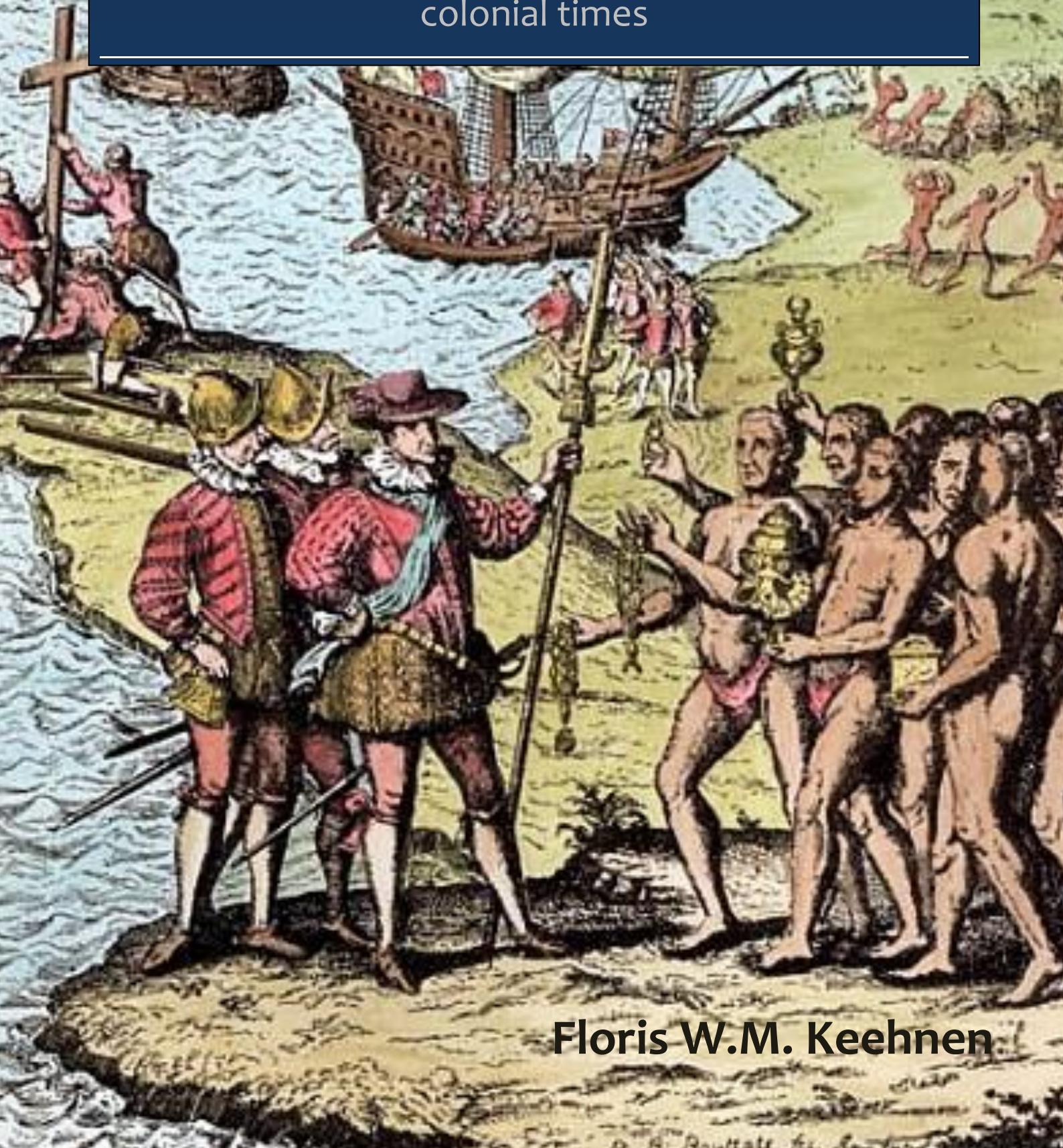


# Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

The role of European material culture in intercultural contacts in Hispaniola during early colonial times



Floris W.M. Keehnen



Trinkets (f)or Treasure?



THESIS TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHAEOLOGY – RELIGION AND  
SOCIETY IN NATIVE AMERICA – FACULTY OF ARCHAEOLOGY – LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

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*“One man's trash is another man's treasure”*





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## 1 | Introduction

Human history is a story of migration. Millions of years ago the first hominids moved out of Africa and began to populate Eurasia. Taking a big leap in history, when *Homo sapiens* had long reached the Near East, the first civilisations emerged across the globe. Different areas of the world saw the independent development of agriculture, innovations spread and societies rapidly evolved into larger and more complex structures. Today, globalisation is a trendy topic. The globe has increasingly become a unified whole in which it is almost as easy to maintain contact with colleagues around the world as to invite your neighbour to come over for coffee. Having collected a sufficient number of airmiles, a transatlantic flight is quickly arranged, while the first commercial voyages to outer space are shortly made available. At the same time, the need to travel has been eliminated through the development of modern communication technology in the current Information Age.

All these outstanding and admirable efforts and advances spring from innate human drives to which also migration and the expansion of geographic horizons belong. Often these moves are suddenly instigated by the need for natural resources, changing climatic conditions or population pressure; in other cases migration occurs when pressures like war and political issues are faced. But next to human movement that is forced in some way, there is also a lot of voluntary movement of people migrating when there is no basic need to do so. Reasons to move may include the desire to search for economic or religious gain and to expand power and influence. This is often given expression by the exploration and colonisation of (unknown) lands, unfortunately sometimes coincided by the conquest and submission of other peoples. Also social motives and individual interests such as the confirmation of status and personal enrichment may play a role. Not seldom, however, these drifts partly originate from a high degree of curiosity and opportunism, getting to know ‘what is out there’ and the desire to broaden not only geographic but also mental horizons. This search for the unknown, connected to the lure of improvement and the possibility of being better off, comprises the human spirit that has favoured us from the moment that mankind emerged.

Wherever people live they are in contact and wherever people migrate to new contacts are sought and established. Not only do people socialise, interact and cooperate within their own group where they feel strongly connected to their kin and relatives and have their affiliates living close by, but from as long as humankind exists also outside the group people have made and maintained social contacts while travelling widely beyond the group’s territory. This way, vast interaction networks were established, resulting in a globalised and connected world in which goods and ideas are exchanged and information is transmitted.

When talking about exchange it is its material expression – commonly referred to as trade – that probably would occur first to many people. Today, with our capitalist, monetary system and innumerable daily transactions we cannot think away trade anymore. The history of trade or (reciprocal) exchange arguably goes as far back as the development of human communication. Prehistoric communities already enjoyed their participation in extensive networks of interaction, mobility and exchange. Historically, the exchange of goods has been important in the encounter between distinct cultures or societies (see Oka and Kusimba 2008, in press). At first contact, when cultures strange to each other

meet, exchanging goods often serves to show friendly intentions towards the other, while at the same time serving to bridge the gap between different mental frameworks and worldviews. Not only the objects themselves, but also the context in which these are exchanged becomes important. Often, these exchange contacts result in the creation of enduring and powerful relationships (Corbey 2006; Graeber 2001; Thomas 1991). However, exchanges can be friendly or hostile, so that sometimes not all the parties involved benefit from the exchange and the relationship may become advantageous for only one of them. It is the balance of equal and unequal exchanges that has shaped the world as we know it today.

However, exchange not only refers to material goods, to commodities or valuables shifting hands, but can have a wider meaning, being used by sociologists to describe all interpersonal contacts (Giddens 2001, 699). It includes the exchange of non-material things, of ideas and information. These interactions both influenced and changed the peoples involved and initiated such processes as assimilation and transculturation, processes during which cultures increasingly begin to look alike or take over cultural elements of the other. These phenomena particularly unfold when one group of people settles itself next to or among another group, causing direct interaction. In the exchange networks that develop as a result from this interaction, goods and ideas are regularly transmitted between the peoples involved (Barth 1969; Gosden 2004).

Exchange in all its forms can be seen as the maintainer of contact between people and cultures, the motor that makes interaction between human beings possible and essentially provides humans with sociality, without which mankind would not have been able to survive (Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1990). Most interesting today are questions about the formation of these intercultural (global) interactions and what impact these have on the societies in question, both in prehistoric and in modern times. One of the most profound contacts established in world history is that between Europe, Africa and Asia (the 'Old World') and the Americas (the 'New World'). In 1492, when Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic on his intended journey westward to India, by accidental encounter two worlds that were not previously aware of each other's existence came into contact and began adopting elements of each other's cultures. Although Europe, Africa and Asia had already started to form a 'worldwide web' of trade relationships long before, it was not until the advent of contact between the 'Old World' and the 'New' that the final missing link was forged and all continents were interconnected. The Americas were quickly absorbed in this web and became an important arena in the struggle for economic, politic and territorial supremacy by the exploring and expanding European seafaring nations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and would ultimately grow – in the case of the United States and to a lesser degree the rest of North America as well – into one of the protagonists on the world stage whose president is often considered the most influential man on earth. It is this defining moment of culture contact and interaction that will be scrutinised in this thesis.

### **1.1 Setting the scene: cultures in contact in the Caribbean**

“And when we were mid-sea between these two islands, that is, Santa María and this big one to which I gave the name Fernandina, I found a man who was passing alone in a dugout from the island of Santa María to Fernandina and who was bringing a small amount of their bread, which was about the size of a fist, and a calabash of water and a piece of red earth made into dust and then kneaded and some dry leaves, which must be something highly esteemed among them, because earlier, in San Salvador, they brought us some of them to me as a present. And

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he was bringing a little native basket in which he had a string of small glass beads and two *blancas*, because of which I recognised that he was coming from the island of San Salvador and had passed to that of Santa María and was passing to Fernandina” [Columbus, trans. Dunn and Kelley 1989, 83-85].<sup>1</sup>

The passage cited here originates from Las Casas’s transcription of Columbus’s journal and describes how Columbus, while sailing through the Bahamas, encounters an Amerindian paddling in his canoe (fig. 1). The man not only carries some basic necessities, but also a couple of small glass beads and two Spanish coins, items of European origin that he must have obtained on an island previously visited by Columbus. The date of meeting is 15 October 1492, which is just a few days after the very first Spanish-Indian encounter. The Europeans were impressed to notice the existence of such elaborate exchange networks among the native inhabitants and praised the voyaging skills that enabled the islanders to quickly make circulate the newly obtained objects. This apparent rapidity at which the foreign objects were absorbed within the native exchange networks may hint at the significance of the European items for the local island dwellers. Probably the canoeing Indian was a messenger who wanted to tell the peoples of the neighbouring islands of the arrival of the Spaniards of which he had evidence through the objects he brought. With the coins he was able to assert the truly uniqueness of the newcomers, both through the materials the coins were made of – how to melt metals they did not know – and through the inscription of unknown writing

and symbols (Wilson 1990a, 51). The example illustrates how objects may play an important part in the formation of intercultural contacts and how they are easily integrated as items of exchange in already existing local networks (cf. Pugh 2009; Thomas 1991).



Figure 1. Indian in canoe. From the 1535 edition of *Historia general y natural de las Indias* by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés.

Columbus’s first landfall and the early days that the Europeans passed navigating among the islands of the Bahamian archipelago were followed by reconnaissance voyages to the Greater Antilles and the founding of La Navidad, the first Spanish settlement in Hispaniola, an island nowadays divided into Haiti (western part) and the Dominican Republic (eastern part). Under unsolved circumstances La Navidad and its European residents did not survive, and Columbus, who saw all this upon his return to the Caribbean on his second voyage about a year later, had to establish a new outpost, which he called La Isabela. The establishment of this colonial town would ultimately become the first step towards European colonisation of the island. The bottom line of the remaining part of the story is generally known: the Spaniards were looking for gold and spices and tried to acquire as much as they could by

<sup>1</sup> “[...] y estando a medio golpho d’estas dos islas, es de saber, de aquella Sancta Maria y d’esta grande a la cual pongo nombre la Fernandina, hallé un hombre solo en una almadía que se pasaba de la isla de Sancta Maria a la Fernandina, y traía un poco de su pan, que sería tanto como el puño y una calabaza de agua, y un pedazo de tierra bermeja hecha en polvo y después amasada, y unas hojas secas, que debe ser cosa muy apreciada entrellos, porque ya me truxeron en San Salvador d’ellas en presente; y traía un cestillo a su guisa en que tenía un ramalejo de cuentezillas de vidrio y dos blancas, por las cuales cognoscí qu’él venía de la isla de San Salvador, y avía pasado a aquélla de Sancta María y se pasaba a la Fernandina” [Columbus 1992, 55, according to Las Casas].

exploiting the native inhabitants of Hispaniola and the surrounding islands. Moreover, Europeans contributed to a rapid and mass decline of the native Caribbean population (Anderson-Córdova 1990, 41-160; 2005; Cook 1998, 19-46; 2002; Moya Pons 1992; Newson 1993; Wilson 1990a, 90-92).

Columbus's 'discovery' of the Americas was not really a discovery, although many popular literature makes one believe so. Centuries before his arrival, voyages by Norse Vikings and Breton fishermen reportedly had reached as far as Newfoundland and the American fishing grounds (McGhee 1984; Tuck 1971). But moreover, upon contact, the Caribbean was already inhabited by one or more million of (Amerindian) people who, (mainly) originating from the northeastern South American mainland, had populated the archipelago some 8,000 years ago (see Curet 2005). Here, these marine-oriented peoples gradually developed the sociopolitical unit called the *cacicazgo* or chiefdom (Vega 1990; Wilson 1990a). With their seafaring abilities they mastered the Caribbean Sea and made it a traversable waterway that they used to maintain their vast interaction networks (Callaghan 2001; Wilson *et al.* 1998). These spheres of interaction comprised not only the Antillean islands, but also the northern coast of South America, the Isthmo-Colombian area (i.e. Colombia, Panama and Costa Rica) and coastal Central America, together referred to as the circum-Caribbean. Thus using the sea as a link instead of a barrier, the mobility and exchange of people, goods and ideas were stimulated (Hofman *et al.* 2007, 2010; Hofman and Hoogland 2011). Locally produced raw materials, semimanufactured goods and finished products, both utilitarian and prestige goods or social valuables, easily found their way to communities living on other islands (Hofman *et al.* 2008). In the same vein also symbols, iconographic representations and other material expressions moved from island to island, as did knowledge and behaviour, cultural traits, practices and values, embedded in a shared pan-Caribbean cosmivision (e.g. Boomert 1987, 2003; Oliver 2000; Saunders 2003).

As already mentioned above, the encounter between the Spaniards and the Taíno – the currently used name for the peoples who inhabited the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas at the time of European contact – was an encounter of two worlds that were not previously aware of each other's existence, of cultures that were different in many things and of people who ultimately proved not to be able to coexist peacefully.<sup>2</sup> Despite these differences and inconsistencies, both parties were constantly making attempts in finding common ground in order to communicate with each other. They had differences in cognitive and aesthetic perception, in worldview and in systems of value. These they tried to bridge by means of objects, where the material culture they exchanged objectified values that were important to both parties. As such, these intercultural exchanges set in motion a continuous dynamic of creating social relationships and of recontextualising social and material worlds, which ultimately resulted in the definition of new identities and the initiation of cultural processes like assimilation and transculturation (Bhabha 1994; Mol 2008).

With the arrival of black slaves from Africa a third set of cultural logics, values and practices entered the Caribbean and set in an interaction between the different cultures (Deagan, ed. 1995; Ewen 1991; Guitar 2000; Smith 1995; see also Deagan 1983). In the centuries that followed, the ongoing exchange of cultural features due to the constant influx of European and African people to the Americas resulted in

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<sup>2</sup> More about the term 'Taíno' and the different Amerindian populations that inhabited the Caribbean at the time of contact can be read in Chapter 4.



the creation of a Caribbean melting pot of cultures. Today, the Caribbean is a “cultural mosaic” (Wilson 1993). The present-day awareness of a pre-Columbian habitation of the islands is increasing and indeed some of the descendants of the original inhabitants, counting at most a few thousand people, are still living on a couple of places in the archipelago, notably in Dominica, St. Vincent and Trinidad. In the Greater Antilles in particular, incipient notions of nationalism, cultural heritage and identity have encouraged studies about the survival of indigenous cultural elements in today’s societies, through which history also becomes appealing for the people to whom it actually matters (Ferbel-Azcarate 1995, 2002; Forte 2005; García Arévalo 1988; Vega 1981; Wilson 1997a).

## 1.2 Current state of affairs and research questions

The encounter between the Spanish and the Taíno and its consequences during and after the early colonial period – covering the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first two decades of the sixteenth (1492-1518) – have deserved considerable attention from scholars and the general public. Most of the research is grounded in Spanish colonial archaeology, a specialisation that gradually developed in the Caribbean around the 1940s and 1950s (for a historical overview, see Deagan 2010 and Valcárcel *et al.* in press). In these early years the above issues were only beginning to be discussed. Two notable studies come from Morales Patiño and Pérez de Acevedo (1946) and García Castañeda (1949). These Cuban archaeologists were the first to apply the concept of transculturation (coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, 1995) as an analytical tool for the study of Indo-Hispanic interaction. Later, these approaches were also adopted by Dominican archaeologists. According to Deagan (2010), even archaeological research in Florida was influenced by these new sociological ideas. But despite these important contributions, most archaeological investigations at the time still concentrated on architectural remains (e.g. Goodwin 1946; de Hostos 1938; Palm 1945, 1952, 1955) and artefact studies (e.g. Goggin 1960, 1968; Mendoza 1957). The locating of Spanish townsites and the description and classification of European materials continued to be given priority in the decades that followed. At the turn of the nineties, with the prospect of the celebration of the Columbian Quincentenary to be held in 1992, researchers finally got more concerned with the study of the dynamics of the colonial period. The event evidently provided impetus towards a surge of interest in Spanish colonial archaeology and, importantly, the focus of research of non-Caribbean scholars became on the area of first contact, the Caribbean, instead of the North American mainland that had been dominating the (mostly U.S.) investigators’ agenda before (Ewen 2001; cf. Sued-Badillo 1992).

Spanish colonial archaeology developed itself beyond mere being descriptive. Works like *First Encounters* (Milanich and Milbrath 1989) and the three-volume *Columbian Consequences* (Thomas 1990) were published and successful archaeological investigations were given a start by both Caribbean and foreign scholars. Notably Kathleen A. Deagan, often in collaboration with her colleague José M. Cruxent, has contributed a great deal to the discipline, given her synthetic articles (Deagan 1988, 1990a; Deagan and Cruxent 1993) and two-volume handbook of Spanish colonial artefacts (Deagan 1987a, 2002), next to numerous publications resulting from (sometimes large-scale) excavations she conducted at sites like En Bas Saline (Deagan 1987b, 2004), La Isabela (Deagan and Cruxent 1993, 2002a, 2002b) and Puerto Real (Deagan, ed. 1995). The archaeology of Spanish colonial sites resulted in studies about European adaptive strategies (e.g. Deagan, ed. 1995, 1996; Smith 1986; Woodward 2006), while encouraging

explanatory studies concerned with the dynamics of the colonial period and cultural processes such as transculturation (e.g. Deagan 1985, 1987b; Ewen 1991; García Arévalo 1990a). Also the 'Old World' introduction of animals, plants and diseases to the Caribbean and the global effects of the encounter have deserved more attention the last couple of decades (e.g. Crosby 1973; Diamond 1997; Mann 2011; Thomas 1990).

Despite all these honourable efforts of the preceding decades, we have to conclude that the scale of Spanish colonial archaeology is still very limited in comparison to the archaeology of pre-Columbian times. Presumably this is partly due to the relatively recent development – though acknowledging the longer history of Cuban and Dominican research of Indo-Hispanic interaction – of historical (i.e. postcontact) archaeology in the region, only encouraged by the celebrations of the United States Bicentennial in 1976. Today, bibliographies of Caribbean archaeology comprise just a few percentages of references to Spanish colonial research (Ewen 2001). However, the general trend towards the future is positive; already, interdisciplinary research is the rule instead of the exception and researchers may be ever more capable of answering the 'how' and 'why' questions (see Deagan 2010; Keegan 1996a).

### *Towards an Amerindian perspective*

The main deficiency in most studies that have been published so far is the almost complete lack or denial of Amerindian agency. Much research concerning the interaction between the Europeans and the Greater Antillean Taíno has focused on European perspectives, making postcontact archaeology still very much a Spanish colonial archaeology, in which the native population is often only mentioned to address the effects of European colonialism. Studies that did concern with the Taíno have often been focused on them living in Spanish town contexts (e.g. García Arévalo 1990a; Ortega 1982). A fair number of native Caribbean researchers has been educated during the past decades, but, rooted in island nationalism, when it comes to postcontact archaeology, they as well (although justifiably) often turn to describe the impact of Spanish colonialism on their (presumed) ancestors (e.g. Deive 1995; Domínguez 1978; Domínguez and Rives 1995; García Arévalo 1990a; Morales Patifio and Pérez de Aveledo 1946; Moya Pons 1987, 1992). While the dramatic losses suffered by the Amerindians cannot be underestimated and cultural changes obviously were perceived, the indigenous means of survival and the fact that there was indeed a measure of continuity of indigenous cultural practices are often neglected. Also the early Cuban researchers denied indigenous survival and a possibly longer period of Indo-Hispanic interaction and transculturation. Nevertheless, in the past years there seems to have developed more awareness on the topic of Amerindian cultural survival beyond initial contact and beyond the (early) colonial period (e.g. Castanha 2011, 51-66; Forte 2006; Guitar 2002; see also Deagan 2010) (and modern revival, see Chapter 8).

That the scholarly attention given to a postconquest indigenous presence has largely been a recent development is primarily caused by false historical assumptions – based in documentary sources – previously adhered to (Deagan 2004; and see Castanha 2011, 21-50). The undeniably tragic character of this historical episode has led researchers to conclude that only a fast and complete Amerindian eradication could have taken place, thereby denying notions of Taíno response to the colonial circumstances. In her study of postcontact dynamics at En Bas Saline, Deagan (2004, 602) remarks the effect of this misconception to the field of archaeology: "The tendency to uncritically accept the notion

that Taíno social formations suffered swift and monolithic collapse in Hispaniola after 1492 has encouraged the premise that the postcontact Taíno experience is largely inaccessible to archaeology and, by extension, an unfruitful focus for archaeological research.” It was persistently believed that after contact “no recognisable Taíno occupation sites were formed (or if they were, their ephemerality made them materially inaccessible)” (*ibid.*, 621). Deagan (2004, 602) also mentions that feelings of national identity (like mentioned above) have made it considerably more attractive to study the flourishing Taíno chiefdoms than to concern with their postcontact annihilation (García Arévalo 1988). It is therefore that the absence of archaeology at postcontact Taíno occupation sites is partly an epistemological bias which may only become more balanced through such extensive studies that incorporate and do justice to Taíno social dynamics after Spanish conquest (Deagan 2004).

Considering the general overemphasis on European perspectives it is imperative to re-evaluate the Spanish-Taíno interactions from a bilateral point of view, thus including a more pronounced Taíno input. This will allow understanding of the ways in which also the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean were able to influence both the newcomers and the dynamics of the colonial period and how they themselves culturally adapted in reaction to the intruding colonists. Taking a Taíno perspective may clarify aspects of indigenous agency; for instance, as to how they dealt with the new material and non-material elements of a colonising culture or what role cosmology played in the intercultural relationships they established. Ultimately this will lead to a more complete picture of Indo-Hispanic interaction and issues like integration and cultural disintegration, transculturation, adoption and rejection of cultural features and values, cultural survival and identity formation.

This thesis aims to unravel part of these dynamics through a focus on the Taíno perception of the European material culture. Adopting a bilateral perspective towards cultural interaction and exchange in the early colonial Caribbean allows the addressing of the following main research question: how can we characterise the role of European material culture in intercultural contacts in Hispaniola during the early colonial period (1492-1518)? Related subquestions are: what elements and structures were the two different precontact exchange networks composed of before their convergence? Which Taíno and European objects composed the basic ‘gift kits’ that were used in the early colonial exchanges? How is European material culture reflected in the archaeological record of indigenous settlements? What does the archaeological record tell us about the significance of European material culture to the Taíno peoples? Can we explain the focus on particular objects that were used in the exchange relationships of the colonial period? Which criteria made the Taíno value European goods?

The main challenge and difficulty concerned with in this thesis will be the scarcity of postcontact archaeological data that are available (see Chapter 6). It is the author’s objective to complement this paucity through an inclusion of several other lines of evidence, comprising anthropological theories, ethnohistoric sources, history and pre-Columbian archaeology of the Caribbean. First, anthropological theory will be consulted in order to construct a framework revolving around the topics of ‘culture contact’ and, in particular, the various forms of colonialism. Secondly, to come to a more informed context of the 1492 meeting and the dynamics of the colonial period, it is necessary to investigate the cultural-historical backgrounds of the protagonists of the story. These certainly were very different cultural frameworks of which the sudden collision has arguably played a major role in constructing the

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course of the postcontact period. Here, in the case of the Taíno, the archaeology of the pre-Columbian Caribbean offers valuable insights into how indigenous exchange networks were constructed and which particular goods were circulating among the island inhabitants. As regards the European history, it will both be investigated how trade and exchange developed in the Middle Ages and what were the historical precedents leading up to the transatlantic voyage(s) of Christopher Columbus.

Furthermore, ethnohistoric sources produced by European chroniclers and other historic writers will comprise the dataset to be used for complementing and comparing to the archaeological component. Their consultation demands a critical approach given the obvious European bias and twisted realities integrated in these sources. Only a couple of these writers actually travelled to the 'New World' and therefore much of what is left to us is composed of second-hand information and hearsay, adapted to the context of time and linked to the common people's imaginary abilities. Besides, the interests of the Caribbean venture were wide-ranging and substantial, both for individuals and kingdoms, making the portrayal of reality not always as refined. Nevertheless, these written sources are a valuable and significant addition to Caribbean archaeology in its effort to reconstruct the history of the area and its people. The recorded information has revealed much of what we would otherwise not have been able to grasp. Also, the documents have proved to be useful as correlates to the archaeological data. With this synergy of multiple lines of evidence and integrated multidisciplinary approach this thesis aims to contribute to an increased understanding of the Caribbean colonial period and to offer new insights that can be useful for Caribbean archaeology. At the same time it is acknowledged that this study is opportunistic and does not pretend to provide conclusive answers.

### *Setting*

A couple of explanatory words concerning the location and time period chosen in this study may be desirable. The island of Hispaniola was the first Caribbean island the Europeans actually colonised. Although Columbus's first voyage went along several Bahamian islands and Cuba before reaching Hispaniola, it was not until his arrival there that the Europeans established a settlement. This means that from that moment on interaction was substantial, continuous and sustained, facilitating the possibility to reasonably study the role of European material culture from a two-side perspective. The early colonial period is often defined as comprising the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first two decades of the sixteenth century. Here, I will take 1518 as its final year, because of two reasons: in 1518 European interests shifted towards the mainland and Hispaniola, notably Santo Domingo, became not much more than a stationary point from which to undertake mainland ventures.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, by that time the native labour force of the islands had been depleted, whereupon the Spanish commenced the large-scale importation of African slaves. The Africans brought along distinct cultural elements that came to influence the native Caribbean cultures drastically, a development that is beyond the scope of this research to include. Nevertheless, whenever it is possible, desirable and of added value within the framework of the thesis, the restrictions placed on time and location may be extended, though with explicit mention, thus enabling the use of parallels and comparisons to archaeological sites located on

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<sup>3</sup> This shift towards the mainland resulted in the conquest of the Aztec Empire by Hernán Cortés in 1519, which from then received full attention.

other islands or to developments and events preceding or postdating the time period such as defined above.

### 1.3 Thesis structure and chapter outline

The thesis consists of two parts and eight chapters. Part I (Chapters 2-4) broadly concerns theoretical considerations and a sketch of both medieval Europe and the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean before contact. Part II (Chapters 5-8) then brings the cultures into contact and focuses on answering the main research question.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework from which to conceptualise the encounter between Europe and the Americas. It firstly addresses how issues of colonialism and colonial interaction were approached in the past and why these ideas have recently been rejected. Then, other, new thoughts are introduced, pertaining to the different ways in which colonialism can express itself and on how complex cultural changes are set in motion after first contact. Central to the discussion of these themes is to acknowledge notions of indigenous agency. The last part of the chapter focuses on the problem of interchangeably using the terms 'culture contact' and 'colonialism'.

Chapter 3 is meant to explain the European precedents leading up to the journey of Columbus. It offers a historical overview of the development of trade in Europe and the Iberian peninsula in particular. It emphasises Europe's connection to Africa and Asia and its struggles with power and religion, from crusaders to explorers. To understand the Spanish procedures in the Caribbean it is illustrated how late medieval society was constructed and what influence ideas of chivalry and 'just war' had. Lastly, it is described how the Canary Islands were mastered and became the antecedent for the ensuing conquest of the Americas.

Chapter 4 portrays the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean upon contact, by characterising its inhabitants and their cultures and the physical setting in which they acted. The main focus is on exchange goods and the networks that were in operation among the precolonial Caribbean populations. It is inferred which objects were socially valued and were regarded prestige goods. As such it is meant to provide a diachronic perspective through which to understand the values the Taíno subsequently attached to European goods.

Chapter 5 discusses Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean and provides a historical overview of the early colonial period, describing the transition from friendly interaction towards tribute payments and the installation of the *encomienda* system. Throughout, the focus is laid on the documented exchanges between the Spaniards and the Taíno in order to compose for either side a list of trade objects and to define the context in which these items were generally exchanged.

Chapter 6 concerns the archaeology of the colonial period. First, it notes the difficulties and problems that are involved in postcontact archaeology and how to link the scarce archaeological data to relative periods of time. Second, an overview is provided of selected postcontact Taíno sites in order to draw a representative picture of the different ways European material culture is reflected in co-occurrence with indigenous material. Third, the archaeology of three historically important Spanish colonial sites is described to illustrate European adaptive strategies and changes in material culture resulting from Indian contact. It also shows some of the variety of the objects and materials shipped to Hispaniola so as to see what goods were possibly integrated in indigenous society.

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Chapter 7 introduces the native cosmological domain and its importance to the inhabitants of the circum-Caribbean when it comes to the valuation of objects. The discussion centres around prestige goods and the criteria that made the objects be valued. This cosmovision is opposed to the European view, as such tentatively explaining some of the cultural conflicts that were faced during the colonial period. The chapter shortly turns to how the Europeans were able to manipulate the Taíno in some ways by means of their material culture. The final part evaluates which European objects the Taíno incorporated into their own culture.

Chapter 8 summarises the results of the thesis research, focusing on the role of European material culture in early colonial times, with special emphasis placed upon the Taíno perception of the foreign objects that they were confronted with. Lastly, there is given some space for discussing the consequences of the encounter and the modern-day revival of Taíno culture.

# Part I





## 2 | From Contact to Colonialism: Intercultural Interactions in Theory

### 2.1 Introduction

Following the end of the era of divergence in which humankind migrated out of Africa and gradually populated the habitable world, there was the era in which people started to converge again and in which, through time, all cultures became interconnected, leaving no more room for any isolated cultural forms (Fernández-Armesto 2007). Contacts between members of distinct cultures have taken place on different levels and scales and with varying natures. The making of contact is either intentional or unintentional, while contact itself may either be direct or indirect. Often the lines are not easy to draw as the different forms frequently co-occur. The reasons for seeking contact are numerous. Most of the time the effort is directed towards the acquisition of some sort of advantage, either economical, political, social, religious, etc. But not always all parties benefit from contact with others. If the power relations between both sides are unequal, this would often have detrimental effects for the people of the 'less powerful' culture. The latter may therefore experience the contact as undesirable. The contact presumably was unintentional for the subordinate culture, for it had not sought contact itself but was being contacted by others. The contact or encounter may also be unintended by both sides, such as was the case when Columbus stumbled upon the Americas on his intended way to Asia. Here, also curiosity may play a role, as instigator of the broadening of horizons and the establishment of new, fruitful contacts.

Other processes unfold if contact becomes sustained. In that case, we cannot speak of 'contact' anymore because 'much more is going on': the event of contact transforms in a process of interaction (Silliman 2005). Relations are being established and intercultural dynamics gradually develop. In this context, people tend to make all kinds of exchanges, which, as already said, were indeed most of the time the reason why the contact with others was sought. Like contact, these exchanges, as well as the character of the intercultural interactions, are either direct or indirect. Direct contacts and direct exchanges typically include the exchange of material, cultural and ideological elements. Though, also when contact and relations are indirect, groups of people can still adopt goods, ideas or influences from each other through contacts with intermediate communities by way of cultural diffusionism, trade and exchange. Cultural interaction thus occurs in a variety of forms and it is impossible to discuss all of these satisfactorily within the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I will focus on two concepts that I think are descriptive and explanatory of the encounter and interactions between the Europeans and Amerindians in the early colonial period, or those between European states and indigenous peoples during the 'Age of Discovery' in general: 'colonial encounters' and 'colonialism'. Attaining the best understanding of both of these processes requires a comparative, cross-cultural and analytical approach that includes examples from prehistoric and historical times, involving non-Western and precapitalist as well as modern societies from both the 'Old' and 'New Worlds'. These are offered by Gil J. Stein (2005) and Chris Gosden (2004) respectively, and I will use their works, both representative of current thoughts in the fields of archaeology and anthropology, extensively to draw up a theoretical framework that aims to aid in the interpretation of the colonial processes that evolved in the decades following the encounter of the Spaniards with the Taíno.

## 2.2 A reorientation: the colonial network and indigenous agency

Before discussing the concepts of ‘colonial encounter’ and ‘colonialism’, it is worthwhile to review shortly some of the established ideas that Gosden (2004, 7-23) and Stein (2005) – along with many others – are opposing. These are ‘world-systems theory’ and the ‘acculturation’ model. World-systems theory was founded by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1980) in his attempt to trace the origins of modern capitalism. He believed that the establishment of colonial relations had facilitated the expansion of global mercantilism and capitalism. One of his main propositions thus was that we have to consider nation-states, or a so-called ‘core’, in direct relation with their ‘peripheries’, embodied by prestate societies. Thus, regions were not considered as vacuums anymore (see also Braudel 1979; Wolf 1982). Both entities are interdependent and changes on either side will directly influence developments at the other side, making the world an interconnected whole. Hence, the connection between core and periphery in a single world-system demanded an expansion of the unit of analysis away from a focus on the nation-state alone. At the same time, it was believed that any changes that derived from the colonial relations were determined by the core, an imbalance that would ultimately result in unequal development at the peripheral side. Therefore, by definition, the core-periphery relationships were asymmetrical and as such often regarded as exploitative imperialist structures. Among anthropologists and archaeologists, world-systems theory created an increased awareness of the position of otherwise largely neglected indigenous societies, who came to be recognised as “an important part, and perhaps, in some cases, the result, of a global scale history of colonial expansion” (Scaramelli and Scaramelli 2005, 137). The other, second, criticised model concerns the traditional culture contact concept of ‘acculturation’, that originated as an intent to analyse situations of contact. In practice, it focused on studying how “people without history” (Wolf 1982) changed as a result of Western contact. According to this model, “the dominant colonising ‘donor’ culture transforms the more passive indigenous ‘recipient’ culture of the host community” (Stein 2005, 14). Always and inevitably, due to the simple conviction that the colonising culture was superior (fig. 2). As a consequence, scholars focused primarily on changes in the ‘subordinate’ culture, basically to measure the nature and pace of change. Nevertheless, notable exceptions exist, like Foster’s (1960) concept of “conquest culture”, which is often referred to by authors discussing Spanish colonialism in the Americas (e.g. Deagan 1983; Ewen 1991; García Arévalo 1990a).

With the rise of postprocessualism (or ‘interpretive archaeology’) and postcolonial theories, inspired by the works of Sahlins (1976), Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979), concepts like agency, practice and identity, as well as considerations about the apparent active role of material culture, became topics of particular interest among archaeologists (Barrett 1994; Hodder 1982, 1985, 1986; Miller and Tilley 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Tilley 1990, 1993, 1994). These studies were valuable contributions to the existing theories and their mutual integration has indeed resulted in new and inspiring approaches towards a lot of different anthropological and archaeological subjects. Hereby, also cooperation was sought between prehistoric and historical archaeologists (Lightfoot 1995). Consequently, also a shift in the approach of studying concepts like ‘culture contact’, ‘colonisation’ and ‘colonialism’ was noticeable and it is here that we find the studies of Gosden (2004) and Stein (2005). In a general sense, both the world-systems theory and the acculturation model were largely rejected as being Eurocentric and unidirectional and hence only applicable to a limited range of the possible forms of colonial interaction. The concepts have



**Figure 2.** Political cartoon by Michael Leunig representing the popular, yet outdated views of ‘first contact’ and intercultural interaction which distinguish between dominant colonisers and underdeveloped, powerless natives (after Torrence and Clarke 2000, 25).

furthermore been accused of reductionism, structural overdetermination and, moreover, their lack of considering local power and agency (for critiques see e.g. Cusick 1998; Dietler 1995, 1998, 2005, 2009; Lightfoot 1995; Sahlins 1988, 1992, 1993; Stein 1998, 1999, 2005). Archaeologists became increasingly aware of the need to move towards more inclusive, multidimensional and dynamic approaches of colonial contact and interaction. In terms of the larger, economic and political structures of the world-system, a better understanding of the interplay between local and global structures had to be achieved, while recognising the diverse natures of the organisation of the colonial network. It was furthermore acknowledged that power relations are not predefined in favour of a dominant coloniser; instead, local agency had to be credited a considerably more important role. What was needed was a focus on the interactions between cultures. In contrast to the theory of acculturation, the emphasis was placed upon “entanglement” (Boyd *et al.* 2000; Dietler 1998; Martindale 2009; Orser 1996; Silliman 2001, 2005; Stahl 2002; Thomas 1991) and “engagement” (Torrence and Clarke 2000), reflecting the idea that the dynamic interactions and transformative effects of the colonial encounter influenced all parties involved. As such, also new or reformulated cultural forms and identities were created. As part of these developments, archaeologists became increasingly concerned with the role of material culture in processes of colonialism (Appadurai 1986; Cusick, ed. 1998; Dietler 1995, 1998; Kirch and Sahlins 1992; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Sahlins 1985, 1992; Stein 2002; Thomas 1991). These studies discussed the indigenous appropriation of European materials and the consequences this had for social, political and economic indigenous structures, while other studies focused on processes like recontextualisation and commoditisation and how in certain circumstances so-called ‘colonial’ or European artefacts should actually be considered indigenous material culture (Kopytoff 1986; Martindale and Jurakic 2006; Pugh 2009; Rogers 1990; Scaramelli and Scaramelli 2005; Silliman 2009; Thomas 1991). Now that I have briefly outlined the theoretical context in which we should position the works of Gosden (2004) and Stein (2005), let us proceed to a discussion of their concepts – ‘colonial encounter’ and ‘colonialism’.

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In Stein's edited book *The Archaeology of Colonial Encounters: Comparative Perspectives* (2005), he provides such a 'modern' approach to the concept of colonies. Colonies are established during colonial encounters. But, what exactly constitutes a colony is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, definitions like those offered by Finley (1976) – centred on European colonialism, portraying natives as inferior and leaving no room for an indigenous agency or their active participation in the structuring of the colonial interaction process – are generally considered outdated. Instead, a more neutral definition of a colony, encompassing *all* colonial encounters independent of time periods, could sound like:

“an implanted settlement established by one society in either uninhabited territory or the territory of another society. The implanted settlement is established for long-term residence by all or part of the homeland or metropole's population and is both spatially and socially distinguishable from the communities of the indigenous polity or peoples among whom it is established. The settlement at least starts off with a distinct formal corporate identity as a community with cultural/ritual, economic, military, or political ties to its homeland, but the homeland need not politically dominate the implanted settlement” [Stein 2002, 30].

The main advantage of the proposed definition is that it leaves out notions of power. According to Stein (2005, 9; see also Dietler 2005) it can thus locally and empirically be determined how relations of power developed in a particular context. The definition also allows for a wide applicability, and hence comparative utility, of the term. The reasons for establishing colonies are many. Stein (2005, 9-10) lists a variety of these purposes, including (1) exchange and/or resource extraction; (2) colonies as military or administrative outposts connected with direct conquest; (3) as refuges; (4) “settler colonies” to resettle excess population; (5) colonies as outposts for the spread of a specific ideology; (6) for agricultural profit motives; (7) and, for the resettlement of conquered populations of empires. Considering who was engaged in the creation of these settlements, Stein (2005, 10) writes that “the establishment of colonies appears to be a process uniquely characteristic of complex societies – almost exclusively states and empires.” Apart from the question of what exactly constitutes a complex society, it may be contested whether this one-to-one relation between colonies and complex societies is not too restrictive. The ‘colonisation’ by non-Western, precapitalist groups of “uninhabited territory” (Stein 2002, 30), such as the initial peopling of the Caribbean islands (Chapter 4), is hereby excluded, despite according to the definition that is offered.

The colonial network that emerges from the established colony includes three nodes: the colonies themselves, their homelands and their indigenous host communities (Stein 2005, 11). It shows that it is not only colonists and colonised who matter. The nodes' intricate connection forces archaeologists to study them all if we wish to come to a realistic understanding of colonial encounters. For now, we will focus on the various relationships between the members of the colonies and the host communities to see what effects their cohabitation may have on either party. Three strategies that the colonists may pursue, according to Stein (2005, 12), are: (1) domination, (2) long-term competition, and (3) alliance. In the past, (European) colonists were naturally associated with domination, while the possibilities of employing other strategies were largely ignored, or at least considered as less likely tactics. With the inclusion of ancient, non-Western and precapitalist colonial networks in the comparative theory of colonial encounters, the discussion of the latter strategy was encouraged. Next to this perspective focusing on the macroscale political economy of colonisation – which Stein (2005) calls a “top-down” approach – better understanding of the nature of colonial encounters is only achieved by considering

the postcolonial notions of agency and identity (“bottom-up”). It is here that, as opposed to the former unidirectional model of ‘acculturation’, the ideas of ‘transculturation’ (Ortiz 1995) or ‘ethnogenesis’ (Deagan 1998; Voss 2008), ‘creolisation’ (Hannerz 1987), ‘*mestizaje*’ (Deagan 1983; Rosenblat 1954) and the concepts of ‘hybridity’ and ‘hybridisation’ (Bhabha 1994; see also van Dommelen 2005) have come to occupy a prominent role. These concepts stress *mutual* cultural and social influence and the emergence of new identities as a result of creative negotiations between all parties involved in the colonial process, with particular emphasis placed upon pronounced local agency, rather than to conceive of indigenous people as underdeveloped, naive, powerless and passive ‘recipients’ of these ‘imposed’ changes. Thus, it is new cultural expressions that exist from the combined effects of the change, loss and acquisition of cultural elements (Valcárcel *et al.* in press).

### 2.3 A tripartite typology of colonialism

The second concept I would like to discuss is colonialism. An excellent theoretical model has been put forward by Chris Gosden (2004) who has formulated three types of colonial contact, each with different underlying power relations between the peoples involved. I will here broadly outline his propositions. The gist of his book *Archaeology and Colonialism: Cultural Contact from 5000 BC to the Present* (2004) is twofold: “colonialism is about material culture” and “colonialism had a cultural effect on all parties” (Gosden 2004, 1). A definition of the term is only given in the last chapter, where we read that

“[c]olonialism is not many things, but just one. Colonialism is a process by which things shape people, rather than the reverse. Colonialism exists where material culture moves people, both culturally and physically, leading them to expand geographically, to accept new material forms and to set up power structures around a desire for material culture. From this unity of desire, colonialism variegates into a surprising range of types” [Gosden 2004, 153].

Like Stein, also Gosden criticises the world-systems analysis of Wallerstein (1974, 1980) and focuses instead on the local scale where everyone had agency and all contributed to the outcome of colonialism’s manifestations. Nevertheless, these local differences and variations he moulds into a broad comparative framework, positing that “the global never dominated and determined the local, but it did provide new global networks through which the local was lived” (Gosden 2004, 151). Hereby, material culture has to be considered as the driving force of all human action. In postcolonial theory the material dimension is not (enough) recognised, which Gosden finds a serious flaw: “it is the values attached to things and the manner in which these values can be remade across the colonial encounter that is crucial to many forms of colonialism. Material things are the basis of much local strategy and the subtlety of strategies can only be understood in a material context” (*ibid.*, 20). It is these “human relationships with the material world” (*ibid.*, 24) whereupon Gosden bases a model of colonialism (*sensu* Thomas 1991, 1994).

The typology that he describes consists of three different types: ‘colonialism within a shared cultural milieu’, ‘the middle ground’ and ‘*terra nullius*’ (fig. 3). Broadly, the three types reflect a chronological division, whereby any of the subsequent stages shows an increase in power inequality between the parties involved in the colonial process. At the same time, however, Gosden stresses that the typology “should not be seen as a linear progression from one form to another” (Gosden 2004, 25). He even

notes that “the present world is neo-colonial and may be best seen as a combination of all previous forms of colonialism” (*ibid.*, 159).



**Figure 3.** Gosden’s tripartite typology of colonialism (after Gosden 2004, 26).

*Colonialism within a shared cultural milieu*

This is the first type of colonialism that Chris Gosden (2004) describes and presumably is the most debated one. In general, this form of culture contact (as most other scholars would probably call it) is not often classified under the heading of colonialism. Gosden, however, uses the concept to build up his model and describes the phenomenon as something like an early expression of colonialism or “colonialism without colonies” (*ibid.*, 41). Although it is not about military might, subjugation, coerced labour or other terms we commonly associate with modern types of colonialism, he explains that it can indeed be considered a colonial form of culture contact. As the term itself already implies, the

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prerequisite for this to happen is the existence of a cultural milieu that is being shared by different cultures over an extended area. This cultural milieu centres around specific values that are attributed not only to social and daily life, but more specifically to material objects. Many people thus value the objects they use in a similar way, through which objects attain a certain power. In illustrating the power that objects can acquire and the expanding influence of particular cultures attendant upon it, Gosden picks three examples to support his case: the city-states of Uruk in Mesopotamia and their development over some 1,000 years; the cultural phenomenon of 'Greekness' and its emergence around the Mediterranean Sea; and the Aztec state that conquered but did not consolidate (see pp. 41-80).

The examples, Gosden (2004, 41) argues, illustrate "processes whereby the values attached to material culture are created and appropriated by a few, and become attractive to an elite over a large area, but still maintaining a symbolic centre of reference [...] which is an important part of their power". With this statement Gosden imputes a powerful and active force to objects; objects are the agents and people are being attracted to them. His argument, therefore, is that "wealth accumulated people" (*ibid.*, 71). So, how does this work out in practice? Cultures that are in mutual contact might be different from each other, while at the same time they may share certain values and cultural elements such as customs, religion, worldview or perhaps even language. This shared cultural milieu that Gosden addresses made it, in the very first place, much easier for both to set up cross-cultural relations. So, that is what often happened. Such was also the case in the 'Ubaid period in early Mesopotamian history (5000-3800 B.C.) where interaction spheres of different areas overlapped. According to Gosden (2004, 42) these were "characterised by their own styles of material culture, but linked by commonalities in pottery and other material culture". These links did not come into existence on their own but needed the intervention of an elite that held the power to popularise these standardised material forms over an extended area. Through the spread of material culture a form of cultural similarity was being created that unified widespread areas. Later, the solidification of the "shared cultural milieu" opened the way for armed conquests, such as the Akkadians (2334-2154 B.C.) managed to do (*ibid.*, 53).

Also 'Greekness' is such a phenomenon classified under the header of "colonialism without colonies", although its manifestation is rather different than in the Mesopotamian case. Gosden explains that it was not a cultural centre from which particular values were carried out, but that there were all different places in various parts of the Mediterranean that simultaneously witnessed the rise of a same kind of cultural expression. The emergence of this 'Greekness' was facilitated by the early spread of material culture that had created a "shared cultural milieu" from which novel cultural forms were able to emerge. A colonial structure was being created with settlements arising outside Greece that maintained no less importance than those within Greece itself (*ibid.*, 60-61). The cultural idea of 'Greekness' and the degree to which people became affiliating themselves with that notion caused changes in the formation of identities as well as the role that land began to play in the process of colonialism. Identities became more fixed when 'Greekness' was used by the elite to differentiate from the local population and other Mediterranean peoples. Also, the land owned by the city-states was attributed a higher status, which further added to the discontinuity of the flexible identities of early times. There were direct links between identity and specific lands and territories, resulting in the identification of such colonies with particular city-states. They made claims to be connected with and be part of these city-states "in a manner that would not have made much sense earlier" (*ibid.*, 65). Necessary to stress is that the

colonies were by no means directed by the city-states, but operated as independent powers that exerted as much influence over the mother cities as happened vice versa (*ibid.*, 69). The colonial settlements influenced the relations between the colonists and the locals, where the expression of this newly adopted and differentiated identity sometimes resulted in strained relations between both.

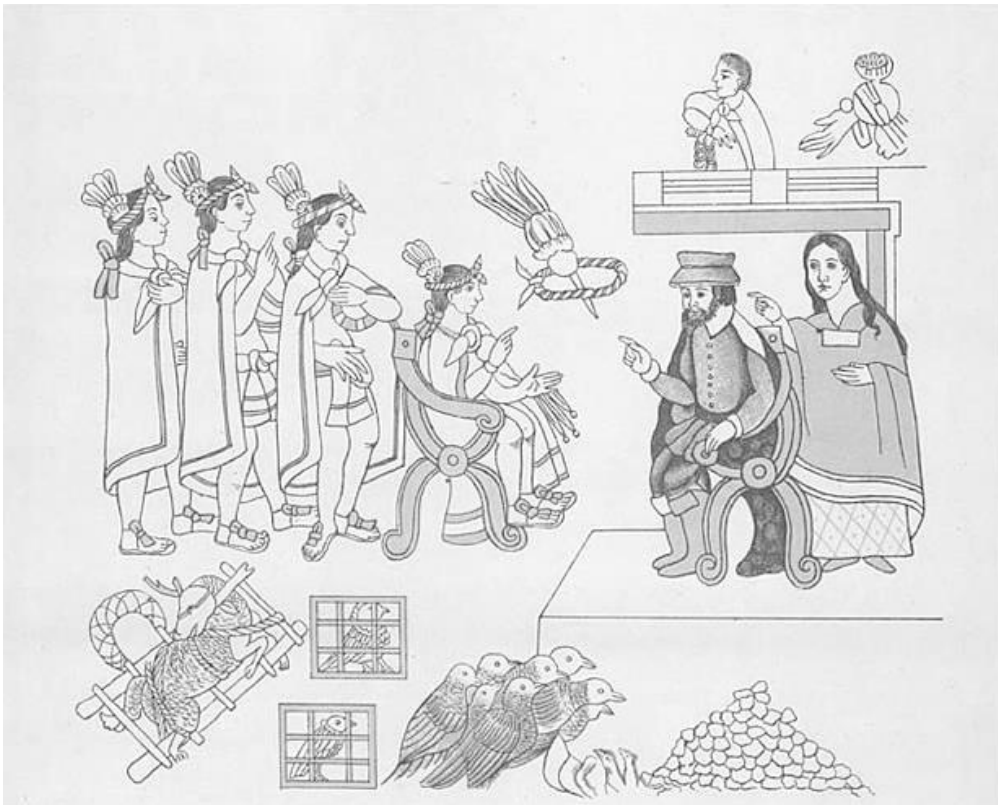
In sum, through time, wealth objects accumulated people in certain areas, which first resulted in the amalgamation of different peoples who did not adhere themselves to specific identities, and later facilitated the creation of regional identities that were more fixed and differentiated from others. Gosden (2004, 71) argues that it is wrong to consider this first manifestation as being formal colonies. Only when the role of land ownership and affiliation with mother cities became more prominent it is more apt to typify them as such. As indicated earlier, the definition of this type of colonialism is not without criticism. Gosden himself admits that it is hard to distinguish between “colonialism within a shared cultural milieu” and culture contact. Only when the archaeological record reveals clear signs of an unequal power balance between people, and when there is evidence that some group(s) enjoyed advantage over others, we can differentiate between colonialism and culture contact. That the distinction is not easy to make may also be related to the fact that people nowadays have come to emphasise the definition of colonialism as one of unequal power relations only between people with different cultural backgrounds and geographical origin. After all, we may reasonably argue that “colonialism was very common between those sharing or developing cultural forms” (*ibid.*, 81).

#### *The middle ground*

The term ‘middle ground’ was first coined by Richard White (1991) and now reused by Gosden as the second form of his tripartite typology of colonialism. Middle-ground colonialism in the first place presumes the movement of people; a movement that results in the encounter between cultures that equally try to come to the best understanding of the other during the process of interaction that follows. The underlying notion of these interactions is that both parties are presumed to possess agency, so that power relations are generally considered to be in balance. At the same time, both strive to attain their own aims and needs, which makes the negotiation of values a vital part of the intercultural communication after contact. New ways of living derive from the colonial meeting as incomers and locals both contribute to the creation of a platform of mutual understanding or “a working relationship” (Gosden 2004, 82). In discussing the phenomenon, Gosden focuses mainly on the colonial relations between Europeans and other cultures around the world. The examples that are discussed include the encounters that Europeans had with the Algonquian Indians of North America; the ambivalent role of Malinche as Cortés’s interpreter in early colonial Mexico (fig. 4); and the islanders of Papua New Guinea. Also the Roman Empire is being discussed, illustrating the hybrid cultural forms that emerged along the Roman fringes (see pp. 83-113).

Fundamental for a middle-ground relationship to come into being, therefore, is the existence of two (or more) cultures that each possess their own set of cultural logics that necessarily is to a more or lesser degree different from the cultural framework of the other. The only way to bridge the main cultural differences is the negotiation of values. Of course, the more different the cultures that contact are from each other, the more difficult it will be to create a working relationship that is able to sustain.





**Figure 4.** Malinche on the side of Hernán Cortés. Meeting with the Aztec ruler Moctezuma II in the city of Tenochtitlan, 8 November 1519. Malinche personified the middle ground through her intermediary role between the different cultures. Cortés and Malinche gave birth to a son, Martín, product of a mixed marriage (*mestizo*), or, like millions of people today, the “living embodiment of the middle ground” (Gosden 2004, 91). After facsimile (c. 1890) of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, sixteenth century. Wikimedia Commons [wmc].

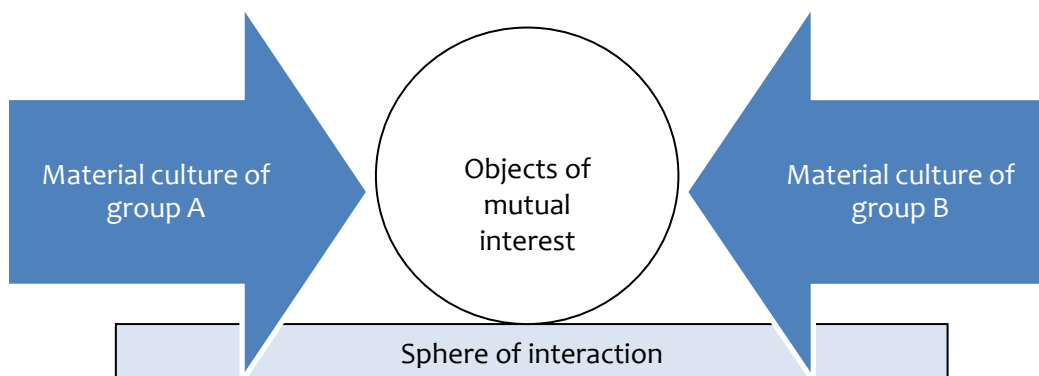
Sometimes, values are truly incompatible. In other cases, such as we will see with Columbus and the Taíno, it is tried to create a middle ground, but when values and cultural logics are really at odds, it turns out not to be workable. The result of the unsuccessful creation of a middle-ground relationship not seldom appears to be military takeover by the incoming power and a decline or marginal role for the local population.

What happens, and what is characteristic for the middle ground, is that all participants are to a certain degree affected by the colonial encounter; “new colonial relations called into question all previous values” (*ibid.*, 82). The encounter transforms people and revalues cultural logics. The result of this intercultural negotiating and compromising is the emergence of mixed cultural forms and expressions of hybridity (Bhabha 1994; van Dommelen 2005). Next to the contemplation of moral and cultural values – a vulnerable and delicate matter – it is the material dimension that plays an important role in this exchange of cultural values. Values are exchanged through objects and it is therefore that objects change the ones involved. The cultures that meet in the encounter all have their own objects that they bring to the scene. These objects are in fact materialised cultural values. Vice versa the objects thus display certain characteristics, or are imbued with certain power or meaning, that make them worth to value for that specific culture. When such a bounded category of cultural objects is confronted with another one by way of an encounter between different cultural groups, it will be estimated which objects are culturally overlapping and are thus able to transcend the cultural boundary of the one to become valued by the other. The way an object is then being valued by the other may be the same, but

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more often it will get a different meaning in the culture that adopts it. Obviously, this will only happen when the object's characteristics are valued by both cultures, be it in another way (fig. 5).

In order to describe such a related phenomenon, Miller and Hamell (1986, 318) have come up with the term 'transubstantiation', referring to the process whereby "the values adhering in local objects were extended to European trade items" (Gosden 2004, 86). In other words, the objects the Europeans came up with possessed certain characteristics or features that were already in some way valued in the cultural framework of the native population. Generally, these foreign objects thus resembled native ones, not always in appearance, but more so in the material properties that signified certain values that were already part of the native culture. For the Europeans, these objects were thus apt to be used for exchange. Moreover, these objects offered the Europeans the possibility to enter into relationships with the local population. Gosden puts this relation between objects and intercultural socialising as follows: "Europeans were assimilated into the network of local relationships through the significance of the trade items they brought with them: materiality was the basis for particular forms of sociality" (*ibid.*). It is through material culture that the social universe of the other was being explored and negotiated with. Through the exchange of objects the material cultures of the peoples involved got intermixed; new materials entered already existing cultural and material frameworks. This resulted in the creation of hybrid forms and cultural expressions that combined aspects from both locals' and incomers' cultures. It is an extremely complex challenge to 'keep the middle ground working'. Constantly it has to be acknowledged that there is being dealt with people who hold other views regarding truth and values. Only when this other truth remains accepted to a certain degree, the interaction can continue in a friendly manner. This often meant that Europeans had to acquiesce to local norms in their search for profits (*ibid.*, 88). Miscommunication and misinterpretation, however, formed continuous threats.



**Figure 5.** The cross-cultural exchange of material things between people in a middle-ground relationship.

In sum, we can say that "colonialism was not only, or mainly, an outside imposition but a negotiated way of life deriving from the cultural logics of the locals as well as the incomers" (*ibid.*, 92). Both parties had agency, which they were often equally able to use during the intricacies following their encounter. The unequal power balance of incomers dominating the local population and imposing their values upon them is something we only see when discussing the third type of colonialism hereafter. Interesting to see is that these middle grounds quite commonly resulted in the creation of new cultural and material forms. In other cases, through disintegration and failure of a lasting mutual understanding, there is no other solution than the decline of one or more of the parties (cf. Algonquin Indians of North America). In

Papua New Guinea, at last, people changed through the encounter without losing anything of their power and self-determination (*ibid.*, 113). What role material values and transubstantiation played in the decades following the Caribbean encounter of 1492 will be discussed in later chapters in more detail.

### *Terra nullius*

The type of colonialism that developed most recently is the concept of *terra nullius*, basically starting with the integration of the 'Old' and the 'New Worlds' from the late fifteenth century onwards. The idea is therefore commonly associated with modern forms of colonialism, forms that came into being when continents came into contact and colonies of settler societies that functioned as resource bases for the (often European) homelands were established. Gradually, the world became a global system, made up of colonial structures and interconnected by newly created networks. The product of colonialism were the colonies, although their creation proper as much influenced and changed the people residing in the homelands as the people among whom the colonists were settled (*ibid.*, 114). In explaining the creation of this new 'world-system' (cf. Wallerstein 1974, 1980), Gosden (2004, 116) argues that it was in fact the rather offensive tactic of land appropriation that the colonisers used (as opposed to the emphasis on rights over persons and things previously) that formed the first step in this process. Urged by upcoming capitalism, following the demise of medieval feudalism, there was a desire to find new markets and raw materials, while the acquisition of personal gain was not less important. Meanwhile, ideas were formed "concerning persons, property and power" (*ibid.*, 27). Liberalised western thought created ideologies, such as *terra nullius*, that justified the alienation of land from local populations. Lands, such western thinkers like John Locke (1632-1704) said, "remained common property of all mankind, until they were put to some, generally agricultural, use" (Pagden 1998, 42), an idea inspired by the Roman concept of *res nullius* which means "empty things" (Gosden 2004, 27-28). As such, it could happen that, for instance, the lands of Native Americans did not meet this European requirement, because "land was not used in a manner Europeans saw as improving and productive" (*ibid.*, 121-122). A justification for settlement was thus easily found. Not recognising, however – or simply denying perhaps – that the values the natives attributed to land were quite contrary to those they themselves adhered to. For local people the lands they lived on were often connected with spirits and ancestors and therefore imbued with deep religious connotations, making the loss of it "a disaster which undermined the foundation of their lives" (*ibid.*, 122). Furthermore, their lands obviously provided them with basic necessities such as food, a place to live and shelter. It is straightforward that these differences in key values are not compatible and will result in friction between both parties. When values are openly disregarded and middle-ground negotiation was futile or did not even start, the outcome of prolonged contact will most likely be negative for at least one of either party, most often the local population. European land appropriation occurred on an increasing scale through the mass death of native people who were not resistant to the diseases the settlers brought from the 'Old World'. The biological differences between the cultures in a sense facilitated the realisation of the colonisers' capitalist desires. Also violence, warfare, dislocation and coerced labour have drastically affected population decline among native populations.

As a result, thus, of fixed and irreconcilable cultural differences, one party becomes the dominant party. In his definition of the concept, Gosden (2004, 28) states that "*terra nullius* is the one form of colonialism that ignored and despised all foreign modalities of sociability as a general rule, destroying, distorting or driving them underground to become resistance. For the colonised, *terra nullius* colonisation meant

usurpation, death and dislocation leading to ‘widowed landscapes’ in Jennings’ (1976) evocative phrase.” Although this form of colonialism has characterised the last five hundred years, we can make a distinction between the periods 1500-1700/1750 and 1750-1950 (Gosden 2004, 127). The first period basically started in Europe itself, when the first colonial ventures were being undertaken, such as the takeover of the Atlantic archipelagos. European imperialism was given shape with the early development of capitalism and the Americas were ‘discovered’, colonised and exploited. The second period is different in many ways: the world became a global system that was interconnected and in which transport was eased by technological innovations. Lands were now taken on mass scale and where native populations dwindled, the number of colonisers rapidly increased. Furthermore, as a result of the early successes derived from the colonies there was a demographic boost in Europe. The world’s balance got disturbed and increasing economic and social differences started to reshape relations. It was during this period from 1700 onwards that issues of gender, class and racism became more pronounced. There were hot-tempered debates about race and general discussions about nature and society, while slavery had become commonplace (*ibid.*, 135). Concepts of self and other were given shape in new ideologies. Something that Gosden (2004, 127) quite rightly stresses is that Europe got incorporated “into a new colonial order”. As already noted, colonialism changed all parties, so that it was not Europe that imposed its values, cultural norms and power on the rest of the world, but rather contributed to a new *hybrid* world. The colonial encounters and entanglements helped Europeans for self-definition as they opposed to ‘negative’ cultural expressions of local cultures and determined what things they did not identify themselves with. This way, contrasts made the seemingly good become better, better than and superior to the counterpart.

Europeans often thought of non-Western cultures as disordered and of lacking civilisation. In the sixteenth century, it was thought that “planting a population on uncivilised soil was an act of cultivation, designed to create model societies” (*ibid.*, 126). They felt a certain responsibility to convert the wilderness of native peoples into “something imbued with human values” (*ibid.*, 114). At the end of the eighteenth century, this resulted in the creation of the concept of ‘Otherness’; a concept based on differences in race and lifestyle (Said 1978). ‘Others’ were considered primitive and inferior, while the idea of Western superiority was emphasised time and again. Cultures worldwide long had notions of Otherness and strangers, but it was this hierarchical distinction between races that differentiated the concept from its previous usages (Gosden 2004, 133). The remarkable thing about racism is that it did not lead to the exclusion of particular groups; people did not become outsiders, but became inferior. It thus became “a means of differential inclusion [...] into one new, all-encompassing world” (*ibid.*, 135). Sadly enough, even today we are still struggling with the consequences of the *terra nullius* ideology of ‘modern colonialism’.

#### **2.4 Mixing up terms: culture contact and colonialism**

Culture contact and colonialism are not the same thing. This may sound straightforward, but, too often, in scholarly literature the distinction between both concepts does not seem to exist. The terms tend to be used interchangeably, while clearly different processes are referred to. Many researchers engaged in investigating the changes, dynamics and processes set in motion by the encounter of Europeans with another, so-called indigenous cultural group, often employ the term ‘contact period’ to capture all

interactions between both parties from the moment of 'first contact'. Admittedly, I was just one of them, uncritically labelling the events postdating Columbus's landfall as taking place in a seemingly perfectly defined 'contact period'. That these complex intercultural interactions were in fact part of a process called 'colonialism' was obvious nevertheless. Stephen W. Silliman (2005) has written an excellent article in which he warned for the wide-ranging implications of a semantic conflation between 'contact' and 'colonialism', especially with regard to the archaeology of native North America. His ideas should, however, be welcomed by anyone interested in studying sustained interaction between indigenous peoples and expanding European powers worldwide, and the Caribbean is no exception to this. In order to conceptualise the events described in this thesis, so often described by many as pertaining to a period of 'culture contact', a short discussion of Silliman's propositions seems worthwhile to include here. The complexity of using the term 'culture contact' becomes readily apparent by noting its broad application. Silliman summarises:

"Contact, or culture contact, stands as a general term used by archaeologists to refer to groups of people coming into or staying in contact for days, years, decades, centuries, or even millennia. In its broadest usage, this contact can range from amicable to hostile, extensive to minor, long term to short duration, or ancient to recent, and it may include a variety of elements such as exchange, integration, slavery, colonialism, imperialism and diaspora" [Silliman 2005, 58].

Adopting this as a definition, we end up with quite an undifferentiated view of such diverse events, processes and interactions that simply cannot be grouped under the sole heading of 'contact'. Colonialism, on the other hand, often seems to be defined too narrowly, stressing the expansion of European mercantilist and capitalist nations over the last five hundred years and denying postcolonial notions of indigenous agency. Hence, colonialism is generally defined as "the process by which a city- or nation-state exerts control over people – termed indigenous – and territories outside of its geographical boundaries" (Silliman 2005, 58). Yet, in search of an archaeology that does not exclude indigenous people, but in fact emphasises the intercultural relations maintained between both, Silliman provides an alternative, encompassing definition of the term, that is to refer to:

"the dual process (1) of attempted domination by a colonial/settler population based on perceptions and actions of inequality, racism, oppression, labour control, economic marginalisation and dispossession, and (2) of resistance, acquiescence and living through these by indigenous people who never permit these processes to become final and complete and who frequently retain or remake identities and traditions in the face of often brutal conditions" [Silliman 2005, 59].

Silliman argues that treating colonialism as culture contact, or using culture contact terminology for colonial contexts, has three major flaws. First, it "emphasises short-term encounters over long-term entanglements" (Silliman 2005, 58). 'Contact' implies a short-duration event and does not account for colonial interactions that develop over a prolonged period of time. In other words, much of the cultural dynamics and processes experienced by both parties as a direct consequence of the encounter are ignored in favour of an event or series of brief encounters of two (or more) seemingly bounded, homogenous cultures. It would mean a simplification of indigenous experiences and entwined processes of intercultural interaction. Importantly, "colonialism is about intersections" (*ibid.*, 61), involving cultural entanglement, negotiation and identity formation. Without acknowledging this, we risk reducing a process to an event. The second problem that Silliman (2005, 58) addresses is that the terminological

conflation “downplays the severity of interaction between groups and the radically different levels of political power that structured those relationships”. Relations of power, inequality, domination and oppression are not explicitly referred to if continuing to refer to colonial processes as expressions of contact. The harsh reality of forced labour, exploitation, slavery and religious persecution that many indigenous peoples saw themselves confronted with cannot be ignored. At the same time, however, the one-sided perspective of the “fatal impact” model (e.g. Moorehead 1966) does not account for the active role people under suppression often took. Notwithstanding the severe impact on the lives of many, indigenous people were far from passive beings, often able to offer resistance to differing degrees by expressing multiple ways of creativity and resilience as part of dealing with a new, colonial situation; a situation that was not entirely imposed on them, but of which they themselves were active agents in its formation. Third, Silliman (2005, 58) argues, the uncritical usage of the term ‘culture contact’ “privileges predefined and almost essentialised cultural traits over creative, creolised, or novel cultural products”. There is both cultural continuity and change: indigenous people tend to retain traditional cultural elements as well as experience change in the different aspects of social and cultural life. It is not acculturation or the one-way movement of cultural traits towards becoming like the other, dominant party that indigenous people experience in the process of colonialism. Rather, colonialism is about transculturation, characterised by interaction, mixing and multiple directions of influence, changing all who are involved, thus creating a “colonialism’s culture” (Thomas 1994) that stresses that changes do not only occur in the colony and the society among whom the colony is established, but even so in the colonists’ homeland. It is new cultural forms that sprout from these interactions, making colonialism “a source of creativity and experiment” (Gosden 2004, 25), that is not only destructive, but where all participants aid in the creation of new ‘shared’ and mixed cultural expressions. The three problems state why sharpening the distinction between ‘contact’ and ‘colonialism’ is not merely a matter of semantics. In fact, denying the different terminologies would be to falsely represent both indigenous and colonial histories and to disregard the entwined historical realities. This is not to say we have to do away with ‘culture contact’ as a concept, as there certainly are such events, encounters and short or longer-lived contacts between different cultures that did not involve the mutually influencing processes pertinent to colonialism. Nevertheless, when colonial contexts are under study, they should be labelled with the right terminology, since only then we might come to a truthful portrayal of the histories we try to reconstruct.

### **2.5 Conclusions**

In contrast to previous theoretical models that focused mostly on the European experiences of the colonial ventures of the last five centuries, recent, comparative studies have achieved a more realistic and synthetic understanding of the various colonial processes through analyses of situations of colonialism among non-Western societies (see e.g. Cusick, ed. 1998; Gosden 2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Stein, ed. 2005; Thomas 1990). From this, it was gathered that such processes are in fact cross-cultural phenomena and, moreover, that these can be expressed in a wide variability of forms of colonial interaction with marked differences in goals, nature and outcome. An important achievement of studies of colonial encounters and colonialism has been their recognition of the role of indigenous people, who in the course of the colonial process actively sought distinctly varied ways to respond or resist the colonising power. Therefore, profound understanding of colonial encounters and interactions

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cannot be reached without ‘involving the native’, since “native cultural logics and perceptions of events play an essential role in how interactions have been structured” (Rogers 2005, 338). It is the concept of “entanglement” (Thomas 1991) that has been popularised as a way to describe the complicated, entwined colonial histories, in order to offer a more nuanced and historically accurate understanding of the nature of intercultural contact in the process of colonialism. The colonial process is seen as the consequence of the combination of strategies adopted by the different groups involved in the encounter. Vital to this theory is an emphasis on the power and agency of indigenous people, which is in sharp contrast to earlier notions of European superiority and dominance. In fact, intercultural relations must have been more symmetrical shortly after the encounter. In the long run, however, the asymmetrical character of the encounter cannot be denied. Key to the intercultural relationships that developed were the mutual negotiation of values and meanings and the recontextualisation of material things. Initial responses were often guided by people’s cultural frameworks: their cultures’ own histories, parallels and metaphors. From the hybrid state created by the collision of these distinct frameworks or interpretations, often new forms and identities were constructed, referred to by terms like ethnogenesis, creolisation or *mestizaje*, while the transformative effects that all parties experienced as a consequence of interaction are referred to as transculturation. Moreover, many authors have stressed the importance of material culture for the way colonialism is to manifest itself and how relationships between contacted cultures unfold. This thesis will further explore which forms of contact and colonialism could be linked with the arrival of Columbus in the Caribbean and the intercultural relationships that came to characterise the decades following the encounter. Obviously, everyone knows the main lines of the story and, indeed, the technological differences, the fatal impact of ‘Old World’ diseases and the marked cultural differences between the Spaniards and the indigenous people, made this colonial encounter both unprecedented and radically different from other more common processes of colonialism (Stein 2005, 24-25). Yet, while most people would consider the European expansion into the Americas as the ultimate example of *terra nullius*, the first Spanish-Indian encounter certainly started off with a short, though very interesting, middle-ground period. But because we cannot understand the entanglement of the colonial period without an informed understanding of its protagonists, the next two chapters will provide the cultural-historical backgrounds of both parties.





## 3 | Trade and Commerce in Medieval Europe

### 3.1 Introduction

The voyages of Columbus and the fortuitous European ‘discovery’ of the Americas were the climax of a process of expansionism, instigated by impulses of curiosity and opportunism as well as economic motivations, that had been initiated long before. In Antiquity the very first foundations were laid for the development of a lively international commerce throughout later centuries. After the establishment of the sedentary European kingdoms of the Early Middle Ages (c. 400-1000), the conditions needed for an active trade to unfold were fulfilled. International commerce almost incessantly increased at variable rates during the centuries that followed, often closely interconnected with instances of religious diligence and war (Duby 1974; Lopez 1971; Pounds 1994). During the High (c. 1000-1300) and Late Middle Ages (c. 1300-1500), the geographical range of European trade expanded significantly. Explorers and travellers informed the common people of the lands they had seen on their journeys. All continents of the ‘Old World’ possessed their ‘own’ pathfinders (Fernández-Armesto 2007); the most well known being Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus (Europe), Rabban Bar Sauma and Zheng He (Asia), and Ibn Battuta (Africa). They brought home stories and precious exotica and reported on the peoples, lands and customs they had seen (J. Phillips 1998). Curiosity aroused among the people who heard the sometimes fabulous stories, while the resulting elite’s demands for new tastes and high-value products from the outer corners of the known world were hardly satisfiable. Hunt and Murray (1999, 2) state that “medieval business was driven from beginning to end by the continuous demands of the elite”, hereby stressing the considerable influence these special wishes had on the character of the medieval economic circuit.

The paths to the sea were only followed sluggishly. Of course, the Mediterranean Sea was frequently used as a fluid medium to keep up contacts with Africa and the Middle East, but the oceans remained untravelled for a long time. Many of the first ventures went overland, although some exceptions occurred. The Norse had developed a maritime culture and established trade contacts with their colonies in Iceland and Greenland in the ninth and eleventh centuries, respectively. These connections were the first commercial activities in the Atlantic. The Norse settlements remained the only Atlantic outposts till the European conquest of the Canaries and the Azores in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Fernández-Armesto 2007). The subsequent European experiences on colonisation and culture contact in the Canary Islands, on top of the preceding experiences, contacts and trade relationships with other peoples throughout history, influenced the character of Spanish imperialism as exercised in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas. Also the goods that Columbus offered the Amerindians in their mutual exchanges were products that had been given their particular European meaning long before the 1492 event. This chapter will broadly explore the main events leading up to the ‘Old World’ trade networks that were in operation in the Late Middle Ages, and that eventually offered the platform for Columbus’s departure from the port of Palos to seek for a westward route to India.

### 3.2 Reshaping relations in the Early Middle Ages

Western Europe has not always been the innovative, industrialised and developed area that we know today. Indeed, a long time the region was a backward area, sparsely populated, poor and

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underdeveloped. Especially so in the second half of the first millennium, when it suffered the permanent threat of invasion and subjugation by different neighbouring peoples (Phillips and Phillips 2011, 59). The relative stability and protection from the Roman Empire was lost when the last West Roman emperor was deposed in 476 (Heather 2007; Pohl 1997). At this time the migrating Germanic peoples began to spread rapidly all across Europe – a period commonly referred to as the Migration Period or *Völkerwanderung* in German. Groups like the Franks, Angles, Saxons, Vandals and Goths advanced as far as Northern Africa, fighting for, or simply claiming the territories they passed, making nothing to be left from the former Western Roman Empire (fig. 6). This switch of land ownership and spread of Germanic cultural influences marked the transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, an era in which the foundations were laid for the modern nation-states. Christianity spread across Europe and stable kingdoms were established as the migrating tribal groups had taken up residence (Collins 2010; Goetz et al. 2003; Innes 2007; Pohl 2005).



**Figure 6.** Medieval trade fair. Source: <http://faculty.nmu.edu/kkendall/hs%20101/10g%20medieval%20illum.htm>

Nonetheless, tumultuous centuries followed and the Western Europeans had to repulse a series of outside offensives. In the eighth century, the Muslims, who had already taken possession of North Africa and the Middle East at that time, conquered most of the Iberian peninsula, eradicated the Visigoths and attacked the lands of the Franks, north of the Pyrenees. The Iberian peninsula became the Muslim province of al-Andalus. From the ninth century, the greatest threat came from the north, when the successful Vikings took control over England, Western France and Southern Italy and established their own kingdoms. Not so much later, the Magyars came from the east to attack Central Europe. They could not exert so much of an influence over the Europeans and were defeated accordingly. By the tenth century, the peace was reasonably restored, and Europe finally was in a position able to “begin the long, arduous task of renewal” and to increase the internal cohesion again (Claster 2009, 28). Much of this unity was accomplished by the Catholic Church, that had already from Late Antiquity onwards been occupied with the Christianisation of the Germanic peoples. In cooperation with the European monarchs of the time, internal warfare was limited, so that a prosperous unity would develop. The population was rising and towns and cities were growing. With these favourable conditions also Europe’s commercial activity was once again increasing steadily (Claster 2009, 28-30; Phillips and Phillips 2011, 59).

Focusing on the economic situation of the Iberian peninsula in particular, a rapid growth of the Spanish markets and fairs in the last couple of centuries can be detected. Trade products that used to be distributed regionally found their way on the international markets as their areas of distribution were being expanded. In the tenth century already, textiles of oriental origin were carried to Spain, mainly by Jewish merchants, whose international contacts and great activity considerably contributed to the beginning of commercial enterprise (Constable 1996; Verlinden 1940). The Iberian peninsula had a unique position within the Mediterranean region as a gateway between Islamic and Christian societies. Cross-cultural relationships developed through time and favoured commercial activity between Europe and Africa (Collins 1995a; Constable 1996, 2003; Glick 2005). Often, contacts between Iberian Christians and the Muslim world passed via Morisco (Christianised Moors) intermediaries who provided the main markets in northern Spain (e.g. Burgos, Oviedo) with precious merchandise from lands beyond the frontiers of Christianity. By the tenth century, the Andalusí gradually obtained the first loads of Sudanese gold. As for the Christians, imports, however, exceeded the exports and it was only in later times that this adverse balance of trade would turn positive for them (Constable 1996; Glick 2005; Verlinden 1940).

### **3.3 The crusaders and commercial contacts of the High Middle Ages**

On the other end of Europe, the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine Empire as it is more commonly known, had not suffered from the collapse of its Western counterpart. Of the two, Byzantium had always been the most flourishing one, and it had hardly lost anything in prosperity after the breakdown of the Western Roman Empire. However, with the extending influence of Islam in the region, a possibly much bigger danger was lurking. Unlike the Iberians and their neighbours, the Eastern Christians in Asia Minor had so far been able to repulse any serious attacks by Muslim invaders. In the end, though, they could not get away from a massive invasion either, as the Muslim Seljuk Turks were expanding into Anatolia. In 1055 the Seljuks had already taken the city of Baghdad, capital of the Islamic Caliphate, and they now posed a serious threat to the large and wealthy city of Constantinople, which was the Christian Byzantine capital. Besides, by marching into Anatolia they had taken possession of the main food-producing area in the region (Gregory 2010; Mango 2002; Mango 2009). Help was needed. The Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos applied to Pope Urban II and requested the assistance of the Roman Catholic forces to help protect the city. It was at the Council of Clermont-Ferrand, in 1095, that Urban II agreed with the request and assembled various major armies of experienced forces ready to overcome the attacking Turkish Muslims (fig. 7). The orders the pope gave the Frankish knights were, however, not restricted to the defence of the city of Constantinople. What at first ought to be an additional goal of the expedition soon turned out to be the main mission: the recapture of the Holy Land and Holy City of Jerusalem, the birthplace of Christianity (Claster 2009, 27-28, 34-38; Mastnak 2002, 50-54).

The Christians of the West had been experiencing the rise of this other religion for almost four centuries already, and it had troubled them ever since: several military campaigns were directed against them and direct trade with the sub-Saharan peoples was impossible due to the Islamic occupation of the Maghreb. Under the command of Tariq ibn Ziyad, it had taken the Moors only a couple of years (711-718) to conquer the Christian Visigothic kingdom and to campaign their way northward until they had spread across almost the entire peninsula. Almost instantly, several Christian kingdoms in the far north decided to react to the advancing Muslims. Together they expanded their influence to the south at the expense

of the Moors, little by little recapturing the territories they had lost to them. It was in 1085 that the united Christian forces had progressed towards the centre of the peninsula and took the city of Toledo back in their hands, an achievement that signified an important step in the *Reconquista* process (i.e. the reconquering of territories lost to the Muslim invaders) (Collins 1995b; Kennedy 1996; O'Callaghan 2003). Simultaneously, the concept of 'just war', a centuries old Christian moral tradition on war, underwent a radical change (Johnson 1997; Mastnak 2002; Murphy 1976; Russell 1975).<sup>4</sup> The original idea was that "war could be justified [...] on any of several grounds" (Phillips and Phillips 2011, 59). This meant that

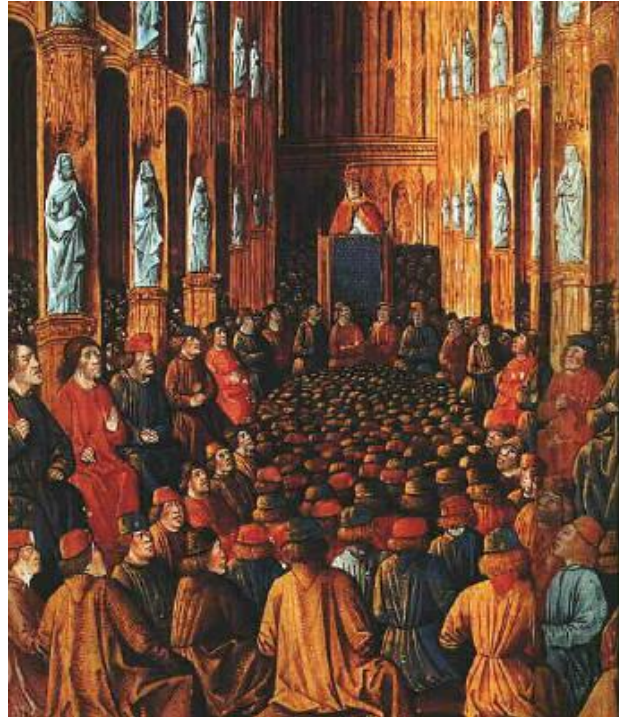


Figure 7. Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont-Ferrand in 1095. *Livre des Passages d'Outre-mer*, c. 1490. Bibliothèque Nationale de France. WMC.

Christians were allowed to engage in warfare, but only under limited circumstances. One of the legitimate purposes of war encompassed "the recovery of property that had been wrongfully seized" (Claster 2009, xvii). According to Rome, Jerusalem, together with the other lands lost to the Muslim invaders, formed of course the example *par excellence*. The policy of the Church had always been pacifistic, yet at the Council of Clermont-Ferrand the papal court now proclaimed a more aggressive stance. Wars became holy wars as their existence was justified as being "spiritually beneficial"; fighting for the Holy Faith became a "noble ideal" with which "spiritual rewards" could be gained (*ibid.*, xviii). The threat of Islam was serious and action had to be undertaken to warrant the Christian dominance of Europe. Time had come that all Muslim lands that once were ruled by Christians, should again be in Christian hands.

With that, the Byzantine request offered Pope Urban II a favourable opportunity to spread the Holy Faith over Asia Minor and the Near East. Perhaps, Christendom could be reunited again, increasing the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the pope had the chance to limit the internal warfare in Europe if the attention would be shifted to an offence against a common enemy. He advocated the march to his disciples holding out the prospect of an indulgence to those who were killed in the fight, something his predecessor Alexander II had already done to the Iberian Christians – although these presumably were pilgrims. Besides, Western Europe had lost many territories to Islam throughout history, making it easy to take up arms now it was asked for. The mission was succeeded within five years and came to be known as the First Crusade. Over a period of nearly 200 years (1095-

<sup>4</sup> The origins of the theory go as far back as Aristotle and Cicero (Orend 2008), though it was St. Augustine of Hippo who in the late fourth century was the first to put forward the concept in a Christian context (Claster 2009, 37); see especially, as cited by Cowdrey (1976, 18, 31n12), his *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*: 6.10 (Fraipont and de Bruyne 1958, 318-319) and *De Civitate Dei*: 1.21 (Dombart and Kalb 1955, 23).



Figure 8. Map of the crusader states in the year 1135. Source: www.exploremed.com.

1291) there would follow eight more crusades and many other expeditions (Asbridge 2004; Riley-Smith 1998, 2005).

### Merchants and trade

For the Western Europeans, and the Italians in particular, the Crusades marked the beginning of the rise of a blooming business along the Middle Eastern shores. Before that time, the Muslims already traded with the Iberians and the Mediterranean islands, and the Italians had entered into a commercial relation with the Lebanese city of Tyre to trade for silks and sugar (Phillips 1986, 2004). Despite these early contacts, as yet Mediterranean trade had been taking place on a rather small scale. This changed rapidly when the Christians succeeded in the reconquest of the lands they had lost to their religious enemy. Along the eastern Mediterranean shores the Europeans established enclaves – the so-called crusader states – which offered them new opportunities for trade (J. Phillips 1998) (fig. 8). The Italians had been rewarded with the allocation of a great deal of property, since they had proven themselves to be reliable partners in the conquest of important cities like Acre, Tripoli and Beirut. Merchants of the northern Italian commercial centres – principally Venice, Genoa and Pisa – made good use of it, cultivating enough

crops to generate a surplus that could be traded off, and supplying the European markets with rare commodities such as sugar and cotton. With their commercial spirit and trade proficiency, in this way they expanded their influence across the Mediterranean Sea even more. Their newborn settlements served as operating bases from which to seek new trading contacts. They succeeded and found new trading partners across the borders of Christendom, ranging from the northern Black Sea to Egypt (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 19-20). These new developments have later been called the “commercial revolution of the Middle Ages” (Lopez 1971). Although this process would take a couple of centuries more, the Italian efforts in Byzantium can fairly be seen as its starting point. In 1291, the year of the last Christian crusade, the Muslims in the Near East had become stronger again and forced the Western Europeans to retreat, making it impossible for them to preserve the enclaves. Trade, however, continued between Muslims and Christians, and because of the knowledge acquired in the Eastern Mediterranean, people in Europe were now, for example, able to produce sugar themselves (Abulafia 2008a; Phillips and Phillips 2011, 61). The two hundred years existence of the enclaves had encouraged the quest for the exotic and the European nobility got more interested in the luxuries of the East (Hunt and Murray 1999; J. Phillips 1998; W. Phillips 1998, 14). Imports from Asia arrived via the Middle East, and, although some information about Asia was picked up in the Eastern Mediterranean, curiosity about that vast continent increased (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 20-21).<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, also in Western Europe trade connections had been made. According to Fernández-Armesto (2007, 87-88), from the eleventh to the early fourteenth centuries there was a time of internal explorations in Europe, a process that simultaneously occurred with the expansion of Latin Christendom. New technologies became available, populations and towns were growing, and more agricultural fields were being cultivated.<sup>6</sup> As a result of these changes more people became professionally interested in long-distance trade. A major consequence of these intensified contacts and new trade routes was the link that forged the “Atlantic and Mediterranean seaboards in a single economy” (*ibid.*, 88).

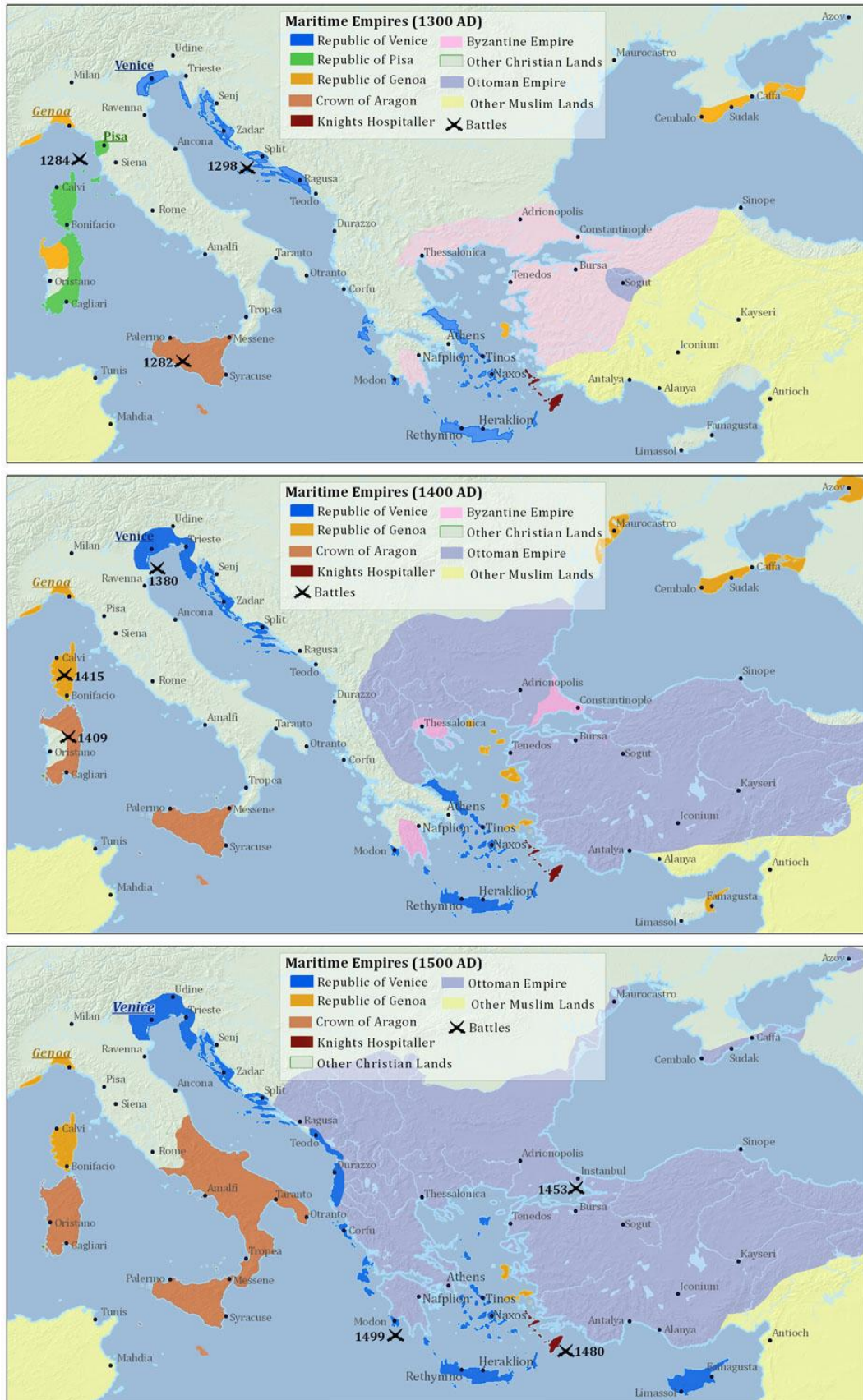
For the first time, direct shipping routes between al-Andalus and the East had become established. The main economies of the Middle Ages (i.e. Western Europe, the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic World) became more and more interconnected by this water mass that they bordered (fig. 9). The Mediterranean Sea had been transformed in an arena of heavy traffic in which the sea routes had become highways that improved transport and communication (Constable 1996; Glick 2005). Glick (2005, 13) describes the situation eloquently as he notes that “the extreme mobility possible within the Mediterranean world gave it an undeniably cosmopolitan tone”. The developing monetary systems of the different regions depended heavily on each other and were influenced and stimulated by the flow of gold and silver currencies between the areas (*ibid.*, 4, 130-135).

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<sup>5</sup> It must be said that imports from Asia already reached Europe around the beginning of the Christian era when the Greeks and Romans were connected with the Indian Ocean through their contacts with Arabia (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 33-34). The ports located in the Arabian peninsula were ports of transit that were linked with many of the important trade cities along the coasts of maritime Asia and much of East Africa. Here, the Mediterranean people acquired aromatics and spices to be used in perfumes and incense like frankincense, myrrh and cassia – an Arabian substitute for cinnamon (Groom 1981). At this time, European contacts with Asia were thus by no means direct, while the scale of trade was rather modest if compared with the situation at the end of the High Middle Ages.

<sup>6</sup> For the concept of urbanisation and the relation between urban, extramural and rural markets in this period, see Glick (2005, 123-130).

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?



**Figure 9a-c.** Maps showing the extent of the different maritime empires through the 14th and 15th centuries. The first map portrays the situation just after the last crusade. Noteworthy are the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the increasing maritime influence of the Crown of Aragon. Source: [www.exploret themed.com](http://www.exploret themed.com).

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

In Spain, the Christian kingdoms traded with their Muslim neighbours raw materials, such as wood and metals, in exchange for olive oil and finished (artisan) products like high-value commodities fabricated from silk; a pattern that continued for over a long time. Al-Andalus exported most of the raw materials to the rest of the Islamic world, notably the Maghreb and the East. The Iberian Muslims dominated the Mediterranean Sea and acquired such products as alum and antimony (Morocco); pepper, flax, dyestuffs and brazilwood (Egypt); and copper and bronze vessels from India as well as cowry shells, which served both decorative and medicinal purposes. Over time the Christians managed to profit from the constant supply of riches and luxuries to al-Andalus. The products more often appeared in the Christian kingdoms where they further added to the well-being of the elite. Increased power enabled active commercial participation, something that had not been possible before. Trade across the Iberian religious frontier was thus regular and rather normal, consisting of for example such varied products as gold, paper, cotton, sugar, leather, dyes and spices like indigo, lac, cumin and oregano. Exemplifying for this period was that also agricultural products such as wool became commercial wares, a development that stimulated the emergence of the textile industry in Spain (Constable 1996; Glick 2005, 135-143).<sup>7</sup>

Commerce had thus increased on different levels: throughout the whole of Spain the scale of interregional trade had been enlarged, while commercial centres had acquired a status of international importance with the establishment of long-distance networks across the Mediterranean. More ports along the Iberian coasts were integrated in these networks, reaching as far as the Bay of Biscay, a region now accessed both by sea and land.<sup>8</sup> Patterns of exchange in the peninsula changed of which the Christians took profit. Tastes and demands altered and new commodities and industries became available in Castile and Aragon. Italian merchants more often preferred a direct trip to Alexandria and the Near East, rather than to obtain those wares via Muslim intermediaries at the Iberian ports. Muslim commercial power weakened and affected their political structures. This eventually caused the Muslim frontier to gradually retreat southwards. So, by the late thirteenth century the Christians dominated again. The Catalans and Italians monopolised Mediterranean sea trade from the early fourteenth century on with commercial activity extending as far as the Near Eastern shores, basically spanning the entire Mediterranean coastline. Furthermore, also the Atlantic coasts had now been included in the Catalan action radius. These western rims were first reached by land only, but sea access opened up quickly through which contacts with England and Flanders could be maintained (Constable 1996; Verlinden 1940).<sup>9</sup> These developments were initial steps in the facilitation of the interconnected networks and sustainable contacts that would characterise the European heydays of commercial activity in later centuries.

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<sup>7</sup> The Spanish wool industry remained important for many centuries and Spain would evolve into a major export centre for markets throughout Europe (Phillips 1983; Phillips and Phillips 1997).

<sup>8</sup> The role played by merchants of Italian origin cannot be underestimated in this development. It were the Genoese in particular who had imparted their commercial knowledge to the inhabitants of Catalonia in earlier times. In the course of the twelfth century these Italians were active along the entire coastline of the Iberian peninsula, where they stimulated the establishment of maritime commercial centres and maintained contacts with the various Muslim kingdoms. Also in later centuries they regulated much of international trade (Constable 1996; Verlinden 1940).

<sup>9</sup> From the beginning of the thirteenth century the ports of northern Spain were already connected with the North Atlantic sea ports, transporting such regional products as wines, Biscay iron, fruits and wool (Verlinden 1940).



### 3.4 Variety is the spice of life: contacts with Asia

Also in Asia things had changed quickly. In the early thirteenth century the Mongol leader Genghis Khan united the nomadic tribes in the steppes of northeast Asia, resulting in an alliance from which the impressive Mongol Empire would emerge, the largest empire world history has ever known. Within a couple of decades the Mongols had started their invasions and expanded across vast areas of Eurasia reaching as far as Eastern Europe. Under the rule of Genghis Khan or Great Khan – a title of honour meaning Great Ruler – the number of incorporated territories grew very rapidly. Genghis Khan died in 1227 and did not witness the Empire’s full extent near the end of the thirteenth century. His third son, Ögedei Khan, succeeded him (de Rachewiltz 2004).

While the Mongol conquests were far from peaceful they had brought peace and stability to the conquered areas. This Mongol peace or *Pax Mongolica* enabled a safe passage for travellers and merchants along the overland trade routes from Europe to China (Morgan 2007; J. Saunders 2001). During this time both continents experienced direct and regular contacts, making communication and commerce much easier, a development that is illustrated by the frequent usage of the renowned Silk Road. It also was a time of many innovations, of information, ideologies and technologies moving to the west, and of Asian goods entering the European markets (Foltz 1999; Prawdin 2006; J. Saunders 2001). The caravans generated a constant supply of all kinds of goods; for example spices like “pepper, ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg”, but also “muslins, cottons, pearls, and precious stones” (Prawdin 2006, 350).



Figure 10. The caravan of Marco Polo on its way to Asia. Detail from the Catalan Atlas, 1375. WMC.

Merchants and missionaries benefited from the trans-Eurasian routes that were accessible to them now, which made the faraway dream of Asia become more realistic, generating even more the emphasis of the alluring image of Asia as land of riches (Gordon 2009; W. Phillips 1998). In this context it is noteworthy to mention an Italian merchant named Francesco Balducci Pegolotti who in the early fourteenth century wrote a handbook on foreign trade titled *La pratica della mercatura* (Evans 1936). The work describes the trade routes to Asia and names the cities that are passed along the way. Besides these itineraries he gives detailed descriptions of the great variety of “goods sold and the prices they

fetched in the markets around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea”, and offers “practical advice regarding mounts and pack animals, provisions, and safety precautions” (W. Phillips 1998, 20). It thus was a valuable document for merchants of the time and still continues to be for modern scholars who want to know more about early European ideas and descriptions of Asia.

The travels did not only generate economic profit, but also brought stories home about Asia (W. Phillips 1998, 2007). The best known story is of course that of Marco Polo (1254-1324), a Venetian merchant who, around the age of seventeen, travelled through Asia all the way to China together with his father and uncle to arrive at the court of Kublai Khan – grandson of Genghis Khan – whom they would serve for some seventeen years (e.g. Bergreen 2007) (fig. 10). They finally returned in 1295, this time via the overseas routes across the Indian Ocean. Not so much later, Marco Polo was made captive by the Genoese, as a result of an ongoing war between the northern Italian city-states of Venice and Genoa at that time (see Dotson 2003). Imprisoned, Marco Polo met a man named Rustichello da Pisa, to whom he dictated the story of his journey. Enhanced with several other tales, embellished and exaggerated in a number of instances, the Marco Polo story resulted in a book titled *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Polo 1978). The credibility of the book has been a subject of debate for centuries, partially because an authoritative version of the travelogue is lacking (Jackson 1998). Fantasy and sensationalism have not been shunned, albeit a lot of information is regarded as reliable (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 80; Larner 2001).<sup>10</sup> For the Europeans of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, though, the account was one of the first recordings of the faraway land of Asia that was available to them. The book became popular and copies spread all over Europe with the introduction of movable type in the late fifteenth century (Akbari and Iannucci 2008; Larner 2001). One of these copies was owned by Columbus and it would ultimately inspire him to seek a way to the lands of Kublai Khan – not knowing, however, that the emperor’s reign had ended almost two centuries previously (Gil 1987; but see e.g. Larner 2001).

People travelled not only eastwards, but found their way to the west as well. One of these individuals was the monk Rabban Bar Sauma (c. 1220-1294) who had set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, visited the courts of Europe and proposed an alliance against the Muslim empires (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 81-83; Rossabi 2010). In the end, the formation of an alliance between the Christians and the Mongols seemed not to be feasible (Jackson 2005, 165-195). Bar Sauma documented his travels in later years, resulting in a valuable and unique account that provides an interesting Asian perspective of the medieval West (Budge 1928).

From 1347, however, “the Silk Roads became hazardous once more” (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 106). The traveller protection and long-distance trade could no longer be guaranteed by the Mongols when they suffered from the arrival of the bubonic plague, a fatal disease that by way of the Silk Routes spread all over Europe as well (Benedictow 2004; Cohn 2002). The demographic losses weakened Mongol control over the remote regions of their empire. Unable to suppress the revolts in those territories, more and more lands got lost. The Mongol power diminished even more dramatically when they were pushed out of China by the new Ming dynasty in the late fourteenth century. The Mongol domination over Eurasia had been brought to an end (Morgan 2007; J. Saunders 2001).

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<sup>10</sup> For one of the most provocative versions questioning the reliability of the book, see Wood (1995). A critical review of her work was written by de Rachewiltz (1997).

The legacy of Genghis Khan and his successors contributed considerably to the approach and contact of Europe and Asia in later times. Thanks to the Mongols, the Islamic occupation of the Middle East had been evaded for a couple of centuries by which the Europeans were offered the possibility to witness the riches from the Orient themselves. Now that the Chinese had reconquered the area again, foreigners were not welcome anymore. Luxuries from Asia could only occasionally reach the markets in Europe and direct contacts between West and East were hardly possible (Morgan 2007; Phillips and Phillips 1992, 23). But once again the European curiosity and the desire for exotics was aroused and a new era of discovery and exploration was soon about to begin (Hunt and Murray 1999; J. Phillips 1998).

### 3.5 About camels and gold: contacts with Africa

European contacts with Africa originate from Antiquity, albeit restricted to the North African shores and Egypt in particular.<sup>11</sup> This coastal zone was relatively well known and formed an important part of the classical Mediterranean trade arena. The establishment of Greek and Roman towns on the fringes of Africa enabled a lively trade in olive oil, gold and such tropical items as ivory and skins (J. Phillips 1998, 136; Posnansky 1973). The familiarity with the African shores was quite contrary to the limited knowledge available of the African interior. For a long time people did not consider the existence of a southward extension of Africa and it would last right until the Portuguese voyages in the late fifteenth century that the complete proportions of Africa were mapped (J. Phillips 1998, 135).<sup>12</sup>

In contrast with the Silk Roads and steppelands of Eurasia, in Africa there were no comparable overland routes that linked the continent's farthest corners. Travelling was especially complicated by the hard-going Sahara Desert and the vast savannahs of the Sahel. The civilisations of West Africa and the empires of Ethiopia and Somalia in the east hardly managed to keep any sustainable contact. From the fifth century onwards, Ethiopian emperors managed to establish trade routes to the river valleys of the southern Sahel, from where they obtained civet, salt, ivory and gold, products that were in great demand along the shores of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Somewhat later, trans-Saharan routes were explored as well. These became the supply routes for gold from the empire of Mali to the Maghreb and the Mediterranean (fig. 11).<sup>13</sup> The other way around, the main product sent to Mali was salt, the commodity the Malians desired most (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 98-100). Little is known about the African import of finished products. Items of West African trade included metal objects manufactured in the form of weapons, ornaments, vessels and other goods. Also cowries, glass beads and carnelian beads played an important role throughout the ages, both in the African exchange

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<sup>11</sup> As regards the trade that was practiced on the coasts of the Sahara in these times, Herodotus writes in his *Histories* (4.196) about a curious phenomenon that is currently referred to as "dumb trade" (e.g. Fernández-Armesto 2007, 28-29). He says that Carthaginian traffickers unloaded their wares on the beach, went back to their ships, and waited for the natives to approach and inspect the cargo. The natives then left in payment an amount of gold that would match the value of goods delivered on their beach. When both parties agreed on a fair price they took it and disappeared. Remarkably, "in this transaction, it is said, neither party defrauds the other: the Carthaginians do not touch the gold until it equals the value of their cargo, nor do the people touch the cargo until the sailors have taken the gold" (Herodotus 4.196, as cited in the version by Godley 2010, 282).

<sup>12</sup> An extensive description of the European conception of Africa in Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages is provided by Francesc Relañó (2002). In his work Relañó stresses the interaction of myth and reality in the European representation of Africa by distinguishing between two existing categories of knowledge: the so-called 'intellectual landscape' created by scholars of the time and the 'living landscape' that is created by the merchants and pilgrims who actually visited the continent.

<sup>13</sup> For a complete history of the Western Sahara and the trans-Saharan trade of gold in particular, see Bovill (1995).

systems and as a medium of exchange in the contacts with Islamic and European peoples (Posnansky 1973).

The rise of Islam in the seventh century resulted in continuous conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Both of them alternately conquered the African territories, although the Christians never really obtained a foothold as the Muslims dominated the area for most of the time. Paradoxically, for mercenaries there were plenty of opportunities to trade off their wares and acquire desirable goods (J. Phillips 1998, 136-139). Due to the Muslim expansion of the eighth century, West Africa became an important export area, mainly trading off the gold that was so abundant in the region. A market was easily found now that North Africa was made Arab territory. The takeover had transformed the area into a more or less coherent and stabilised unit that made the expansion of trade possible. Trade demands reached as far as India (Posnansky 1973). Lamb (1972, 8) adds that by this time Spain had to contend with depleted gold sources, so that, for the minting of Islamic gold currencies, the metal had to be imported from Africa from then onwards.

Already confronted with a Muslim barrier in the Middle East, the Muslim presence in Africa meant a second Islamic obstruction to the Europeans, this time thus located along the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The barrier impeded the Iberians to trade directly with the sub-Saharan peoples, making it more difficult to get access to the great quantity of riches that was rumoured to be in

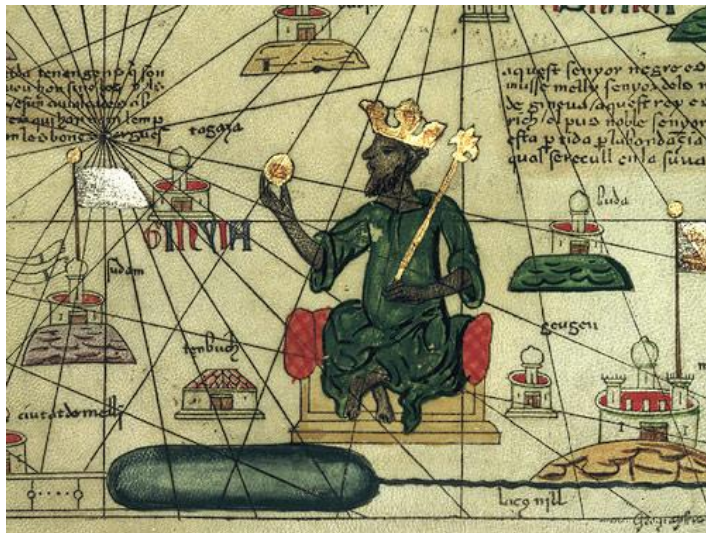


Figure 11. King of Mali holding a gold nugget. Facsimile of a map drawn in Spain, 1375. Bibliothèque National, Paris. Source: [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).

possession of the African chiefs. Through their contacts in the Mediterranean the Westerners frequently received hints of the existence of golden treasures in the black African empires, territories that they were only indirectly connected with through the Muslim caravans that travelled across the Sahara Desert in order to supply the ports of North Africa. These North African ports became the centres of commerce where the Europeans obtained the West African gold they were looking for. Often they were supplied by Jewish intermediaries, although exchange rates were high. At this time the Europeans were still not able to maintain direct contacts with the peoples living on the other side of the Muslim barrier (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 23-25).

A boost in commercial activity was realised when the traders of the kingdom of Aragon took over dominance in the region from the Italian merchants of Genoa and Pisa in about 1230 (J. Phillips 1998, 140). Especially attractive for the Iberians were “such bulky items as high grade merino wool and grain, but above all [...] gold bullion” (*ibid.*). Europeans made attempts at finding the sources of African gold themselves, but the overland routes they took did not bring them any further (Fernández-Armesto 2007,

100-102). In the fourteenth century, the exploitation of gold from Ghana caused a world-wide expansion of trade. Posnansky (1973) argues that the immediate cause of the rise in gold digging activity can be found in the recent encounter of the markets in the Far East. The acquisition of precious exotica from Asia entailed a great deal of expense. Furthermore, coining the new currencies of Europe required lots of gold. For the Europeans, it would ultimately last until the mid-fifteenth century that they reached Mali themselves, although despaired of the Sahara, this time they would travel by sea.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.6 The current to the sea: maritime exploration in the Late Middle Ages**

As mentioned previously, in the mid-fourteenth century the bubonic plague arrived in Europe. This disease, which is also called the Black Death, killed between one quarter and one third of the European population, although estimates of mortality rates vary widely (Benedictow 2004; Cohn 2002). The plague affected daily life drastically, while also trade was not left unimpaired (Hunt and Murray 1999). As we have seen, contacts with Asia, but also the Middle East and North Africa, were almost cut off completely for a couple of decades (Benedictow 2004, 57-67; Dolls 1977). Paradoxically, however, during the depression that followed the Black Death, Europe did experience a period of economic growth. Remarkably, several commercial centres did not lose anything in the function they held of vital nuclei in the European trade networks. Because population pressure had been reduced significantly, more resources had become available for fewer people, resulting in a higher standard of living. The survivors of the recurring plagues had more money to spend and demanded new, better and more commodities, including exotica from foreign lands. Therefore, it were especially the merchants and cities that were involved in the trade of these luxury goods that profited from the depression (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 25-28). Again, it was the international trade that was important as the main medium to acquire the desired foreign wares (Lopez 1971). A “new business environment” was shaped that provided the conditions for economic expansion in later centuries (Hunt and Murray 1999).

In this environment the maritime activity of Castile and also Portugal visibly increased, following on the seafaring initiatives that had been taken throughout the entire peninsula in the preceding decades. It is often said that necessity is the mother of invention, a saying that is arguably applicable when explaining the quite sudden seaward turn that different communities around the world demonstrated in search of new profits. They have in common a peripheral and backward position in relation to neighbouring nations and a relatively poor population that is not satisfied with the economic opportunities available at the home basis. The same was true for the Iberian peninsula where circumstances of poverty, famine and warfare during the fifteenth century formed the ideal incentive for adventurous people to explore new horizons. Furthermore, Iberia was the outer edge of the West, the terminus point for people coming from eastern regions who upon arrival faced the unpromising shores and that barrier called the Atlantic. Not only the land, but also a good deal of the people can therefore be considered peripheral. For them the sea thus became a way out for the problems encountered in daily life. Moreover, it

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<sup>14</sup> An Islamic scholar and traveller called Ibn Battuta (1304-1368/1369) already visited both Mali and Europe on his itineraries during the fourteenth century. He became famous for travelling through almost the entire Islamic world – including much of Africa, the southern shores of Europe and the Middle East – and to Central and Southeastern Asia and China. He left us an account of his journeys of which the translated and edited version by H.A.R. Gibb (1929) is the most recommended. For more information about Ibn Battuta and his travels, see Dunn (2005), Harvey (2007) and Waines (2010).

appeared to be the ideal starting point for commercial and colonial initiatives for Castilians and Portuguese, as also for many other peoples occupying the Atlantic seaboard (Fernández-Armesto 2007).

For merchants there was good reason to look beyond their sphere of trade activity. They still did not have direct access to the luxuries of Asia and the gold of Africa because of the Muslim barriers that obstructed them in the Near East and North Africa. They were far too dependent on this religious enemy and thus had to explore other ways of acquiring the commodities they desired. With the seafaring knowledge that was available now, they hoped to be able to circumnavigate Africa to reach their destinations. On their way they would explore the West African coast in order to find the African gold sources so that they could control these themselves and use the gold to invest in their trade. The Europeans had not only economic reasons for exploring the African waters, but also thought of the possibility of attacking the Muslims from behind. As we have seen, previously they had already tried to establish an alliance with the Mongols but that turned out to be unsuccessful. New attempts were now on their way.

#### *Sailing to Africa and Europe's first Atlantic colonies*

It is reported that already in 1291 two Genoese brothers called Vandino and Ugolino Vivaldi have tried to reach Asia by circumnavigating Africa. They did not make it, however, and were never heard of again, though they are supposed to have reached as far as the Western Saharan coast (Moore 1972; J. Phillips 1998, 147-150). In a way these adventurous Italians thus preceded their fellow-countryman Columbus by two centuries. New ventures were undertaken, however, and soon the Canary Islands were reached (figs. 12 and 13).<sup>15</sup> With the Castilian conquest of the islands in 1402, Spanish imperialism was first given expression. The Canaries were already known in Antiquity as the Fortunate Isles and described by Pliny the Elder in the first century (trans. Rackham *et al.* 1938-1962). The Arabs set sail to the islands for trade and commerce during the Middle Ages, whereupon in the late thirteenth century the islands were explored by Genoese and Majorcan sailors who then sent merchants and missionaries. Although precise data concerning the European exploration and exploitation of the Canaries are missing, the islands first seem to (partly) appear on a map dated to 1339. From around the mid-fourteenth century also the Castilians, Aragonese and Portuguese became interested in the archipelago. Its strategic position was extolled because of the possible use as way station for further explorations of the African gold sources, and as a base from where to link the European trade networks with the African ones (Abulafia 2008b, 67). The Europeans launched several expeditions in order to explore and conquer, but these were not successful. With the arrival of the Black Death, then, new ventures were postponed. Only the Majorcans succeeded in establishing a mission that lasted until about 1400. Part of the success presumably was due to the employment of some twelve Canary Islanders who had mastered the Catalan language after having been taken to Aragon (*ibid.*). This tactic of using natives as interpreters is something we will see again when discussing the Spanish arrival in the Caribbean.

The islands of Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and (partially) Hierro were the first that fell victim to the conquest that Enrique III of Castile directed in 1402. The French nobles Jean de Béthencourt and Gadifer

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<sup>15</sup> The Canary Islands consist of seven larger – Grand Canary, Tenerife, La Palma, La Gomera, El Hierro, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura – and six smaller isles – Alegranza, Graciosa, Isla de Lobos, Montaña Clara, Roque del Este and Roque del Oeste – and are situated approximately a hundred kilometres west off the coast of southern Morocco.

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?



**Figure 12.** Locations of Madeira Islands and Canary Islands in relation to Spain and North Africa. After original from WMC.

de la Salle had been entrusted with the expedition, a mission that eventually took three years before it was ended successfully. By a grant of Juan II of Castile in 1420 it was possible to incorporate the rest of Hierro as well as conquering the island of Gomera. This phase – broadly covering the first half of the fifteenth century – is historically referred to as the *Conquista señorial*, because of the active role played by the nobility, who carried out these expeditions for personal gain, while royal intervention was limited. With the annexation of these four islands this period came to an end (Aznar Vallejo 1994; Fernández-Armesto 1987).

Also particularly active were the Portuguese who, often encouraged by the Portuguese *infante* Dom Henrique (1394-1460), known as Prince Henry the Navigator, in relatively short time exceeded the strength and success of the Castilians (Russell 2000). The African waters appeared to be ideal fishing grounds and with their exploitation the Portuguese substantially expanded their fishing industry at home. Contacts with Africa were used in an optimal way, what is exemplified by the purchase of wheat in Morocco that was subsequently traded off farther south (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 54). In 1415 Portugal seized the strategic Moroccan port of Ceuta by which they obtained an African commercial centre that served the purpose of terminal point for the trans-Saharan trade caravans. After the conquest, however, the city was mostly ignored by the defeated Muslims. Nevertheless, the Portuguese now had a base from where they could more easily explore the southern areas and search for trade relations (Diffie and Winus 1977, 44-56). Not much later, also Portugal incorporated its own archipelago, namely the Madeira Islands, situated almost 400 km north of Tenerife (fig. 12). These islands were first explored by Europeans in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, after which there were occasional visits by Castilians and Portuguese who collected wood and extracted resin to be used as red dye from the local ‘dragon’s blood tree’ (*Dracaena draco*). In 1417 the Castilians appeared to intend seizing the islands of the Madeira group, whereupon the Portuguese effectively reacted by quick-wittedly sending an expedition on behalf of João I of Portugal to the two major islands, Madeira and Porto Santo.<sup>16</sup> The Portuguese had been spectators during the Castilian conquest of the four Canary

<sup>16</sup> One of the expedition leaders was called Bartolomeu Perestrelo, who was a naturalised Portuguese man of the lower nobility born in Italy whom had been assigned the island of Porto Santo. Notably, Perestrelo had a daughter who many years later would become the spouse of Columbus, who himself was of course also an Italian residing in Portugal (Diffie and Winus 1977, 58). Columbus’s marriage thus already linked him with the Atlantic and has

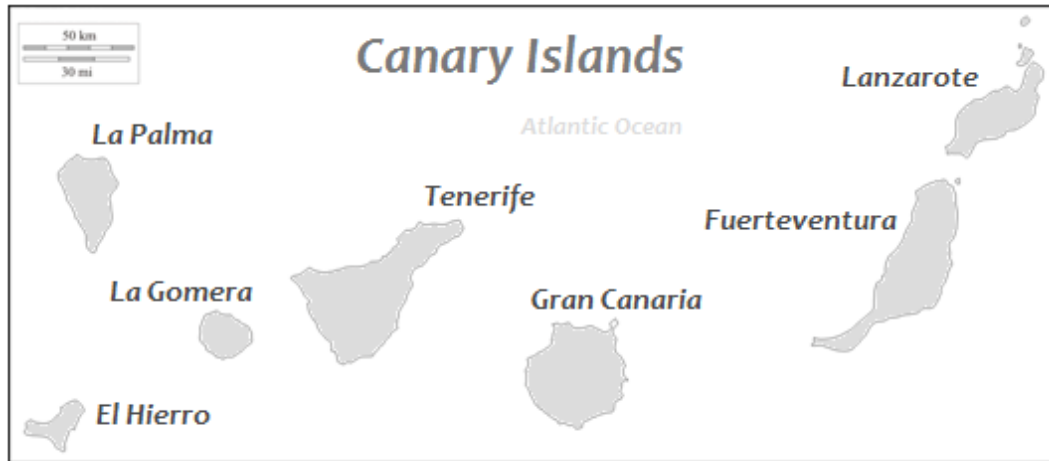


Figure 13. The Canary Islands. Adapted from [www.d-maps.com](http://www.d-maps.com).

Islands, so that for economic, political and strategic reasons they now could not afford to abstain from imperialism either. The islands were uninhabited, through which their confiscation was easy and sugarcane plantations could be established. It was not until 1450 that real profits were drawn from the production of grain and these sugar crops. More labourers were needed in the Madeiras and therefore slaves were shipped from North and West Africa and the Canaries (Diffie and Winius 1977; Fernández-Armesto 1987; Phillips and Phillips 2011, 68-69; Vieira 1992, 2004).

When departing from the Canaries and searching for profitable westerlies to return to Iberia, the winds and currents of the Atlantic basically lead to the Azores, which made the Portuguese discovery of this archipelago quite propitious. Like the Madeira Islands, the Azores were uninhabited. From the 1430s the Portuguese began to use the islands for the cultivation of wheat and herding wild sheep (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 127; Vieira 1992). Because the climate did not allow sugarcane to grow, it was only grain and dyestuffs that were exploited. The islands long remained a strategic way station for travels between the Iberian peninsula and the Atlantic colonies, and continued to be in later years for itineraries to the Americas.

#### *Exotic animals at the Chinese court*

While the Europeans had made an ambitious start in the process of reaching the southern tip of Africa, at the other side of that continent the Asians had not been idle either. Their efforts deserve to be discussed here shortly so as to put into perspective the European developments in a much wider 'Old World', and to portray the wide extent of the Asian trade networks to which the Europeans had indirect access. An illustrative figure that explored the western routes was the Chinese admiral Zheng He (Dreyer 2007). Between 1405 and 1433 he commanded seven expeditions to South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa, visiting at least thirty-two countries bordering the Indian Ocean (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 110). He was sent by China's Yongle emperor, the third ruler of the Ming dynasty, who had provided him with a huge fleet never matched before (Tsai 2001).<sup>17</sup> For Yongle, glory and prestige

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arguably provided him with information that he might have recalled on his later voyages to the Americas (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 98-99).

<sup>17</sup> According to Fernández-Armesto (2007, 109), this huge fleet comprised "sixty-two junks of the largest dimensions ever built, 225 support vessels, and 27,780 men". Wilson (1999, 121) writes that the gigantic junks or trading galleons, which are also referred to as treasure ships, "were more than 122 meters (400 ft) long and 45



## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

were the things he pursued most. He offered countless presents like gold, spices, silk, porcelain and other valuables to foreign rulers and gladdened himself with tribute from faraway lands and barbarian nations (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 109-110). Great was the astonishment of the emperor when Zheng He brought home a wondrous creature he had never seen before. The animal was shipped from Bengal where it had ended up as a gift from the ruler of Malindi, a rich city-state in East Africa. After some negotiations with Zheng He's diplomats, the Bengal king agreed to give away his present to the Chinese emperor. On their demand another exemplar arrived from Africa, and thus this was how it happened that in 1415 a pair of giraffes was welcomed in Beijing (Wilson 1999, 121-126) (fig. 14). The "treasure ships" of Zheng He subsequently brought home many more exotic animals to the emperor's court. His magnificent collection included "lions, leopards, camels, ostriches, zebras, rhinoceroses, antelopes [...] and strange birds" (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 111). Besides, also many non-living curiosities and exotica, like tortoise shells and elephant ivory, were imported (Wilson 1999, 124). The arrival of Zheng He in Africa marked the beginning of Chinese formal contacts with Africa (Snow 1988).

Zheng He's maritime ventures were like an exuberant display of power, a confounding way of demonstrating the Chinese dominance over the Indian Ocean. There was some cartography involved and contacts with remote peoples were renewed, but, although China possessed all the means to do so, the opportunities for new commercial initiatives were not utilised. Although the superiority of Ming China was unmistakable, the empire always abstained from overseas imperialism and preferred to focus on the internal politics. Furthermore, China's trade relationships with Africa and all those countries lying in between, made it possible to acquire any of the commodities the Chinese wanted. Therefore, when reaching Cape of Good Hope it was not worth going any further, since there would not be found anything more of interest for the Chinese (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 112-117; Levanthes 1997; Snow 1988). Would they have done so, they would inevitably have met the Portuguese a couple of decades later when Bartolomeu



**Figure 14.** Giraffe brought to the Yongle emperor Zheng He from the east coast of Africa. Painting by Sheng Du (1357-1434). Source: [www.hist.umn.edu](http://www.hist.umn.edu).

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meters (150 ft) wide and each could carry about 1,500 tons". When the Zheng He fleet is compared to the flotilla of Columbus, the latter completely pales into insignificance. The *Santa María*, Columbus's largest vessel, measured only 27 meters (90 ft) by 9 meters (30 ft), while the three ships of Columbus combined could carry only about 400 tons (Wilson 1999, 121).

Dias reached Cape of Good Hope. Scholars have regularly speculated about this and other 'what if' scenarios of China's renounced maritime imperialism (e.g. Dreyer 2007).

### **3.7 In the name of the Crown: the exploitation of the Atlantic islands and their native inhabitants**

After an interval of a couple of decades, the Castilian conquests in the Atlantic revived during the *Conquista realenga*, starting in 1478 with the capture of Grand Canary (Aznar Vallejo 1983, 1994; Jiménez González 1990). This time Queen Isabel of Castile and King Fernando of Aragon – who had at this time by way of marriage united the two Crowns – had taken the direct responsibility of the colonial mission, which meant that they commanded and financed the joint venture themselves. A long period of rivalry and jealousy between Portugal and Castile, who were competing over succession and dominion, came to an end in 1479 when a treaty was signed that divided the Atlantic islands among both parties. For the Castilians this meant that the Canary Islands now were their rightful property (Abulafia 1997; 2008b, 95-101). It was not until April 1483 that the island governor Pedro de Vera witnessed the surrender of the Canarians. Finally, then, in 1492 the last Muslim stronghold of Granada was defeated, marking the end of the *Reconquista*. The remaining Moors were expelled and their territory got back in Christian hands. Only after the Iberian peninsula was reclaimed, the Spanish were able to shift their full attention back again to the Canary Islands. Alonso Fernández de Lugo, who had played an important role in the victory on Grand Canary, was appointed as commander for the conquest of the two remaining islands of La Palma and Tenerife. At the same time, plans were made for the transoceanic voyages that should open profitable routes to Asia. It was only some seven months after the fall of Granada that Columbus left Spain and would arrive in this other world. For the islands of La Palma and Tenerife, the years of surrender ultimately were 1493 and 1496, respectively.<sup>18</sup>

#### *African gold and slaves*

The Portuguese had meanwhile shifted their attention to the African mainland and were looking for slaves and gold south of the Canaries. Bigger gold supplies started to reach Portugal increasingly from the mid-1440s (Diffie and Winius 1977; Fernández-Armesto 1987; 2007, 135). Arguim became their first offshore establishment, founded in 1441, and three years later the first black slaves were deported (Abulafia 2008b, 90-92; Diffie and Winius 1977). Furthermore, the uninhabited Cape Verde Islands were discovered around 1460. The islands were used for the cultivation of grain and fruits as well as cattle raising. They later became an important slave station for shipment to the 'New World' (Abulafia 2008b, 84). In 1475 the Portuguese had managed to sail around the bulge of Africa and reached Benin, where much more gold could be found (Ryder 1969). On their way and through time they had founded trading posts (*feitorias*) along the West African coasts. They also sporadically attempted to penetrate into the African interior, but the danger of tropical African diseases and the power of the black African kingdoms inhibited European efforts to pursue their territorial conquests, so that the European presence in Africa remained limited to trade enclaves (Phillips and Phillips 2011, 69). One of the best known and most important outposts became São Jorge da Mina, or El Mina, which was founded in 1482 (Vogt 1979). Also Columbus visited the fortress a couple of times (Columbus 1982, 167). It became a place of trade where gold and slaves were collected before being transported to elsewhere. European exchange commodities

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<sup>18</sup> For more on "the breakthrough of the 1490s", see Fernández-Armesto (2000; 2007, 153-190).

furthermore included “horses, saddles, and stirrups; cloth, caps, and hats; saffron, wine, wheat, and salt; and lead, iron, steel, copper, and brass” (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 55). Next to slaves and gold, the local African rulers offered “animal skins, gum arabic, civet, cotton, malagueta pepper, cobalt, parrots, and camels” (*ibid.*). Not only Portugal, but also Castile profited from the African gold that reached their markets in high quantities where it contributed to a flourishing economy. The Iberians were now making good profit from the trade in gold and slaves and this would continue for a couple of centuries more (Bovill 1995; Thomas 1997; Thornton 1998).

*The Canary Islanders: experimental subjects for a Caribbean encounter*

When in July 1341 three ships with a mix of Portuguese, Castilian, Catalan and Italian crew members arrived in the Canary Islands, they found the islands inhabited by a strange kind of people they had never seen before (Boccaccio 1998 [1341]). Like between the islands, there were many differences between the peoples who inhabited them – often (incorrectly) collectively called the Guanches.<sup>19</sup> There were multiple cultural groups residing in the seven isles and they all spoke different Berber languages (Abulafia 2008b, 51-54; Jiménez González 1990, 37-50). They lived in bands or tribes and shared a Neolithic technology that was without knowledge of navigation and working metals. They mostly were herders, although occasionally agriculture was practiced to cultivate barley (de Abreu Galindo 1977 [c. 1600]; Abulafia 2008b). They did have a structured society, though, that was politically controlled by either some kind of kings called *menceys* (Tenerife) or chieftains called *guanartemes* (Grand Canary and other islands), who each ruled (part of) an island (de Abreu Galindo 1977 [c. 1600]; Abulafia 2008b, 62-63; de Espinosa 1907:I, ch. 8 [1594]).

Upon sighting the Canary Islanders for the first time, the Europeans were utterly confused. Who were these people that were running around almost naked, and had they, perhaps, been let down by God? Reports on the natives are not unambiguous, often combining both positive and negative aspects. There was the ongoing twist about where to place these people in the European mental framework. On the one side, there was the image of the fierce savage or the ‘beast’, while the other side portrayed them as innocent and ignorant, very much the personification of what the classical authors had described in their works as pastoral societies (Abulafia 2002, 2008b). Alonso de Espinosa (1907:I, ch. 10 [1594]) described them as “uncontaminated Gentiles” as if they were a *tabula rasa* not yet having received the message of God (Abulafia 2008b, 36, 43; cf. Boccaccio 1998 [1341]). After due consideration by the medieval Europeans the romanticised image prevailed. The Europeans were convinced of the goodness of these people because of the natives’ knowledge of the marriage; the fact that they cooked or (half-)roasted their meat; revered the dead; and, had a structured society with a political leader (de Abreu Galindo 1977 [c. 1600]; Abulafia 2008b; Boccaccio 1998 [1341]; de Espinosa 1907:I [1594]).

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<sup>19</sup> In modern literature the term ‘Guanches’ has become in common use when talking about all the native Canary Islanders. Strictly speaking, however, the name may only be applied when referring to the native inhabitants of Tenerife in order to avoid any implication of cultural uniformity among the different groups of the seven islands (Aznar Vallejo 1994, 136-137; Tejera Gaspar 1992a). For the natives of the other six islands, the following names are used: the Canarians of Grand Canary (Jiménez González 1992); the Auaritas of La Palma (Martín Rodríguez 1992); the Majos of Lanzarote (Cabrera Pérez 1992); the Gomeros of La Gomera (Navarro Mederos 1993); the Bimbaches of El Hierro (de la Cruz Jiménez Gómez 1993); and the Majoreros of Fuerteventura (Cabrera Pérez 1993). When the total population of all the islands is meant, the collective term Canary Islanders will be used.

Initial contact coincided with the exchange of goods, or at least the intention to do so. The Canary Islanders gullibly swam out to the ships to find out who these people were that had arrived on their beaches. Abulafia (2008b, 39) describes such an encounter on Grand Canary: “once on board, their hosts showed them familiar foods and objects from Europe, to see how they would respond. The explorers discovered that the native Canarians were quite interested in bread, which was a novelty to them, but they refused wine and continued to drink water”. In this kind of encounters there often is mutual astonishment while at the same time attempts are made to communicate with the other in order to make intentions clear and to acquire knowledge (*middle ground*, Gosden 2004). The Europeans, who were still in search of the African sources of gold, also showed the Canarians objects of gold in order to gather information about where to get it. This was not successful, though, since the natives had neither seen nor heard about the metal (cf. Boccaccio 1998 [1341]). Next to the dyestuff extracted from the dragon’s blood tree, also a purple dye called orchil became a popular commodity for the Europeans. The islands furthermore provided sealskins for the European markets and, increasingly, became a resource base for the export of slaves (Abulafia 2008b, 66).

Now that the ‘uncontaminated’ nature of the islanders had been determined, their subjugation was deemed to be approved in order to impose the Holy Faith on them.<sup>20</sup> Other reasons were devised as well, such as did Alvar García de Santa María in 1417 when he told that the Muslims had colonised the islands before, so that the Spanish Christians would have been given a permit to reconquer the islands as part of their continuous struggle against Islam (*ibid.*, 33-34). War, again, was then justified. Gradually, more Canary Islanders received baptism and, in order to convert the rest of the natives as well, the Europeans sought their allies among the natives that had already been Christianised. These treaties helped the Europeans much and it is not surprising that they repeated this tactic in similar ways during the conquest of the Americas (see Chapter 5). The Canary Islanders were, however, fierce and brave humans who managed to hinder the Europeans considerably during their efforts to colonise the archipelago. They often fought off European incursions with their wooden or bone sticks and stones, a “remarkable and ill-understood aspect of the story” (Fernández-Armesto 2007, 129).

Despite ample moral consideration on the nature of the island inhabitants, it was not long before the first slaves were raided from the islands and shipped to Spain where they were sold. This is explained by Phillips and Phillips (2011, 67) who say that “in the initial phases of conquest, the conquerors needed quick profits to repay creditors who had financed the expeditions. The capture and sale of slaves offered an obvious and easy way to repay those loans”. Often the slaves came to work on either the Canary Islands themselves or on any of the islands of the different Portuguese archipelagos, where they were put to work on the sugar plantations or in household service (Lobo Cabrera 1996; Vieira 2004). As for the colonisation of the islands, there were several reasons to justify the enslavement of the native inhabitants, particularly when they had offered resistance during a just war, rebelled while being allied, or did not respect the treaties made with the Europeans (Phillips and Phillips 2011, 67). Obviously, the slave trade disrupted native society terribly as many people were taken off or simply died. Death was primarily caused, however, by the diseases that had been brought from the European mainland, to

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<sup>20</sup> The conversion of non-Christians was comprised in a single policy that had its precedents in the thirteenth century when the Dominican and Franciscan friars tried to Christianise Jews and Muslims (Abulafia 1997, 94-101; 2008b, 70-71).

which the islanders were highly susceptible. Population numbers decreased drastically and by the start of the fifteenth century only a small percentage of the original population had survived. On the other hand, though, the Canary Islands had become a well-integrated part of the Castilian Crown through time and a colonial society that reflected the developments in the home country emerged. There was intercultural marriage and the island societies became assimilated wholes (Aznar Vallejo 1983; Fernández-Armesto 1982).<sup>21</sup>

### **3.8 God, Gold and Glory: Columbus in the context of late medieval society**

While the Castilians and Portuguese were competing over control at sea and the new colonies, back 'home', at the other end of Europe, the eastern frontiers of Christendom were threatened: the Ottoman Turks were expanding their empire in Asia Minor and prepared the conquest of Constantinople (Goodwin 1998; Inalcik 1973). In 1227 this militant force of Islam had moved into Seljuk territory while escaping the Mongols and accumulated wealth and strength with the years. This resulted in the establishment of their own empire in 1299. They continued their expansion drift and succeeded in taking over the capital of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 (Crowley 2005). This meant a real disaster for Christianity that had not only lost its capital but also this immensely important commercial centre that served as the trade corridor between East and West. Also the (mostly Italian) crusader states had to be given up. The reign of the flourishing Byzantine Empire had come to an end and was replaced by the Ottoman Empire, an empire that would grow and hold a leading position for many centuries. The dramatic loss suffered by the Christians resulted in increasing feelings of hostility that, however, also became a source of inspiration for explorations during the decades that followed (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 32-33). Furthermore, King Fernando and Queen Isabel established the Spanish Inquisition in 1478, an ecclesiastical tribunal that was set the task to enforce the single faith of Christianity. Moreover, extreme measures were taken to force the union between both of the Crowns and to establish a strong and united nation. For this purpose, social and racial purity were ought to be vital principals. Therefore, measures comprised the enforcement of a policy of religious intolerance towards non-Christians, and *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) which focused on the expulsion of Jews and Moriscos (Roth 2002, 229-236; Thomsett 2010, 115-174).

The role of the Church and religion in medieval life cannot be underestimated. As illustrated earlier when discussing the period of the High Middle Ages, the Catholic Church wielded much power and was able to exert political influence, and even assemble crusaders willing to spread the Holy Faith and reconquer lost territories. Paradoxically, though, through time the Church also maintained the function of peacekeeper; a clear line between state and church did not exist in Iberia at the end of the Middle Ages. National monarchies and smaller political units closely cooperated with the religious orders, partly driven of course by the everlasting Muslim presence on 'their' territory. Also for the common people religion was intricately woven in all aspects of life and society. Living right and preventing from committing sins were extremely important aims of life, and when one failed he had to pray for the grace of God and perform "the ritual of penance and forgiveness" (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 33-34). The faith was so important that it was thought to be the only, and thus Holy Faith. Cultures that worshipped other gods

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<sup>21</sup> For more information about the interactions between the Europeans and the Canary Islanders, see Tejera Gaspar (1992b, 2008) and Tejera Gaspar and Aznar Vallejo (1992).

were regarded as ignorant and had yet to be taught the principles of Christianity. Converting these other peoples and spreading the Christian message over the world therefore were important goals of the Christian mission; Christians really believed having the duty to do so, making it an important religious motive for the European expansion of the Middle Ages (*ibid.*, 38-41).

Late medieval society was hierarchically organised and allowed social mobility between the different socioeconomic classes (fig. 15). With the acquisition of wealth and noble status it was possible to advance in



**Figure 15.** French medieval illumination of the three estates: “Cleric, Knight and Workman”. Image from the British Library; Manuscript number: Sloane 2435, f.85. WMC.

class. A popular way of achieving this higher position was a military career that generated profits from the spoils of war and prestige from committing exceptional deeds. Upward mobility was also possible if employed by the Catholic Church or when serving the national monarchies. Status inequalities were, however, significant which is illustrated by the existence of only a small middle class of some twenty percent of the total population (Phillips and Phillips 2011, 63-64). More important than material wealth was the acquisition of immaterial wealth: fame through honourable deeds, a tradition of chivalry that long existed in the Middle Ages and formed an important personal motive for many European explorers and adventurers (Goodman 1998; Huizinga 1996; Keen 1986, 2005). It found its origins in medieval feudal society, which was based on reciprocal service and mutual obligations between members of different layers of the hierarchical system.<sup>22</sup> The wish to seek for glory was respected even more when it was fulfilled in service of God (Abulafia 2008b, 76). “Values evolved over those seven centuries of holy war idealised the *hidalgo* as a man who built a livelihood on service to God and king (as opposed to labour or trade), and acquired property and wealth as rewards for honour, valour, and military success” (Deagan 2001, 185-186).

Added to these aspiring motives for broadening horizons came a kind of idealisation of adventure, a tendency that sprouted from mere (intellectual) curiosity stirred up by the development of technological innovations such as the introduction of movable type. With this, more people had access to literary works and knowledge spread. As indicated already by the case of Marco Polo, travel books informed people about distant lands and aroused curiosity; even so in times that contact between the continents was hardly possible. Ancient works were now being rediscovered with the beginning of the Renaissance

<sup>22</sup> In the narrow definition of Ganshof (1964) feudalism was defined only in the context of the warrior nobility, while a broader definition by Bloch (1989) added a more social aspect, focusing on the relationships between lords and peasants and describing the phenomenon as ‘feudal society’. The term currently is a much debated one and there does not seem to be scholarly consensus about a single definition or whether to use the concept at all for explaining medieval society (e.g. Reynolds 1994; White 2005).

and the elite screened the possibilities for contacting other cultures and acquiring admission to new sources of wealth, as well as mapping forgotten lands and, later, the unknown world (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 34-36). Of course, next to these religious and socioeconomic motives there were pure economic motives; reasons that have already been elaborately described when discussing the expansion of European trade. New opportunities for trade came into being, new goods reached the markets, and new routes were explored in order to acquire direct access to these commodities. Naturally, the economic situation was often determining, both for the individual as well as the national monarchies. As Fernández-Armesto (2007, 59) puts it appositely: “poverty could be a source of compulsion, wealth of complacency”.

### *Columbus: the one who forged the missing link*

Born in Genoa in 1451, Christopher Columbus was just another man to be placed in the context described above (fig. 16). He was born in a humble family and like so many others strived for the acquisition of wealth and status. His father's occupation was that of wool weaver, an industry in which Columbus found his early employment as well. At the time, it was not uncommon at all to be engaged in more than one profession in order to make the most profit, and it was therefore that Columbus not only was a wool worker, but was also active as merchant, mariner and bookseller (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 92). Columbus already ventured to sea in his teenage years (Columbus 1982, 252; Dunn and Kelley 1989, 252-253); he became acquainted with the Mediterranean, where he maintained contacts with the various Genoese merchant communities. In or around the year 1476 he moved to Portugal, from where his seafaring range was expanded significantly. He is said to have visited England and Ireland, and, less sure, also Flanders and Iceland (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 105). More so, however, he explored the Atlantic and became very familiar with West Africa and the ocean colonies, territories he often referred to when drawing parallels or making comparisons with the Caribbean (Columbus 1982; Dunn and Kelley 1989). He became a regular visitor of the Madeira Islands, where he became well informed of the sugar business (Abulafia 2008b, 84; Columbus 1982, 160). In 1479 Columbus married Filipa Moniz Perestrelo, daughter of Bartolomeu Perestrelo (mentioned earlier), who was the governor of the island of Porto Santo and who maintained profound connections with the Portuguese court (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 97-98).<sup>23</sup>

### *Courting the royals*

Through time Columbus developed the idea of reaching India by a westward route from Iberia.<sup>24</sup> He was inspired not only by the intellectual works of contemporaries and the classical authors, but more so by the different stories he collected during his Atlantic voyages (see Phillips and Phillips 1992, 100-102). Blended with his own experiences and practical knowledge he found it feasible to explore this other way to Asia. The one mistake he made, however, was his miscalculation of the earth's circumference, which he, inspired by the Florentine Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli (1397-1482), thought to be much smaller than it actually is (*ibid.*, 100, 108-110). For Columbus, imaginary faraway Asia thus seemed quite close in the theoretical sense. To carry out his grand design he needed money and materials for which he requested the Crown of Portugal. His attempt failed, though, and he had to look for other backing options.

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<sup>23</sup> For more information about the early years of Columbus, see his biography by Taviani (1985).

<sup>24</sup> According to Phillips and Phillips (1992, 104), Columbus was not the first to conceive the idea; he did only persist long enough to find his proposal accepted.



Figure 16. Portrait of Columbus, c. 1520. Painted by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio (1483-1561). Displayed in Genoa, Il Padiglione del Mare e della Navigazione. WMC.

For that matter he left Lisbon and went to seek new opportunities in Spain. In early 1485 he arrived at the port town of Palos de la Frontera in southwestern Andalusia. From there he contacted the Spanish monarchs and asked for a financial share as well as some generous royal bestowals. His first audience was not successful, however, and Columbus thus saw history repeating itself. Success did not come soon either, and it would ultimately take him the next seven years to finally get what he was desperately looking for. Also his brother Bartolomeo had tried to help him by visiting the wealthy monarchies of England and France, pleading for the same case. Over

the years Columbus got himself invited at court several times and applied to multiple intermediaries. In the end it was not only efficient persuasive power and negotiations from the side of Columbus that made Fernando and Isabel decide to finance his voyage, but also the unfavourable economic and political position of Spain in comparison with its Portuguese rival. Despite the marriage between Fernando and Isabel – which was a political one and therefore a marriage of convenience – Spain had to contend with disharmony as the new political unit of the joint kingdoms of Aragon and Castile was hardly a united one.<sup>25</sup> Also in the economic sense success needed to be achieved. In a rather short period of time the Portuguese had made remarkable progress and profited considerably from the trade in African gold and slaves. Furthermore, in 1487 the Portuguese Bartolomeu Dias had been sent on a mission to reach the southern tip of Africa, which would eventually make a direct sea route to Asia available – an expedition that was accomplished by Vasco da Gama who reached India in 1498. Spain thus had to turn up with a plan to keep up with the Portuguese. Fernando and Isabel ultimately decided that the investment in Columbus's undertaking would be a calculated risk that upon succeeding could possibly yield much more profit and, perhaps more important, would prevent Portugal from getting any more advantage (*ibid.*, 112-135).

Columbus himself also repeatedly mentions the religious motives in his account and his aim of promoting the Holy Christian Faith. Also, because he was still expecting to meet the Grand Khan, he pronounced the possibility of forming an alliance in order to get rid of Islam (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 16-19). By all this, Columbus had thus secured the Spanish sponsorship. His aspiration to noble status could now be realised due to his service to the monarchy. He proposed some “incredibly bold terms” like a hereditary title and a significant share in the profits (Sauer 1966, 16-17). Columbus himself writes that Fernando and Isabel “granted me great favours and ennobled me so that from then on I might call

<sup>25</sup> For more information about the dynamic relationships between the different Iberian kingdoms and the internal structures of the individual polities, see Hillgarth (1976-1978) and O'Callaghan (1975).



myself 'Don' and would be Grand Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy and perpetual Governor of all the islands and lands that I might discover and gain and [that] from now on might be discovered and gained in the Ocean Sea; and likewise my eldest sons would succeed me and his son him, from generation to generation forever" (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 18-19).<sup>26</sup> A small fleet of one *nao* – the flagship *Santa María* – and two caravels of Portuguese design – the *Niña* and the *Pinta* – together with eighty-seven men were placed at Columbus's disposal.<sup>27</sup> Finally, then, on Friday the third day of August 1492, Columbus and his comrades left the Spanish harbour of Palos de la Frontera and steered towards a yet to be discovered and unexpected 'New World'.

### 3.9 Conclusions

The permission Columbus was given to sail and look for what would lie beyond the Ocean Sea can be said to have had many antecedents in the past. The Europeans had long been accustomed to contact with others; not only the interplay and close interaction between the different political units and cultural groups within Europe itself, but also the contacts that were made with distant cultures which resided in exotic parts of the world. From Antiquity onwards a lively trade surrounding the Mediterranean Sea had developed and cultural groups frequently contacted each other to profit from the things each had to offer. With the Migration Period of the Early Middle Ages, Europe had become populated by an amalgamated mix of different peoples, a development that would ultimately lead to the establishment of the modern nation-states. Following the commercial revolution (Duby 1974; Lopez 1971), the geographical range of European trade expanded (J. Phillips 1998), which resulted in favourable contacts with Asia and Africa and their progressive integration in the European exchange networks. When specific maritime technology became available and new economic profits were sought, also the Atlantic became subject of exploration. The seafaring nations prospered, while the Portuguese and Spanish Crowns vied with another over the rights of dominion of the islands they had just discovered (Abulafia 1997). By way of the new developments the Spanish empire became more and more prominent and was well under way to equal its rival Portugal once again.

The enhancement of social well-being and economic gain had been prime motives for the contact with other peoples and the undertakings of long voyages. A change of food whets the appetite, a desire that stirred up the quest for the exotic and kept enlivening it with the constant supply of new commodities and fabulous tales. Wealthy kings and monarchs competed with one another for having the most prestigious luxuries; for the fame they could acquire; for personal, political and economic contacts; and for the trade routes that were to be established. After all, knowledge is power, and this was certainly the case in an as yet not entirely discovered world (Helms 1988). Between the courts gifts were exchanged (Davis 2000) and marriages arranged, although most of the time these relations were ambiguous since they often coincided with periods of war.

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<sup>26</sup> These agreements between Columbus and the Catholic Monarchs are recorded in two documents, referred to as "The Capitulations of Santa Fe". The first outlines the purpose of the expedition (the Contract, dated 17 April 1492) and the second mentions the titles and privileges he was to receive in the case of success (the Title, dated 30 April 1492). Both are translated and reproduced in Parry and Keith (1984, 18-20).

<sup>27</sup> The Spanish word *nao* or *carraca* refers to a round-shaped Galician sailing ship with three or four masts, developed in the fifteenth century, which was extremely useful to sail heavy seas and make long voyages. Caravels were of lighter design, highly manoeuvrable, and had two or three masts (see Gardiner and Unger 1994; Pastor 2005).

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

Through time, however, the almost complete European population remained in a sense connected through their common faith; the fact that they were all Christians. “Medieval people”, according to Glick (2005, 5), “tended to think of culture and religion as coextensive or coterminous categories, and therefore of a unified Christianitas in opposition to Islam”. Furthermore, popes and monarchs cooperated closely and politics and religion were inextricably intertwined. Religion therefore played an incredibly important role in medieval society and has often been the originator and motivation of both conflict and expansionism. Christianised Europe fought long lasting wars with Islam, with peaks during the crusades and the fall of Constantinople. Also, the Muslims had taken the Iberian peninsula from the Christians, which set in motion the process of the *Reconquista* (O’Callaghan 2003). For the Spanish Christians, the struggle for regaining their lost lands would persist in full swing until the surrender of the last Muslim stronghold of Granada in 1492. This religious enemy was, however, also a source of inspiration and wealth, from where innovations and trade goods crossed the frontiers of Christianity. In this context, the Iberian peninsula had a unique position within the Mediterranean region as a gateway between the Islamic and Christian societies (Collins 1995a; Constable 1996; Glick 2005).

Medieval trade was practiced in rather diverse ways, mentioning not only the local fairs and markets and their gradual absorption in an urban environment, but also the foreign enclaves, the fortresses that were built, and the colonial appropriation of entire archipelagos. Europeans often cooperated in trade ventures (mainly the Florentines, Genoese, Portuguese, Aragonese and Castilians), although as much there was rivalry about the best strategic positions and the highest economic profits. Enclaves to trade were quite normal throughout European history; the most illustrative examples being the crusader states in Asia Minor and the Portuguese (sometimes fortified) trading posts in West Africa “that enabled them to tap into existing networks of trade” (Phillips and Phillips 2011, 69). A whole new chapter was added to Europe’s history of expansionism with the exploitation of the Canary Islands and a couple more Atlantic island groups. The colonisation of the Canaries was unique in the sense that it first involved the systematic exploitation of the local inhabitants who were put to work and instructed in the Holy Faith. Also Africa became a resource area from where slaves were readily available to be transported to Europe. These Atlantic experiences were later repeated in the conquest of the Americas, while European relations with the Canary Islanders prefigured those with the native populations of the Caribbean (Aznar Vallejo 1983; Fernández-Armesto 1982; Stevens-Arroyo 1993).

Along the lines of these different and dynamic economic systems, directed by national monarchies and the political order, there were individuals who tried to find their way for personal success. Also for the individual the device of ‘God, Gold and Glory’ encompassed the main motives for venturing abroad. As far as religion is concerned, Christians generally considered it their duty to spread the Holy Faith and to convert those who had not yet received God’s Message. Gold as a parallel of money and wealth was the other logical instigator, while glory referred to a certain medieval inherent desire – or undeniable and perfunctory aim of life if you wish – to obtain personal fame, wealth and status. Beyond that, on the eve of the European discovery of the Americas, the technology that was needed to sail the ocean had become available (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 64-84). It was the venture of Columbus that combined all these aspects and that would connect the trade networks of the ‘Old’ and the ‘New Worlds’.

## 4 | Interaction and Exchange in the Pre-Columbian Caribbean

### 4.1 Introduction

Upon European arrival, the islands of the Caribbean were already occupied for more than 5,000 years. Millennia ago people coming from the South American mainland opportunistically decided to take their canoes and search for new and better horizons, a new home that they found in a chain of islands enclosing the Caribbean Sea, thereby populating the last uninhabited part of the Americas. Through time the archipelagic societies gradually became more complex and diverse as cultural groups each adapted, developed and changed their way of life to the new island environments in their own distinct manner. The Caribbean peoples established networks for interaction and exchange through which regular insular, interisland and also long-distance contacts were possible. The intricate communication patterns facilitated intermarriage and alliance formation, as well as the exchange of goods, knowledge and ideas, thereby sustaining a shared pan-Caribbean cultural identity. This sphere of interaction also included the surrounding mainlands, notably the tropical lowlands of South America, the Amerindian homeland with which the islanders were strongly connected through the ‘lifeline’ they maintained, a link they never lost (Hofman *et al.* 2011; see Kirch 1988, 2000; Moore 2001).

In order to understand the nature, flows and dynamics of the exchange relationships that existed in precolonial times, it is first necessary to give a short introduction on the physical setting of the islands. Different types of geology, climate and weather influenced the people exposed to it. The Caribbean islands differ a lot from one another in size, topography, climate and the availability of natural resources (Newsom and Wing 2004), either restricting or encouraging people’s opportunities for trade. This discontinuous distribution of resources (Crock 2000; Watters 1997) made people inventive in developing local adaptive strategies and made them achieve high degrees of mobility and flexibility. Second, an overview is provided of Caribbean occupation history from the first migration up until the formation of the “cultural mosaic” (Wilson 1993) that was encountered by the Europeans.<sup>28</sup> As such it serves to give some cultural background to the developments against which precolonial material interactions took place. Then, also the diversity of cultural groups that formed the islands’ Late Ceramic Age population is elaborated upon, with special emphasis on the people that first came to encounter the Europeans, the Taíno, to get an impression of the complex social arena present in (pre)colonial times. Finally, having discussed Caribbean natural and cultural conditions and the protohistoric ethnic plurality in their respective order, it is possible to take a diachronic perspective on the pre-Columbian exchange networks with the purpose of defining their dynamics and the different kinds of social valuables that circulated through time.

### 4.2 The physical setting

The Caribbean (or West Indies) consists of nearly a hundred sizeable islands next to thousands of islets and cays and stretches 2,500 km from the delta of the Orinoco River in northern South America to Florida and Yucatán, in this way forming a natural crescent-like border between the Atlantic Ocean and

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<sup>28</sup> With this, however, I do not pretend at all to cover the full range of cultural variability and all associated ceramic complexes, subseries and series that have subsequently occurred in the circum-Caribbean before 1492 (for a synthetic overview, see e.g. Keegan 2000; Rouse 1992).

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

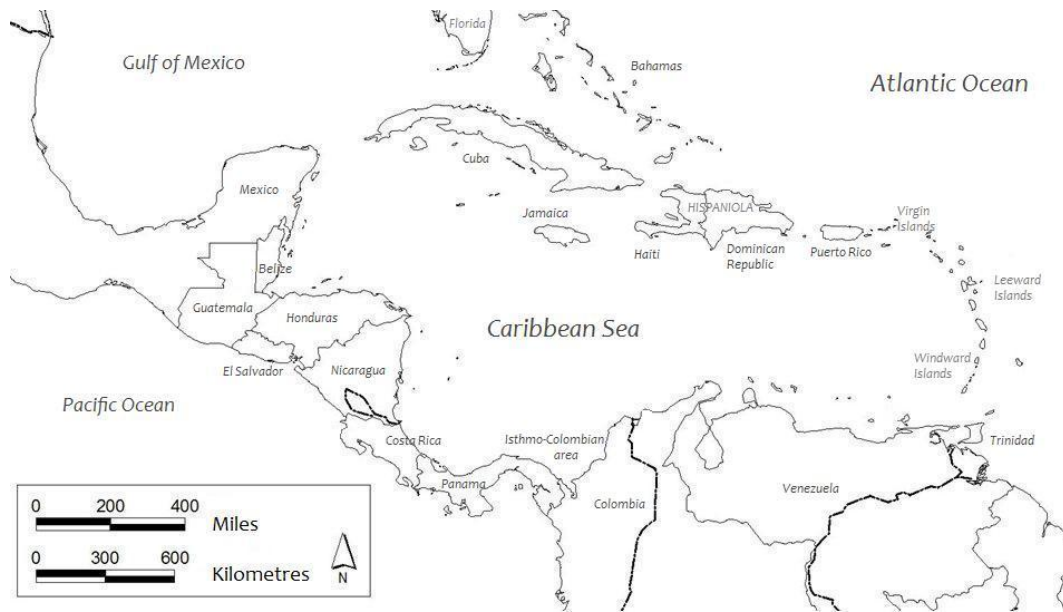


Figure 17. Map of the circum-Caribbean (after Rodríguez Ramos 2010).

the Caribbean Sea (fig. 17).<sup>29</sup> The islands can be roughly subdivided into three major groups, namely the Lesser Antilles, the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas. The Lesser Antilles are composed of a series of small volcanic and calcareous stepping-stone islands stretching from the South American mainland to the Greater Antilles in the north. The southeastern islands are known as the Windward Islands and range from Grenada to Dominica, the northwestern ones between Guadeloupe and Sombrero (Anguilla) are referred to as the Leeward Islands. Situated north of the Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands form both a geographical and cultural transition area between the Lesser and the Greater Antilles. The arc of the Lesser Antilles is completed by a group of smaller islands just north of the coast of Venezuela, among which are the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao) and the islands of Margarita, Coche and Cubagua. The east Venezuelan islands together with Trinidad and Tobago are geologically tied to the South American mainland, whereas the other islands of the Lesser Antilles lie atop the Caribbean Plate and are oceanic in character. This distinction is reflected in the islands' floral and faunal assemblages (Boomert 2000, 17).

When passing the Virgin Islands, going westward, one comes across the smallest island of the Greater Antilles, called Puerto Rico. It is one of four large islands forming the Greater Antilles, characterised by long shorelines and often remarkable differences in elevation level. Since the trade wind patterns differ as much as the (mostly sedimentary) geology of the islands, considerable variations in both rainfall and temperature are to be perceived, resulting in a large variety of environmental and vegetational characteristics. Jamaica, Hispaniola and Cuba, mentioned in order of increasing size, are the three other islands of the Greater Antilles. Due to their size these islands are both in prehistoric and present times suitable to sustain dense populations. Located north of Cuba and Hispaniola and east of the American state of Florida, some 700 relatively flat limestone islands and 2,000 cays arise in the Atlantic Ocean. The collective term of this area is the Bahamian archipelago or the Bahamas, which includes the Turks and Caicos Islands located southeast. Culturally these two island groups form a unit, politically they do not.

<sup>29</sup> Cays are small, low-lying, sandy islands formed on the surface of coral reefs.



Figure 18. The Cibao Valley. Photography by author.

Together the Bahamas constitute only some 5% of the total land mass of the West Indies. Their climatic conditions vary from dry tropical to moist subtropical (Sears and Sullivan 1978). The small islands lack the presence of terrestrial fauna so that prehistoric life was mainly oriented towards the sea (as on many other islands as well). Furthermore, the Bahamas were known for their crystalline salt and dried conch, commodities exploited to serve as trade products (Rose 1987). In its entirety the Caribbean is part of what is called the circum-Caribbean area, further encompassing the coasts of northern South America, the eastern coasts of Central America and the Gulf Coast of the United States.

#### *An additional note on Hispaniola*

Being the island of main concern here, Hispaniola deserves a somewhat more detailed description as regards its physical setting and environmental conditions, natural factors that have determined and influenced much of daily practice for both precolonial societies and European colonisers. Hispaniola is situated along the fault between the North American and the Caribbean Plates and has a complex geological composition. The island measures approximately 76,192 square kilometres (Dominican Republic 48,442 km<sup>2</sup> and Haiti 27,750 km<sup>2</sup>), a land mass that is enormous compared to many of the other Caribbean islands (only Cuba is larger). Elevation and ecological zones of Hispaniola are very diverse. The island's topography is dominated by fault-block mountains, forming high mountain ranges and extensive inland river valleys. The ranges consist of several impressive parallel cordilleras that primarily run from the northwest and west to the east, the most pronounced being the Cordillera Central in the middle of the island which also has the highest point of the island and indeed the entire Caribbean area, the Pico Duarte (3,098 metres). The valleys between the ranges are generally large, green and fertile. The largest valley is called the Cibao whereas the Vega Real, part of the Cibao, is the most fertile (fig. 18). Rivers

crosscut the entire island and there are many lakes and bays. The island has long shorelines along which coastal plains are situated. The extreme differences between the very high elevations and the coastal lowlands are reflected by an equally varied array of ecological zones, ranging from dry scrub forests and savannahs to mangroves and tropical rainforests. Seasonal variation is mainly perceived in rainfall, not in temperature and has been of influence to the availability of natural resources for people inhabiting the island. As a result of the human occupation of the island, Hispaniola got gradually deforested and the few larger terrestrial animals were hunted to extinction. Nowadays, the terrestrial faunal assemblage mainly comprises a fair number of bird species, reptiles and amphibians, insects and some small insectivorous mammals. The current ecological setting of the island only partly reflects the environment that Columbus encountered and that was praised so much in the ethnohistoric accounts.

#### **4.3 Populating the West Indies: a synopsis of Caribbean cultural developments**

One of the people that have contributed a considerable deal to Caribbean archaeology is Irving B. Rouse (1913-2006), a pioneer in the field, who, among other things, established on the basis of ceramics a relative chronology of Caribbean history that in essence is still the most widely used among archaeologists (Rouse 1964). Rouse's time scale consists of four subsequent periods (I-IV), subdivided into series and subseries and ranging from the earliest human occupation of the archipelago until European colonisation.<sup>30</sup> The series include subseries; the latter are divided into complexes and styles. Series are given the characteristic suffix '-oid', while the subseries end in '-an' (Rouse 1992). The name of the (sub)series is commonly derived from an archaeological site that is characteristic for the material assemblage associated with it. The typology has not been free of critique (e.g. Keegan 2000; Keegan and Rodríguez Ramos 2004) and alternative terminologies have been proposed over time (for a synthetic discussion of "chronology, taxonomy and terminology", see Wilson 2007, 19-23); though, for the purpose of this thesis, throughout this chapter I will keep in line with the typology introduced by Rouse which is generally adopted in scholarly literature.

##### *The initial colonisation of the Caribbean*

Before the Ceramic Age peoples entered the Caribbean, the Greater Antilles had already been occupied by early groups of seminomadic hunter-gatherers using flaked-stone tools since 4000 B.C, an era that is called the Lithic Age. Although their origin has been disputed (see Callaghan 2003; Wilson 2007, 27-33), most prefer to assign these peoples a Central American descent (Keegan 2000; Rouse 1992; Wilson *et al.* 1998). Rouse designated these earliest archaeological manifestations as the Casimiroid series, covering a period that lasted until 400 B.C (1992, 51-61). Around 2000 B.C. the Lithic Age was followed by the Archaic Age when people developed the grinding technique (but see Rodríguez Ramos 2007) and began to use materials like bone and shell next to stone and chert. In the meantime, between 3000 and 2000 B.C., new groups had moved into the archipelago from Trinidad and the South American littoral (Boomert 2000) – the opposite end of the island chain – a second wave of migration that was to disrupt the cultural homogeneity of the earliest preceramic island societies (Wilson 2007, 36-39). The culture of the peoples initiating this second migration into the West Indies Rouse called the Ortoiroid series (1992,

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<sup>30</sup> Rouse's periods (1992, 107) with their respective calendric dates are subdivided in Ia (4000-2000 B.C.); Ib (2000-300 B.C.); IIa (300 B.C.-A.D. 400); IIb (A.D. 400-600); IIIa (A.D. 600-900); IIIb (A.D. 900-1200); IVa (A.D. 1200-1492); and IVb (A.D. 1492-1524).

62-67). In the northern Lesser Antilles and eastern Greater Antilles the two cultures of hunter-gatherers contacted each other. Diverse in culture and perhaps language they interacted, although the intensity and nature of the relationships are not very clear. Two main culture zones persisted through time, while regional diversification steadily increased due to environmental adaptations (Wilson 2007, 56-58).<sup>31</sup>

#### *The South American Saladoid (400 B.C. - c. A.D. 650/800)*

Only around 400 B.C. the first Ceramic Age migrants, the Saladoid peoples, the Taíno forebears, moved into the Caribbean islands from their South American place of origin, where they had likely learned about the islands from interaction with the Archaic Ortoiroid peoples with which they had been living in contact for centuries. By several fast initial nonlinear migrations, or leapfrogging events, bypassing the southernmost islands, they reached Puerto Rico around 200 B.C. where their advance was halted perhaps because of Casimiroid presence further west. From Puerto Rico the Saladoid subsequently populated all intermediate islands of the Lesser Antilles and Virgin Islands (Callaghan 2003; Havisser 1997; Keegan 1995, 2004). Because of the impact the migration of these different, culturally distinct Amerindian mainland groups had on the West Indies, Rouse (1992) referred to the event as a process of “repeopling” the Caribbean. It would determine much of how Caribbean prehistory continued in the centuries that followed and in due time created the conditions that eventually enabled Taíno society to develop.

The Saladoid colonists were fully horticulturalists who produced brilliant white-on-red painted pottery, a ceramic tradition that originated in South America around 2500 B.C. (Boomert 2000, 217-251; Keegan 2000; Rouse 1992) (fig. 19). Why they eventually decided to cross the passage to the islands is a matter of debate (Siegel 1991). An initial move northward of Saladoid groups – and therefore a possibly accelerated migration into



**Figure 19.** Saladoid bowl with with-on-red paint, Loiza, Puerto Rico. 14.6 x 24.8 x 19.1 cm. Museo de Historia, Antropología y Arte, Universidad de Puerto Rico. Source: [www.lehman.edu](http://www.lehman.edu).

the islands – might have been instigated by the development of another ceramic series called Barrancoid (Rouse 1992, 77). The development of this tradition occurred somewhere between 1500 and 1000 B.C. in the Lower Orinoco area (Boomert 2000, 118-125, 202-216; Rouse 1992). The Barrancoid ceramics Boomert (2000, 118) describes as “the artistic climax of pre-Columbian culture in the Caribbean, being both highly aesthetic and imaginative”, featuring a variety of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures or *adornos*. Their settlement in the Caribbean island environment is limited and thus far only demonstrated in Tobago. Once in the islands, interaction between the Saladoid and Barrancoid peoples, notably conceived in Saladoid ceramics, occurred roughly between A.D. 200 and 650, after which Barrancoid influence gradually faded (see Boomert 2009a, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Contrary to Rouse’s (1992) assumption that ceramics were introduced in the Caribbean islands by Arawakan-speaking groups from South America, it has recently been argued that long before Saladoid movement into the Antilles Archaic peoples were already fabricating and using pottery on Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, suggesting the existence of a “Pre-Arawak Pottery Horizon” (Keegan 2006a; Rodríguez Ramos *et al.* 2008; Ulloa Hung and Valcárcel Rojas 2002; see also Keegan and Rodríguez Ramos 2004).

Around the same time, another early ceramic tradition called Huecoid (or La Hueca) appears in the archaeological record. It has long been assumed that the peoples associated with these ceramics originated from the South American tropical lowlands as well. In the islands they would have interacted regularly with the Saladoid peoples, although the exact relationship between the different groups remained unclear (e.g. Boomert 2008; Curet 2005, 63-76; Oliver 1999; Rodríguez Ramos 2007, 143-231). Today, however, Huecoid is seen as the result of Saladoid-Ortoiroid interaction in Puerto Rico (Boomert, pers. comm. 2012). Together with the Cedrosan Saladoid peoples they are considered the Early Ceramic Age settlers of the Caribbean.<sup>32</sup> Huecoid deposits, especially evident on the small island of Vieques, just east of Puerto Rico, have been



**Figure 20.** Beak-bird pendant, jadeite and serpentine, La Hueca culture, 5.1 x 4.1 cm. Source: [www.precolumbianjade.com](http://www.precolumbianjade.com).

found both in association with and in concurrence with Saladoid assemblages. Most of the ceramics lack painting, while decoration broadly resembles Saladoid pottery. More characteristic is the Huecoid lapidary iconography of which the distinctive beak-bird pendants are a case in point, avian icons that suggest a relation with the mainland (Boomert 1987, 2003) (fig. 20).

The Saladoid and Huecoid peoples were organised in tribal societies and lived in sizeable permanent villages, often constructed around a communal plaza where they gathered and buried their dead (Curet 1996; Siegel 1992). From lowland South America the Saladoid peoples brought plants and animals, this way transporting the rich and varied economic system their ancestors had sophisticatedly developed over millennia.<sup>33</sup> They subsequently adapted it to the local circumstances of the islands, where they cultivated root crops like manioc, supplemented by hunting, fishing and food collecting (Newsom and Wing 2004; Petersen 1997; Siegel, ed. 1989). In addition, the pottery-using groups brought ideas about worldview and religion, reflected in ceramic iconography, artefacts and settlement layout (Roe 1989; Siegel 1996, 1999). Once settled, they established interaction networks that facilitated exchange among the different islands and between the islands and the mainland. These relationships also comprised interactions with the Archaic peoples living on Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, and the northern Lesser Antilles (Keegan 2000). Of the nature and extent of the contacts between these groups we are only recently coming to a better understanding (Rodríguez Ramos 2005; Siegel et al. 2005).

#### *From Saladoid to Ostionoid: Towards a Greater Antillean crucible of cultures (c. A.D. 650/800-1200)*

Around A.D. 250 the Cedrosan Saladoid crossed the Mona Passage between Puerto Rico and Hispaniola where they managed to get a foothold on the eastern tip of the island and gradually displaced Casimiroid culture. By A.D. 600 this merging of Archaic and Saladoid cultures resulted in the

<sup>32</sup> Cedrosan Saladoid is a Saladoid subseries that is characterised by a duality of white-on-red painted ware and zone-incised crosshatched ware. Its name is derived from the archaeological site of Cedros, Trinidad (Boomert 2000, 127-145; Rouse 1992, 77-85).

<sup>33</sup> Some crops are assumed to have already been cultivated in Archaic times (Boomert, pers. comm. 2012).



development of a ceramic series called Ostionoid (Keegan 2000), basically the third main culture period following early Archaic and Saladoid – at least in the Greater Antilles, the Lesser Antillean equivalent came to be known as Troumassoid (Rouse 1992).<sup>34</sup> Along with this development people had begun inhabiting the interior parts of Puerto Rico. This transition in settlement location enabled the Ostionoid people to continue the Saladoid movement westward (*ibid.*), eventually populating eastern and central Cuba, Jamaica (Atkinson 2006) and the Bahamas/Turks and Caicos (Berman and Gnivecki 1995; Carlson 1999; Keegan 1992a). This dispersal from the Mona Passage resulted in the creation of new interaction spheres along with an increase in cultural diversity seen in the local development of component subseries like Ostionan, Meillacan (or Mellacoide) and Chican, and a related Palmetto pottery style in the Bahamian archipelago (see Rouse 1992 for the different ceramic characteristics of these subseries). After a period of relative stability it was a period of tumultuous changes, these centuries between A.D. 650 and 1200, in which, next to the end of Saladoid culture and the colonisation of the biggest part of the Greater Antilles and Bahamas by new hybrid groups with newly introduced pottery styles, also social and political complexity increased and community organisation altered. Populations grew and incipient social stratification emerged, giving rise to a sociopolitical structure that foreshadowed the Taíno chiefdoms (Curet 1992a, 2003; Curet and Oliver 1998; Siegel 2004; Wilson 1990a, 2001). It marked the transition towards permanent, hereditary inequality, whereby power and status were ascribed instead of achieved. The number of villages increased and a site hierarchy developed, which included the establishment of ceremonial centres featuring communal ballcourts and plazas (Curet 1996; Keegan 2000; Oliver 2005; Siegel 1996, 1999; Wilson 2007, 110-136).<sup>35</sup> This development coincided with a shift in burial placement from the central communal space to the house and its surroundings, pointing to a more pronounced notion of the individual (Curet and Oliver 1998; Siegel 1989; Wilson 2007, 110-136). At the same time horticultural activities centring around the staples manioc and sweet potato were continued and intensified, as proved by the appearance of mounded fields and terraces, while the increasing exploitation of marine resources further added to a more diversified diet (Ortiz Aguilú *et al.* 1993; Rouse 1992). This way, more and more conditions were fulfilled for the gradual unfolding of Taíno society.

#### *Chican Ostionoid and Taíno (A.D. 1200-1500)*

Basically, all developments that had been set in motion around the turn of the first millennium A.D. continued in the three centuries preceding contact, Rouse's period IVa. The main difference was an increase in scale and complexity. The changes and transformations faced by the Caribbean peoples must have been profound. Out of the Ostionoid cultural crucible that had manifested itself throughout the Greater Antilles this period gave rise to the peoples we refer to as the 'Taíno' – an umbrella-term that encompasses a multiplicity of cultural groups.<sup>36</sup> It is not easy to mark the beginning of their florescence. In fact it was a range of cultural achievements we together assigned the (mis)nomer 'Taíno'. These

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<sup>34</sup> In contrast with the rapidly changing situation in the Greater Antilles, in the northern Lesser Antilles Saladoid pottery also remained in use for some centuries after A.D. 600 (Hofman 1993; Oliver 1995; Versteeg 1991). "In fact", Wilson (2007, 96) adds, "in much of the Lesser Antilles, the period from A.D. 600 to at least A.D. 900 showed very little in the way of dramatic change in archaeological remains."

<sup>35</sup> Some of the most prominent sites assigned to this period of increasing sociopolitical complexity and change are Maisabel, Tibes and Caguana (Puerto Rico); El Atajadizo, Chacuey and San Juan de la Maguana (Dominican Republic); and Pueblo Viejo (Cuba) (Wilson 2007, 110-136).

<sup>36</sup> The term 'Taíno' is further explained in section 4.4.5.

included developments on the political, economic and social levels (Wilson 2007, 137-138). The Taíno polities reached maturity as they developed into the more complex chiefdoms or *cacicazgos* (Vega 1980; Wilson 1990a). New *cacicazgos* were emerging in places they had not been before, while existing polities continued to expand, not only within the island of Hispaniola, but also influencing areas beyond the Greater Antilles (Crock and Petersen 2004; Hofman 1993; Hofman and Hoogland 2004; Keegan 1992a; Keegan and Maclachlan 1989). These political elaborations instigated increased competition for power and status, illustrated for example by burial differentiation. Economically, the intensification of agriculture reached its highest level and production was sufficient to sustain large populations. As a result of population growth, regional adaptation and variability increased at a rapid pace. Partly grounded in and reinforced by the multiple ancestries of the Caribbean peoples, cultural diversity reached its apogee in this period. Even between such islands as Hispaniola and Puerto Rico there were considerable cultural differences (McGinnis 1997a; Wilson 2007, 139-144). But, at the same time, all these people were in constant contact with each other as interaction networks became intertwined. Also artistic expression reached its climax. The Taíno became renowned for their impressively shaped and decorated objects, often items of refashioned traditional material culture (see Bercht *et al.* 1997 for examples). Pottery belonging to the Ostionoid and Meillacoid series was still most widely used. The Taíno are commonly associated with Chican Ostionoid, though many local variants existed between A.D. 1200-1500 (Rouse 1992). This Chican Ostionoid, encompassing a range of vessel types and effigies, is characterised by incision and elaborate sculptural modelling, while representations of *zemiism* abound.<sup>37</sup>

Also the inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles were in a period of change, although these changes did not proceed till the level attained by their Greater Antillean neighbours (Rouse 1992). In their position they must have functioned as intermediaries between the South American mainland and the larger islands to the north(west). As such, they received influences from both geographical culture zones. Most of the developments originated locally, with new groups occasionally moving into the islands (e.g. Boomert 1986). Attendant pottery series are Troumassoid and later Suazoid (Rouse 1992; see also Hofman *et al.* 2007). I will now turn to a description of the Late Ceramic Age inhabitants of the Caribbean in order to illustrate the social arena in which the Taíno were interacting.

#### 4.4 Caribbean inhabitants of the Late Ceramic Age

The Late Ceramic Age Caribbean accommodated a plethora of ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups that, as mentioned earlier, Samuel Wilson (1993) has termed a “cultural mosaic”. This diversity has, however, not always been acknowledged (Rouse 1948a, 1948b) and it is indeed still believed by many that there existed only two large discrete cultural entities, namely the Arawak or Taíno, inhabiting the Greater Antilles and Bahamas, and the Caribs, occupying the Lesser Antilles. The two Amerindian groupings are generally portrayed as opposites, where the ‘good’ people are the Arawak or Taíno, being gentle and peaceful, and the ‘bad’ ones are the Caribs, ferocious and warlike people who were apt to consume human flesh (e.g. Whitehead 2002).<sup>38</sup> These popular, stereotypic images were principally caused by Spanish misunderstanding of the Caribbean cultural reality, due to misinterpretation, confusion and

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<sup>37</sup> More about the *zemí* concept can be found in sections 4.4.5 and 7.3.

<sup>38</sup> The association between Caribs and cannibalism is largely based on Spanish mixing up and misinterpretation of a number of orthographically related terms that the indigenous peoples used. For a discussion of these terms, see e.g. Keegan (1996b) and Whitehead (1995, 2002).

mixing up of what was being told to them in their first encounters with the Amerindians. Influenced by preconceived medieval ideas of 'others' the information they gathered during their first Caribbean experiences was easily turned into false images (Hulme 1993).<sup>39</sup> Ironically, in his point of view, Columbus's belief was confirmed several times during his ventures in the West Indies. Ethnohistorians copied and exaggerated the perspectives in their descriptions. Later, also scholars have dramatically and increasingly complicated the matter by the interchangeable use of ethnic, cultural and linguistic terminology. Even today, next to the worrying facts that these wild tales are still taught in modern Caribbean education (Wilson 2007) and continue to dominate popular belief (Hofman 2008), the Taíno-Carib dichotomy still affects Caribbean archaeology (Hofman *et al.* 2008). This section addresses the various groups that occupied the area in the Late Ceramic Age to give a more realistic impression of the social arena in which the Taíno interacted and exchanged.

#### 4.4.1 Lucayans

The Lucayans were the inhabitants of the Bahamian archipelago, settling the islands around A.D. 700 during a complex process of population dispersal throughout the Greater Antilles. The islanders derive their name from the Taíno word *Lukku-Cairi*, meaning "island men", a denomination the Spanish glossed into 'Lucayo' (Keegan 1992a, 11; 1997, 13). Today, the Lucayans are often referred to as Lucayan Taíno (e.g. Keegan and Maclachlan 1989, 613; Rouse 1992, 5), illustrating their common ancestry with the 'Classic Taíno'. According to Keegan (2007), the basic cultural characteristics of both these Arawakan-speaking groups were not significantly different. More so, they reflected differences of scale. The Lucayans made good use of the available marine resources, both as primary food supply as for the fabrication of tools and ornaments. Other means of their subsistence pattern included the cultivation of a wide array of root and tuber crops, notably manioc, and the practicing of arboriculture, supplemented by the hunting and collecting of small animals (Berman and Pearsall 2000; Berman *et al.* 1999; Keegan 1992a, 1997). The Lucayan Taíno developed a distinctive local, thick, crude and shell-tempered pottery style known as Palmetto ware (Granberry and Winter 1995; Hoffman 1970; Rouse 1992, 99-101; Sears and Sullivan 1978). It is plausible that the cultural evolution of the islands was influenced by the expanding interaction spheres of the Greater Antillean *cacicazgos* in late precolonial times. Through time the Bahamian colonists maintained links with the people to the south through trade and interaction, evidenced by the appearance of Taíno material culture and ceremonial sites in the Lucayan islands. Also cosmological links have been proposed (Keegan 2007). The precise nature of the interrelatedness between the two island groups is, however, not yet understood.

#### 4.4.2 Guanahatabey and Ciboney

The Guanahatabey (or Guanahacabibe) reportedly were band-organised cave dwellers who lived in western Cuba at the time of contact. They had neither pottery nor agriculture and maintained a subsistence economy based on hunting, gathering and fishing. They spoke a non-Arawakan language mutually unintelligible with those of other Caribbean groups. Their presumed existence was first recorded by the Spanish, although these reports were entirely based on hearsay. From that time

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<sup>39</sup> The colonial construct of a presumed Arawak/Carib duality also had its influence on Spanish colonial policy, encouraging discrimination and enslavement of those the Spanish labelled *caribes*, as an umbrella term for all those Amerindians that were fierce or resistant (Jesse 1963; Sued-Badillo 1995; Whitehead 2002).

confusion arose about their identity, making their actual existence disputed by some (e.g. Keegan 1989a, 1994). Thus far, archaeological research has yielded little data to clear the case. Erroneously, Guanahatabey has been used interchangeably with Ciboney, a term that at one time came to encompass all Caribbean societies that had an Archaic lifestyle. In fact, Las Casas used 'Ciboney' to refer to the Western Taíno of central Cuba, people that practiced horticulture and produced pottery and who spoke an Arawak dialect distinct from that of the 'Classic Taíno' of eastern Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico (Alegria 1981; Sauer 1966, 185).<sup>40</sup> To further complicate matters, both terms have uncritically been applied to aceramic assemblages across the Antilles (see Granberry and Vescelius 2004, 21-22; Rodríguez Ramos 2008; Sauer 1966, 185).

#### 4.4.3 *Macorix and Ciguayo*

Next to the widespread 'Classic Taíno' dialect, there were two non-Arawakan languages that were spoken in Hispaniola during the protohistoric period, namely Macorix (also Macorís), itself subdivided into Macorix de Arriba (or Upper Macorix) and Macorix de Abajo (or Lower Macorix), and Ciguayo. From Las Casas (1967:III, 311, cited in Wilson 2007, 144) we know that the three languages were mutually unintelligible. The precise relationship between these non-Taíno linguistic variants remains vague, although it is generally believed that Macorix and Ciguayo were spoken by people residing in respectively the northern and northeastern parts of the island (Granberry and Vescelius 2004) who were culturally and sociopolitically distinct from the 'Classic Taíno' (Oliver 2009a). Columbus reported that they also differed in physical appearance and were more warlike than the natives he had encountered before (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 329-344; Wilson 1990a). Archaeologically, it has been debated since the 1980s whether there is a correlation between the Macorix people and the Meillacan or Meillacoid ceramic assemblages (Guerrero and Veloz Maggiolo 1988; Oliver 2009a; Vega 1980; Veloz Maggiolo et al. 1981, 344-346).

#### 4.4.4 *Island Caribs and Igneri*

The Island Caribs appear to have arrived in the Caribbean only around A.D. 1400, where they settled parts of Trinidad, the Windward Islands and the southernmost Leewards (Allaire 1987, 1997; Boomert 1995). Their intrusion was not without a fight as we may believe from the ethnography of the Lesser Antilles. The Island Caribs allegedly encountered Igneri-speaking people, of whom they killed or expelled the men and captured the women as newborn wives, thus creating a new Carib/Igneri (or Eyeri) society. Both men and women retained parts of their identity. The Island Caribs shared an ethnic identity – but spoke a distinct Arawak dialect – with the Cariban-speaking mainland *Kaliña* or *Kariña* with whom they lived in northern South America and continued to feel affiliated with in the islands. While living together, the Island Caribs – now used as an inclusive term for insular male Carib and female Igneri – employed both a male and a female vocabulary. For autodenomination they respectively used *Callínago* and *Callíponam* or *Callíponan* (Breton 1999[1665], 55). The women thus continued to speak their Arawak Igneri tongue; the Arawak male variant was supplemented by a variety of lexical elements from mainland Cariban. A pidgin *Kaliña* was used in communication between the sexes as well as in trade

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<sup>40</sup> Next to the Cuban Ciboney, Ciboney Taíno – a language dialect, not an ethnic group – was also spoken by the Lucayans (excluding those inhabiting the southernmost Turks and Caicos), probably by the natives of Jamaica and people dwelling in western Hispaniola (Granberry and Vescelius 2004, 21).

affairs with other Amerindian groups (Hoff 1995). In the Caribbean the Island Caribs retained an Amazonian lifestyle, though the women continued their traditional agricultural practices and household veneration of *zemís* (Rouse 1992, 21-23). Like the Taíno the Island Caribs were horticulturalists; next to agriculture their tropical forest economy included fishing and collecting marine and littoral resources and hunting birds, lizards and small mammals (Petersen 1997). They lived in small villages that were occasionally moved. The Island Caribs were organised as tribal societies, principally egalitarian and with local headmen. The chiefdom level of the Late Ceramic Age Greater Antilles they did not achieve. Religiously, these people adhered to their South American shamanic traditions and seem not to have developed the *zemí* concept to the same degree as the Taíno did (see section below). These late arrivals were excellent seafarers who used their large canoes (pirogues) for an active trade with the neighbouring islands and their South American homeland. Archaeologically, the Island Caribs have been associated with the enigmatic Cayo style (Allaire and Duval 1995; Boomert 1986, 1995, 2009b, 2011) – an often undecorated ceramic type that has long gone unnoticed or ignored. Noteworthy, a small number of their descendants still live in restricted territories on Dominica, St. Vincent and Trinidad today.

#### 4.4.5 Taíno

The Taíno inhabited the largest part of the Caribbean at the moment of European arrival and were the native peoples the Spanish interacted most with during the first decades following contact. Due to their particular role and position during this period it is the Taíno to whom will be given principal attention here. Actually, 'Taíno' is a collective term for a fair number of native Caribbean groups who spoke a mutual intelligible language and shared a fair number of cultural characteristics. It has to be understood that the usage of the term denotes this heterogeneity and thus by no means refers to a single cultural group. To the Taíno themselves the word was only known as an adjective meaning 'good' or 'noble'. When sighting the Europeans for the first time the Taíno reportedly exclaimed the word to stress their friendly intentions, which by the Europeans was believed so as to distinguish themselves from the allegedly more aggressive Island Caribs of the Lesser Antilles. Columbus at that time called them *indios* since he was in the supposition that he was navigating among the islands east of Asia. After Columbus's mistake had become acknowledged, it was Rafinesque (1836, 163), a Franco-American naturalist, who in the nineteenth century adopted the word 'Taíno' as an inclusive term for the early colonial indigenous inhabitants of the Greater Antilles and Bahamas as he believed it to be their "collective proper name". This, again, was a mistake. In fact, the many different ethnic groups that inhabited the islands did not share a collective name as self-ascription. Instead, it is most likely that they "referred to themselves by the names of the localities in which they lived" (Rouse 1992, 5). Anthropologists and archaeologists have continued to use the umbrella term ever since, however. Besides, other names have been used through time. The linguist Daniel Brinton (1871) came up with 'Island Arawak' to express the relatedness of the languages of the Hispaniolan natives and the Lokóno or Arawak Indians occupying the northern areas of the South American mainland. The name met a wide response and became shortened to 'Arawak', which caused ambiguity as it wrongly implies an ethnic relationship between both cultural groups. 'Taíno', thus, for lack of a better term, remains frequently used when collectively referring to the early colonial-era inhabitants of the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas (e.g. Fewkes 1907, 26; 1922, 52, 261; Lovén 1935, 2; Rouse 1986, 114; 1992, 5).

Irving B. Rouse (1986, 1992) recognised the cultural and sociopolitical dissimilarities that existed among the various Taíno cultural groups. Subsequently, he divided them into different subgroups: Western Taíno on Jamaica, most of Cuba, and the Bahamian archipelago; 'Classic Taíno' on easternmost Cuba and the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico; and Eastern Taíno on most of the Virgin Islands and possibly some of the Leeward Antilles. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on the Taíno peoples of Hispaniola. This means that wherever the term 'Taíno' – *faute de mieux* – is used throughout this thesis it is meant to indicate the Hispaniolan 'Classic Taíno'; otherwise, a specification will be made. Now, what follows is a description of these 'Classic Taíno', the sociopolitically most complex and most developed people among the Taíno, who found their cultural centre on the island of Hispaniola.

### *Taíno society*

All achievements that were made from the Ostionoid period onwards, culminating in the last few centuries before contact (as discussed above), constituted 'Classic Taíno' society. The 'Classic Taíno' had attained the highest level of development among the pre-Columbian peoples of the Caribbean and their influence reached far beyond their territories (Allaire 1987; Crock 2000; Delpuech and Hofman 2004; Hofman 1993; Hofman et al. 2008; Keegan 1992a, 1997; Keegan and Maclachlan 1989; Rouse 1992). Also they were the most populous, although precise numbers are not easy to gauge. For the island of Hispaniola estimates have ranged from 100,000 (Mira Caballos 1997, 34; Rosenblat 1954, 102; 1992) to 7,000,000-8,000,000 (Cook and Borah 1971).<sup>41</sup> The dialect spoken by the 'Classic Taíno' peoples functioned as the *lingua franca* for all the Greater Antilles (Granberry and Vesceius 2004, 49). The ceramic style associated with the 'Classic Taíno' is the Chican Ostionoid, the final Ostionoid variation, encompassing local styles like Atajadizo, Guayabal and Boca Chica (Rouse 1992).

The political structure of the Taíno is often referred to as that of a number of "complex chiefdoms" (Wilson 1997b). From the historic sources we know that on the island of Hispaniola there were five major autonomous political units or *cacicazgos* that were led by a paramount chief or *cacique* (Wilson 1990a).<sup>42</sup> Each of these large polities comprised up to a hundred individual communities (*yucayeques*) that were ruled by minor *caciques* over which the supreme chief exerted his or her influence.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, *caciques* of important settlements extended their authority over the headmen of smaller villages (Redmond and Spencer 1994). Taíno society was based on avunculocal residence and matrilineal descent, meaning that name and status were inherited from one's mother (Alcina Franch 1983; Keegan and Maclachlan 1989; Wilson 1997b). Concurringly, the position of leader is believed to have been inherited from a maternal uncle (Keegan 2006b; Wilson 1997b; cf. Curet 2002, 2006). The chief's functions were social, economic,

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<sup>41</sup> The reconstruction of population figures at the time of contact has been given considerable scholarly attention. In between the limiting values, intermediate numbers of 400,000 and 500,000 are provided by Moya Pons (1987, 187; 1992) and Anderson-Córdova (1990), respectively, while Las Casas (1992:II, 76) estimated a Taíno population of more than 3,000,000 for Hispaniola. Keegan (1992b) prefers to maintain a range of 400,000 to 2,000,000. Detailed considerations of these wide ranging numbers can be found in Anderson-Córdova (1990, 180; 1995); Cook (1993); Henige (1978); Moya Pons (1987, 181-189; 1992); Watts (1987, 71-75); and Wilson (1990a, 91-92).

<sup>42</sup> The sociopolitical situation on Puerto Rico seems to have been a bit different. Although Taíno society on Puerto Rico (*Boriquén*) was based on the same principles of political organisation, the historic sources identify only one or two supreme chiefs on the island that ruled over less powerful leaders. Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés speaks of one paramount *cacique*, named Agueybaná, while Diego Colón (*Relación del Memorial del Almirante*) thinks of two, the other one being Guaybanex (Oliver 2005, 237).

<sup>43</sup> The function of *cacique* was also held by women (*cacica*) and indeed one of the most powerful leaders during the protohistoric and historical period was a female, named Anacaona (Wilson 1990a).

political, ceremonial, religious and military (Alcina Franch 1983; Moscoso 1986; Wilson 1990a, 1997b). The *cacique* was responsible for the division of labour, the order of public works and the collection of tribute. Moreover, a Taíno leader acted as intermediary, both cosmologically as an embodied link between the spirit realm and the human world, and in the sociopolitical sphere where an important task was the organisation of large communal events or religious ceremonies, known as *areytos*. Often neighbouring people were invited for these gatherings as they provided opportunities for exchange, marriage agreements and the reinforcement of alliances. Especially for elite members these were valuable occasions (Wilson 1990a, 1990b). The *areytos* were held at the central plaza and involved feasting, dancing and singing during which the history, customs and values of Taíno society were being recalled (Alegria 1997). A related phenomenon centring around exchange relations and diplomatic acts was the ball game, that was typically played during these meetings on levelled courts or plazas (García Arévalo 1990b). These ball courts (*bateyes*) are found throughout the Greater Antilles and Virgin Islands, while variants of the game were also played in South and Mesoamerica (Alegria 1951, 1983; Wilson 1990a, 22-26).

The Taíno hierarchical system consisted of at least two more social ranks: below the *caciques* came the nobles, called *nitaínos*, followed by the common people, or *naborías* (Moscoso 1986, 330-355; Oliver 1998, 64-82). Some have mentioned the existence of a separate class for slaves, though this has never been unequivocally proved (Moscoso 1978; Rouse 1948a, 530; Sauer 1966, 50). The *nitaínos* acted in close relationship with the *caciques* and basically functioned as polity informants executing chiefly orders and organising work for the commoners (Oliver 2005, 241-242). Among these elite members – who did not account for more than 5% of the total population (Wilson 2007, 110) – there were *behiques*, religious specialists or shamans who, like *caciques*, possessed the ability to connect with the supernatural world, but who furthermore possessed valuable knowledge about nature and the cosmic (Deive 1983). Access to the numinous was achieved by means of the *cohoba* ritual, a practice during which the body was being purified and hallucinogenic drugs were consumed. Thus reaching an altered state of consciousness the *cacique* or *behique* was able to make a shamanic flight and contact the spirits. An additional and exclusive role of *behiques* was that of healer. While the *cacique* was responsible for the welfare of the whole community, the *behique* cared about the physical-spiritual well-being of the individual (Oliver 2005, 245; Pané 1999[1571]).<sup>44</sup> *Caciques* and *nitaínos* were considered very important figures. They held privileged positions and benefited from exclusive access to some of community's resources, like special foods (Oliver 2005, 242). In appearance they distinguished themselves from the commoners by dressing up with powerful religious regalia and elite accoutrements (Alegria 1995; Oliver 2005, 242). *Cacical* interments – buried with “some of their most precious jewels” (Oliver 2005, 242) as well as, allegedly, some of their wives (Oliver 2005, 243; Rouse 1992, 13) – were attended with elaborate courtesy (Oliver 2005, 242-244). In afterlife *caciques* received a divine status (Siegel 1997), though some attribute them this (semi)divine connotation also during their lifetime, given the veneration and decorum they were commonly surrounded with (Mol 2007, 63). The *naborías* – which means “the rest of them” (Oliver 2005, 246) – basically supported Taíno society. The Taíno practiced intensive agriculture based primarily on the cultivation of cassava (manioc) and other root crops, which they planted in artificial earthen mounds (Petersen 1997; Rouse 1992; Sturtevant 1961) (fig. 21). Other cultigens were

<sup>44</sup> A more detailed discussion about the distinctions and specific roles of *caciques*, *behiques* and priests in Taíno society can be found in Deive (1983), Roe (1997) and Siegel (1999).



**Figure 21.** Taíno preparation of manioc and corn. Girolamo Benzoni, *La historia del mondo nuovo*, 1565. Translated by W.H. Smythe as 'History of the New World', Hakluyt Society Publications, 21. Hakluyt Society, London, 1857.

squash, sweet potatoes, maize, beans and peppers, as well as a variety of fruits (Newsom 1993; Vega 2001). Hunting birds, small mammals (hutia [*Isolobodon portoricensis*], agouti and solenodon) and reptiles (especially iguanas and snakes) supplemented Taíno diet (Alegría 1997; Newsom and Wing 2004). Their menu was made perfectly balanced by fishing and collecting shellfish and other marine life (Newsom and Wing 2004; Wing 2001; Wing and Reitz 1982; Wing and Scudder 1983), which provided important sources of protein. Occasionally, the Taíno

caught larger marine species like sharks, turtles and manatees (Keegan and Carlson 2008; Newsom and Wing 2004). Tobacco and cotton were widely grown, of which the latter was used for multiple purposes like the fabrication of clothing, hammocks and *zemí* dolls (see Taylor et al. 1997; Vega 1973). Some animals, like the (reportedly hairless and barkless) dog (*Canis familiaris*), were domesticates and used for either hunting, company and/or occasional food. Also the guinea pig (*Cavia porcellus*) was used for food (Newsom and Wing 2004, 73).

Taíno sedentary lifestyle is reflected by permanent villages consisting of a variable number of circular houses with conical thatched roofs (*caneyes*) that were built around a central plaza. The dwellings provided shelter to approximately ten persons of an extended family who together with some three to five similar houses formed a house group of some thirty to forty closely related people (Samson 2011). The Taíno were commendable craftsmen who produced exquisite objects carved from wood, stone, shell and bone. Also gold was used, that was worked unheated into various objects. Often these artefacts were used as bodily ornamentation or intended as free-standing ceremonial objects that were owned and controlled by the elite. Personal adornments included earrings, plugs for nose, ear and lips, necklaces, bracelets, pendants, amulets and beads. Feathered crowns, painting and tattooing completed Taíno exuberant appearance. The larger items encompassed stone collars, elbow stones and three-pointers (McGinnis 1997b; Walker 1997); religious paraphernalia and statuettes (Alegría 1997; García Arévalo 1997; Roe 1997); belts and dolls bundling ancestor bones (Siegel 1997; Taylor et al. 1997; Vega 1973); and *duhos*, ceremonial seats that represent beautiful examples of Taíno woodworking skills (Ostapkowicz 1997; Ostapkowicz et al. 2011) (see also section 4.6).

The most intricate objects, however, are those designated as *zemís* (or *cemís*), materialised representations of Taíno spirits, gods and ancestors. *Zemís* were at the centre of Taíno religion, which was based on shamanic, animistic traditions brought into the Antilles by the early Saladoid peoples from the South American mainland. *Zemís* embodied supernatural power and possessed the ability of either helping or hurting their owner, mostly *caciques*; they were no simple images, but were actual spirit



beings themselves. *Zemí* objects were subjected to worship and veneration as they legitimised the *cacique's* political power and social status (Curet 1992a; McGinnis 1997a; Pane 1999 [1571]). Those who possessed *zemís* and were able to control them, secured access to the superhuman realm to themselves and consequently were the most powerful. By the public display of the chiefly *zemís*, very personal items, the *caciques* asserted their special ties with the real and mythical ancestors. The sculptural *zemís* take many forms; particularly characteristic and most widespread are the triangular three-pointed stones, though images are also commonly found on ceramics, religious paraphernalia and other elite associated objects (see also section 4.6). The materials used for their fabrication include wood, stone, clay, bone, shell, coral and cotton (Roe 1997; Siegel 1997).

#### 4.5 Caribbean exchange networks: an archaeological history

Due to the absence of large terrestrial fauna that could be used as riding or pack animals transport over land went on foot. More importantly, however, as for island societies worldwide, was the usage of the dugout canoe, that came in many forms and sizes. Made from a single hollow tree trunk these sailless lightweight boats are reported to have been suitable for carrying as many as eighty persons (Cassá 1974, 92). Both up-river as on the open sea it was the ideal and swiftest medium to transport goods and persons over varying distances. Its usage made it possible to maintain regular contacts with people living in other villages and other islands. Villages were often located along riverbanks or coasts so that the access to navigable water was generally within short reach. Not being familiar with sails, over long distances the Taíno paddlers were dependent on the currents of the sea, undertakings that inherently brought along risks and unpredictability. Tropical storms and hurricanes are mostly seasonal, but the moist easterly trade winds blow year-round.

The precolonial Caribbean did not consist of introverted communities living in isolated places and islands (Rouse 1951, 1986, 1992). Rather, the opposite is true. The archipelago was a dynamic arena in which frequent interaction on both the local and the regional levels made the islands highly interconnected. Most of the islands are intervisible and relatively easy to reach from surrounding places (Bright 2011, 24-26; Curet and Hauser, 2011; Hofman *et al.* 2007, 2010, 2011; Keegan and Diamond 1987).<sup>45</sup> The maritime subsistence base of many of the islanders resulted in a high familiarity with the sea, practical knowledge that they could easily apply when navigating to other islands. It made the Caribbean Sea a useful highway that linked the islands with the northern shores of South America, with Central America and Florida. This body of water was a link rather than a barrier and formed a medium that facilitated contact between societies living on both the islands and the continent (Watters and Rouse 1989). It was quite common that people maintained more frequent contacts with communities living on the opposite island than with those situated on the other end of the same island, certainly so for those in the extremities of the Greater Antilles (Hofman *et al.* 2007; Rouse 1951; Watters and Rouse 1989).

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<sup>45</sup> Other than perceptible through direct visibility, islands can also be otherwise apparent through, for example, favourable weather conditions like cloud formation. Concerning the islands' reachableness, the main troubles are with the passages between the mainlands and the first adjacent islands. In the case of Yucatán-Cuba the distance measures almost 200 km, Florida and the Bahamas lie some 100 km apart, while Tobago and Grenada are separated by a 125-km gap. Nonetheless, in the latter case, if the first crossing has been made it is relatively easy island-hopping up until Cuba, with the only serious gap being the Anegada Passage that separates the British Virgin Islands and Sombrero Island of Anguilla (Wilson 2007, 4).

Samuel Wilson's (1993) term "cultural mosaic" has already been mentioned in the introduction to this chapter and indeed the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean accommodated a plethora of ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, as discussed in the previous section. Perhaps more importantly, though, is the fact that these peoples were linked by the interaction networks they held in operation. Keegan (1996a, 277) already argued likewise by proposing to use the term *matrices* instead of *mosaic*, saying that the latter "leaves the impression that the *mosaic* is the product of discrete entities". He then postulates his alternative, that "a more compelling metaphor is that of *matrices* of connections linking communities with one another". To this Hofman *et al.* (2007, 244) add an extra dimension by labelling these interaction networks as "rhythmic", a concept adopted "to express the dynamics of expansion and contraction, fission and fusion, and continuity and discontinuity that characterise the social relationships across the archipelago through time". These notions stress connections and interactions instead of highlighting cultural diversity *per se* and advocate the nature of these networks as being fluid and flexible as opposed to static and conservative, and this is precisely how we have to conceive of the pre-Columbian Caribbean and its interacting inhabitants.

Especially in the last decade archaeological research has adopted this approach, which has gained major ground primarily by a number of large, multidisciplinary projects initiated by Leiden University under the auspices of Corinne L. Hofman, notably those titled 'Mobility and Exchange' (2003-2008) and 'Communicating Communities' (started June 2008). The general trend within Caribbean archaeology is a gradual development towards the establishment of a pan-Caribbean perspective of precolonial mobility and exchange (Hofman and Bright 2010). Instead of concentrating on microscale interactions, the focus is on long-term macroregional interactions with the aim to unravel the composition and operation of the diverse larger and smaller integrated and independent interaction networks. To do this, according to Hofman and Bright (2010, i), we need to conceive of the wider Caribbean "as a circum-Caribbean region (Antilles, coastal South America, southern Caribbean islands, Isthmo-Colombian area and coastal Central America) inhabited by a multitude of pre-Colonial Amerindian communities, [which] is to render (at least conceptually) the region a variegated yet cohesive entity, and lend it a degree of commonality and shared identity". Employing this perspective of widely interacting communities, I will here consider the material exchange of the precolonial inhabitants of the circum-Caribbean. The aim is to draw up a concise history of exchanged goods that may help detecting long-term patterns, object characteristics and attributes that were important to the precolonial peoples up to the colonial period. With this, it is, however, less the aim to describe which specific people used and traded which particular goods than it is to provide a general diachronic picture of the variety of social valuables that were being exchanged in pre-Columbian times.

#### 4.5.1 The Lithic/Archaic Age (2500-500 B.C.)

Ever since the moment the move into the archipelago was made, influences from the surrounding mainlands have been noticeable in the Caribbean islandscape. A case in point is the introduction of crops like maize, manioc and the sweet potato (Fortuna 1980; Mickleburgh and Pagán Jiménez, in press; Pagán Jiménez 2007; Pagán Jiménez *et al.* 2005), a botanical complex that spread throughout the Greater Antilles since at least 2500 B.C. (Rodríguez Ramos 2010). With these cultigens came agricultural techniques, culinary traditions, "and very likely a set of ideological principles associated with those botanical traditions" (*ibid.*, 29). Contacts with the mainland are further evidenced by the finding of an

obsidian blade in Maruca, Puerto Rico; volcanic glass of which the nearest geological source can be found in Mesoamerica (Rodríguez Ramos 2007). Furthermore, also some early pottery traditions seem to have spread between the insular Caribbean and the surrounding mainlands in this stage (Rodríguez Ramos 2007, 2010).

In this period of initial Caribbean settlement, acquiring personal adornments and other sumptuary items was often a matter of self-production, using locally available materials. Nevertheless, a number of archaeological finds provides tentative evidence of contacts and transactions between island societies that went beyond the daily action radius. Such an example is provided by the documentation of a number of serpentinite findings on Puerto Rico: two pendants were recovered at Angostura, of which one was found in the context of a burial; several oval-shaped or petaloid amulets were unearthed at the site of Ortiz; and, also, beads were found in (unspecified) Archaic contexts (Rodríguez Ramos 2007, 2010). Serpentinite occurs naturally on Puerto Rico, though only on the western side of the island (see Rodríguez Ramos 2010, Fig. 1), at least some hundred kilometres away from Angostura. Travelling such distances, particularly directed at the importation of this specific raw material, reveals the importance of the rock type for the early island dwellers of, at least, Puerto Rico (Rodríguez Ramos 2007). In his extensive research on precolonial stone, Rodríguez Ramos (2007) furthermore refers to a serpentinite find located in Banwari Trace, Trinidad – earlier documented by Harris (1973) – concerning the rim fragment of a stone bowl. Here again, the material does not occur locally as far as known today and was probably imported from coastal Venezuela. Yet another example of wearable art comes from Mona Island, a sedimentary island between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, where a basalt pendant decorated with geometric designs was encountered, pointing to a Puerto Rican origin (Rodríguez Ramos 2007). In most cases, however, also these pendants (or *bobitos*) – which resemble the spiral shell of gastropod species (*ibid.*) – were made of local materials. Lastly, and probably most remarkable as far as distance is concerned, is the finding of a radiolarian limestone celt fragment in Paso del Indio, Puerto Rico (*ibid.*), since the occurrence of this material is restricted to St. Martin, some 350 km away (Knippenberg 1999, 2006).

The finds mentioned so far could be determined ‘non-local’ through the materials they were made of. Other examples of presumably sumptuary items are less clear and can only be guessed to have circulated over wider areas. In these cases the materials used are often shell (notably mother of pearls and *Strombus* sp.), bone and coral. Rodríguez Ramos (2007, 107-113) mentions the recovery of discoidal stone beads (e.g. Puerto Ferro, Puerto Rico); shell adornments with serrated edges from the site of Maruca, Puerto Rico; stone spheres, also known to have been grave goods (Paso del Indio, Puerto Rico); and a variety of other shell and stone beads. Furthermore, at Puerto Ferro two triangular shell pieces have been found that Rodríguez Ramos (2007, 111) notes to resemble proto-*cemíes*, i.e. three-pointed stones. Also possibly related to religion is an engraved cobble from La Pesa, Puerto Rico, that features an avian-like figure that we particularly know of later, Huecoid times (Rodríguez Ramos 2007; see Boomert 1987). In sum, this period is characterised by several long-distance maritime translocations of, notably, peoples, domesticated plants and pottery traditions. Furthermore, there seem to have existed relatively small-scale intra- and interisland interaction spheres that facilitated the exchange of prestige-enhancing commodities and personal adornments, sometimes fabricated from extralocal materials. Interesting is the diversity of materials used in this early stage, as well as the apparent effort invested to

acquire certain materials, and the tentative religious connotations that some objects appear to have borne.

#### 4.5.2 The Early Ceramic Age or Saladoid period (500 B.C. - c. A.D. 650/800)

The pathways for interaction established by the earliest Caribbean populations were to be fully exploited and elaborated upon in the Early Ceramic Age, when a second wave of South American groups, associated with the Saladoid series, settled the islands (see above). This “repeopling”, as Rouse (1992) called it, was not only a physical translocation of people, but entailed the introduction of new cultural practices, material culture, ideas and ideologies as well. Especially in this early Saladoid period, maintaining contact and establishing patterns of exchange appeared of vital importance for those who had just arrived in the insular Caribbean. Enduring contact with the South American mainland assured, for example, the availability of marriage partners, which was an important life strategy for the Cedrosan Saladoid and Huecoid peoples. Another survival strategy was presumably sought in the exchange of prestige goods throughout the region (Hofman *et al.* 2007). Only once firmly settled the ties became less strong, as will be seen in the next section.

As a consequence of the leapfrogging colonisation of the islands, the earliest exchange networks that were established by the South American Saladoid groups were limited to the Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands and eastern Puerto Rico (see Hofman *et al.* 2007, Fig. 5a). When after 300 B.C. the La Hueca culture had virtually disappeared, the Cedrosan Saladoid peoples quickly filled the lacunae left by the Huecoids, thereby populating the entire area between Puerto Rico and South America. As a consequence, microregional styles began to develop increasingly, which presumably encouraged local specialisation (Hofman *et al.* 2007; Watters 1997; Watters and Scaglione 1994). Particularly prominent commodities that came to circulate widely in this area were flint from Long Island, Antigua, and St. Martin (Hope Estate) greenstone (Knippenberg 2004, 2006) (fig. 22). Most often these materials were worked into finished products on the spot before being exchanged (Haviser 1999; Knippenberg 1999; de Waal 1999). Both were used for the fabrication of tools, yet greenstone additionally served as the prime material for the production of axe heads or celts. Moreover, also metamorphic rocks and green stones



**Figure 22.** Local distribution of flint, greenstone and calciridite in the northern Lesser Antilles in the Archaic and Ceramic Ages (after Hofman and Hoogland 2011, 23).

were used for these celts, which, interestingly, do not occur naturally in the Lesser Antilles (Knippenberg 2006). More distant sources might thus have been consulted (Hofman *et al.* 2007). Shell and semiprecious, but also less exotic, stone materials circulated widely and specialised microlapidary workshops dating to this Early Ceramic period have been found on multiple islands (see Hofman *et al.* 2007 for an overview of documented sites). The most outstanding sites are those of Trants, Montserrat (Crock and Bartone 1998; Watters and Scaglione 1994), Sorcé/La Hueca, Vieques (Narganes Storde 1995, 1999; Oliver 1999) and Punta Candeleró, Puerto Rico (Rodríguez López 1991, 1993), where thousands of ornamental items have been found, suggesting their function as centres of trade and exchange (see also Cody 1993; Knippenberg 2006). The (exotic) stone materials were typically fashioned into beads, amulets and pendants, using a variety of stone types, comprising rocks and minerals like amethyst, quartz, serpentinite, jadeite, peridotite, olivine, aventurine, beryl, amber, carnelian, malachite, barite, garnet, calcite, greenschist, lignite, nephrite and turquoise.

The tremendous increase in semiprecious stone artefacts and other exotics throughout the insular Caribbean during this period can be partly ascribed to imports from the South American mainland that were taken by the Saladoid colonists (e.g. Boomert 1987; Cody 1993). Often in direct association with these 'heirlooms' came other influences such as iconographic representations, ideas that would quickly be absorbed into and adapted to Caribbean island life.<sup>46</sup> Early examples (before 200 B.C.) in which this homeland is recalled can be perceived in ceramics encountered up until eastern Puerto Rico, that were generally fabricated from local clays, yet decorated with an iconography portraying South American elements (Hofman *et al.* 2007) – most often realistic and mythological faunal representations (Roe 1989).<sup>47</sup> These animal forms and designs constitute a recurrent pattern in ornamental manufactures throughout the Saladoid period and thereafter (e.g. Boomert 1987). Most often frogs are portrayed, though many other species occur, like jaguars, dogs, bats, owls, raptorial birds, frigate birds and caimans, but also characteristic island elements like turtles, sharks, manatees, lizards, fishes, and possibly rodents like hutias (*Isolobodon portoricensis*) (Hofman *et al.* 2007). Most of the animals endemic to the mainland were substituted by island species after time (e.g. jaguar-dog), though some persisted, reflecting the continuous connection with South America (Boomert 2000, 2003; Roe 1989; see also García Arévalo 1997). One of these specimens that are regularly found is the king vulture, which is particularly shaped into "green stone" pendants (Boomert 1987, 2003; see Narganes Storde 1995). The animal representations often carry religious connotations and symbolism and their meaning is generally sexually coded (Boomert 1987, pers. comm. 2006) (fig. 20). Apart from rock materials and gemstones, also other artefacts are likely to have been integrated in the systematic networks of exchange (fig. 23). Among them were items made of *Pinctada* and *Spondylus* shells, that must have had special significance (see Blower 1995; Trubitt 2003). Also, jaguar and peccary teeth have been found on Vieques. The teeth were drilled for their use as pendants, thus expressing a connectedness with the South American mainland (Boomert 2008; Rodríguez Ramos 2010). Besides, hammered ornaments fabricated from *tumbaga* or *guanín* (an indigenous term) are notable. This is an alloy of gold, copper and silver that had its origin in South America and the Isthmo-Colombian area (Oliver 2000; Sauer 1966, 61; Vega 1979). Although archaeological finds are scarce, it is conceivable that *guanín* became a product of exchange as

<sup>46</sup> For the 'heirloom' concept, see Lillios (1999). For its application in the Caribbean, see Fitzpatrick *et al.* (2009).

<sup>47</sup> It appears that in some instances also exotic clays were used, suggesting the inter-island transportation of either clays or finished pots (Hofman 1999).

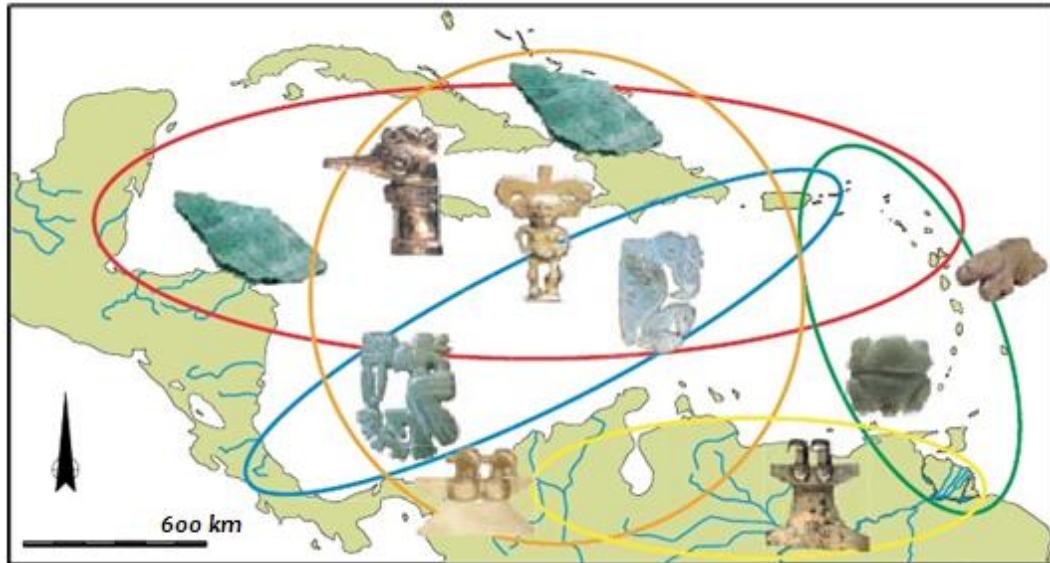


Figure 23. Pan-regional distributions of greenstone and guanín objects (after Hofman and Hoogland 2011, 20).

early as the Early Ceramic Age (Boomert 1987, 37; Siegel and Severin 1993; Whitehead 1990).<sup>48</sup> All in all, it is not strange Rodríguez Ramos (2010) called this period the “Iridescent period”.

Possibly there were also connections with Central America during this period. Evidence is, however, scarce and tentative. Rodríguez Ramos (2010) points to various concomitances between Isthmo-Colombian and insular Caribbean (though excluding Cuba and Hispaniola) personal adornments and celts or adzes made of jade. There is some iconographic similarity, reflected in the representation of beak bird, axe-god, curly-tailed, frog-shaped, reptilian, and winged pendants (also Rodríguez Ramos 2007) (fig. 24). Also to a certain extent manufacturing techniques are similar, and, lastly, the types of raw materials used for manufacture of the wearable art types are identical, including the jade forms jadeite and serpentinite (Rodríguez Ramos 2007, 2010; see Knippenberg 2006). However, serpentinite occurs widely, also in the Greater Antilles and Venezuela, while jadeite sources have recently been located on Hispaniola and Cuba (Hofman and Hoogland 2011, 20; Rodríguez Ramos 2010, 26). Also, serpentinite has been found in its early modification phases in the Caribbean, which makes a Central American origin unlikely. Jadeite, nephrite and turquoise, however, have only been found as finished items, which suggests their mainland (i.e. Central and/or South America) origin and subsequent intra-Caribbean circulation via the existing exchange networks (Rodríguez Ramos 2010, 2011). A striking difference between both geographical artefact groups is the archaeological context in which they predominate: burials in the Isthmo-Colombian area and mounded middens in the Caribbean (Rodríguez Ramos 2010).

In the latest phase of the Early Ceramic Age, between A.D. 400 and 650/800, microregional interaction still continued along the Lesser Antillean arc, yet the long-distance trade network was diminishing (Hofman and Hoogland 2004; Hofman *et al.* 2007). Puerto Rico did no longer receive greenstone and flint from the northern Lesser Antilles (Knippenberg 2006), while also the frequency of lapidary items in the latter area, as well as at some other sites, decreased considerably (Hofman *et al.* 2007). In contrast, the first three-pointed stones appeared in the Leeward Islands and ornaments made of naïad shells

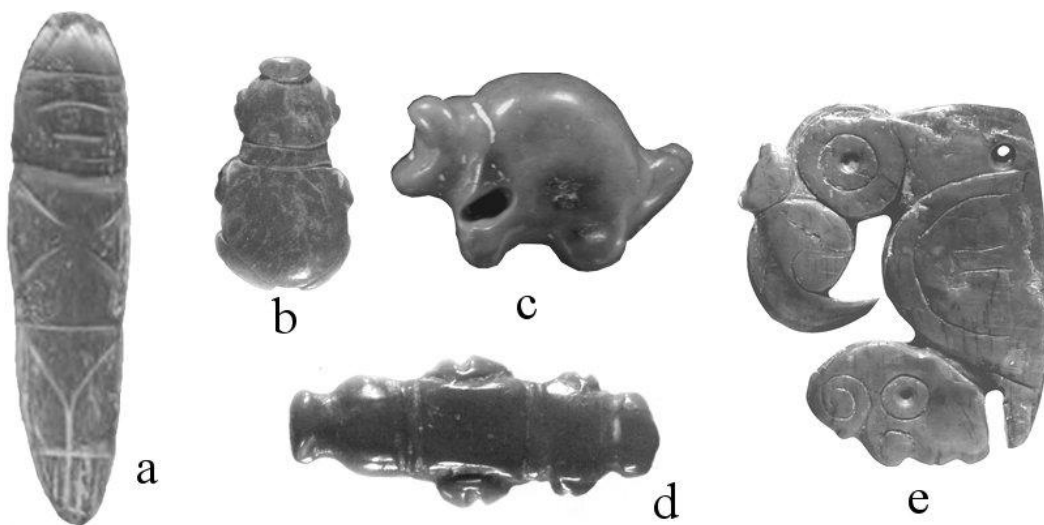
<sup>48</sup> The earliest known *guanín* artefact has been found in a Saladoid context in Maisabel, northern Puerto Rico. It is dated to about A.D. 100 (Siegel and Severin 1993).

(*Unionidae* sp.) increasingly occurred throughout the Lesser Antilles, possibly stemming from Trinidad or the mainland (*ibid.*).

In sum, initially the Early Ceramic Age showed a further evolvement of the exchange networks in the Caribbean islands, mainly caused by the entry of new groups of people from the South American mainland. The Saladoid peoples actively engaged in long-distance trade and maintained contact with their homeland as a matter of survival. Initially the distances between communities were generally large due to the rapid early dispersal of relatively few people. Nevertheless, when more islands became populated, more localised networks of exchange and distinct style zones developed. The Saladoid period is renowned for its apparent lapidary industry, expressed in a variety of gemstone ornaments and artefacts scattered abundantly throughout the Lesser Antilles up to Puerto Rico, both seen as local manufactures and finished items. Relations with perhaps Central America, the Isthmo-Colombian region and South America facilitated the spread of panregional iconographic themes, technological traditions and raw materials, though local variations and reinterpretations were present. Next to semiprecious stones like various jade forms, materials used for adornments and prestige goods included ceramics, shell, bone and metal. When the end of the Saladoid came close, the exchange networks and distribution areas gradually contracted.

#### 4.5.3 The Late Ceramic Age I (c. A.D. 650/800-1200)

As already discussed in section 4.3, the transition from Saladoid to Ostionoid and Troumassoid entailed considerable alterations in, for example, social and political complexity during what Rouse (1992) called Periods IIIa and IIIb. The Caribbean islanders were well adapted to island life now and population density increased. The Greater Antilles were being populated by new groups of people, and indeed a Greater Antillean crucible of cultures was beginning to emerge. This phase typically was a transitional period in which, one can say, the distorted equilibrium caused by the waning of the Saladoid had to be gradually restored and reinvented. The decline in long-distance exchanges that was set into motion during the previous period continued, which led to a process of regionalisation in the Lesser Antilles (Hofman *et al.* 2007). The interaction networks were being rearticulated. Intercommunity interaction basically took place only between neighbouring islands, promoting cultural and stylistic differentiation on the



**Figure 24.** Pan-Caribbean themes objectified in personal adornments in the Antilles: (a) axe-god pendant, Antigua (b) frog-shaped pendant, La Hueca-Sorcé, Vieques; (c) curly-tailed pendant, La Hueca-Sorcé; (d) reptilian amulet, La Hueca-Sorcé; (e) beak-bird pendant (Rodríguez Ramos 2010, 30).

microlevel. This increasing regionalisation is expressed by an adherence to local materials and the development of local pottery styles – though these were generally embedded in larger style zones.

The exotic gemstones formerly used for the manufacture of ornaments were substituted by local stone materials, such as calcite, diorite and rock crystal varieties (Hofman *et al.* 2007). Calcirudite from the northern Lesser Antilles became the predominant material from which to manufacture three-pointed stones, and it was during this period that their production reached its peak in the region (Crock 2000; Knippenberg 2004, 2006). Simultaneously, other (local) materials such as flint and greenstone (both discussed above) were distributed over less extensive areas than they were previously, though their volumes increased substantially (Crock and Petersen 2004; Hofman *et al.* 2007; Knippenberg 2004, 2006). In contrast, Rodríguez Ramos (2010, 2011) argues that during this period there was an increase in the panregional circulation of jadeitite celts and (frog-shaped) personal adornments. The items now appeared throughout the Greater Antilles instead of being restricted to Puerto Rico and occurred on multiple islands of the Lesser Antilles. According to Rodríguez Ramos (2010, 37) “it is quite possible that after A.D. 1000, the Cuban and Hispaniolan sources of jadeitite get inserted into the pan-regional distribution of this raw material”. Concomitant was an increase in the distribution of celts made of radiolarian limestone, though their circulation was presumably restricted to the Lesser Antilles (Crock 2000; Knippenberg 2006). In the Greater Antilles adorned celts, especially portraying axe-god motifs, appear from this time onwards (Rodríguez Ramos 2010). Following distinctions between Antillean and Central American pieces from the Early Ceramic Age, also the Late Ceramic Age showed different expressions of panregional themes in the iconography and use of the celts. In particular, the Antillean variants were used as hand held objects, as opposed to their use as pendants in Costa Rica and elsewhere on the mainland. Rodríguez Ramos (2010) additionally mentions the first instances of monolithic axes in the Greater Antilles from A.D. 1000.

#### 4.5.4 The Late Ceramic Age II (A.D. 1200-1500)

The period from A.D. 1200 until European contact formed the heyday of Taíno society. Chiefdoms developed and cultural boundaries were resettled once again. With the Taíno, Caribbean artistic expression reached its climax and a tremendous variety of material culture flowed through the revitalised pan-Caribbean long-distance exchange networks. Political and cultural influence of the Taíno spread as far as the northern Lesser Antilles and Bahamas (Crock and Petersen 2004; Hofman 1993; Hofman and Hoogland 2004; Keegan 1992a; Keegan and Maclachlan 1989). Taíno artefacts or Taíno-influenced artefacts are quite commonly found in these regions, including pottery, ritual items, personal adornments and other prestige-enhancing paraphernalia, made of a range of different materials (e.g. Hofman *et al.* 2008; Hofman and Hoogland 2004; Keegan 1992a, 2007; Mol 2007; Oliver 2009b; Rodríguez Ramos 2007). The Lesser Antilles constituted an important link between the cultural centres of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico and the South American mainland, and it may be presumed that much of the exchanges between both culture zones passed through these islands (Hofman *et al.* 2007). Remarkable throughout the Caribbean islandscape are the recurrent iconographic features and themes, expressed in multiple material media, that show tentative similarities with elements found in Central America, the Isthmo-Colombian and the Andes, suggesting an underlying pan-Caribbean ideological framework. Another connection is proposed by virtue of presumed similarities in the ball courts and the associated game of Central America, the Antilles and South America (Alegría 1983; Rodríguez Ramos 2010, 39). The



next section will describe in more detail the highly valued commodities that were in use and circulation during the final phase of the Late Ceramic Age.

#### 4.6 Late Ceramic Age social valuables

Most of the more elaborately crafted artefacts that we know of Late Ceramic Age Taíno society come from private collections or museum exhibits (see Bercht *et al.* 1997). Only a small part of the total assemblage can be traced to the archaeological context in which these items were once found. Aided by ethnohistorical information as well as sporadic new archaeological findings we are able to gain some insight into the intriguing class of artefacts that the Taíno valued most. The specialised craftsmanship that was reserved for the manufacture of these artefacts added to their value. Also the materials of which the items were made of were carefully chosen. Moreover, there was hardly any element of the object that was not in some sense connected to the spirit world or that had no religious connotations. These factors distinguished the objects and made them social valuables of which the possession and usage were restricted to the highest classes of Taíno society. They were symbols of prestige, status, and power and played an important role as exchange items between *caciques*. Only more exhaustive studies may provide a detailed picture of the intricate meaning and function of these social valuables (but see e.g. Mol 2007; Oliver 2000). For the scope of this research I will limit myself to a short description of each of these object categories.

##### 4.6.1 Three-pointed stones

The triangular shaped three-pointers, or *trigonolitos*, were, as noted above, among those objects that represented *zemís* (fig. 25). They were the *caciques*' legitimising devices (Walker 1997). Moreover, ethnohistoric accounts suggest that three-pointers were buried in *conucos* as fertility charms, though they most probably served many additional (ceremonial) functions (McGinnis 1997b; Pané 1999[1571]). The objects have a central cone and two lower ends and occur in various sizes and production materials, being of stone, coral or shell, and have been found quite frequently.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes they show anthropomorphic or zoomorphic heads or figures on one pointed end, while on the opposite pointed



**Figure 25.** Three-pointed *zemí*, Puerto Rico. 14.0 x 29.2 x 12.7. Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. Source: www.lehman.edu.

end depicting hunched “frog” legs. Others are formed like a woman’s breast or mountain peak, generally making reference to power and fertility. More than half of them, however, are undecorated (McGinnis 1997b). Through time their size and level of craftsmanship increased. The finest and largest ornate examples are from the Late Ceramic Age and come from the eastern Greater Antilles. Other, smaller and less refined three-pointers have been found in the Lesser Antilles, the earliest examples appearing in contexts dated to 200 B.C. (Alegría 1997; Veloz Maggiolo 1970). It is postulated that the chronological evolution of the three-pointer’s size reflects developments in the level of sociopolitical organisation, the smallest ones being

<sup>49</sup> Around 1900 Jesse Walter Fewkes classified the various three-pointer forms into four typological categories that are still widely used by scholars. A summary of these types can be found in McGinnis (1997b, 100-101) and Veloz Maggiolo (1970).

private possessions, and the larger, later examples forming proof of stratified society by their presumed use at public rituals. Nevertheless, the use of the small personal items persisted until the final Chicoid period (Walker 1997).

#### 4.6.2 Stone collars and elbow stones

Apart from three-pointers, two other classes considered to be 'idols' or embodiments of spiritual beings are "stone collars" and "elbow stones". Both were probably used at public ceremonies and rituals and are believed to reference and convey Taíno myths. In contrast to the privately owned three-pointed figures, stone collars and elbow stones presumably were communal possessions. Their precise functional use is not clear, however (Walker 1997). Stone collars are large, often massive monolithic rings or belts. Through time they are believed to have evolved into more slender forms. They are felt to be associated with the Taíno ball game: players may have worn them around the waist (Alegría 1951, 1983; Ekholm 1961). Most examples come from Hispaniola and, predominantly, Puerto Rico, where their occurrence is quite common (McGinnis 1997a). Contrary to stone collars, elbow stones have only rarely been found. Elbow stones are most often interpreted as partial, gracile stone collars, not having the closed circular form that the collars exhibit. They are believed to be an abbreviated derivation of a combined stone collar/three-pointer form, in which the three-pointer was attached to the collar. As such they appear to postdate the stone collars (Walker 1997).

#### 4.6.3 Ceremonial seats (duhos)

*Duhos* are low stools that functioned as seats for *caciques* and shamans so that their distinct, chiefly rank was given physical expression through sitting in a higher position. Most were made out of highly-polished black- or dark-coloured hardwood like *guayacán* (*Guaiacum officinale* or *G. sanctum*) or mahogany (*Swietenia mahogani*), tree species that were appreciated for their colour, strength, toughness and durability, and were considered to possess spiritual power (see also Chapter 7). For other examples stone or even coral were preferred as manufacturing material. The mouth and eyes of the richly carved spiritual being shown by the *duho* were often decorated with gold, shell or stone inlays (fig. 26).<sup>50</sup> The *duho* had an important place in Taíno society, where it was a means to form and maintain social, political and ideological hierarchies. The seat was typically used in the context of ceremonies, rituals and exchanges, where its presence elevated the owner above the rest and emphasised notions of power and prestige. It signified the great importance of the event that whenever high-ranking guests were welcomed they too were provided a *duho* in order to demonstrate their special status. The stool also served as a medium to communicate with the supernatural world. Seated upon it both *caciques* and shamans (*behiques*) used hallucinogenic drugs to enter a state of trance in which spiritual



Figure 26. Wooden *duho* decorated with gold inlays. Source: [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org).

<sup>50</sup> For an interpretation of the bared-teeth motif in pre-Columbian artefacts, see Samson and Waller (2010).

contacts were sought. Its role as communication device enhanced the symbolic and ritual power of the *duho*. Except for being a means to exchange, the *duho* itself could also be used as an elite trade item, an extraordinary present and potent symbol indeed, given the intimate relationship that often existed between the ritual seat and its owner. The iconographic elements of the *duho* depicted *zemís* and ancestor spirits that were linked to the owner and gave him support and authority. It is known from ethnohistorical sources that a deceased *cacique* was sometimes even buried with his personal stool. The archaeological conservation and preservation of the seats is difficult given their often organic composition. Nonetheless, today more than one hundred examples are curated by museums and private collectors worldwide. The Hispaniolan *duhos*, which form the majority of the ceremonial seats that we know, are commonly made of hardwood. Most of them have an extended back (so-called “high-backs”) and are decorated with anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and geometric designs, whereas on the island of Puerto Rico considerably less elaborately carved, stone *duhos*, both high- and low-backed, predominate the assemblage. The largest examples, depicting some of the most complex iconography and varying styles, have been located in the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. The distribution of pieces beyond these islands is very limited (Ostapkowicz 1997; Ostapkowicz et al. 2011).

#### 4.6.4 Shamanic paraphernalia

The *cohoba* ceremony was an important ritual event, enabling, after a period of abstinence, the shamanic flight towards the supernatural world and hence making contact with the spirits. In order to reach an altered state of consciousness several instruments were available to the *cacique* or *behique*. Among these were vomiting spatulas, drug inhalers and *cohoba* stands. Vomiting spatulas, or *purgaderas*, were carved sticks that ensured the purification of the body through puking (fig. 27). Most often they are made of wood, shell or manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) bone, sometimes inlaid with conch shell or gold, and portraying zoomorphic figures (Alegría 1985). Drug inhalers were small tubes that were put into the nose in order to aid in the intense absorption of the narcotic snuff. They are made of clay, wood, conch shell, or, more commonly, manatee or bird bones. *Cohoba* stands are wooden or stone, flat platforms from which the drugs were consumed. The most elaborate pieces are beautifully crafted and inlaid with shell or gold, and often portray gods or anthropomorphic figures (Alegría 1997) (fig. 28). Additionally, spoons, mostly made of bone, were used to ladle the *cohoba* powder (see Bercht et al. 1997, Fig. 15, 117). The *duho* discussed above was commonly used during this ritual (Ostapkowicz 1997).

#### 4.6.5 Gold artefacts and guanínes

Presumably the most delicate jewellery among the Taíno were artefacts made of gold, or *caona* as it was indigenously called. The Taíno did not know the technique of melting metals, though placer gold nuggets were worked into various forms and objects.<sup>51</sup> They were typically hammered into sheets or plates which occasionally



**Figure 27.** *Purgadera*. Fundación García Arévalo, Santo Domingo. Photography by author.

<sup>51</sup> Deagan and Crucent (2002a, 185) describe placer gold as “gold released from the primary veins by weathering and transported by water to sand or gravel beds where it forms nuggets.”



**Figure 28.** Wooden *cohoba* stands. Ostapkowicz *et al.* 2012. *Chronologies in wood and resin. Journal of Archaeological Science* 39(7), 2238-2251.

were incised and decorated. Most of the worked pieces were used as incrustations of sculptured objects like *duhos*, three-pointers and other artefacts, variably made of wood, stone, bone, shell and cotton. The gold sheets were also used as body adornments, such as pectoral discs, ear and lip plugs, nose rings, or as tablets to be suspended from the ears or neck. Furthermore, the Taíno seem to have been capable of working solid gold into rings for chains, and, as suggested by a reference in Columbus's shipping list (see Chapter 5), frog-depicting sculptures (Alegría 1985). Findings of gold occurred throughout the Greater Antilles, though the total assemblage is small (Chanlatte Baik 1977; Lee 1985; Oliver 2000; Vega 1979, Table 2).<sup>52</sup> Besides gold, the Taíno elites possessed items of *guanín*, the copper-alloy with constituents of gold and silver. Objects made from *guanín* broadly correspond to those of pure gold in form and variety. *Guanín* was imported from South America (Oliver 2000; Vega 1979) and ultimately derived from the Isthmo-Columbian area, where strikingly similar objects have been found (Quilter and Hoopes 2003; Whitehead 1990). Archaeologically such a piece is known from a site like Maisabel, Puerto Rico (Siegel and Severin 1993), and a hollow bird-like pendant from El Chorro de Maíta, Cuba (Cooper *et al.* 2008; Martínón-Torres *et al.* 2007). Another figurine, probably of *guanín* (Oliver 2000), though originally believed to have been gold, was found by Miguel Alonso (1950) in the Yaguajay area in the municipality of Banes, Holguín Province, Cuba, close to the site of El Chorro de Maíta. It portrays a naked woman, standing and holding a small vessel, dressed up with a jester-like headdress and two discs suspending from her ears. Other archaeologically recovered *guanín* objects are scarce (Oliver 2000; Vega 1979). The symbolic importance of *guanín* far exceeded that of gold, mainly because it featured prominently in Taíno myths and embodied connotations of symbolic distance due to the material's exoticness (Oliver 2000; further discussed in Chapter 7).

#### 4.6.6 Personal adornments

Other social valuables were items that were used as bodily ornaments. Among them are amulets, ear spoons, pectorals, necklaces, miniature masks and other adornments, variably made of (green)stone, shell, bone, clay, cotton, and gold(-alloys). All these items appear in a wide variety of forms, sizes and material constitution. Small stone beads or *cibas* belong to the items that were held in highest esteem and often made up necklaces and pendants (Alegría 1985). The same is true for shell beads, which could

<sup>52</sup> The thus far known earliest discovery of gold was made by Herbert W. Krieger who found three pieces of gold near Montecristi in the northern Dominican Republic around the year 1930 (Lovén 1935; Vega 1979). Illustrations are provided by Oliver (2000, 200) and Vega (1979, 17).

either be worked into very thin, flat forms or used unworked for suspension, as often occurred with olive shells (*Olivia* spp.). Their special meaning has been affirmed by their recovery in burial contexts (e.g. Veloz Maggiolo 1997). Amulets that depict anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures are elaborately carved adornments, often fabricated of shell, stone or jadeite and sometimes placed in configuration with necklaces and other valuables (see e.g. Alegría 1997; Wilson 1997b). They have long been ascribed a function as protective talismans (García Arévalo 1997). Additional and more intricate meanings are however more likely. Smaller examples are the widespread animal-shaped pendants made of greenstone or shell that frequently illustrate frog-like figures (Boomert 1987). Also the enigmatic *guaízas* or “shell faces”, alternatively referred to as masks (*carátulas*) or heads (*cabezas*), can be classified as ornaments. These shell objects depicting human faces were probably worn as pectoral pendants or placed as centrepieces of a belt or headband, of which the latter was put on top of the forehead on special occasions. The objects, that were restricted to the *cacique*, show a characteristic iconography, featuring deep-set eyes and conspicuously bared teeth. They are believed to have been elite objects and were often used as objects of exchange (Mol 2007; Moscoso 1980; Oliver 2009b, 148-156). Lastly, as inferred from ethnographic work among present-day South American groups, also perishable materials like feather headdresses and clothes, basketry, and woven garments must have been prized items, as they were usually restricted to the highest classes of society.

#### 4.6.7 Tools and domestic items

The Taíno not only possessed tools that were used for daily activities, but also made more exquisitely crafted items that served ceremonial functions. They were valued throughout the circum-Caribbean area and were common items of exchange (Knippenberg 2004, 2006; Rodríguez Ramos 2007, 2011). They include such high-polished items as celts, petaloid axes (e.g. Wilson 1997b) and ceremonial stone daggers (e.g. Alegría 1997), most often made of greenstone or other (exotic) stone materials (Knippenberg 2004, 2006; Rodríguez Ramos 2007, 2011). The axes or hatchets typically show wooden shafts and when not fulfilling ritual purposes were used for working the land and the carving of canoes and other wooden objects (Veloz Maggiolo 1997). Other valued objects whose elaborate production made them acquire value beyond their functional use include carved pottery and effigy vessels, carved grinders and richly decorated pestles or mortars for the grinding of hallucinogenic substances (*ibid.*). About their inclusion in exchange networks, however, not much is known.

### 4.7 Conclusions: the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean on the eve of contact

This chapter has shown that the Caribbean was not at all uninhabited at the moment Columbus disembarked in the Bahamas in 1492. Instead, on the eve of European contact the area had a long occupation history already and was inhabited by a plethora of ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. Among them, the Taíno was the most distinctive one, showing the highest level of sociopolitical development and exhibiting the finest elaborately crafted materials. Their influence reached far beyond their cultural centre of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. Moreover, they interacted actively with communities living on other islands and the surrounding mainlands, a pattern that had been evolving during the times of their forebears, the Saladoid and Huecoid peoples. Through time local, regional and panregional networks of interaction and exchange contracted and expanded, following the flow and dynamics the Caribbean inhabitants directed (Hofman and Bright, eds. 2010; Hofman et al. 2007; Hofman and

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

Hoogland 2011). People, goods and ideas circulated throughout the circum-Caribbean, thereby sustaining shared panregional ideologies and cosmovisions. The exchange of material culture was often accompanied by “the sharing of myths, tales, songs, dances, ritual knowledge and experience, embedded in native cosmovision” (Hofman *et al.* 2010, 4). At the same time the area exhibited a considerable degree of cultural differentiation, where local groups were able to maintain their identity, which resulted in the development of local style zones and regional specialisation. It was the entry of Saladoid communities into the archipelago that caused the development of elaborate exchange systems, accomplished through the maintenance of contacts, or a ‘lifeline’, with their South American homeland. Populations grew and communities that were dispersed throughout the Lesser Antilles came into contact through the overlap of interaction spheres. During Caribbean precolonial history strong cultural, material and stylistic continuities are to be perceived, noted for instance in Taíno iconography that contains Saladoid elements. Also, there were long-time interactions with the surrounding mainlands, with which narratives, ideologies and materials were exchanged. Materials used for the fabrication of high-prestige goods – gemstones, semiprecious stones, gold and *guanín*, shell, bone, dark wood – remained broadly the same through time, with only minor variations due to restricted availability. Also, in the early colonial period similar objects must have been valued (e.g. Boomert 1987, 2000). Thus, when already some 5,000 years of Caribbean occupation history had elapsed, a new Caribbean re peopling was about to commence with the arrival of the Spaniards.

# Part II





## 5 | The Colonial Period

### 5.1 Introduction

How and why the Spanish and Taíno exchanged with each other are questions of which the answers are strongly influenced by the dynamics of the cross-cultural social relationships as these developed on the island of Hispaniola during the colonial period. A single answer cannot be found and would not be enough to cover the whole of this very turbulent era. Through a succession of historical events and constantly shifting circumstances these relations were put to the test time and again. Most of the time the Spanish were the ones who, either willingly or unwillingly, caused trouble with their actions. Many strove for gold and glory at the cost of anything, and anyone. In contrast to popular opinion, also the Taíno did possess an agency, one that at times and on the local level was able to resist the Spanish dominance, and to which the Spanish initially had to conform. Considering these far from stable relationships, presenting a historical overview of the colonial period is needed to be able to see the exchanges between the protagonists of the story in context. After this has been done, the focus will move towards a discussion of the exchanges that took place in the background of this new social reality, ranging from initial and personal exchanges to forced tribute payments. Special emphasis will be given to the diversity of objects that were exchanged between the two cultures during these decades following contact.

### 5.2 Telling the story: the colonial history of Hispaniola and the ‘New World’

The arrival of Columbus in the ‘New World’ obviously had a dramatic impact on the lands and people the Spaniards encountered on their way. Conversely, also the Spaniards had to adapt to the unexpected situation they had seen themselves confronted with. But, while Columbus was preoccupied by succeeding his mission, for the Taíno the encounter was sudden and overwhelming. This section will describe some consecutive events that together broadly give an impression of how the relations between Spaniards and Indians developed during a period of some twenty-five years of interaction. It places in perspective the different actions and reactions from both sides that made up this tumultuous period, and illustrates how either one tried best to cope with the uneasy circumstances their encounter had created.

#### 5.2.1 *European arrival in the ‘New World’*

Initiated as a desperate urge to find an alternative route to Cipango (Asia) where to arrange a meeting with the Great Khan, Columbus commenced his historical journey to the Americas from the harbour of Palos. The three ships had their first stop at the Canary Islands where they called for repairs and supplies, a pattern that proved to be useful and appreciated also in the decades that followed. The trans-Atlantic voyage really started on 8 September 1492 with the departure from the Canaries. The journey turned out to be much longer than expected and Columbus had to soothe ideas of mutiny among his impatient and complaining crew several times. Columbus’ own doubts were not less severe, but, nothing to lose, he was determined to pursue his goal. It was not before 12 October, two hours after midnight,

that Columbus and his men first sighted land somewhere in the Bahamas (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 63).<sup>53</sup> It was here that in the morning the first meeting between Amerindians and Europeans occurred. For the Lucayans, the Spanish landing on their island must have been an extraordinary odd scene: in full armour Columbus and the other two captains – the Pinzón brothers – planted their royal banners, got down on their knees and praised their God abundantly, after which they claimed the island as Spanish possession and baptised it San Salvador. From both sides there was bartering of all kinds of things, which continued for a couple of days. During these exchanges Columbus saw some of the Indians having golden nose plugs and asked whence the precious material came. He was directed to the south, an instruction that was eagerly followed by the Spanish who set course to Cuba – “which I heard from these people was very large and of great commerce and that there were there gold and spices and great ships and merchants” (*ibid.*, 113). Captured to function as guides and interpreters, also seven Indians had been taken on board (*ibid.*, 75) – an additional ‘function’ they, as well as other captives, were given was to tell other Indians that the Spanish do no evil.<sup>54</sup> The flotilla scouted the shores of the Bahamas, where on every place it anchored similar exchange practices were repeated. Following mentions of gold and pearls, from 28 October the Spanish thus reconnoitred northern Cuba, of which Columbus was convinced it must be the mainland he was looking for (*ibid.*, 129). They spent quite a while exploring the coasts and, sporadically, made some hikes into the interior, before finally arriving in Hispaniolan waters in early December.<sup>55</sup> There, on Christmas Eve, fate struck and Columbus’s flagship *Santa María* ran aground on a coral reef to the east of present-day Cap Haïtien, Haiti.<sup>56</sup> The *nao* could not be rescued anymore, although much of the ship’s provisions and timbers were salvaged with the assistance of the Amerindians. The local *cacique* Guacanagarí, whose village was situated only four miles from the wreck, hospitably welcomed the Spaniards and offered them two of his houses as well as the opportunity to construct a small settlement from the wreckage of the lost vessel. It was aptly called La Navidad. To Columbus it had become clear that the large-scale trade he was looking for did not exist in these islands and that his expectations should be slightly moderated.

### *Back home*

Despite the loss of one of his ships and the lack of extensive trade, Columbus could be contented about what he had already accomplished. In need of more supplies and avid to tell the Spanish monarchs about

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<sup>53</sup> This place somewhere in the Bahamas was called Guanahani by its inhabitants and christened San Salvador, “Holy Savior”, by the Spanish. Although unmistakably San Salvador being the place where Columbus first set foot ashore, there has been much debate as to just which island corresponds to this location (e.g. Gerace 1987; Sealey 1992; de Vorsey and Parker 1985). Some ten islands have been suggested through time, including modern-day San Salvador (former Watling Island) (e.g. Keegan 1989b, 1992a; Morison 1942; Murdock 1884), Samana Cay (Fox 1882; Judge 1986; Marden 1986) and many others (e.g. Molander 1983; Pickering 1994). Today, confirmed by archaeological data (e.g. Hoffman 1987a, 1987b; Keegan 1992a, 1996a, 1997) most researchers tend to prefer the island that also today bears that name of San Salvador, although the issue will probably never be solved completely.

<sup>54</sup> This model was first used by the Franciscan missionaries in the Canary Islands and continued to be used by the Portuguese in Africa (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 162).

<sup>55</sup> Not only the island of Columbus’s first landfall has been contested, but also the route Columbus took through the Bahamian archipelago on his southern journey to Cuba and Hispaniola (e.g. Judge 1986; Keegan 1989b; Keegan and Mitchell 1987; Mitchell and Keegan 1987; Morison 1942). The view that is most generally hold is that Columbus proceeded to Rum Cay, Long Island, on to Crooked Island and crossed to Cuba before finally reaching Hispaniola (e.g. Keegan 1984, 1992a, 1996a).

<sup>56</sup> Two days later Columbus would say that the shipwreck was not a fatality, but God’s will: “he recognised that Our Lord had caused the ship to ground there so that he would found a settlement there. And for this purpose, he says, so many things came to hand that truly it was not disaster, but great luck” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 287, also 289).

his successes, the Admiral returned to his Iberian homeland on 16 January 1493, thereby leaving behind thirty-nine of his men, who he had been given instructions to trade for gold. Reaching Lisbon on 4 March after a long and worrisome voyage, the Spaniards had finally arrived in Europe again. They ultimately entered the harbour of Palos on 15 March, from where Columbus prepared for a courtly visit to Fernando and Isabela to communicate all he had achieved.<sup>57</sup> But before meeting the royals, residing in Barcelona, the news about Columbus had already reached many people through a letter the Admiral himself had written to his friend Luis de Santángel, that had subsequently been published in a revised version throughout much of Europe in April 1493.<sup>58</sup> The document holds descriptions of the discovered lands and peoples, as well as the outcome of the expedition, that are breathlessly exaggerated, while other things are false or based on misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the stories attracted a wide audience (see also 5.3.1). Even more so when the people saw Columbus himself, who in public processions travelled from Andalusia to Barcelona joined by green parrots and the seven Indians he had brought. He was excitedly welcomed wherever he came, especially by Fernando and Isabel who received him with great honour (Las Casas 1992:I, 346-357; Parry and Keith 1984, 64-68). Like Columbus they were convinced of the necessity of a second voyage and thus sent him with instructions of how to compose his fleet and crew and how to run the newly found colony. Back in the Caribbean all should be controlled and monitored by Columbus and the other Crown's officials, and everything traded was to be administrated carefully. In any case, no private trade was permitted and the crew would all be salaried employees (see also 5.4.1). Noteworthy, the instructions also included a statement emphasising the good treatment of the Indians, otherwise one would be punished.<sup>59</sup> All in all, the former preconception of easily tapping into a lively Asian exchange network was replaced by a total Crown directed enterprise focusing on the construction of a complete trans-Atlantic colony.

### 5.2.2 Columbus's second voyage: an unwelcome surprise

The first reports concerning the discovery of the new lands described a marvellous world, where everything – including the local fauna, the very green trees and vegetation, all kinds of fruits, the idyllic and suitable harbours, and the most amenable people – seemed to surpass the conditions at home. The tales about this idealistic world inspired many to pursue the *ilusión indiana* (Ballesteros Beretta 1945). Furthermore, everyone knew the success stories of the Portuguese who had been making their fortunes in Africa in the last decades. For Columbus therefore, finding people willing to accompany him crossing the Atlantic was not difficult.<sup>60</sup> With a fleet consisting of seventeen ships, transporting between 1,200

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<sup>57</sup> To Columbus it mattered a great deal to be credited for his discoveries and to show he had been right all along. Honour and fame were most important, as discussed in Chapter 3. This is illustrated by him putting a piece of parchment, addressed to the king and queen of Spain, in a barrel that he threw into the sea, so that in the case of Martín Alonso Pinzón – sailing the *Pinta* – would reach the European mainland first and would pocket the gain and honour, it would ultimately be revealed that in fact Columbus was the one to whom all these favours should be credited (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 177). Also, it is even suggested that Columbus's log contains deliberate errors as to prevent others – especially the Portuguese – from profiting from his knowledge (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 375; Phillips and Phillips 1992, 177-178).

<sup>58</sup> Luis de Santángel was the notary of the King of Aragon's household account (*escribano de ración*) and had played an important role in persuading the monarchs to back up Columbus's first voyage. The letter he received from Columbus can be found in Parry and Keith (1984, 58-62).

<sup>59</sup> The complete royal instructions to Columbus for the second voyage can be found in Parry and Keith (1984, 71-74).

<sup>60</sup> The crew was a mishmash of people, who came mostly from Andalusia, but also included men from Catalonia, Galicia, Santander, Portugal and Italy (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 19). Moreover, they had all different occupations as to establish a full-fledged colony (see Las Casas 1992:I, 361-364).

and 1,500 men, along with a range of plants, animals and other supplies, Columbus again left Europe for a transoceanic venture heading to the Caribbean on 25 September 1493 (Las Casas 1992:1, 361-364; Parry and Keith 1984, 70-71). They arrived in Dominica and headed straight through Carib territory as they went northwards across the Leeward and Virgin Islands. Several incidents and serious skirmishes occurred, foreshadowing the feelings of disappointment that were bound to come. Upon arrival at La Navidad in late November Columbus found his left comrades all dead and his tiny settlement burned. The local ruler Guacanagarí recited that most of the Spaniards had been killed by a rival *cacique*, named Caonabó, who had attacked and burned the village of Guacanagarí. Others had died of disease or during exploratory ventures inland, while some men had been killed through internal fights over gold and women. Guacanagarí told that at least he was not to blame and that he had even tried to protect the Spaniards. In fact, it may well have been the case that the Spaniards had sealed their own fate as a result of brutally seizing gold and other goods and violating the Indian women.

Anyhow, a new settlement was quickly needed. Scouting for a suitable place, somewhat further to the east a bay was found along which La Isabela – named after the Spanish Queen – was constructed in early January 1494. It became the first European town in the Americas, but turned out not to be a success (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 2002b). Deagan and Cruxent (2002a) convincingly argue that the Spanish colonists had mostly themselves to blame for it, for their “inability or unwillingness [...] to accommodate the material and social actuality of life in America” (*ibid.*, 3). The Spaniards’ expectations were radically different from the Caribbean reality. Their intent to establish a Crown-controlled trading settlement (*factoría*) at the site of La Isabela dramatically failed.<sup>61</sup> Although Columbus had seen the continent before and thus knew the environmental setting, the supplies shipped to the Caribbean seem not to reflect a profound idea of how to cope with these conditions. There was a naive, reckless conviction that a Spanish *estilo de vida* could be recreated in a Caribbean atmosphere. Besides, after such a long trip and due to the altered climatic conditions, most of the crew complained about hunger, sickness and fatigue, physical conditions that did not contribute in encouraging the men to build a town.

Quite instantly after arrival, Columbus had sent Alonso de Hojeda (also Ojeda) together with forty men to explore the island’s interior mountain ranges and seek gold deposits. They returned with large nuggets, signifying the first real promises of gold. Columbus then sent twelve ships back to Spain under the supervision of Antonio de Torres. He had to hand over to the monarchs a letter about the expedition, the discoveries, the gold and the problems threatening the colonists. New supplies and provisions were urgently needed. Meanwhile, also the building efforts proceeded far too slow. Next to the principal buildings, also water mills, town walls and agricultural fields had to be erected. Columbus forced all men able to work to aid in this construction, including the outraged *hidalgos*. Yet another unpopular measure was taken when Columbus demanded the *hidalgos*’ horses for agricultural and construction purposes.<sup>62</sup> Columbus’s policy, combined with the everlasting food shortages and persistent illnesses, led to the first open rebellion in February 1494. The instigator was imprisoned, several others hanged and the revolt had been crushed, but opposition against the Admiral increased.

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<sup>61</sup> Columbus mentions this intent repeatedly in his log, in which he remarks the possibility of building harbours and fortresses multiple times on his way through the Bahamas and to Hispaniola (Dunn and Kelley 1989).

<sup>62</sup> Horses were important medieval symbols of status and power (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 168, 172-175). Nevertheless, the Crown had paid for them, which was, according to Columbus, reason to claim them in this urgent situation (*ibid.*, 56).

*Expansion from La Isabela*

In March, awaiting the relief fleet, Columbus assembled some five hundred settlers with whom he went to explore and collect gold from the Cibao valley. On their way inland they constructed the fort of Santo Tomás, some 160 km from La Isabela, from where to exploit the region and its mines. Columbus appointed Pedro de Margarite as commander of some fifty men who remained at the fort. Upon Columbus's return in La Isabela, he found two-thirds of the settlement destroyed by fire, a devastating fatality. Again, much had to be rebuilt. A few days later Columbus received alarming news of Margarite, who warned for an imminent attack on Santo Tomás by Caonabó. The Admiral immediately sent reinforcements of seventy men, while assembling some four hundred more who, under the command of Alonso de Hojeda, were to quell the Indian advance by showing their superior power. Thereby, no Indians were to be harmed and the central valley of the Cibao, the Vega Real, had to be further explored and subdued. Despite these instructions, violent confrontations were frequent.<sup>63</sup>

During these events Columbus decided to continue his maritime explorations. He departed 24 April 1494 and scouted the shores of Cuba, claiming the island as Spanish possession. He reconnoitred Jamaica as well as southern Hispaniola and returned some five months later. The good news was that his brother Bartolomé had arrived with additional supplies. On the other hand, quite some men had suddenly and without permission abandoned the colony and were on their way back to Spain. They were disillusioned and saw little from what they had expected to find in this 'New World'. Their negative reports were soon to come to the Iberian monarchs' ears. Together with the "Torres Memorandum" (in Parry and Keith 1984, 179-185) and other letters sent by objective observers this would badly affect their opinion of Columbus, as he had apparently misleadingly portrayed what he had seen and, above all, was not able to organise the new colony satisfactorily.<sup>64</sup> Because of his months long absence in this critical situation, Columbus's authority was damaged when he returned at La Isabela. There was chaos, a tremendous lack of food and many people suffered illnesses. The (insufficient) relief fleet of Antonio de Torres arrived in the Winter 1494. The material conditions were somewhat improved, though much more supplies were needed in order to make La Isabela a self-sufficient colony. Meanwhile, attacks and counterattacks continued to take place frequently. The situation inland was completely out of hand, because Pedro de Margarite had decided to go back to Spain, leaving hundreds of uncontrolled men who terrorised, plundered, abused, insulted and killed many Indians. At this point also Caonabó, ruler of the Maguana region, appears to have formed an alliance with many other *caciques*, including Guarionex of Magua,

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<sup>63</sup> Columbus's instructions to Pedro de Margarite, dated 9 April 1494, mirror the inconsequential, perhaps still not completely determined, approach towards the Taíno. It were these persisting contradictions that soon did not allow for peaceful coexistence anymore. An excerpt of the briefing: "The main thing you are to do is to take great care that no harm or injury is done to the Indians, and that nothing is forcibly taken from them; but rather that they are treated with respect and protected, so that they do not rebel. And since on the road I followed to Cambao, it happened that one Indian stole something, if you discover that any of them steal, you shall punish them by cutting their noses and ears, as these are parts of the body they cannot hide, and by this action you can ensure the trade (*rescate*) of the people of the whole island, explaining to them that what was done to the other Indians was done because of their robbery, and that good Indians will be treated very well, while the bad ones will be punished" (Parry and Keith 1984, 204).

<sup>64</sup> In contrast to Columbus, many of the men who joined the second voyage had no reason to embellish their reports. Two of these valuable eyewitness letters have been preserved, namely those of Diego Álvarez Chanca, a physician – therefore often referred to as Dr. Chanca – and Michele de Cuneo, a young volunteer who accompanied Columbus during his exploration of the interior and the southern coast of Cuba in 1493-1494. Both accounts are reproduced in Parry and Keith (1984, 76-92).

Behecchio of Xaraguá, Higuamaná of Higüey and Mayobanex of Samaná, but excluding Guacanagarí of the Marien province, Columbus's ally (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 59).

In response, Columbus constructed two additional forts on the route between La Isabela and Santo Tomás – Magdalena and Concepción – in order to control the area and make access to the Vega Real safer (fig. 29). Magdalena, however, was instantly attacked by a subchief called Guatiguará (subordinate to Guarionex) who killed tens of Spaniards. Columbus then organised a punitive march into the Cibao against Guatiguará. Some serious battles were fought and many Indians died. Some 1,600 Indians who had offered resistance were captured, “initiating the

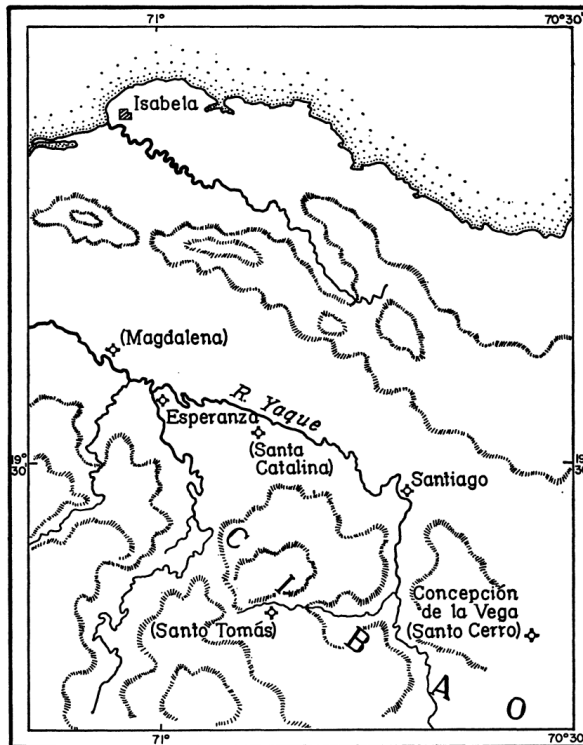


Figure 29. Expansion from La Isabela. The construction of forts along the way to the Cibao (Sauer 1966, 79).

first open enslavement of Caribbean Indians” (*ibid.*, 60). Of them, 550 were shipped to Europe on another fleet by Torres, in order to show the King and Queen that the colony was generating profit now that the recovered gold amounts had been disappointing. The rest of the captives were either allotted to the European settlers or released. Not much later, the end of February 1495, Magdalena was attacked once again. This time also Santo Tomás was sieged and it was not Guatiguará but Caonabó who led the attacks. Though he and his men persisted a long time, Caonabó was finally captured and shackled. Angered by this action, the remaining allied *caciques* allegedly planned to take over La Isabela with an enormous force of thousands of Indians. In order to prevent this to happen, Columbus responded with a pitched battle in March 1495, directing horsemen, war dogs (*perros bravos*) and a multitude of armed men, including his ally Guacanagarí with a number of Indians. A slaughter took place, after which the area was gradually pacified, aided in part by the easy submission of many of the revolting *caciques*. A new fort named Esperanza came to replace that of Magdalena, while Santo Tomás had its functions transferred to Concepción. In this year also the fortresses of Santiago and Bonao were established. Columbus then implemented a system of coerced labour, assigning Indians to work for the colonists, “to reward his men and protect his battlefield gains” (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 207). The Indian communities were also subjected to a policy of tribute payments, contributing either gold, cotton, food or labour. To make this system work, the Spaniards made cleverly use of the Taíno *caciques*, whom they made responsible for assembling the required amounts, that should then be handed over to the Spanish officials. However, the two years following the installation of the system appeared to be the most terrible years for the Indians.<sup>65</sup> They were plagued by famine, disease and warfare, and suffered from the heavy tribute demands. The native population declined rapidly. As a result, also Taíno social

<sup>65</sup> The Spanish knew the importance of maintaining the social hierarchy of the native population by earlier expeditions. Likewise, in the Canaries, they had recognised the status and privileges of the Guanche chiefs.

hierarchy quickly disintegrated, thereby removing the foundations of the Spanish tribute system, which collapsed as early as 1497 (Wilson 1990a, 91-97).

Back in the Iberian homeland, 1495, the Catholic monarchs had meanwhile appointed Juan Aguado to inspect the colony, in response to the complaints that had increasingly reached the royal court. To plead his case Columbus determined to join Aguado on his way back to Spain, where they arrived 11 June 1496, leaving Bartolomé in charge of the island. By 1496 “the explorers and settlers had become conquerors, and their erstwhile hosts had become enemies to be vanquished” (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 207).

### 5.2.3 *Rebellion and a third voyage*

After two years in Spain, Columbus could only depart for the West Indies again on 30 May 1498. The European political situation had required full attention of the Catholic monarchs. Also, there was a lack of money and some royal family affairs intervened. Fernando and Isabel accepted Columbus’s request for a third voyage, in part because the Portuguese were now planning to send Vasco da Gama on his journey to India. Columbus’s third fleet was composed of eight ships.<sup>66</sup> Three of these, including the one sailed by Columbus, formed a distinct contingent that for exploration matters steered a different course, calling at the Azores and finally arriving in Trinidad. From there they found the Venezuelan mainland where they encountered pearl beds. They subsequently headed to Hispaniola where they arrived 31 August 1498.

Meanwhile in Hispaniola, with Bartolomé as the colony’s administrator, commissioned *Adelantado* by his brother, the conditions at La Isabela had got even worse. Food shortages prevailed. But there were also new developments. When Columbus was still on the island, the Spanish had located promising gold fields to the south of the central mountain ranges, named San Cristóbal. Now, several way stations were built between La Isabela and the new gold area. Moreover, in 1496, a new port was constructed along the southern coast of Hispaniola: early Santo Domingo. These apparent successes, however, entailed a drawback, affecting Bartolomé’s popularity. That is, Santo Domingo superseded the functions of La Isabela because of its preferable location. As a result, Bartolomé began to move virtually whatever he thought useful from La Isabela to the new town. The early Spanish medieval town gradually disintegrated, causing also the collecting of tribute to become more troublesome. The next year, 1497, was a chaotic one. In the Vega Real a number of *caciques* headed by Guarionex were organising an insurrection. Their rebellion did not succeed, however, and Guarionex as well as a number of other chiefs were taken captive at night. The next day thousands of Taíno Indians encouraged the Spanish to release their leaders. Bartolomé acceded, after which the area was pacified again and tribute payments remained guaranteed. Guarionex became an ally. On the other hand, among a number of colonists dissatisfaction had reached its peak. They complained about the conditions and some measures taken by the Columbus brothers and initiated a revolt commanded by Francisco Roldán (Las Casas 1992:1, 460-491, trans. and repr. in Parry and Keith 1984, 222-228; Phillips and Phillips 1992, 214-215). He was joined by some Indian allies, whom he had promised an elimination of the tribute system. In fact, upon Columbus’s return the Spaniards had still not succeeded in making the system function properly. Also the Roldán

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<sup>66</sup> This time it proved much harder to find volunteers for a Caribbean venture. The Crown therefore freed prisoners detained for minor crimes if they were willing to join the expedition. Only ten of them eventually accepted, a notion that goes counter to the story that the crew of Columbus’s first fleet consisted of mere criminals (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 218-219).

rebellion had not been suppressed yet, though Columbus soon managed to settle with Roldán, not knowing, however, the far-reaching consequences this would entail. Back in 1497, while taking preparations for his third voyage, Columbus had been given a royal decree stating his authority to grant and distribute land among the settlers of Hispaniola (in Parry and Keith 1984, 220-221). To be considered, these people were “obliged to maintain residence and support a household (*casa poblada*) on the said island of Hispaniola for four consecutive years” (*ibid.*, 220). This land distribution, or *repartimiento*, followed similar allocation systems employed during the Spanish Reconquista and the ongoing colonisation of the Canary Islands, where (re)conquered lots of land were granted to ensure Spanish possession. In his attempt to soothe Roldán, Columbus exceeded his authority by a fatal, though conscious, reinterpretation of the system of *repartimiento*, granting not only land, but also Indian labour services! This way, the receiver of the grant was allowed to move his labourers and make them do whatever he liked. Although officially it was not, in practice the elaboration of this new definition of *repartimiento* was just slavery, to which the King and Queen had so far always strongly opposed to.<sup>67</sup> This system would later be followed by the *encomienda* system, that forced Indians to work for a landholder they were assigned to. In return they would be provided protection and instructions in ‘civilisation’ and the Catholic faith. Additionally, the policy of *reducción* was introduced, whereby indigenous communities were occasionally forcibly removed to Spanish towns (Anderson-Córdova 1990; Arranz Marquez 1991; Moya Pons 1992). Both systems tragically disrupted native society and caused many to die.

From 1499 the Crown began to grant permits for exploration voyages to about a dozen people, including some of Columbus’s old companions like Hojeda and Pinzón, presumably indicating their loss of faith in Columbus. Moreover, due to the unceasing unrest and disorder on Hispaniola, Fernando and Isabela decided to send another investigator, the newly appointed governor Francisco de Bobadilla, to restore peace with whatever measures needed (Las Casas in Parry and Keith 1984, 234-242). Upon approaching Santo Domingo on 23 August 1500, the omens for what to expect were far from good, sighting several Spanish rebels hanging from gallows. Bobadilla immediately took over control and sent the brothers Diego, Bartolomé and Christopher Columbus back to Spain in chains, essentially meaning the end of Columbus. Columbus comments on the event, writing “*contra su real mandado fui preso y hechado con dos herm[anos en] un navío, cargados de fierros, desnudo en cuerpo, con muy mal tratamiento, sin aver desobedezido ni ser llamado ni vençido por justiçia. Privilegios, cartas, promesas ni asiento no me aprobechó cosa*” (Varela and Gil 1992, 500, cited in Wey-Goméz 2007, 112-113).<sup>68</sup> This was not what was ordered by the Crown though, and they instantly released the brothers. Nevertheless, although Columbus was allowed to keep his property and some of his titles, they deprived him from any authority, neither was he ever to set a foot on Hispaniola anymore.

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<sup>67</sup> Slavery was a legal practice, though only those designated captives of a ‘just war’ could be enslaved (see also Chapter 3 for ‘just war’ and early slavery in Africa and the Canaries). In the Indies this applied to natives who had killed or otherwise tried to harm the Spaniards. Innocent, ‘good’ Indians were not allowed to be enslaved, at least according to law. In 1501 instructions for the government of the Indians were issued that stated not to use them as slaves but rather to treat them like Crown vassals (in Parry and Keith 1984, 260-262).

<sup>68</sup> “Against thy royal mandate, I was imprisoned and shipped back along with my two brothers, in shackles, naked, mistreated, without ever having disobeyed, nor having been deposed or convicted by just means. Neither privileges, nor letters, nor promises, nor steadfastness were of avail to me” (trans. Wey-Goméz 2007, 112-113).



The original dream was lost. In sum, “the *factoría* model had failed, no significant gold deposits had been found, the Indians were tragically depleted and suffering, the Spanish settlers were in conflict among themselves, and La Isabela was abandoned. By 1498, a new story had begun, with a different idea of colonisation” (Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 70). Where previously the idea was to set up a trading-post variant, in which the overseas settlers were salaried by the Crown, the policy had now shifted towards stimulating the development of self-sustaining colonies under local self-government, whereby land was granted to anyone showing meritorious behaviour. Thereby, the Crown “would retain overall authority, regulate trade, and provide the structure of government and the rule of law” (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 218). Thus, what ought to be a mercantile venture was to become an imperial one, which led to a “different way of life after 1500, expressed in social, ideological, and material contours previously unknown in either Spain or America” (Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 3).

Still, in 1502, with a considerable smaller fleet Columbus (along with his brother Bartolomé and son Hernando – also known as Fernando or Hernán) was permitted to go on a fourth, exploratory voyage, seeking access to the Indian Ocean. He ended up scouting the coasts from Honduras to Panama, was – due to a series of miserable incidents – forced to stay at Jamaica for nearly a year, after which he could eventually return to Spain in late 1504. The Admiral died in 1506.

#### 5.2.4 After Columbus: Nicolás de Ovando, Diego Colón and the near extinction of the Indians

King Fernando and Queen Isabela commissioned Nicolás de Ovando y Cáceres as new governor of Hispaniola, where to he sailed in February 1502.<sup>69</sup> The fleet was the largest ever sailed to the Americas, transporting about 2,500 people, among whom also Bartolomé de las Casas and Hernán Cortés, the later conqueror of Mexico. More royal trustees were given functions in the Caribbean, refined colonial administration was set up (*Casa de Contratación*, Seville), more exploratory voyages were made, making the Spanish Empire gradually unfold. With the arrival of Ovando and the thirty or so ships the Spanish population on Hispaniola – at this time only a few hundred had remained – promptly multiplied. The settlers coming with this new wave of settlement were held firmly in control by Ovando. His regimen was strict, discipline was tight and the revenues from the Indies increased. At the same time, his severities – the combined effects of war against rebellious Indians, the *encomienda* system, of which the formal implementation was put into operation in 1503, and the tribute demands – contributed to a total breakdown and accelerated decline of the native people. During the years of 1503-1504 also the remaining parts of Hispaniola not under Spanish control were cruelly subjugated in order to provide for additional labour forces for the newly arrived settlers. These areas comprised Isla Saona and Higüey in the east, the western province of Xaraguá and the peninsulas in the south- and northwest of the island (Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 207). A horrific incident during these campaigns was a tremendous massacre killing the Taíno *cacica* Anacaona of Xaraguá and eighty of her subordinate leaders.<sup>70</sup> Thereafter, conforming to royal instructions (in Parry and Keith 1984, 255-258), Ovando ordered the construction of fifteen towns throughout the island, to hold control over the secured areas and to make the Spanish, as opposed to the previous situation, orderly live together in settlements (Sauer 1966, 151-155) (fig. 30). The colony enjoyed its economic peak between 1505 and 1508 (*ibid.*, 154), still mainly

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<sup>69</sup> Along with many others, including Roldán, Bobadilla had died during a hurricane on his way back to Spain.

<sup>70</sup> Anacaona was the sister of the aforementioned Behechchio, who was the principal *cacique* of the province of Xaraguá. By royal marriage she was the wife of Caonabó.



Figure 30. The fifteen towns established by Nicolás de Ovando (Sauer 1966, 152).

focusing on gold mining, though other activities such as cattle ranching and agriculture became increasingly popular. By now, a lively transport between the Iberian mainland and the island of Hispaniola had been developed, exporting the island's gold and other Caribbean profits, while more and more importing common products and household items, reflecting the reform of Spanish colonial life. In 1514 the fifteen towns accommodated already some five thousand Spaniards (Deagan and Cruixent 2002a, 208). Also women and children gradually began to take an active part in the colonial venture.

#### *The aftermath of conquest*

After the reign of Ovando, who was succeeded by Diego Colón (1509-1518), also the neighbouring islands were being subjugated. By 1515 all of the Greater Antilles had effectively been seized. On Hispaniola gold deposits had almost depleted, while also the human labour force had dwindled quickly. According to Las Casas (1992:III, 137-138) in 1508 there were only 60,000 Indians left (referring to those of working age). To supply the labour pool of the island the Spanish initiated slave raids in the Bahamas (Las Casas in Parry and Keith 1984, 282-285). Many of the Lucayans ended up working in the gold mines or the pearl fishing industry – which had developed around the islands off the coast of Venezuela, such as Cubagua – and many died, resulting in the rapid depopulation of the archipelago (Gnivecki 1995; Granberry 1979, 1980, 1981; Keegan 1992a, 1997; Sauer 1966). In 1518 the Hieronymite monk Alonso de Zuazo reports the import of 15,000 persons from all over the Caribbean to Hispaniola (in Parry and Keith 1984, 274). Within twenty-five years after Columbus's arrival more than ninety percent of the native Hispaniolan population had died (Wilson 1990a, ix). In the end, there had obviously been too much factors contributing to a rapid decline of the native population of Hispaniola and the other islands of the Greater Antilles. European diseases like measles and smallpox were easily transmitted to the non-resistant Indians. The effects were reinforced through the constant relocation of Indian communities as a result of which diseases spread. The systems of *repartimiento* and *encomienda* further added to the annihilation of the Indians. The forced labour they were obliged to conduct caused social disruption among the Taíno. It furthermore entailed harsh treatment, social abuses, punishments and death. Next to the effects of slavery and diseases, the Spaniards also actively waged war against the native population, killing many by military defeat and through conquest's atrocities. Although the Spaniards did not ever formally had

the intention to systematically eliminate the people they had encountered, reality leaves no doubt as to the devastating effects of their deeds. Though hardly imaginable, a minority survived and managed to continue an adapted existence, both during the colonial period and beyond, as will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

### 5.3 Chaotic contacts: Spanish-Taíno relationships during the colonial period

The relationships between the Spanish and the Taíno – the colonists and colonised – changed radically over the years. A short period of interaction on more or less equal terms (the middle ground) was followed by a phase in which the colonists gradually imposed their will on the ‘other’, which in due time resulted in total dominance and takeover on the side of the Spaniards (*terra nullius*). Obviously these relations had a profound effect on how trade and exchange between both cultures evolved throughout the first decades of the colonial period. This section first discusses the topic of ‘otherness’ to offer some idea of how both parties perceived the strangers they had just encountered. This ‘mindset towards the other’ surely determined how both Spanish and Taíno entered into contact. Second, the changing and complex relationships between the two cultures are scrutinised, mainly to give an idea of the intricacies entwined in the construction of effective relationships and to see what cultural processes took place as the period of co-existence between colonists and colonised was being prolonged.

#### 5.3.1 Another world: strange creatures and mythical beings

How intercultural relationships – as relations in general – take shape is to a considerable degree influenced by the images that people have of each other. The initial mutual impressions formed upon first contact and during the short period that immediately follows the encounter are often leading in this process. Sometimes when cultures first meet there are expectations and preconceived ideas about their counterpart, though these are not seldom misinformed as they are typically based on stories, hearsay and fantasy. On the other hand, in due time it is naturally possible for created images to be changed,



Figure 31. Monstruous people: a sciapode ("who is shading himself under his only foot"), a Cyclops, a little dicephalus (two-headed person), an acephalus (with his face in his chest), and a cynocephalus (dog-headed). From Gregor Reisch, *Margarita Philosophica*, Basel 1517 (Axtell 1992, 32).

adapted or nuanced. The Indo-Hispanic encounter was a *mutual* discovery (Axtell 1992). Both people met a so-called 'other' that they had never seen nor imagined before, and the Spaniards were as strange to the Indians as vice versa. For both parties, the challenge then was to make these foreigners fit into the categories that made up their cultural frames of reference (see Abulafia 2008b; Viveiros de Castro 1998). Not an easy task for such diverse and in many respects oppositional cultures. That there were clear differences in how these images were constructed may seem straightforward.

Notions of self and 'other' were present among both cultures before contact. In the case of the Europeans there was a long history of contacts with cultures inhabiting places as far as Africa and Asia, as was discussed in Chapter 3. Herodotus (version Godley 2010) already wrote about other cultures, and it were these classical works and traditions, as well as the omnipresent Bible, that helped shape the ideas of what the 'other' would look like (see Hartog 1980). With the crusades and the European access of the silk roads additional stories and knowledge of new cultures and geographies reached Europe. Medieval textbooks reported about the faraway travels of people like Marco Polo (1978) and held descriptions and portrayals of monsters, wild, barbarian and anthropophagous men, and other fabulous creatures (see also Mandeville 2005). The vivid fantasy that made up many medieval legends and bestiaries further added to the mystique and oddity that exotic men, animals and fantastic creatures were endowed with (e.g. Bernheimer 1952; Friedman 1981) (fig. 31). Much of what was actually brought from these foreign places ended up in display in cabinets of curiosities. Together it was this interplay of myth and reality and the co-existence of the "intellectual landscape" – i.e. drawn by scholars and churchmen, based largely on the works from Antiquity – and the "living landscape" – i.e. of merchants and travellers, based on the practice of travel – (Relaño 2002) that determined how the 'other' was seen and represented during the Middle Ages. In this regard, Europeans were very ethnocentric and generally saw themselves as superior to others, who hence by definition were distinctly unlike them in their representations (e.g. the Mongols or people from Northern and Eastern Europe; Fernández-Armesto 2007, 85-86, 94-95, resp.; also W. Phillips 1998; Valtrova 2010).

James Axtell (1992) herein sees a contrast to the natives of the Americas, who also distinguished between self and other, but among whom the 'other' was commonly regarded as (more or less) equal or superior (spirits). These 'others' appeared "largely faithful reflections of themselves or of the anthropomorphic deities who populated their pantheons" (*ibid.*, 32). Still, at the same time distinctions with 'others' were made, either politically, geographically, habitually etc. and the own culture was among many native American cultures seen as the centre of the world, 'the chosen one', or simply the only that mattered. Furthermore, spiritual beings could manifest themselves in an invariable number of forms – indeed often being 'just' people – so that some degree of caution had to be considered when unknown people were met. Axtell (1992, 101) writes that, "the natives expected novel strangers to be [...] either powerful and potentially dangerous 'persons' animated by living 'souls' like their own, or 'gods', 'spirits' from the heavens whose powers were of a higher order." Whether this was indeed the case is doubtful, but it seems true that, in the case of the Taíno, strangers from faraway (like other exotic 'things' as well) were attributed spiritual power (see also Chapter 7).

Returning to European perceptions, upon arrival in the 'New World' Columbus vividly described all that he saw. The diary and letters he left contain a succession of descriptions of marvels (Ferdman 1994),

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written down in order to impress and make wonder the reader – by things that cannot be believed to exist if you have not seen it yourself – and to make more verisimilar and believable the rest of what is written. Reference is provided by the frequent usage of analogy and metaphors, both in describing the lands and peoples that are encountered. The below excerpt is taken from Columbus's letter to Luis de Santángel, in which he describes the island of Hispaniola:

“In it there are many harbours on the coast of the sea, beyond comparison with others which I know in Christendom, and many rivers, good and large, which is marvellous. Its lands are high, and there are in it very many sierras and very lofty mountains, beyond comparison with the island of Teneriffe. All are most beautiful, of a thousand shapes, and all are accessible and filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall, and they seem to touch the sky. And I am told that they never lose their foliage, as I can understand, for I saw them as green and as lovely as they are in Spain in May, and some of them were flowering, some bearing fruit, and some in another stage, according to their nature. And the nightingale was singing and other birds of thousand kinds in the month of November were there I went. There are six or eight kinds of palm, which are a wonder to behold on account of their beautiful variety, but so are the other trees and fruits and plants. In it are marvellous pine groves, and there are very large tracts of cultivatable lands, and there is honey, and there are birds of many kinds and fruits in great diversity. In the interior are mines of metals, and the population is without number. Española is a marvel. The sierras and mountains, the plains and arable lands and pastures, are so lovely and rich for planting and sowing, for breeding cattle of every kind, for building towns and villages. The harbours of the sea here are such as cannot be believed to exist unless they have been seen, and so with the rivers, many and great, and good waters, the majority of which contain gold. In the trees and fruits and plants, there is great difference from those of Juana. In this island, there are many spices and great mines of gold and of other metals” [Parry and Keith 1984, 59-60].

In similar, repeating wordings Columbus reported about the people he had encountered: “they are very well formed, with handsome bodies and good faces”; “they are of the colour of the Canarians, neither black nor white”; “all of them alike are of good-sized stature and carry themselves well” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 67). As to their conduct and nature Columbus makes (partly incorrect) comments like “They are very gentle and do not know what evil is; nor do they kill others, nor steal; and they are without weapons and so timid that a hundred of them flee from one of our men even if our men are teasing them” (*ibid.*, 145). And, most importantly, he states that “They should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion” (*ibid.*, 67-69). The Indians were frequently compared with the only recently contacted Canary Islanders (see Chapter 3), whose nature had in terms of classification already been subject of debate before. That also the Taíno were physically human and not the monstrous beings that were rumoured to dwell on the world's fringes was readily confirmed.<sup>71</sup> Yet, whether they possessed a soul was questionable for some time, as it had been with the people of the Canaries.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Still, Columbus kept believing these monstrous races and barbarous men had to be found somewhere. On 4 November, Cuba, his log says that, “He understood also that, far from there, there were one-eyed men, and others, with snouts of dogs, who ate men, and that as soon as one was taken they cut his throat and drank his blood and cut off his genitals” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 133). That this European belief really was persevering is witnessed by the fact that around the 1850s the existence of, for instance, tailed men in Africa, was still discussed among scholars, though obviously no one had ever seen such creatures (Reade 1864).

<sup>72</sup> Studies of how Europeans perceived the people of the ‘New World’ and how the encounter influenced their image of the ‘other’ are provided by Abulafia (2008b), Jara and Spadaccini (1992), Pastor (1988, 1992), Todorov (1984) and Varela and Gil (1984, 1992).

At the true Indian perception of the strangers we can obviously only speculate. In his log Columbus mentions that the Indians were “convinced that we come from the heavens” (*ibid.*, 143). Similarly, in his letter to Luis de Santángel he says, when talking about the guides he had taken from the Lucayas, that “they are always assured that I come from Heaven for all the intercourse which they have had with me; and the others went running from house to house and to the neighbouring towns, with loud cries of, ‘Come! Come to see the people from Heaven!’” (Parry and Keith 1984, 61). These statements would all accord to Taíno myths and prophesies that predicted the coming of their gods. But, it is too short-sighted to uncritically accept the credulous thought of a fifteenth-century Catholic man who, furthermore, as we have seen, pursued a certain interest with his writings. Moreover, some while after contact, the harsh reality in which the natives had found themselves would certainly have moderated their assumed reverence for the strangers. Nevertheless, Wilson (1990a, 137) notes that the native struggle of where to place the newcomers in their social and political ranking and whether to treat them either as commoners, elites or gods persisted well into the years succeeding contact.

The writings of Columbus describe the Taíno treatment of the Spaniards as elite members alike, suggesting that the Europeans were attributed spiritual power. It is, for instance noted, when on Hispaniola, that the Indians “insisted on carrying the Spaniards on their backs; and in fact they did so through some rivers and muddy places” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 267).<sup>73</sup> Or, that the Taíno were keen on the thorough salvaging of Columbus’s wrecked ship near the town of Guacanagarí. In fact, the generous treatment the Spaniards received may also have been the result of different ideas of hospitality on the side of the Taíno. However, would that also explain the various extraordinary welcome ceremonies the Spanish received? For example, in the Bahamas, “Many men came, and many women, each one with something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves on the ground; and they raised their hands to heaven, and afterward they called to us in loud voices to come ashore” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 75); on 6 November, when on Cuba, “The Indians touched them and kissed their hands and feet, marvelling and believing that the Spaniards came from the heavens, and so they gave them to understand”; [...] “attempting to see if they were, like themselves, of flesh and bone” (*ibid.*, 137); and on Hispaniola, “All of them came to the Christians and put their hands on their heads, which was a sign of great reverence and friendship” (*ibid.*, 223). It must be said, however, that the Indians of Hispaniola initially were more reserved than the Lucayans, as they already knew of the arrival of the Spanish, news that preceded their actual coming. The same practices, attended with great solemnity, reportedly continued for over decades, even centuries, wherever native Americans came into contact with Europeans (see Axtell 1992). Similarly, these patterns resembled much of what had happened earlier in the Canaries. Again, whether these exceptional receptions really point to an assumed supernatural origin of the seaborne explorers remains debatable. Fernández-Armesto (2007, 25) even argues that a heavenly nature is “such a widespread topos as to be barely believable”. He compares the Indian-Hispanic encounter with a far earlier (half of second millennium B.C.) encounter between the people of Punt (Somalia) and the Egyptians, the first who ask “‘How have you reached this land unknown to the men of Egypt?’ [...], with hands uplifted in surprise. ‘Have you descended hither by the paths of the sky or,’ they added as if it were equally improbable, ‘have you sailed the sea?’” (*ibid.*, 24-25). Similarly, Rolena Adorno (1993)

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<sup>73</sup> On commenting on a similar situation known from Florida, Rolena Adorno (1993, 26) says: “By lifting them up and carrying them, they meant to assure that their magical powers would not enter the ground or contaminate it.” Likewise, Taíno *caciques* were occasionally carried on a litter (e.g. Las Casas 1992:1, 271).

addresses the lack of reliable information of the hosts concerning the origin of the explorers. From the 1542 edition of the narrative of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish explorer who joined the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition through Florida, she translated an important passage, that is omitted in later editions: “Among all these peoples, it was held for very certain that we came from the sky, because about all the things that they do not understand or have information regarding their origins, they say that such phenomena come from the sky” (Adorno 1993, 68). The encounter must thus be seen in the cultural vision of both the hosts and the guests. Keegan (1992a, 2007), for instance, inspired by the work of Sahlins (1985), compared the arrival of Columbus as the coming of a stranger king, like also the native *cacique* Caonabó, a presumed Lucayan, would have been. Among other things, using native mythology and worldviews, Keegan elaborates on how Columbus was seen as a Caníbale, or mythical being. Indeed, that the intruders were considered spiritually powerful beings is generally more accepted than an ascribed divine origin. It is from this kind of studies it is hoped to grasp some of Taíno imagination. In the end it is these mutual images which influenced how Indians and Spaniards approached each other, how their intercultural relationships developed, and thus in which context the earliest exchanges took place. Yet, reconstructing these images remains exceptionally difficult, certainly when it comes to the native vision and perceptions. But, indeed, much of the reactions and acting towards the ‘other’, from either side, must have been grounded in both trepidation and excitement, reflecting the encounter with the unknown.

### 5.3.2 Differing attitudes and the processes of interaction

Initially, the Spaniards and the Taíno peacefully coexisted, though the situation must have been uneasy and relations strained. Mutual mistrust arose as early as the destruction of La Navidad and the death of the Spanish sailors.<sup>74</sup> Although the arrival of Columbus would certainly have been an astonishing momentum for the Taíno, the fact that Columbus recklessly captured some local Lucayans to function as guides in November 1492 would obviously not have aroused much sympathy. News of the European arrival spread quickly, trade goods went ahead of their coming – as illustrated by the anecdote in Chapter 1 – providing the Taíno with some idea of whom they could expect to welcome. Columbus himself mentioned that the Indians of Hispaniola were more watchful than those he had encountered so far. The first minor skirmish occurred when Columbus sailed eastwards along the northern coast of Hispaniola where he met some Ciguayo, whom he believed to be Caribs. The Ciguayo were obviously not as hospitable as Guacanagari’s people, though gifts were exchanged for reconciliation the day after. However, it would last for about a decade that there existed marked distinctions between native groups on the island who were allies and enemies of the Spanish. Over the years, the Spanish-Taíno relations deteriorated quickly. Hostility increased as natives were attacked, killed, enslaved or made captives of war. The Spanish gold rush and increasing atrocities worsened the cross-cultural relations considerably. Spanish brutal misbehaviour and Taíno reactions both had profound consequences for the attitudes toward each other. From 1494, when Alonso de Hojeda spread terror over the north-central part of the island, the relations had become overtly hostile. Furthermore, many Indians passed away due to severe illnesses, for which the Spanish too were responsible. With the reign of Nicolás de Ovando, the entire island was subjugated and the original Taíno political structure had essentially collapsed.

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<sup>74</sup> Arguably earlier of course, if one takes into the account the events that caused the killing to happen.



**Figure 32.** The Indians of La Española hang themselves in the woods, rather than serve Christians. Girolamo Benzoni, *La historia del mondo nuovo*, 1565. Translated by W.H. Smythe as 'History of the New World', Hakluyt Society Publications, 21. Hakluyt Society, London, 1857.

A more detailed account of the historical context of Indo-Hispanic interaction is inserted at the beginning of this chapter. The consecutive events that made up the first twenty-five years of contact between both cultures clearly show a radical shift of power in favour of the Spaniards. Although starting out on equal grounds, the newcomers soon took the upper hand and initiated conquest and colonisation at the expense of the native population. These very different phases of intercultural interaction taking place over a

period of several decades (either till about 1520 or even 1550) have conceptually often uncritically been referred to as the “contact period” or “Indo-Hispanic contact” (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* in press). But, the use of this umbrella term does not account for the profound and radical changes that occurred in the course of this period. Recently, it is thus argued that the (evidently present) awareness of these distinctions should also be reflected in the terminology scholars employ when discussing the dynamics of these interactions (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* in press; see also Silliman 2005). As such, on Hispaniola, we can distinguish between three phases or colonial temporalities in the period from 1492 to 1518, mainly reflecting changes in Spanish colonial policy. Following arguments proposed by Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* (in press), I would define these as: a) initial contact, roughly concerning the first one and a half years of interaction; b) conquest and pacification, ranging from c. 1494 to 1502; and c) colonisation, i.e. the full and destructive subjugation of the island and its people by the Spaniards, initiated by Nicolás de Ovando in 1502 and continuing for the rest of the period that is subject of this thesis (see also Anderson-Córdova 1990).

A detailed study by Karen Anderson-Córdova (1990) illustrated how the Taíno of the Greater Antilles employed different tactics vis-à-vis the arrival and presence of the Europeans. During the phase of initial contact, which was friendly and based on reciprocity, these responses were expressed in a number of ways, comprising flight, exchange and accommodation. The ‘pacification’ and imposition of the tribute system, which both caused lasting changes for Taíno society and the entire island, additionally provoked rebellion and open warfare. Furthermore, when the large-scale violent colonisation of Hispaniola was set in motion, and the Taíno peoples were enslaved and forced to work for the Spaniards by way of the *encomienda* system, some of the Taíno allegedly responded with suicide (fig. 32). Others opted to flee, sometimes to other islands as the Indians from Puerto Rico would have done. Simultaneously, when the Indian labour force was depleting, foreign Indians, and later Africans, came to the island of Hispaniola as slaves, creating a new and hybrid composition of the island’s population. Continued negative contact, expressed in forced residence in designated territories and the harsh consequences of the *encomienda* system, made many Indians decide to escape their oppressors. Often these Indians managed to survive



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as ‘rebels’ in marginal areas where they were able to persist certain native cultural traits. Nevertheless, after a short period of rebellion (much longer on Puerto Rico), many Indians responded by submission, as they saw no other choice under the domination of the Spaniards. Indian acceptance of Spanish ways seems often to have been merely nominal, while a distinction remained apparent between Taíno village life and Taíno ways of behaving under direct Spanish control.

Striking are the different concurrent attitudes that the various Taíno groups opted to assume towards the Spanish, especially in the earliest years after contact. In general terms, there was amicableness, hostility and reconciliation. It took quite some years before the whole of Hispaniola was under Spanish rule, hence till that time people living in the extremities of the island had not much to fear from the colonists. While the Indians around La Isabela and the Cibao were exposed to direct contact, these other groups were able to maintain their normal lives. By way of the existing communication networks they knew about the Spanish intrusion and would indeed have followed their actions and movements meticulously. The political sovereignty of the *cacicazgos* is apparent from the reception Bartolomé Columbus received when he visited the *caciques* of Xaraguá in 1496, which was quite similar to earlier greeting ceremonies Columbus had been regaled with. Thus, when conflict escalated in one part of the island, the Spaniards were hospitably welcomed in other areas (Anderson-Córdova 1990, 114-115).

Characteristic for the Taíno-Spanish interactions also were the numerous ways to find favour with the other. Columbus considered it important to maintain the (political) hierarchical structure on which Taíno society was based. Through the *caciques*, he presumed, the Spanish could simply spread Christianity and civilisation to large numbers of natives. Establishing effective relations was a prerequisite. Also the *caciques* saw advantages in the formation of such alliances, mostly to gather prestige and several other benefits (see below). This ‘exploring’ and ‘sensing’ from both sides co-occurred with acts of sheer manipulation. In order to move or influence the other there was much performing and dramatising. Columbus, for example, upon departure to Spain in 1493 “had a lombard shoot a hole through the wrecked hull of the Santa María. Then he had the departing crew and the remaining settlers stage a mock battle, all designed to impress the locals with the power of European fighting skills” (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 175). For the Taíno it might have seemed something like an European *areyto*. There are many more instances to mention in which the Spanish intended to impress their hosts or where through manipulation they tried to make them act according to their will. The Taíno, on the other hand, were also manipulating, as is, for example, illustrated by Guacanagarí, who, after the return of Columbus, feigned a wounded leg in order not to be accused for the death of the thirty-nine men left at La Navidad (Phillips and Phillips 1992, 199; see also Chanca in Parry and Keith 1984, 85-86). Also, the quest to establish a common ground of understanding entailed moments of misunderstanding, characteristic of such a hybrid period in which both cultures try best to convey clear signals, meanings and intents that are logical from their own cultural framework, but may be incomprehensible to the other (e.g. Altman and Butler 1994; Mol 2008). Manipulation also occurred in situations of exchange, such as Columbus refusing Taíno trinkets in favour of gold (see below), or Taíno elites who presented Columbus with their most elaborate prestige goods at certain moments (see Mol 2008).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The Europeans also manipulatively used their material culture in some instances, as they found out the values the Taíno attached to their goods. This is further described in Chapter 7.

The character of the interactions between both cultures has often been a topic of inquiry, while the restrictions imposed on this thesis do not allow for a detailed analysis. Evident is that during this period of 1492 to 1518 there were a lot of complex, entangled processes at work that together determined how the intercultural relationships developed and, moreover, ultimately laid the foundations for the variegated cultural geography that characterises the Caribbean area today. Some of these are noteworthy, if not compulsory, to mention here shortly. These concern intermarriage and transculturation, both being processes that generally sprout from prolonged contact between two or more different cultures. Intermarriage took generally place between Spanish men and Taíno women. Also did the women work in household service for the Spaniards, or were they concubines. In precolonial times, marriages between high-ranking individuals were not uncommon in order to forge an alliance between political entities. The same practices occurred in Europe as well, reflected, for instance, by the marriage of Fernando and Isabela. Hence, wives were sometimes given away as extremely valuable gifts. Such an instance is related by Martire d'Anghiera (1970:I, 106): “This *cacique* was called Guarionex. He had been pleased to give his sister to be the wife of that Diego Columbus [...]. Guarionex had hoped by these means to establish a more intimate friendship with the Admiral”. The incorporation of Taíno women in Spanish households resulted in the continuation of Taíno traditions in the domestic sphere (e.g. Deagan 2004). Conversely, Spanish men dominated the economical and political life in the colonies. This cultural interaction entailed processes of transculturation and native religious syncretism. It applied to both Spaniards and Taíno that cultural elements from the strangers were adopted in their own social lives. Forms of earthenware began to look alike and advantageous elements of ‘the other’ were incorporated in daily life. In the end, the cohabitation of Europeans, Indians and Africans created a hybrid or *mestizo* society through the active interplay of distinctive cultural elements from all parties. More aspects related to these processes are treated in the next two chapters.<sup>76</sup>

#### 5.4 Trade and exchange in colonial Hispaniola

“Trade was the most important vehicle for interaction between the Spaniards and Indians”, as Wilson (1990a, 49) is apt to remark. Exchange commenced upon first arrival in the Bahamas and persisted in various forms throughout the colonial period. This section consecutively describes the earliest exchanges, investigated through an analysis of the log of Columbus, the system of barter (*rescate*) that Columbus installed after the European settlement of Hispaniola, and, finally, the tribute system, that obliged the native population to provide the Spaniards with products the colonists demanded.

##### 5.4.1 A Spanish perspective: how trade was to be organised

That the Spanish initially aimed at the establishment of thriving *factorías* and desired to participate in new, profitable trade networks has already been discussed. That these expectations had to be altered drastically was evident. Nevertheless, the instructions Columbus had received from the Spanish monarchs – especially those for the second voyage (see Parry and Keith 1984, 71-74) – he tried to carry

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<sup>76</sup> There exists a wide range of literature pertinent to cultural interaction between Spaniards and Indians, and Spaniards, Indians and Africans. These include the works of e.g. Anderson-Córdova (1995); Cusick (1991); Deagan (1983, 1996, 1998, 2004, ed. 1995); Deagan and Cruxent (1993, 2002a, 2002b); Domínguez (1978); Domínguez and Rives (1995); Ewen (1991); García Arévalo (1978, 1990a); García Castañeda (1949); Guitar (2000); Morales Patiño and Pérez de Acevedo (1946); Moya Pons (1987); Smith (1986); Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* (in press); and VanderVeen (2006).

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out the best he could, he himself still not knowing he was not in Asia. How Columbus, in spite of the unexpected circumstances, tried to regulate trade and exchange in the Caribbean deserves a short discussion, since it would well have effected how Spaniards and Indians both interacted and exchanged with each other.

On the personal level, Columbus had much to win and much to lose. It would benefit him if he would successfully command the new colony and if revenues would be high, since he would then have the possibility to continue his mission and take the ten percent profit that he had managed to receive. If he failed and his position would be undermined – which indeed occurred in due time – he risked losing the profits and favours promised to him. He therefore complied to the terms seriously. Several of the instructions that Columbus were given concerned the regulation of trade. Like said, the venture principally was a royal undertaking, though executed and headed by Columbus. In general thus, all revenues would fall to the King and Queen and things had to be arranged according to their royal complacency. One of the tasks (item 14 in the list) for the Admiral and Viceroy was to provide for a customs house, like there also was in Cádiz, Spain:

“for the storage of all the merchandise of Their Highnesses, including the merchandise to be sent from here, and that to be collected for return shipment. At the time the said merchandise is unloaded, it is to be deposited in the said house in the presence of the persons the said Admiral and Viceroy shall designate for this purpose, and in the presence of the said deputy of the Royal auditors who is to be there, and in the presence of another officer to be appointed by the said Admiral in his own behalf, so that two books may be kept, in which everything is to be written, and these are to be kept by the treasurer whom Their Highnesses send [...]” [Parry and Keith 1984, 74].

This is only one of the many instructions that hint at the Crown’s desire for monopolistic control over the commercial activities to be conducted in the Indies. Basically, Columbus had to monitor all import, export and local transactions. Other items in the list emphasise the role of the Admiral in bartering with the local population. It was thus stated – instructions for the second voyage – that nobody but Columbus or another Crown representative was authorised to exchange with the inhabitants of the newly discovered areas:

Item 7: “No person or persons among those who are to sail with the said fleet, of whatever rank or station they may be, carry or be permitted to carry [...] any merchandise for barter on the said islands and mainland, for none save Their Highnesses are to engage in barter” [Parry and Keith 1984, 73].

Item 9: “All barter is to be carried on by the Admiral or the person he may designate in his place and by the treasurer of Their Highnesses in the Indies, and by no other person. And this is to be done in the presence of the said deputy of the Royal auditors, or before the officer he may appoint for this purpose, so that the transaction may be supervised for them by him, and so that he may enter it in the record book he is to keep of the said bartering” [Parry and Keith 1984, 73].

The crew members were thus forbidden to trade with the Indians for personal purposes, as everything had to be assembled for the sovereigns (see e.g. Parry and Keith 1984, 131-133). Nevertheless, some Spaniards engaged in secret trade, though many were discovered and punished: “some had their ears slit and some the nose, a pitiful sight” (Michele de Cuneo in Parry and Keith 1984, 89). Very soon, despite the Crown’s summons, the exclusive regulation of trade via the official channels could no longer be enforced by Columbus (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 198). Casual encounters between colonists and

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Indians were frequent, and once the Spaniards realised they could barter only trinkets for gold and other indigenous things, the restrictions on trade were soon ignored. Why it was so tempting to participate in these activities appears from the following: “For a lace-end they gave pieces [i.e. of gold] that would be more than two *castellanos*” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 283). Las Casas remarks that two *castellanos* were valued at one *excelente*, or 960 *maravedís* (*ibid.*, 243n1). More than two *castellanos* would then count for, for convenience, around 1,000 *maravedís*. To put these numbers in perspective we only have to consider a 1504 document, which is a “List of ships employed in Columbus’ fourth Transatlantic voyage and nominal rolls of the ships’ companies” (in Parry and Keith 1984, 108-111). It is herein stated that crewmembers like ordinary seamen, sailors, squires, gunners and trumpeters were paid 6,000 *maravedís* for half a year of service, which equals 1,000 *maravedís* a month, being the same price represented by the gold pieces they were offered for a single lace-end! This makes perfectly understandable why, despite the severe punishments Columbus had imposed, secret trade could never be stopped altogether.

Also, from their stay in the Bahamas onwards, Columbus had stressed not to take anything of the Indians without their permission (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 257, 265). According to Las Casas, this was a problem because the Spaniards were “so greedy and disorderly” that they even wanted more than all that the Indians already gave; and also “even without giving the Indians something, the Spaniards want to have and take everything” (*ibid.*, 265). With apparent little success, Columbus forbade all this and ordered that something of more or less equal value had to be paid in return for anything that the Spaniards received, “not because they asked for something, but because it seemed to him that it was right” (*ibid.*). The log in fact describes one such instance where Columbus prohibits a transaction which does not involve a Spanish gift of the same value. Here, on 13 October 1492, when the Spanish had just arrived in the Bahamas, the Indians offered sixteen balls of cotton for three Portuguese *çeotis* (copper coins), which is one Castilian *blanca* (valued at half a *maravedí*). Columbus did not accept this, as he said that the balls contained probably more than an *arroba* (around twenty-five pounds) of spun cotton (*ibid.*, 71), apparently far exceeding the small amount of money that had just been ‘paid’ for it. Also when arriving in Cuba, Columbus refused an offering of cotton thread and “other things”, though this time he had a totally different reason, namely, “in order that they might know that the Admiral was seeking nothing but gold” (*ibid.*, 127). This eagerness, not only for gold, but for all the Spaniards could obtain, is repeatedly mentioned by Las Casas in his edition of Columbus’s log. It is arguable that the selective desire for particular goods, notably high-status items and materials like gold and silver, influenced the Indian-Hispanic exchanges, as apparently particular commodities were refused in favour of other, more desired things of barter, while at the same time a certain degree of aggressiveness was employed in order to acquire those things of highest interest. For Columbus personally, the fact that he was granted one tenth of all merchandise, would as well have influenced particular decisions that were made; among these obviously the route he travelled once in the West Indies and, for instance, the fact that after the establishment of La Isabela so quickly men were sent out to scout for gold in the interior of Hispaniola.

With Columbus’s second journey, more ships found their way to the Indies, shuttling between Cádiz and Seville, both ports that held a monopoly on transport to and fro the ‘New World’, and Hispaniola, carrying provisions and trade goods. Regular contact was thus maintained and this colonial convoy system became known as the *Carrera de Indias*, that would last for over three centuries (e.g. McAlister

1984; Pérez-Mallaína 2005). With this increased transport, also more settlers reached the overseas colonies. As a consequence, in 1495, a licence was issued by the Catholic Monarchs that outlined the rules concerning settlement and trade in the Indies (in Parry and Keith 1984, 215-217). The overseas vassals were provided considerably more freedom than those restricted by the controlled exchanges during the first two voyages, albeit these new colonists still had to pay to the Crown a share of their gold (two-thirds) and other merchandise and things found (one tenth). Those who were salaried vassals of the King and Queen had to give even more. Nevertheless, trade with the Indians for personal profit was still officially forbidden on the island of Hispaniola, though they were permitted to do so on other islands and the mainland.

Lastly, in 1501 instructions for the government of the Indians were written down for Nicolás de Ovando (in Parry and Keith 1984, 260-262). Concerning the trade with the Indians, it is herein stated “not to allow the Indians to sell or exchange their possessions or farms with the Christians for beads or other such things of little value, as had happened before; and when the Christians buy something from them, it is to be in fair exchange” (*ibid.*, 261). This statement makes clear both the continuing Crown’s noble conviction of exchanging equally – which had thus been persisting for some ten years – and that, apparently, not only goods, but entire plots of land were exchanged for trinkets! Having discussed so far some of the Spanish terms and regulations, the following section will describe how the intercultural exchanges took place in practice.

#### 5.4.2 *The earliest exchanges: the log of Columbus*

There has never been located a shipping list of all that Columbus brought on his first voyage. Detailed descriptions of the trade goods that were taken are thus lacking. One can even question whether these traded goods were indeed intended to function as such upon their shipment. Yet, part of the answer we can find in a fragment written by Las Casas on Columbus’s search for royal approval for his first voyage. In the end of 1483 Columbus visited King João II of Portugal to state his demands and ask for the desired privileges. The excerpt is as follows:

*“Lo que pedía para su viaje fue lo que se sigue: Lo primero, que el Rey le armase tres carabelas bastecidas de gente y de vituallas para un año, con las cosas demás necesarias para navegar, y ciertas arcas de rescates, conviene á saber, mercería de Flandes, como son cascabeles, bacinetas de latón, hoja del mismo latón, sartas de cuentas, vidrio de diversas colores, espejuelos, tijeras, cuchillos, agujas, alfileres, camisas de lienzo, paño basto de colores, bonetejos colorados y otras cosas semejantes, que todas son de poco precio y valor, aunque para entre gente dellas ignorante de mucha estima” [Las Casas 1992:I, 151].*

Next to three fully equipped and supplied ships for the duration of one year, Columbus specifically asks for *arcas de rescates*, or trade coffers, which are to consist of sewing equipment from Flanders, jingle bells, small brass basins, brass sheets, strings of beads, glass of different colours, small mirrors, scissors, knives, needles, pins, canvas shirts, coloured coarse clothes, little coloured bonnets and other similar things. All these items are of little worth and value, though, Las Casas writes, they are much esteemed among ignorant people. This last remark possibly refers to earlier experiences along the Guinea coast of Africa, where such trifles he had found to be in great demand (Morison in Hoffman 1987a, 238).<sup>77</sup> Although, as was written in Chapter 3, the Portuguese king did not accede to Columbus’ demands, it is

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<sup>77</sup> See also Dunn and Kelley (1989, 253), where Columbus confirms to have been in Guinea.

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very well likely that the trinkets mentioned above were also part of the cargo of the ships that would ultimately leave nine years later. This is supposed by the fact that the favours and terms that Columbus proposed remained unchanged for the years he continued to seek agreement for his venture. The needed equipment and supplies, which include the trade goods, would do likewise. The assertion is confirmed by Morison (in Hoffman 1987a, 238) who states that Columbus, on his first voyage, shipped hawk bells, glass beads, brass rings, red caps and other trifles. Hence, with trade coffers full of trinkets loaded, serviceable if any people would be encountered, Columbus and his men unexpectedly arrived in the 'New World'.

The first documented exchange between Europeans and Amerindians was written down by Columbus in his *Diario*, and reproduced by Las Casas:

"I, he says, in order that they would be friendly to us – because I recognised that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force – I gave red caps, and glass beads which they put on their chests, and many other things of small value, in which they took so much pleasure and became so much our friends that it was a marvel. Later they came swimming to the ships' launches where we were and brought us parrots and cotton thread in balls and javelins and many other things, and they traded them to us for other things which we gave them, such as small glass beads and bells. In sum, they took everything and gave of what they had very willingly" [Dunn and Kelley 1989, 65].

It describes the exchange of small goods, which are "symbols and proof of the other group's alien nature" (Wilson 1990a, 49). The excerpt is illustrative of many of the exchanges that followed, as well as for how the Spanish seemingly entered into these transactions. Columbus is clear in saying that his objective is to convert the Amerindians to Catholicism – although it is arguable that this phrase has only been inserted to act up to the desires of the Spanish royals (but see Todorov 1984). Upon inspecting these strange people, Columbus thinks the best way to achieve their Christianisation would be by establishing a friendly relation with them. To accomplish that, Columbus starts giving gifts which he, throughout the log, repeatedly emphasises to be of small value. Apart from securing friendship and aid Christianisation, other reasons for giving or bartering goods that Columbus mentions are "to buy food" (Cuba, 2 November), "so that all were pacified" (Cuba, 3 December), and "in order to treat them courteously and make them lose their fear" (Hispaniola, 12 December) (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 129, 197, 219, resp.). The first instance describes how Columbus sent two of his men together with two Indians to scout the interior of Cuba in order to find the local king. If they were in need they could use strings of beads to buy themselves food. Trinkets were also given to reassure the native population. Not seldom there were encounters with individuals, whom they passed in their canoes, or, sometimes, whom they had captured, as happened to a woman from Hispaniola. Subsequently, these people were treated courteously and 'overwhelmed' with gifts, a deliberate strategy so that thereafter they would persuade their fellow Indians of the Spaniards' goodness and generosity. Columbus confirms this during the encounter with the peddler that was described in Chapter 1: "through good reports of us – Our Lord pleasing – when Your Highnesses send [others] here, those who come will receive courteous treatment and the natives will give us all that they may have" (*ibid.*, 85). Similarly, the case of the seized woman reads as follows: "The Admiral ordered her clothed and he gave her glass beads and bells and brass finger rings and returned her to land very courteously, according to his custom" (*ibid.*, 219).

To Columbus, it seems to have surprised him that what to him were evident trinkets were of so much attraction to the Taíno.<sup>78</sup> Also, he was astounded to see that the islanders apparently gave whatever they had and that this was done without the least hesitation, an indication that the islanders were indeed willing to do this if they could at least get those foreign items – “believing that nothing will be given to them without their giving something” (*ibid.*, 71). Nevertheless, on Long Island (*Fernandina*), Columbus remarked that the people were more sophisticated in their negotiations, as they “appear somewhat more civilised and given to commerce and more astute [...] [for] they know better how to bargain payment than the others did” (*ibid.*, 89). The area was already a lively area of trade, involving also the Greater Antilles, which may be a possible explanation. Furthermore, for sure the news of the Spanish arrival preceded their actual landing (see also the fragment of the Indian man in a canoe, Chapter 1), which might have encouraged a more sensible attitude (Wilson 1990a, 50). Also on Hispaniola the reception of the Spaniards was initially attended with more reticence and suspicion than they had witnessed before (*ibid.*, 60-61).

In the above fragment of the first documented exchange, the things mentioned by name to have been traded are red caps, glass beads and bells by the Spanish, against parrots, cotton and javelins by the Indians. Indeed these were among the items that were most frequently bartered between the two cultures. But also tableware, like “pieces of (clay) bowls” and “broken glass cups” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 71, 107), “fragments of dishes and plates” (Chanca in Parry and Keith 1984, 87), as well as coins, clothes and lace-ends, were swapped. At one instance it is mentioned that some of the Spanish sailors had caught a sea turtle, of which the ship’s boys traded pieces of the shell, the size of a fingernail, for which they were given javelins in return (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 197). The exchange is remarkable, since the Spaniards here trade a local and, for the natives, familiar (though rare) commodity with the Taíno, assuming the presence of a certain ethos of hospitality or social strategy with strangers. As regards gold, this was not traded in the first couple of days of contact. Though, upon seeing some pieces of gold a Lucayan Indian was wearing as ornamentation, Columbus was covetous to find all there was. This he made explicitly clear to the local people by dangling gold, but also pearls, in front of them, asking where to find it (e.g. *ibid.*, 133).<sup>79</sup> As appears from the ethnohistoric accounts, the people of the Greater Antilles soon perceived the Spanish enrapture of the material, often before their actual arrival (cf. Mol 2008).

Columbus repeatedly mentions that the Indians took much pleasure in the things they were given – which “they considered of the greatest excellence” and “seemed to be esteemed as sacred relics” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 87, 273, resp.) –, a statement arguably applicable to the entire set of Spanish trade items. Among these qualifications no distinctions are made between items that were most desired and less desired, so it seems, except for the bells. Ever since Columbus set first foot ashore in the West Indies, brass bells, or *cascabeles*, “of the sort [put] on the foot of a sparrow hawk” (*ibid.*, 109), appeared to be of particular interest to the Taíno. The eagerness to acquire the little bells was overwhelming. Early ethnohistoric accounts frequently mention the Taíno delight when *cascabeles* were offered. Such is also narrated by Columbus in the entry of 26 December 1492 of his diary: “Another canoe came from another place bringing certain pieces of gold which they wished to give for one bell, because they desired nothing else as much as bells, for the canoe was not yet alongside when they called and showed the

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<sup>78</sup> The reverse must have been true as well; see Chapter 7.

<sup>79</sup> This act of showing gold to natives echoed similar practices earlier in the Canaries (Abulafia 2008b, 39).

pieces of gold, saying *chuq chuque* for bells, for they are on the point of going crazy for them (*ibid.*, 283). Next to the reiteration Columbus uses to express the marvellousness with which the Taíno regarded the offerings, this presumed admiration and attractiveness of the European goods also appears from other remarks. For example, by the fact that the Indians came swimming to the Spanish ships, with the sole reason of bartering. Also, after a man in a canoe had been given some trinkets and thus arrived at land “all the others went up to him” (*ibid.*, 81), undoubtedly curious to see what he had been given by those strangers.

The log provides some short notices about how the different items were used by the Taíno, or, at least, on how Columbus thought they might use them. On 15 October 1492, in the Bahamas, Columbus offered two bells to the peddling Indian just mentioned, which he put on the man’s ears (*ibid.*). In this transaction, he also gave some small green glass beads, which he put on his arm. The man, though – like his fellow villagers – seemed to appreciate this act of adornment. A couple of days earlier (the first documented exchange, quoted above), the Indians were offered glass beads, which they themselves put on their chests (*ibid.*, 65). Other such examples of personal usage for dress or decoration are only mentioned in the context of elite contacts, which will be discussed in the next section. In Chapter 7 the Taíno adoption of European goods will be reflected upon in more detail.

Noteworthy to mention is that, besides the different goods, from the earliest moments of contact also water and food supplies were frequently offered. These exchanges were two-directional, though mostly it were the Taíno who provided the Spaniards in their needs. Especially in the earliest months there was an urgent need of food, though the problem remained a threat for the colonists for years (see Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 132-147; VanderVeen 2006). The Taíno provided the newcomers with basically all kinds of food available in the islands, such as fish, birds, small mammals, seeds, spices, fruits and cassava bread. At first instance the Spanish had to get used to the new food sources, but they soon began to appreciate them, as appears from a quote of dr. Chanca: “There come here [i.e. La Isabela] constantly many Indians [...] All come laden with *ages* [yams], which are like turnips, very excellent for food; of these we make here many kinds of food-stuffs in various ways. It is so sustaining to eat that it comforts us greatly” (in Parry and Keith 1984, 86-87). Within two years, however, food supplies ran down, hunger became worse, and the Taíno could not meet the Spanish food demands anymore. Even fish was being transported across the Atlantic (see appendices 1 and 3). Also in subsequent years, as the tribute system was being established, food remained to constitute a large part of what the Spaniards received from the Taíno.

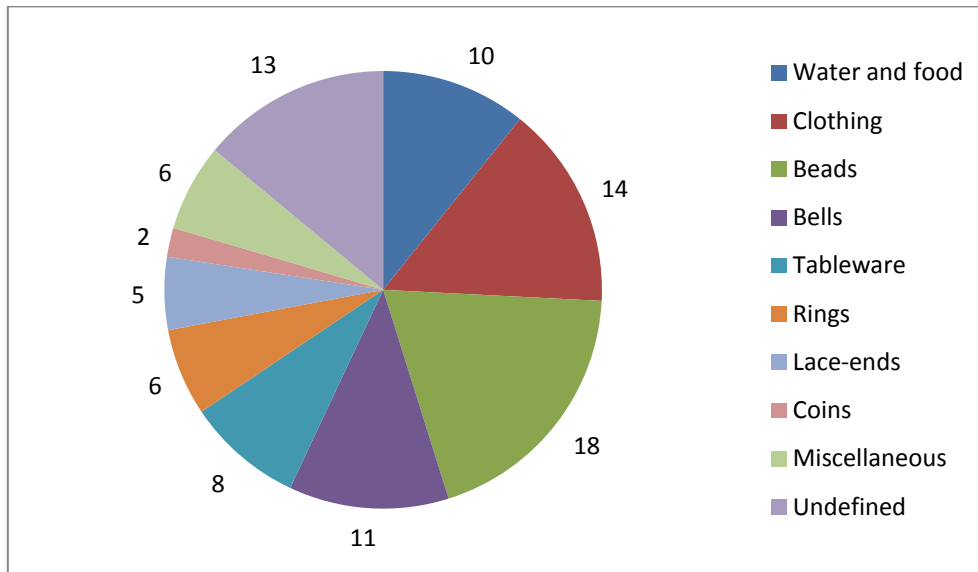
Figure 33 summarises the variety of Spanish trade goods as they are mentioned to be exchanged in the log of Columbus. These include both ‘common’ exchanges and ‘elite’ exchanges (see below). It must be noted that obviously not all exchanges would have been written down by Columbus, while at multiple times only vague terms like “trifles” or “many other things” appear.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the graph is

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<sup>80</sup> That not all exchanges have been recorded would simply have been because they were too numerous. It is therefore often just stated that ‘things were exchanged’. Also exchanges between Columbus and local rulers are not always described, as is suggested by the following sentence: “The lord [i.e. Guacanagari] was still wearing the shirt and gloves that the Admiral had given him” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 285). In fact, this is the first time in the diary that the clothes are mentioned.



believed to cover much, if not all, of the diversity of the Spanish ‘gift kit’ (*sensu* Brain 1975) that was employed during the first voyage – and probably remained to be used in subsequent years as well.<sup>81</sup>



**Figure 33.** The variety of European items used in exchanges with the Taíno, according to the log of Columbus (Dunn and Kelley 1989).

From listing all intercultural exchanges mentioned in the *Diario* at which the Spanish offered things to the Indians, no regularities or patterns can be discerned. Beads were not only swapped for cotton, nor were parrots exclusively exchanged for finger rings. Rather, both parties would have possessed a ‘gift kit’ from which they chose whatever to give whenever they pleased. Sometimes multiple things of different kinds were given at the same time, but at other instances only one thing or one kind of good was provided. A number of things were apparently given without receiving something in return, though most of the times the exchanges were a matter of *quid pro quo* and thus involved an act of reciprocity. Also the geographical location seems to have made no difference in what was exchanged: the things the Lucayans were offered do not significantly differ from the things bartered in Cuba and Hispaniola. Most often the quantities of things bartered are undefined. Whenever they are defined, it generally counts one; only sporadically other numbers are mentioned (i.e. for coins, beads, bells). One such example is that, on Hispaniola, Columbus mentions that “for six glass beads [the Indians] would give and do give a piece of gold” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 265). Those things that were exchanged by the crewmembers were also personally bartered by Columbus. Nevertheless, there were also things which only Columbus was allowed to give away and these will be discussed below.

#### 5.4.3 Exchange on the higher level: interactions with the local elite

The exchanges Columbus had with Taíno *caciques* and other high-ranking individuals stand apart from the more common exchanges that Columbus and his crewmen had with other Taíno people. These elite interactions took place in a different atmosphere, in which the guest was welcomed, received and being seated, all attended with much courtesy, after which there typically were offerings of food (dinners), followed by the giving of gifts (Mol 2008; Wilson 1990a). For both parties these acts were in some way

<sup>81</sup> The term “gift kit” was first proposed by Jeffrey P. Brain (1975) to describe the standardised set of trade goods that many Europeans used on early expeditions in North America during the first half of the sixteenth century. Beads and bells were prominent constituents of this gift kit.

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

compatible with the exchanges that they knew of their own social-cultural context. For the Spaniards this pattern resembled audiences at the royal courts of Europe, whereas the Taíno maintained a socioeconomic system of gift exchange, in which *caciques* were accustomed to participate in elaborate ritual exchange ceremonies. The common diplomatic ground thus established was comprehensible to both the guest and the host.

It was Columbus, who, in the early years after arrival, could not do anything other than broadly conform to the local customs. For the most part he was dependent on the willingness of the *caciques* to provide him and his men with food. At the same time, he had ended up in an unknown part of the world so that time was needed to explore and experience the environment and its people. But, as much as Columbus sought to make contact with local rulers, also the Taíno headmen of the different *cacicazgos* – though in varying degrees – strived to receive Columbus’s attention and sympathy. Although at this early moment he was still seen as an ambiguous, and therefore dangerous, person, exhibiting qualities of both a Taíno god and chief, he was also regarded a possible powerful ally (Wilson 1990a, 61-62). Guacanagarí took the risk of entering into a peaceful relation with the Spaniards, so that his social and political status would considerably increase among other chiefs. Political alliances between the different indigenous groups had always been important, and the occasional flexibility with which they could be rearranged would possibly have allowed for the establishment of this intercultural bond. For to establish and solidify these political and social relations, it was a well-grounded practice among the Taíno elite members to exchange high-prestige goods. Thus, it did not take long before also Columbus – the *cacique* of the Spaniards – was being involved. Some of these instances of gift giving between both cultures will be described below to give some insight into the variety of objects that shifted hands, as well as the context in which these transactions occurred.<sup>82</sup>

The first such instance is described to have occurred in the early days of Columbus’s stay in Cuba. Here, as was referred to earlier, Columbus sent two of his men into the interior to find favour with the local ‘king’. The hospitable welcome the two men received reads as follows: “upon their arrival the most honourable men of the town led them by the arm to the principal house and gave them two chairs, in which they sat [i.e. *duhos*]; and all of them sat down on the ground around them” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 137). Las Casas (1992:1, 235) adds that upon their arrival in the village the men were immediately presented food. From Hernando Colón, Columbus’s son, who wrote a biography of his father, we know that there were also gifts exchanged, thus completing the typical order of acts carried out when high-ranking visitors were greeted in Taíno society (in Wilson 1990a, 58). Remarkable is that Hernando Colón points to an apparent distinction between the role of men and women at such an occasion. First, the men would have greeted the guests, thereby handing round all kinds of food. Thereafter, it was up to the women to meet the visitors and offering them high-prestige gifts of various articles. This pattern was repeated at later contacts with Taíno women (see Wilson 1990a).

One of the earliest meetings Columbus himself had with a *cacique* was on Sunday, 16 December 1492 in northwestern Hispaniola. The Spanish fleet had been anchored there for quite a while and Columbus had sent some men into the Valley of Trois Rivières to see if they could make contact. In this they succeeded,

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<sup>82</sup> Examples and analyses of these exchanges can be read in e.g. Dunn and Kelley (1989), Las Casas (1992), Mol (2007, 76-90; 2008) and Wilson (1990a). The descriptions of interactions between Columbus and Taíno *caciques* that are recorded in this section are derived from these works.

and probably further encouraged by the reports that a man in a canoe – whom Columbus had met that morning and bestowed with gifts – had given to the *cacique*, some five hundred men appeared on the beach together with their king, a boy of only about twenty-one years of age (Las Casas in Wilson 1990a, 62). Some pieces of gold were traded with the Indians who came to the ships. For the king, Columbus ordered to send a present, which was received “with great state” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 231). Unfortunately it is not specified what constituted the gift. Nevertheless, for the king it would possibly have been the reason why in the afternoon he himself decided to approach the Spanish ships, accompanied by his tutor and counsellors. At the *Santa María* Columbus served them Castilian food, which the king tasted and distributed to the rest of the entourage. Not much more is described about this encounter. Nonetheless, contact had been established and the next day Columbus again sent some of his men to the Indian village. There they met a *cacique*, whom Columbus believed to be the “governor” of the province, who had a large sheet of gold (*ibid.*, 237).<sup>83</sup> He broke it into pieces and each time he individually traded such a small part for what the Spaniards offered, promising he would bring more the next day. The next day, 18 December, when the Spaniards were celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation and Columbus was enjoying dinner, the young king whom Columbus had dined with at the *Santa María* the other day, again showed up with some two hundred men. Without wanting Columbus to rise from his seat, the *cacique* sat next to him, tasting and sharing the food and drinks with the small company he had taken on deck (for the fragment and its interpretation, see Dunn and Kelley 1989, 241-243; Las Casas 1992:I, 271-272; Mol 2008; Wilson 1990a, 64-65). According to custom, afterwards there were goods exchanged, as the following excerpt describes:

After eating, an Indian squire brought a belt just like those of Castile in form, except that it is of different workmanship, which he took and gave to me, and two pieces of worked gold, which were very thin; for I think that here they get little of it, although I believe that they are very close to the place where it originates and that there, there is much. I saw that he was pleased with a coverlet that I had on my bed [or tapestry above his bed]. I gave it to him and some very good amber beads that I wore on my neck, and some red shoes, and a flask of orange-flower water, with which he was so pleased that it was a marvel. And he and his tutor and counsellors were very troubled because they did not understand me nor I them. Nevertheless I gathered that he told me that if something from this place pleased me that the whole island was at my command. I sent for some beads of mine on which, as a token, I have a gold *excelente* on which Your Highnesses are sculptured, and I showed it to him” [Columbus in Dunn and Kelley 1989, 243].

Some days later, on 22 December, Columbus was again offered a belt, described as “a belt that in place of a purse bore a mask which had two big ears and the tongue and nose of hammered gold” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 263).<sup>84</sup> This time, the item was handed over by one of the *cacique*’s retainers to a ship’s boy, though it was sent by the *cacique* himself and was designated for Columbus. No official ceremonies accompanied the transaction. The intent of the gift was to persuade the Admiral coming over to the village of the local ruler. Columbus, however, did not respond. These days on the north coast of

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<sup>83</sup> It is not clear exactly who this *cacique* was, though from Columbus’s wording it seems likely he was not the same king as Columbus had met on his ship the day before.

<sup>84</sup> According to Las Casas (1992:I, 278) “this belt was of very fine small stones, like pearls made of white fish bones [i.e., shell (Oliver 2009b, 149)] interspersed with other coloured ones. The manner of work was so closely sewn in cotton thread, and of such beautiful work in both front and back, although all in white, that it was a pleasure to see it, as if it had been made on a tapestry frame in the way that the embroiderers create the edgings of chasubles in Castile. And it was so hard and so strong that I believe without a doubt that an arquebuz shot could not pass through it, or only with difficulty; it was four fingers in width, in the manner of belts worked in embroidery or gold thread that are only used by kings or great nobles in Castile” (translation from Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 38).

Hispaniola hundreds and hundreds of people and canoes, swimming and peddling, came and went to the Spanish ships, all with the desire to trade, meet the Admiral, and have him come to visit their *caciques*, who were overtly competing for Columbus's friendship and favours now.<sup>85</sup> At this time, the Indians resided in close proximity to the ships twenty-four hours a day, while Columbus sent out small groups of Europeans to nearby Taíno villages. Eventually, though, when the unmanageable situation could not appeal to him anymore, Columbus decided to weigh the anchors and continue searching the gold mines further east (Wilson 1990a, 67).

The next notable instance of Columbus exchanging with a Taíno distinguished person was with Guacanagarí, the *cacique* who had helped the Spaniards after their wreckage on Christmas eve, and who became an important ally to the newcomers. In all possible ways Guacanagarí and his people had taken care of the Spaniards after the fatality, offering help, hospitality, shelter, feasting and gifts. Together they dined at the *Niña*, while Indian foods, including yams, shrimps, game and cassava, were shared when they were ashore. On 26 December, Columbus presented Guacanagarí with a shirt or blouse and a pair of gloves, with which "he was pleased more [...] than with anything else that they gave him" (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 285). The *cacique* later gave Columbus a carved mask with gold inlays, as well as other "gold jewels, that he himself had put on the Admiral's head and neck" (*ibid.*, 287). The next days, more dinners and gift exchanges took place between the two leaders. Columbus received a large flattened piece of gold that, again, was put on his neck. Later, he received a large mask of gold for which he gave a hand washbasin and a pitcher, items Guacanagarí had specifically asked for. For the entry of 30 December, a remarkable transaction is described:

"The Admiral left to dine on shore and arrived at the time when five kings had come, all subject to the one who is called Guacanagarí, all with their crowns displaying their high rank [...] The king came to receive the Admiral as soon as he reached land and took him by the arm to the same house as yesterday where he had a dais and chairs in which he seated the Admiral. Next he took off the crown from his own head and put it on the Admiral's. And the Admiral took from his own neck a collar of fine agates and handsome beads of beautiful colours that looked well in all its parts and put it on the king; and he took off a cape of fine red colour that he had dressed in that day and dressed the king in it; and he sent for some coloured, high-laced shoes and had him shod with them and he put on his finger a large silver ring because the king's men had said they saw a silver ring on a sailor and that they had done a lot to get it. The king was very happy and content, and two of those [other] kings who were with him came where the Admiral was with the king and brought him two flattened pieces of gold, each one his own" [Las Casas in Dunn and Kelley 1989, 295-297].

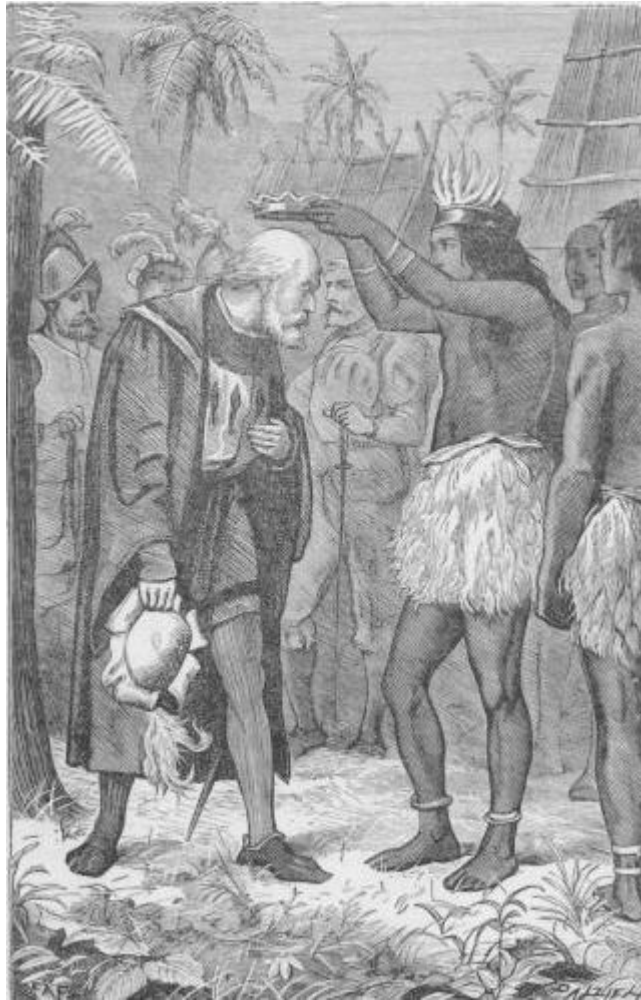
Like the preceding fragments of intercultural elite exchange, also this excerpt shows that both parties had a variety of gifts that they reserved for this kind of encounters. Most of the items Columbus mentions to have been given to Guacanagarí do not occur in other, more common exchanges. Moreover, the act of giving, the expression of respect and authority, is arguably more important than what was actually given (see Mol 2008; Wilson 1990a). Nevertheless, Wilson (1990a, 71) reasons that "the 'coronation' of the Admiral meant a lot more within the European set of cultural categories than it did among the Taíno." Columbus understood the coronation as a symbol of Indian recognition of his

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<sup>85</sup> In this competition, a remarkable scene took place on the beach, on 17 December. In the afternoon, Columbus was ashore with some of the local people when a canoe with members of a group from the island of Tortuga arrived. They peddlers were given no chance of making contact with the Admiral, as the Indians on land started throwing rocks at them. They even encouraged one of Columbus's officials to participate, but he refused (see fragment in Wilson 1990a, 63-64).

supreme power and Guacanagarí's affirmation of fealty to him and the Catholic monarchs of Castile. The exact meaning of this crowning ceremony for the Taíno is indistinct (fig. 34).<sup>86</sup> For Guacanagarí, on the other hand, Keegan (2007, 22) asserts, the “gifts of a scarlet cape and red beads were perhaps the greatest honour that Columbus could have bestowed. Red was the Taíno colour of life, the colour of male virility (Roe 1982, discussion of colour symbolism in South American mythology).”

Apart from these quite detailed descriptions of exchanges, there are a couple more notions of things shifting hands between Columbus and Indian ‘lords’ or ‘kings’. One such example of goods that Columbus received is gold, which often constituted larger pieces than the grains and nuggets the common people bartered among each other. Also special foods like “three very fat geese” (presumably Muscovy



**Figure 34.** The *cacique* Guacanagarí placing a crown on the head of Columbus. W.H.G. Kingston and Henry Frith, *Notable Voyagers*, 1998. Source: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

ducks) (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 267) were given, as were parrots and “pieces of cotton cloth that the women wear” (*ibid.*, 273). Columbus, on the other hand, is further mentioned to have given a shirt and other pieces of cloth. Also, after a brief skirmish with the Ciguayo of the Samaná peninsula, he offered, in an act of reconciliation, the local ruler and his companion biscuit and honey, and the king a red cap, beads and a piece of red cloth (*ibid.*, 337). Alternatively, it is also mentioned that Columbus, or other representatives of the Crown, gave “things of the trade goods” to high-ranking Taíno people, suggesting these were the same items that also the common people received in barter.

Elite exchanges were obviously not restricted to the first voyage, and also of later instances of exchange between Columbus and Taíno *caciques* descriptions have been left. Such an example concerned again Columbus's friend Guacanagarí, who had to explain Columbus about the dead of the thirty-nine Spaniards at La Navidad, upon the Admiral's return to Hispaniola in 1493. First he had sent him two masks of gold (Chanca in Parry and Keith 1984, 83); thereafter, when Columbus was ashore, he presented him an elaborate gift, containing “eight hundred small beads made of stone, which they highly valued, and called them *cíbas*, and one hundred of gold, and a crown of gold, and three little

<sup>86</sup> Another European leader known to have been crowned was Jacques Cartier (1535), who stayed with the Iroquois of Hochelaga, Canada (Axtell 1992, 48).

calabashes, or gourds, which they call *ybueras*, full of grains of gold, all weighing about two hundred pesos.” The Admiral gave him “several glass trinkets, knives, scissors, hawks-bells, pins, needles, and little looking-glasses, which the king thought a great treasure” (Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas in Parry and Keith 1984, 191; see also Las Casas 1992:1, 373). In this way, exchanges between both European and Indian high-ranking individuals continued for years; on Hispaniola, but similarly in virtually every other place in the circum-Caribbean where both cultures first met each other. Next to all the objects that have so far been described as exchange items, the Spaniards obviously brought a lot more to the West Indies. Often it remains unclear whether these ‘other things’ were exchanged as well. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to include a short discussion on these shipments, in order to see more of the variety of the ‘alien’ material culture the Indians sooner or later were confronted with. Furthermore, it gives more information about the context of Spanish gifts and goods in the ‘New World’.

#### 5.4.4 Spanish provisioning and supply lists

After Columbus, the number of ships crossing the Atlantic quickly multiplied. During the early years of Spanish presence in the Caribbean, fleets carrying provisions and other goods from the Iberian homeland frequently dropped their anchors in the Caribbean to sustain the colonists. Through time a lively trade developed between both continents, whereby much of the material culture that constituted medieval life in Europe eventually ended up in the ‘New World’. The common colonists’ desire to have at their disposal most of what they were used to at home is reflected in the composition of the cargoes of the ships that made the oceanic crossing. Unfortunately, no supply lists or ship registries are known to have survived. Nevertheless, because of the chroniclers and early writers who described the encounter and events in subsequent decades, we have quite an understanding of which products and materials were shipped to the colonies. Also archaeology has contributed a good deal to our knowledge (see Deagan and Cruxent 2002b).

Concerning these European imports, Las Casas (in Parry and Keith 1984, 70) writes that the ships of the second expedition were fitted out with artillery and arms, and brought “biscuit, wine, wheat, and flour, oil, vinegar, cheeses, all kinds of seeds, tools, mares, and several stallions, fowl, and many other things that could reproduce in the Indies and be of benefit to those who were there. They also brought along many coffers of trade goods and merchandise to be given away to the Indians on behalf of the King and Queen, or to be bartered or exchanged.” From the letter of Michele de Cuneo to Hieronymo Annari (in Parry and Keith 1984, 88-92) we know which seeds grew well and which did not. Of those that were brought Cuneo mentions spring melon, cucumber, squashes, radishes, onions, lettuce, other salad plants, scallions, parsley, wheat, chickpeas and beans. Also cattle, horses, sheep and goats were brought, as well as chickens, dogs, cats and pigs, of which the latter reproduced quickly.<sup>87</sup> An important position throughout these decades of intercontinental shipping was maintained by the Canary Islands, which, like mentioned before, served as a strategic and convenient way station between Spain and Hispaniola. Hence, many of the material goods transhipped to the ‘New World’ originated from these

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<sup>87</sup> The rapid multiplying of pigs was also mentioned by Columbus in a letter to the sovereigns, dated to 1499. On the second voyage he had bought eight pigs on the island of Gomera in the Canaries, about which he writes, “one now sees innumerable pigs here, all of them descended from these eight” (Parry and Keith 1984, 233). Although pigs were a profitable source of meat, their introduction caused a devastation of the cultivated fields of the Taíno, which indirectly contributed to their decline.

islands (see Tejera Gaspar 1998). Among these many plants (notably sugarcane) and animals, as the archipelago was the final stop before the ocean had to be crossed.

Besides, unique information is offered by a list in which are recorded additional supplies for the settlement of La Isabela (see appendix 1). It was in early 1494 that Columbus appointed Antonio de Torres to convey a message to the Spanish Crown that contained this request. The cleric Juan de Fonseca, the recipient of the message, was the factor chosen by Fernando and Isabela to fit out Columbus's second voyage. Until the early 1520s he would be the principal official responsible for Caribbean affairs (Parry and Keith 1984, 185). The list mentions what should be provided in order to sustain one thousand persons for one year. Among the requested supplies are foodstuffs, supplies for the maintenance of people and ships, and livestock and fowl, but also specialised craftsmen and other people. All this was delivered by the relief fleet headed by Torres that arrived in Hispaniola in winter 1494, that somewhat improved the material conditions at La Isabela. A detailed discussion of the usage of the materials from the Crown's list for the colonists at the settlement, can be found in Deagan and Crucent (2002b). Remarkable is the existence of a second list composed by the Admiral that outlined all that he supposed necessary for himself and his household (see appendix 2). Striking are the differences between the items on both lists. Columbus clearly permits himself a range of luxuries, including food delicacies, fine cloths and high-status tableware. Lastly, yet another list includes the things Columbus required for his fourth voyage (see appendix 3). Apart from the composition of the crew and their respective salaries, it is also noted that there had to be loaded trade goods, together worth 80,000 *maravedís* (Parry and Keith 1984, 108). In comparison, Columbus mentions that a brass jingle is worth a *maravedí* each in Castile (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 87). Following this line of reasoning, tens of thousands of bells and beads must have been shipped to the Caribbean, with the intention to be given away, bartered or exchanged with the Indians.

#### 5.4.5 Synthesis: early exchanges, 1492-1495

Many of the earliest exchanges between the Spaniards and the Taíno took place in a friendly atmosphere and were fairly equal. Exchanges were centred around mutually valued goods that composed the so-called 'gift kits' of the parties. The Spaniards offered such items as bells, beads, bonnets, lace-ends and crockery, while the Taíno reciprocated with gold, cotton, javelins, parrots and hammocks. The objects that were swapped were often gestures of hospitality and generosity, instigated by curiosity and by way of establishing an amicable relation. Nevertheless, the desire to obtain goods or commodities from the 'other' was evident and arguably formed the prime goal of many transactions. Both parties were convinced of making the best deal in the mutual exchanges and were surprised about how little they had to give for how much to receive. Many exchanges occurred between Spanish crewmembers and Indians coming up to the European ships or residence, or during casual encounters as the Spaniards roamed the countryside. Simultaneously, also exchanges took place between the high-ranking individuals of both represented cultures. These exchanges generally proceeded along the line or protocol of indigenous greeting ceremonies, keeping the ritual order of being seated, distributing food and giving gifts. These meetings often served additional goals such as securing an effective relation and establishing a possibly fruitful political alliance. Moreover, for the *caciques* these relations would have increased their power and status. The gifts were often gestures of hospitality, respect and wealth. Considering all that was traded between the Spaniards and the Taíno, there is a difference between the

objects exchanged among the elite and the common people. Clearly, some items were restricted to the elite and therefore only figured in elite exchanges. The objects the Spaniards gave had no precedents in Europe, as to their function as exchange items, while the Taíno gifts functioned as high-prestige goods in protohistoric times already. As such, well-established patterns of elite exchange continued to be followed by the Taíno during the initial years of colonisation. The Spaniards, on the other hand, by the recognition of certain analogies, were well able to fit many occasions into their European medieval cultural framework. Thus, a common platform of understanding facilitated interaction and exchange between both parties, which were, though, interpreted in their own distinctive manners.

After a short period of haphazard exchanges, Columbus implemented a system of barter (*rescate*), allowing groups of Spaniards, accompanied by a representative of the Crown, to visit Indian villages and exchange goods for gold and food. The restrictions and rules they had to comply to were, however, often denied, because for many of them the advantages of illicit barter simply outweighed the disadvantages. Among the Europeans, food shortages, disease and dissatisfaction prevailed. Through engaging in barter the colonists could ease their situation somewhat, for, as discussed above, revenues from barter could be high. At the same time, this wandering was attended with abuse and aggression towards the Taíno, encouraging hostility and deteriorating the established intercultural relations.

#### 5.4.6 The collecting of tribute

From 1495 the Taíno were obliged to pay tribute to the Spaniards. Barter became forbidden altogether. The system went into operation after Columbus's march of possession into the interior, 'the battle of the Vega Real', the climax of increasing hostilities, that led to the 'pacification' of the Cibao. For the preceding years, the revenues of the newly discovered colonies had been minimal. The heaps of gold Columbus was thought to find had still not been located. Yet, to keep King Fernando and Queen Isabela satisfied, Columbus had to come up with other things to show that the islands yielded profit. His earlier attempt of sending slaves had not received much sympathy. By enforcing this policy of tribute payments, Columbus was assured of receiving commodities that could be sent to Spain directly. As was discussed earlier, the Spaniards soon noticed the directing power of the *caciques* and perceived that maintaining this Taíno social hierarchical order could eventually be to their advantage. And thus, also tribute became organised through the Taíno chiefs, who were made responsible for the collection and delivery of the requirements.

In practice, this meant that each person of over fourteen years of age (till seventy, according to Las Casas; in Parry and Keith 1984, 233) had to provide enough gold to fill a Flemish hawk bell every three months (fig. 35).<sup>88</sup> In the localities where there were no gold deposits, for those people it sufficed to pay an *arroba* of cotton (Las Casas 1992:I, 437).<sup>89</sup> According to Martire d'Anghiera (1970:I, 111), next to

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<sup>88</sup> According to Las Casas, this amount of gold equalled between 3 and 4 pesos of gold, with each peso valued at 450 *maravedis* (Las Casas 1992:I, 437). If recalling that a moderate Spanish monthly wage was around 1,000 *maravedis*, we can make an interesting comparative calculation of how these tribute demands stood out against a sailor's salary. The total amount of gold (between 3 and 4 pesos) would be worth between 1,350 and 1,800 *maravedis*, for three months. For convenience let us stick to 1,500 *maravedis*. A three months wage for a common Spaniard was 3,000 *maravedis*. Seen in this perspective, for a Spaniard tribute would require him to render about half of his monthly payment!

<sup>89</sup> An *arroba* was a Spanish and Portuguese unit of weight equal to about twenty-five pounds, and as a unit of liquid measure almost twenty litres.



cotton, also spices were paid. Moreover, each person had to wear a disk around his neck to indicate that he was paying tribute (Las Casas 1992:1, 437). The tribute demands were strenuous and required much of the local population. There was famine among the Taíno, which often hindered them to come up with the requested amounts. Las Casas, with good sense of drama, argued that the amounts were far from proportional (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, there was some room for negotiation, at least in those instances when other products than gold were asked. An example comes from the *caciques* of the Cibao: “They begged as a favour of the Admiral to have pity on their misery, and to exempt them till such time as the island might recover its former prosperity. They bound themselves then to pay double what was for the moment failing” (Martire d’Anghiera 1970:1, 111). Generally, though, the Taíno agreed upon the arrangements, although presumably because they saw no other option. The ethnohistoric sources describe such a meeting where Spanish tribute obligations were communicated. In this case, Bartolomé Columbus, the Adelantado, visits the western province of Xaraguá, the territory of the *caciques* Behecchio and Anacaona – the last major chiefdom on which payments had to be imposed – somewhere in late 1496 or early 1497. They were hospitably welcomed with songs, dances and ceremonies. The subsequent negotiations have been recorded by Martire d’Anghiera and read as follows:

“How can you ask tribute from me, since none of the numerous provinces under my authority produce gold?” He had learned that strangers in search of gold had landed on the island, and he did not suspect that our men would ask for anything else. “We do not pretend,” continued the Adelantado, “to exact tribute from anybody which cannot be easily paid, or of a kind not obtainable; but we know that this country produces an abundance of cotton, hemp [i.e. *Agave sisalana*], and other similar things, and we ask you to pay tribute of those products.” The cacique’s face expressed joy on hearing these words, and with a satisfied air he agreed to give what he was asked, and in whatever quantities they desired” [Martire d’Anghiera 1970:1, 118-119].

Bartolomé furthermore advised his hosts to plant more cotton along the river banks, so that they could more easily assemble the required amounts (*ibid.*, 120). The fragment illustrates that Behecchio was relieved after the terms had been settled, presumably because he considered it easier, and within his power, to amass food and cotton, as opposed to gold, of which they did not possess the technology to extract it. Furthermore, he held the prospect that if he acceded to the demands, the Spaniards were willing to leave his area, so that his authority and the autonomy of his chiefdom would be guaranteed (Wilson 1990a, 127-128). Several months later, Bartolomé returned to the region to collect the tribute. In the village of Behecchio thirty-two (subordinate) *caciques* had gathered who had all brought their share of the demands. Martire d’Anghiera (1970:1, 123-124) recounts that “in addition to what had been agreed



Figure 35. Gold panning by Indians. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, sixteenth century. WMC.

upon, they sought to win favour by adding numerous presents, which consisted of two kinds of bread, roots, grains, utias [i.e. hutias], [...], fish, which they had preserved by cooking them, and those same serpents, resembling crocodiles, which they esteem a most delicate food [i.e. iguanas].” Food like cassava bread and dried fish were gladly received by the Spaniards, who at this moment increasingly suffered from severe hunger. Behecchio had promised to provide for all the bread the Spaniards needed, and combined with the large amounts of cotton that were collected, Bartolomé thought of ordering a ship from La Isabela to carry all the provisions. Anacaona persuaded Behecchio to accompany the Spaniards to the shore, some ten kilometres from the village. She insisted on passing the night in a small hamlet, where she appeared to possess a storehouse packed with wondrous articles, her ‘treasure’, comprising the most valuable Taíno prestige goods. According to Martire d’Anghiera (1970:I, 125) “this treasure did not consist of gold, silver, or pearls, but of utensils necessary to the different requirements of life, such as seats, platters, basins, cauldrons, and plates made of black wood, brilliantly polished; they display great art in the manufacture of all these articles.” Anacaona honoured the Adelantado by giving him fourteen *duhos* as gifts. Also, he received “sixty earthen vessels for the kitchen” and “four rolls of woven cotton of immense weight” (*ibid.*). The version of Las Casas (1992:I, 470) is somewhat different, as he adds that also women’s skirts of cotton (called *naguas*) were provided. He is not as detailed as Martire d’Anghiera in specifying the number of seats and the types of tableware.<sup>90</sup>

In conclusion, also during these years of tribute, gift giving between the high-ranking individuals of both cultures continued. Still, also, the Spaniards were hospitably welcomed at certain places, though the western part of the island obviously had not suffered the devastation that the people of the Cibao had witnessed. Next to gold and cotton also food became a requirement for tribute, and soon all major *cacicazgos* were obliged to provide herein, as the Spaniards could hardly fulfil their own needs. Cassava, amassed in enormous quantities through the tribute system, but also prepared by the Spaniards themselves, came to be known as the “bread of the conquest” (García Arévalo 1990b). Soon the Taíno ran out of food, while neither the other products could be delivered any longer. The island of Hispaniola was in a poor condition and the indigenous people were in distress and diminished. And although tribute was being reduced, the established payments remained “beyond their means of compliance” (Sauer 1966, 90). In 1497 already, the disintegration of Taíno society, combined with Spanish mismanagement, made a quick end to a system that had never really succeeded to function properly (Sauer 1966, 88-91; Wilson 1990a, 91-97). According to Deagan and Cruxent (2002a, 200), “significant exchange of material goods between Spaniards and Taínos was probably uncommon after 1497.”

Attention has already been paid to how the demands of gold, food and cotton were gradually replaced by gold and labour services. Instead of rendering tribute in material form, when the first gold mines were established in 1499, the *caciques* were ordered to send their subordinates to work in the mines as remuneration. With the *encomienda* system, the Indians were set to work all over the island, so that the desired profits had not to be collected anymore, but were conveniently produced on the spot (see e.g. Mira Caballos 1997, 2000).

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<sup>90</sup> For an ethnohistorical analysis of Bartolomé’s visit, the collection of the tribute and the exchange of gifts, see Wilson (1990a, 125-132). The interactions are also recounted by Las Casas (1992:I, 467-470).

*Columbus's shipping list: products received in tribute by the Admiral (1495-1496)*

A truly unique insight into the diversity of indigenous objects that Columbus collected from the various *caciques* of the island of Hispaniola is offered by a document that lists the goods and products the royal treasurer Sebastián de Olanó has reported to have received at La Isabela between 10 March 1495 and 19 February 1496 (*Colección de Documentos Inéditos, Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Colonización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de América y Oceanía*. Vol. X, pp. 5-9; see appendix 4). The inventory contains all those items acquired by way of ransom or payment of tribute, as well as by the expropriation of the goods of rebellious leaders, most notably of the *cacique* Caonabó. Apart from providing information about tribute transactions, the list also is an invaluable source for the study of Taíno culture, as it demonstrates the rich variety of high-prestige goods, which in the pre-Columbian exchange networks played an important part as gifts among the elites. The list contains a rare combination of quantities and short descriptions of the recorded items, while also their (Taíno/Spanish) names are mentioned. The artefacts that occur in highest numbers are stone beads (*cíbas*), hammocks (*hamacas*), masks (*guaízas*), skirts (*naguas*) and mirrors (*espejos*) or flat discs, which possibly were gold or gold inlaid pectorals. Nevertheless, the discs may equally well have been made of another material as they are not explicitly referred to as gold, as you would expect from a Spanish point of view. Other distinctive items include cotton woven belts (*cintos*), ritual paraphernalia like vomit spatulas (*purgaderas*) and drug inhalers, and stone necklaces. Miscellaneous items comprise parrots (*papagayos*), personal adornments like feather decorations and other ornaments, bugles, mats (*esteras*), spindles (*torteruelos*), and weaponry, including arrows, axes, hatchets and spear launchers or dart propellers (*tiraderas*). Unclear is what is meant by seven *taos*, possibly gold or *guanín* sheets or badges. Many of the objects were encrusted or inlaid with gold decorations. Also were gold and cotton collected as unprocessed commodities. Wherever brass (*latón*) or copper is mentioned in the list, this presumably refers to impure gold, which may be interpreted as being *guanín*. The items in the inventory, or the “report of gold and jewellery and other things”, are discussed in detail by Ricardo E. Alegría (1980, 1985), who provides the cultural context of many of the valuables. An interesting analysis of the list, deducing information about Spanish-Taíno relations and the practice of gift exchange in a hybrid phase of culture contact, is given by Mol (2007, 77-81; 2008).

In later years, the diversity of what was collected as tribute considerably diminished. From 1499 the gold mines were in operation and production increased every year (Mira Caballos 2000, 33-40, 48-50). During the governorship of Nicolás de Ovando (1502-1509) the economy of the island was growing, reaching its peak between 1505 and 1508. Now with more gold available, and Taíno who were forced to provide ‘tribute’ by way of working in the mines, no other products had to be provided anymore as ‘substitutes’ of the lacking gold. These developments are apparent from a shipping list composed by the treasurer of Hispaniola, Cristóbal de Santa Clara (1505-1507) (*ibid.*, 81-139). Payments of gold clearly dominate the list, though cotton and cassava were also collected. The list includes only very few other items, that most likely were taken to the royal courts of Europe as curiosities (see appendix 5).

### **5.5 An analysis of the ‘gift kit’ constituents**

Following the records of the ethnohistoric sources, it has been unravelled which objects both Taíno and Spanish picked from their variegated material cultures to compose the “gift kits” (Brain 1975) they

considered suitable for the exchanges they entered into. It appeared that sometimes elite members and the general populace had exclusive access to specific compartments of the kit. Also, a fair number of gifts was imbued with special meanings to convey particular messages. This paragraph provides more detailed descriptions of these individual constituents of the distinctive gift kits. The focus will be more on the European objects, although their Taíno counterparts are certainly not ignored.

### 5.5.1 European objects

Many of the Spanish items recorded to have been exchanged with the Taíno have been defined in the preceding sections. Now, this part will give some more information on the cultural (i.e. medieval European) context of particular artefact categories, in order to see how and why they ended up in the ‘New World’ and what meaning and usage they had for the people who brought them. As such, it also aids in estimating the Spanish value of certain gifts offered to the Taíno. However, once again it should be noted that it is hardly possible to reconstruct an encompassing list of items that the Spanish offered the Taíno in exchange. Also, many items might certainly have been of interest to the Taíno, yet they are seldom confirmed to have actually been traded. The following list must therefore be regarded as indicative.

#### European ceramics

Ceramic artefacts were among the categories of goods that were shipped in highest quantity to the ‘New World’. Given their importance and daily use it did not take long before they were also locally produced, although, according to McEwan (1992), locally produced majolica did not entice the Spanish colonists as much as the earthenwares imported from their homeland. Spain had a long tradition of pottery making and it was particularly in Andalusia that the craft had been a continuous thriving business. In the classification of Spanish-made ceramics recovered at postcontact sites there is an enormous variety of distinct types and names, of which detailed descriptions are found elsewhere (Deagan 1987a; Goggin 1968; Lister and Lister 1987). Here, the discussion centres on the general ware-type varieties that appeared to have been the most common during this period, which are believed to have a European origin, and which were among those pottery sherds assumed to be bartered with the Taíno. The two major classes, according to paste type, are coarse earthenware and majolica, each subdivided in types respectively showing different surface treatment and distinct individual decorative motifs (fig. 36).<sup>91</sup>

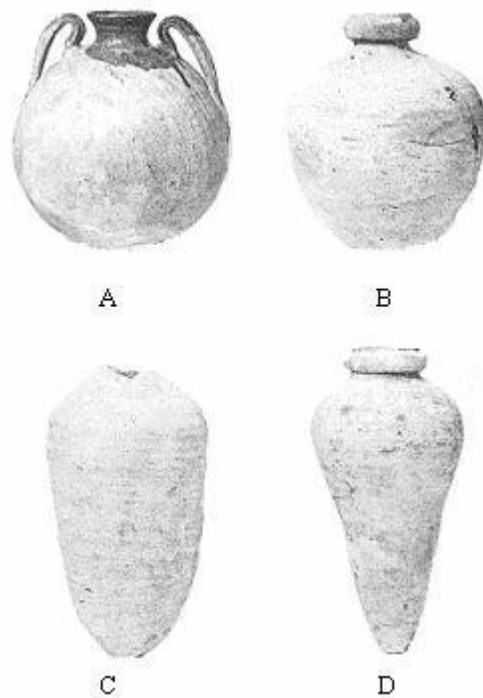
Coarse earthenware	Spanish majolica
* Unglazed coarse earthenware	* Moorish influenced Spanish majolica
Olive jar, early style	Lusterware
Bizcocho	Cuerda seca ware
Redware	* ‘Morisco ware’
Spanish storage jar (loza común)	Isabela Polychrome
* Lead-glazed coarse earthenware	Yayal Blue on White
Melado	Columbia Plain
Green bacín/green lebrillo	* Italianate Spanish majolica
	Caparra Blue

Figure 36. Hispanic Ceramics in Spanish Colonial sites (after Deagan 1987a, 28-29).

<sup>91</sup> Here are included only those ceramic types that have date ranges from 1500 or earlier. A complete overview of all types is provided by Kathleen A. Deagan (1987a, 28-29).

### Coarse earthenware

The class of coarse earthenware includes both unglazed and glazed ceramics, and it is the former that I will first draw the attention to. One of the most characteristic types among these unglazed wares is the Spanish olive jar. Olive jars, also referred to as *tinajas*, *peruleras* or *botijas*, were the predominant Spanish storage and shipping containers, in particular for liquids, and were secondarily used as building construction material. Over four centuries these amphora-shaped vessels appeared in different shapes and types, generally divided into an early, middle and late style, and they are ubiquitous throughout the circum-Caribbean area. The only style represented in the early colonial period is the first style olive jar that was in use until around 1570. The exterior surface characteristically shows a thin white slip, while green lead glaze is frequently present on the interior (Deagan 1987a, 30-35; Goggin 1960, 8-11; Florida Museum of Natural History [FLMNH] 2004). From 1500 onwards there is



**Figure 37.** Early-, middle-, and late-style olive jars: a. early style, 26 cm high; b-c. middle-style, (b) 31 cm high, (c) 26.4 cm high; d. late style, 33.7 cm high (Deagan 1987a, 32).

an increased appearance of this globular form jar in the Caribbean, reflecting the intensified need for Spanish shipping containers during Ovando's time (Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 288-289).

Most of the other unglazed coarse earthenware varieties are also utilitarian, non-tableware vessels, commonly made into such forms as *jarras*, *bacines*, *lebrillos* and *ollas* (Deagan 1987a, 35-43; FLMNH 2004). A typical, frequently found type is redware. Another large group, referred to as storage jar (Deagan 1987a) or *loza común* (Ortega 1980), are those vessels that have the same paste, though not the same form as olive jars (Deagan 1987a, 35). *Bizcocho* ware is exceptional within its class, since it was nonutilitarian in function, including such forms as bowls, cups, pitchers, plates and small vases. It is a fine ware that often shows moulded decoration. *Bizcocho* typically exhibits a cream or off-white chalky paste that resembles that of majolica (Deagan 1987a, 43; Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 155; FLMNH 2004).

Whereas the unglazed coarse earthenware types were mostly used for storage and transport, the lead-glazed varieties were often related to cooking and washing activities, reflected by their food-consumption tableware and utilitarian forms like *escudillas* (carinated bowls), pitchers, *jarros*, *cántaros* and *platos* (Deagan 1987a, 48). The earliest of these wares is referred to as *melado* or honey-brown coloured ware. *Melados* have a thick opaque lead-tin glaze and are fabricated with a fine paste (Deagan 1987a, 48; Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 160-166; Goggin 1968, 227; Lister and Lister 1987). Another type is the green *bacín* or green *lebrillo*, which occurs, other than the terminology suggests, in a variety of forms. The *bacín* form presumably functioned as chamber pot. Other vessel forms are usually massive as well (Deagan 1987a, 48-50; Goggin 1968, 226).

### *Majolica*

Next to coarse earthenware, the second class considered here is that of majolica. This comprises a variety of temperless earthenwares, covered with an opaque vitreous tin enamel or glaze that were principally used in the fabrication of tableware, such as serving vessels, plates and bowls. Basically, one can distinguish between three categories, namely Spanish, Italian and Mexican majolica (Deagan 1987a, 53-54; Goggin 1968). For the purpose of this thesis only the Spanish variant will be discussed, which comprises three distinct categories, namely Moorish-influenced ware, 'Morisco ware' and Italianate Spanish majolica (fig. 36). The fabrication of majolica reached a high development in Spain. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans had taken the technique of ceramic glazing from the East in earlier times, and via the North-African Muslims it reached the Iberian peninsula where it was refined in the production of the enamelled majolica (Ortega 1974). It was the centuries-long Muslim occupation of Al-Andalus in southern Spain that greatly influenced the pottery traditions in medieval Iberia (Deagan 1987a; see Constable 1996). Traits of the rich Muslim culture are evidently present in the pottery shipped to the earliest European towns in the Americas. Examples of this type of pottery are the luxury wares of lusterware and *cuerda seca* majolica, both of which clearly show these Moorish traits (Deagan 1987a, 54-55; Goggin 1968, 141-142, 171).

Rooted in this Moorish ceramic tradition, a new, amalgamated 'Morisco ware' developed in Andalusia, reflecting the influence of Christianised Muslims on the existing pottery traditions in the region. The term was coined by Florence and Robert Lister (1982) and includes four types of which three predate 1550. These are defined as Columbia Plain, Isabela Polychrome and Yayal Blue on White (Deagan 1987a, 53-59; Goggin 1968, 27-28, 120-122; Lister and Lister 1974, 1982). The majolica vessels mostly are *platos* (concave plates), *escudillas* (carinated bowls) and shallow saucers, while other forms included *tazas* (small, handleless cups) and *albarellos* (medicine jars) (Deagan 1987a, 56; Deagan and Crucent 2002b, 155; FLMNH 2004). Among these late medieval Andalusian ceramic traditions, Columbia Plain is the most frequently encountered type (fig. 38). It has, like Isabela Polychrome, a cream, off-white or greyish tin enamel (Deagan 1987a, 55-56; FLMNH 2004). Isabela Polychrome is the only polychrome majolica among the 'Morisco wares' and typically exhibits Arabic-influenced designs painted in blue and manganese purple (Deagan 1987a, 58-59; Goggin 1968, 126-128) (fig. 39). The type derived its name from the site of La Isabela, where it occurred abundantly, though later sites show a decline, suggesting a possible replacement by Yayal Blue on White (Goggin 1968, 128). Yayal Blue on White is characterised by a design of simple concentric light blue bands on the vessel's interior surface. In most other respects the type resembles that of Columbia Plain (Deagan 1987a, 58; Goggin 1968).

From 1492, after the fall of the Granada kingdom and the expulsion of the Jews and Muslims, Arabic influence gradually vanished and others, mainly Italian potters, began to take over their role, introducing Italian majolicas, so that the Moorish Mudéjar influence came to be replaced by an Italian Renaissance-influenced orientation. These Italianate Spanish majolicas were thus produced in Spain but resembled Italian wares, and soon found their way to the 'New World' (Deagan 1987a; see Ray 1990). An early type within this class is Caparra Blue, which has a solid-blue tin-enamel on the exterior side of the vessel, while the inside is covered with a white or off-white tin-enamel. So far, it is known only to have been used in the fabrication of the *albarello*, or Spanish drug jar form (Deagan 1987a, 62-63; Goggin 1968; FLMNH 2004).

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

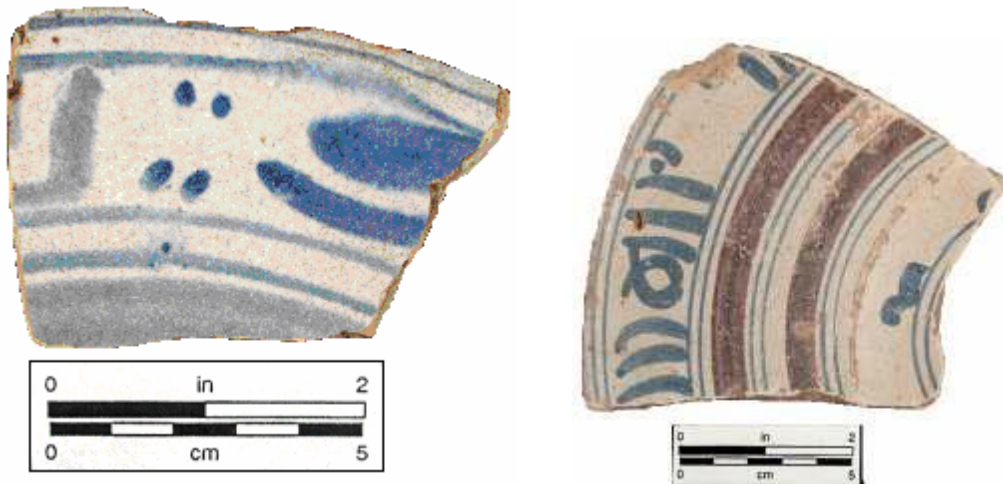


**Figure 38.** Columbia Plain majolica. Left: Concepción de la Vega, Dominican Republic. Right: Jacagua, Dominican Republic. Source: [www.flmnh.ufl.edu](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu).

### *Glassware and beads*

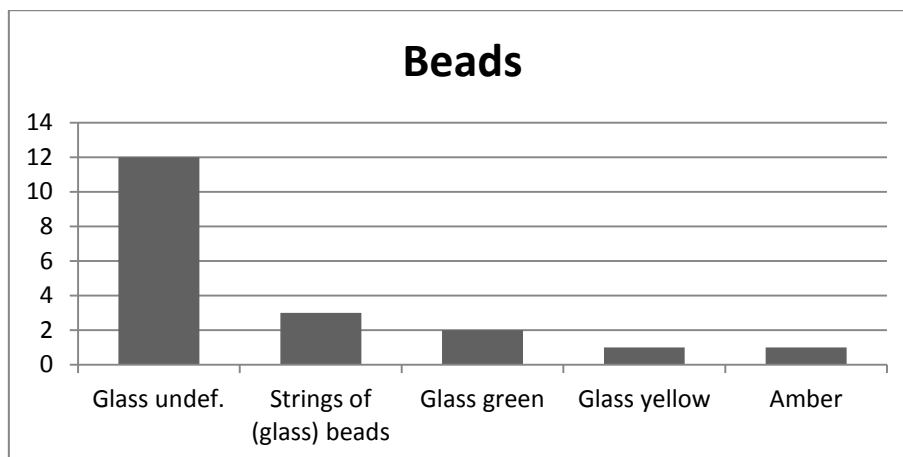
Next to ceramics, the Spaniards brought glassware. In various respects the developments in Spain's glass industry resembled those in pottery making. The tradition of glass production began in the province of Catalonia, northeastern Spain, by at least the twelfth century. Throughout the following centuries Catalan glass was considered superior to glassware from other parts of Spain. Because of its qualities it was exported widely. Due to the region's connection with the commercial networks of the Mediterranean Sea, Catalonia welcomed many foreign merchants. Among them were people from the Near and Middle East, and it would be the glass industries of Damascus, Beirut and Alexandria that brought their stylistic influences. The real centre of glassmaking, however, was Venice, and especially the nearby island of Murano. Here the glass industry had been thriving much longer, dating back to the Romans, when techniques and styles spread from their traditional homes in Egypt, Syria and the Near East. After the fall of Constantinople more glassmakers – the same was true for potters – reached Venice, and later Spain. The techniques of the Venetian glass industry became available throughout Europe in the early sixteenth century. Venetian glassblowers also tried their luck in Spain, which in the region around Barcelona, Catalonia, resulted in the creation of a distinctive style that comprised Venetian, Moorish, Islamic and Spanish elements. The glassware the Spaniards brought to the 'New World' encompassed a variety of all these wares. Ornamental and utilitarian wares, mostly tableware such as bottles, vials and drinking glasses accompanied the settlers on their journey. The latter, more common and less expensive wares presumably came from Andalusia, because of the restrictions imposed on the overland transport of glass. This type of glass is typically green or yellowish green in colour, and can be found at Spanish colonial sites (Deagan 1987a, 127-128).

Among the glass materials shipped to the Caribbean, there were also a lot of beads. Except for their use as personal adornments, they were shipped in quantity to serve as trade items. Figure 40 graphically displays the variety of beads that are mentioned in Columbus's log to have been given away to the Indians. There existed a wide range of colours and types of beads. Beads that seemed to have frequently formed part of the cargo were small green beads, called *abalarios*, "a term that generally refers to beads of little value" (*ibid.*, 157). Most beads would have been green and yellow with the majority probably of Venetian origin. Hence, the development of glass bead technologies has to be compared with that of the



**Figure 39.** Isabela Polychrome majolica. Left: Jacagua, Dominican Republic. Right: La Isabela, Dominican Republic. Source: www.flmnh.ufl.edu.

glassware industries of medieval Europe (*ibid.*, 156-160). The glass beads that are characteristic of Spanish-Indian interaction in the three decades after contact are of a type called Nueva Cádiz, called after the location where they were first found. The Nueva Cádiz bead is most often a “multilayered, often multicoloured drawn bead with an unusual square section” (*ibid.*, 162), whereas the glass itself is “most commonly clear, turquoise, navy, light robin’s-egg blue, or opaque white, in various three-layered combinations” (*ibid.*, 163). As we have seen, Columbus also offered the Taíno beads of materials like amber and stone. In medieval Spain, amber had a number of attributed benefits: it “aids in and protects from problems of gestation, birth, and lactation in women; aids teething in infants; protects from poisonous things; protects against witches and spells” (Deagan 2002, table 5.1). At La Isabela two beads of pale orange carnelian (agate) were recovered, that may have been part of a similar necklace that was worn by Columbus (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 158; 2002b, 195-196, figure 8.7). Additionally, beads of wood or bone might have been taken as personal adornment as well (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 165).



**Figure 40.** The variety of European beads used in exchanges with the Taíno, according to the log of Columbus (Dunn and Kelley 1989).

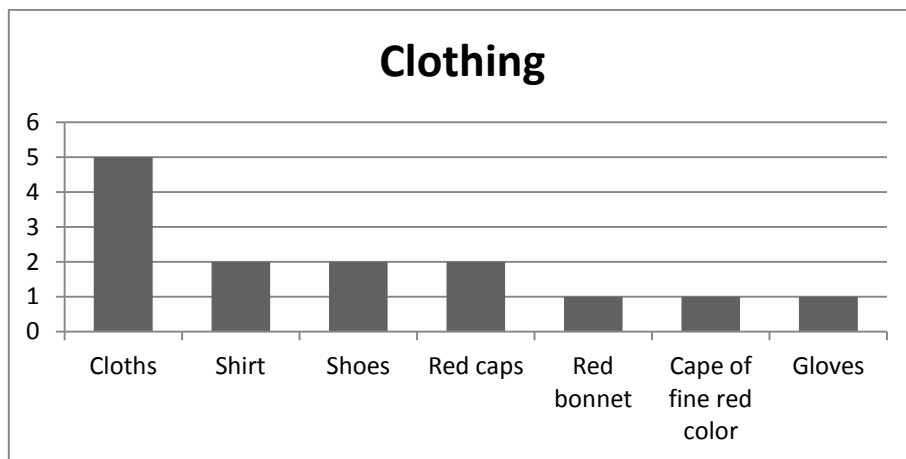
### Clothing

In the Middle Ages clothing was highly important, though not only for body cover and protection. From the way one was dressed class and social status could be inferred. Clothing therefore was an important social signifier (Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 188). Its social importance is also expressed by the obvious



distinctions between the clothes Columbus requested for the common people (shoes, sandals, coarse cloth and “other items of clothing and footwear”) and those that he ordered for himself (green and brownish serge silk cloth, silk thread, shirts, leggings, jackets and shoes) (appendices 1 and 2). Supplies from Europe were limited and Spanish clothing became increasingly scarce and extremely valuable. When the fleet of Nicolás de Ovando arrived in 1502, the people of the ships fared well as they were able to trade cloths among fellow Spaniards for food and land (Deagan and Cruzent 2002a, 205). Also in exchanges with the Indians clothing was regularly offered (fig. 41). These gifts were often intended to civilise the almost naked islanders, though they also figured in exchanges with Taíno elite members. Columbus, for instance, gave a blouse to Guacanagarí, “a symbol of high birth and wealth” (Wilson 1990a, 69). Another item regularly mentioned is a certain “red cap” or bonnet, probably some kind of hat that could be bended over the head.

Besides, a variety of items associated with clothing, including metal buckles, lace tips (aglets, or *agujetas*), fasteners, and adornments, were shipped by the Spaniards (Deagan 2002, 157; Deagan and Cruzent 2002b, 188-194). According to Martínón-Torres *et al.* (2007, 201) the aglets were used “to prevent the ends of laces from fraying, and to ease threading in the points for fastening doublets and hose, or various other laces used in dressing”. Since the fabric and repair of clothing was an important Spanish domestic activity, also needles, pins, and scissors were brought. The related activities were generally restricted to women, but their absence in the earliest years forced the men to employ the sewing equipment themselves. For women, sewing also was a social and leisure activity. Nearly all the pins were made of brass, covered with a thin layer of tin that gave them a silvery appearance. The pins were both used in the fabric process and as clothing fasteners. Needles (*aguja*s) also formed part of the earliest shippings. In general the steel needles were more expensive than pins, since their production process took a lot more time. The needle-making centre of Spain was located in Córdoba, from where they were exported to the Spanish overseas colonies (Deagan 2002, 193-197).

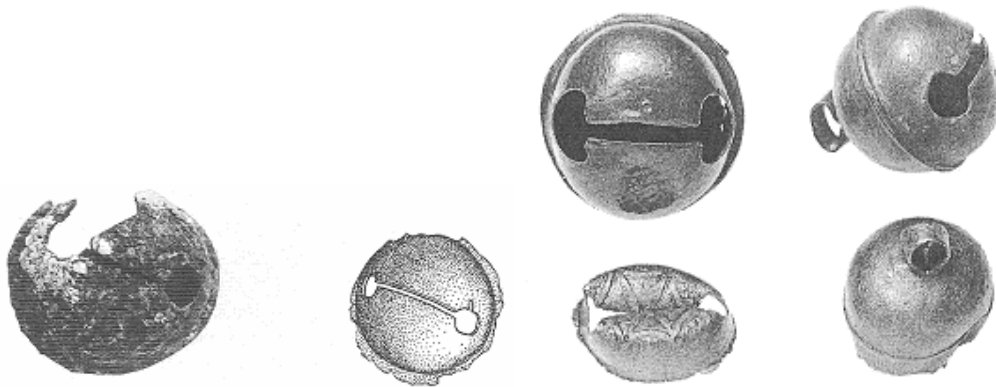


**Figure 41.** The variety of clothing items used in exchanges with the Taíno, according to the log of Columbus (Dunn and Kelley 1989).

#### Hawk bells

Bells were among the first Spanish artefacts that were shipped to the ‘New World’ (Deagan 2002, 138-156). Columbus already brought them on his first voyage in 1492 (fig. 42). There existed a variety of bells serving a lot of different purposes, including as musical instruments, “as trade goods, as clothing

adornment, on horse harness decoration, on animals and birds as locators, as gates and as doorbells, in a variety of church functions, and on amulets (particularly those for children)” (*ibid.*, 138). They were used in falconry, a popular leisure activity among the medieval European elite. The use of bells as amulets is rooted in ancient traditions of attributing protective properties to bells, reason why they were often associated with children (for amulet use in Spain, see also Deagan 2002, 87-105). Also cast open bells (*campanillas*) appeared in the Spanish colonies and they were hung in the first churches of the ‘New World’. The bells used and traded in the Columbus era mostly concerned relatively small, closed, hawk bell-type bells referred to as *cascabeles*. The *cascabela*, which we know as rumbler bell, was rarely bigger than three centimetres in diameter, although it could measure up to six centimetres. These sheet-brass bells were likely produced in northern Europe. Presumably they had a Roman precedent known as *tintinabula*, a small, musical, copper-alloy bell (*ibid.*, 139). The most common varieties encountered archaeologically belong to the so-called lapped-edged bells and include the Sabana Yegua and Clarksdale variants. Of the former type four crushed fragments were found at La Isabela (Deagan and Crucent 2002b, 201). The name of the bell is derived from a site in the Dominican Republic, that will be discussed in the next chapter. The latter are called after an archaeological site in Mississippi and are slightly larger than the ones encountered in Hispaniola (Mitchem 1989, 101-102).



**Figure 42.** Hawk bells. Left: Brass *cascabeles*. 1.3 and 3.7 cm in diameter (Deagan and Crucent 2002b, 201). Right: Clarksdale bells from Puerto Real. Maximum diameter of top left bell 2.94 cm (Deagan 2002, 145).

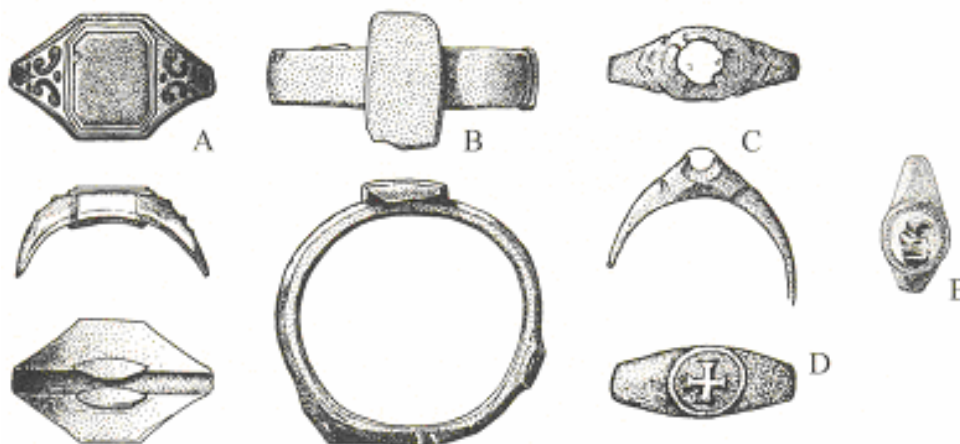
#### *Personal ornamentation*

Popular and precious jewellery were in some form available to most of the Spanish colonists (Deagan 2002, 106-137; Deagan and Crucent 2002b, 195-201, table 8.2). They conveyed status and wealth, while they might also have had religious connotations (see Muller 1972). Precious jewellery, which was very well cared for, was likely restricted to the individuals of higher status, like Columbus and the *hidalgos*, while popular forms made of non-precious substances were typically used by the general populace. These more common items were also used in exchanges with the Taíno. Many of the items designated as elite jewellery were given by Columbus to high-ranking individuals like Guacanagarí. Moorish influences are apparent in most of the ornaments dated to the early sixteenth century, “such as scrolls, loops, filigree, interlocking geometric patterns, and Arabic letters and numbers” (Deagan and Crucent 2002b, 195). They include such items as necklaces (*gargantillas*), bracelets, pendants, collars, earrings, finger rings, brooches and other adornments. Also the beads discussed above must be mentioned here. Besides, small semiprecious stones (like turquoise) were used as inlays in rings or collars and were jewels

in itself. With the arrival of women in the 'New World' the quantity and diversity of personal adornments would likely have increased.<sup>92</sup>

#### *Religious and ritual items*

Religious items played an important role both in medieval Europe and in the new Spanish colonies (see Deagan 2002, 37-86; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 163-165; 2002b, 211-213). As discussed in Chapter 3, religion and personal honour were of utmost concern and indeed structured much of daily life. Devotional images and symbols were omnipresent as reminders of the Catholics' faith, duties and rewards. Material religious elements must therefore have been among the key objects shipped to the 'New World', both as personal possessions and for public display. The Spaniards took objects like crosses, medals, amulets and magic items for their own protection, as well as for the indoctrination of the Indian peoples with the Catholic Church. The continued use of amulets and magic items was grounded in medieval traditions in which witchcraft and demons were urgent concerns. Although religious artefacts came to be more abundant in later times, there are some notions of early objects shipped to the Caribbean, such as *veneras*, which are small devotional images. Probably some of the items were used as gifts rather than for own sake. Other objects known to have been involved in Spanish-Indian exchanges are religious finger rings (*anillos*). Apart from their function as jewellery, there were also rings with religious motifs that primarily served a religious purpose. At the site of La Isabela, some of these finger rings bearing a raised Greek cross have been found (fig. 43). Other finger rings depict the Virgin Mary. Rings were also associated with wealth and social identity. A silver ring was for instance given to Guacanagarí by Columbus (Las Casas in Dunn and Kelley 1989, 295-297). In Spanish belief these would protect against epilepsy (Deagan 2002, table 5.1). Likewise, the *cacique* was persuaded to wear a silver image of Mary around his neck (Hernando Colón in Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 165).



**Figure 43.** Finger rings from La Isabela: (a) engraved ring; (b) thumb ring; (c) stirrup ring set with a blue stone; (d) ring with raised Maltese cross on bezel; (e) signet ring with image of the Virgin Mary and Christ child. Interior diameter of (b) is 2.3 cm (Deagan & Cruxent 2002b, 197).

<sup>92</sup> An unusual find at La Isabela were fragments of thin ring-shaped, differently coloured glass bracelets (*manillas*), constituting at least eleven exemplars. Interestingly, these items are generally associated with women. They might also have been taken as trade goods (see Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 198-201 and appendix 6 by Robert Brill in the same book, pp. 341-343).

### Coinage

Coins were shipped to the Americas in high quantities. Columbus used money to pay the salaries of his crewmen, while with increasing numbers of settlers arriving and commercial activity growing more coins were put into circulation. A modest internal money-based commerce was developed among the Spanish residents of Hispaniola. There probably was gambling and goods were sold to one another. Minting was one of the first industries the Spaniards established in the overseas areas. Most of the coins were made of *billon* (also known as *vellón*), an alloy of copper and a little bit of silver, though silver coins were also issued. Among the types of Spanish colonial coins are the *maravedí* and *blanca – moneda de Castilla*, issued by Henry IV – that are frequently mentioned by Columbus and Las Casas. Other coins included the *real*, the Sicilian *denaro*, and the Portuguese *ceutil*. Archaeologically, coins have been found in abundance at postcontact sites. Also they are known to have been traded with the Indians, such as is illustrated by the excerpt of the paddling Lucayan man in Chapter 1. Apart from coins, other items related to commercial activity were shipped as well. Among these articles were (brass) weights and (lead) counting tokens, or *jetons* (Deagan 2002, 236-267; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 194-198; 2002b, 215-220).

### 5.5.2 Taíno objects

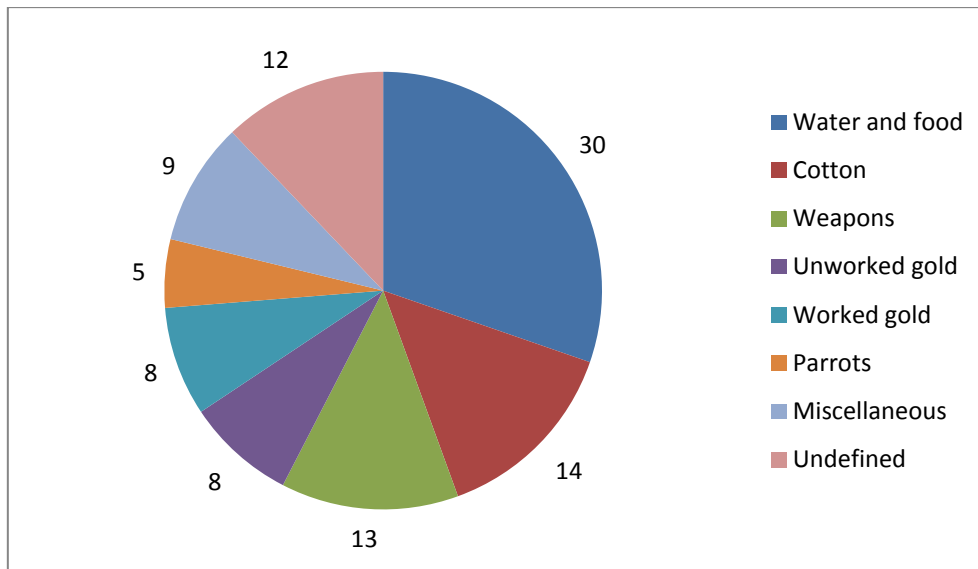
Many of the things that were part of the Taíno gift kit, especially those related to elite exchanges, have already been discussed in Chapter 4, where the variety of Late Ceramic Age social valuables was considered. A discussion of these objects will not be reiterated here, suffice it to say that many of them were also used in exchanges with the Spaniards. Hence, this section deals with any other kinds of goods that have been recorded to have been part of exchanges between the two cultures. Again, let us take a look at the information that Columbus's *diario* has to offer (Dunn and Kelley 1989). Figure 44 displays the variety of items the Taíno presented their guests with.<sup>93</sup> Striking is the high number of instances where water and food were given. Items of food included cassava, fish, snails, shrimps, peanuts, dried fruits, yams, game and poultry. This presumably reflected the Taíno custom of providing guests with food, while, at the other hand, the Spaniards had run out of food, which would have been noticed by the Taíno soon enough and was reason alone to give some of what they had. Besides, the sailors would have probably asked for it themselves as well. Other goods well known to have figured prominently in the exchanges of the initial period of contact are cotton (n=14) and gold (n=16). Cotton was offered in threads, spun balls and made into *naguas*. Eight times gold was offered in its unprocessed form, while another eight times it was worked in some way, either hammered or made into sheets or nose and ear ornaments. Most of the gold the Spaniards acquired, though – at least till the construction of the gold mines – was placer gold. Conspicuous is the relatively high number of times that weapons were exchanged. Some of these were bows and arrows, but the greater part consisted of javelins, all

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<sup>93</sup> The graph plots the variety of exchange items as well as the number of times the distinct items are mentioned to have been exchanged. This means that when the log mentions the simultaneous exchange of different kinds of items the distinct types are counted individually. Example: “[...] and gave him refreshments of two or three kinds of yams and shrimp and game and other foods that they had and some of their bread, which they call cassava” (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 285); this single transaction is counted as n=5 (i.e. yams, shrimp, game, other and cassava). Similarly, when is stated “[...] from them two bows and many arrows” (*ibid.*, 331), this is counted as n=2 (i.e. bows and arrows).

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

fabricated from organic materials.<sup>94</sup> Not much is known about the meaning of these offerings. The miscellaneous objects include belts (n=2), masks (n=2), crowns (n=2), hammocks (n=1), dry leaves or tobacco (n=1) and beads (n=1).<sup>95</sup> The hammocks might have been made of cotton, though this is not specified. The use of other fibres for their construction is equally possible. One mask and one crown were from gold. Because of their distinctive character they have been separated from the other objects of worked gold. Likewise, one of the belts had a golden mask attached to it; in the graph the belt is considered a single item and neither the mask nor the gold is counted apart.<sup>96</sup> Two of the important gift categories not yet elaborated upon will be discussed in some more detail below: cotton and parrots.



**Figure 44.** The variety of Taíno items used in exchanges with the Spaniards, according to the log of Columbus (Dunn and Kelley 1989).

### Cotton

Cotton was among the products that were regularly bartered with the Spaniards. On virtually every place Columbus weighed his anchor he was offered the material, most often spun and in the form of skeins or threads. Because of the frequent mention of cotton in Columbus's log, Rose (1987) argues that it may have been a Lucayan trade product. In the previous chapter the usage of cotton has already been noted among the Taíno. On Hispaniola, the western province of Xaraguá was well-known for its extensive cotton cultivation, and so was the island of Jamaica (Sauer 1966, 56). As a cultigen of ancient mainland introduction, and subsequent occurrence throughout the Antilles, cotton must indeed have been used widely. Archaeologically, it is hard to find evidence of this perishable material, though secondary indications may be provided by spindle whorls and fibre impressed pottery (Rose 1987). Its use and cultivation are, however, undisputed. As the material was usable for multiple purposes, its

<sup>94</sup> About some arrows the Spaniards received when residing in northwestern Hispaniola it is commented that "they are [made] of spikes of cane, and they insert into them some sharp little sticks, fire-toasted, and they are very long" (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 237).

<sup>95</sup> At least one of these masks might have been a *guaíza*; see section 4.6.6.

<sup>96</sup> Belts were laboriously constructed artefacts, often composed of multiple (precious) materials, that had special significance in Taíno culture, containing references to political and spiritual power (Alegria 1980, 1985; Siegel 1997; Taylor *et al.* 1997; Vega 1973). Lévine (1992, 40) takes it even further, writing that in exchanges "they were much more than mere gifts [...] they served the purpose of official documents, attesting to the sealing of a treaty between two partners in an alliance." Also, representations of Taíno high-status individuals on media like earthenware often wear such belts (Wilson 1990a, 66).

absorption in native exchange networks would hence very well have been the case. Cotton was used to fabricate clothing (especially *naguas*), fishnets, traps to catch birds, to fasten cargoes to canoes (*ibid.*), and for the production of *zemí* figures and belts (see Taylor *et al.* 1997; Vega 1973). On Jamaica, also hammocks were made of woven cotton, whereas on other islands presumably other fibre plants were used (Sauer 1966, 61). For Mesoamerica, where cotton was widely traded and paid in tribute in pre-Columbian times, it has been reported that the plant also served medicinal purposes (Berdan 1987). With the colonial introduction of the tribute system in the Caribbean, raw and spun cotton became regular payments in the areas where Spanish demands for gold could not be met.

### Parrots

Parrots were the most popular among the many tropical birds of the West Indies, “as food, for their plumage, and by the ease with which they were tamed and taught to speak” (Sauer 1966, 5). They were easily caught by knocking them from the trees in which they slept (*ibid.*, 58). Their use as food source, however, is not directly mentioned in the ethnohistoric documents and therefore cannot be known for sure. More likely it would indeed have been their colourful plumage for which both Spaniards and Indians praised them. Las Casas (1992:1, 346) once mentions them as “*papagayos verdes muy hermosos y colorados*”. On 13 December the entry of the *Diario* states that parrots were brought to Columbus after he had apparently specifically asked for them. Also at the Royal Court in Spain the birds were well accepted, and they accompanied many of the processions upon Columbus’s return. Parrots figured prominently as items of exchange between the Indians and Spaniards, as they did among the Taíno before contact. For the Taíno, parrots (*guacamayas*, as they referred to them) are believed to have had special significance, and were thus considered prestige goods that were typically exchanged between *caciques* (Wilson 1990a; Mol 2008). Therefore, within the context of Taíno culture, Columbus’s request for the birds confirmed his high status and importance (Wilson 1990a, 61). The elite exchange of parrots took also place between leaders of different islands (e.g. Keegan 1997). Also the parrots’ feathers were highly valued and made into clothes, headdresses and decorations, ending up in the indigenous trade networks as well, while also Columbus was occasionally offered these items (Alegría 1985, 6). Since early contact, parrots have almost completely disappeared on the islands (Sauer 1966, 184).

## 5.6 Conclusions

This chapter has shown how the ethnohistoric sources prove to be a valuable tool for the reconstruction of Hispanic-Taíno exchanges and related colonial processes in the first decades after European arrival in the Caribbean. Also, from this inquiry much is gathered about the role of the European material culture during this period of 1492 to 1518. The encounter was sudden and unexpected – more so for the Taíno – yet initial contacts followed established patterns of exchange common to both parties. How the relationships developed between the two cultures was influenced by the perceptions they had of the other. The Taíno saw the Spaniards as equal or superior, while the Spaniards thought of themselves as superior too. Also, differing interests were at stake. The Spanish Crown tried to command the colonies from Europe by way of terms and regulations that Columbus was unable to enforce in the chaotic reality of the Caribbean. At the same time, the Taíno peoples and their rulers seemed to have been in despondency about how to treat the intruders. An initial period of fairly equal, informal exchange was soon replaced by a system of barter or *rescate*. However, it did not take long before this strategy was

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abandoned and an institutionalised tribute system was put into operation, marking the transition towards a coercive form of exchange, aiming to exact all of the available gold of the island and to show that Columbus' ventures indeed yielded profit. Meanwhile, informal and illicit exchange must have continued for whatever goods or services were needed or desired (Deagan and Crucent 2002a). However, also the tribute system failed and thus, after continuous attempts over the course of some five years, the colonial revenues had still not come up to expectations. A radical change was implemented when collection and trade were replaced by production, entailing the imposition of coercive mechanisms using the labour force of the Indians (Altman and Butler 1994). Significant mutual exchange must have decreased considerably after this time. The Spaniards had lost interest in most of the Taíno goods after some years, so that the acquisition of gold remained of highest priority (Wilson 1990a). Conversely, Taíno interest in European goods apparently persisted much longer as after ten years still tens of thousands of trinkets were shipped to the Caribbean.

It appeared that both Spaniards and Taíno had at their disposal a so-called gift kit that included a range of objects and commodities commonly used for exchange. Many of the goods the Spaniards offered the Taíno were of little value to the Europeans, while the Taíno in general seem to have been more generous in their gifting. The Spaniards used their trinkets for a number of goals, including the acquisition of Taíno objects, to show their friendliness, to establish political alliances, and to aid in Christianisation and civilisation. Trifles were also used to make the Indians render them services. Even were they swapped for plots of land. The ethnohistoric sources documented that the Taíno received the European goods with much pleasure and admiration. Part of this attraction arguably had to do with the status assigned to the people who brought them. The Taíno used Spanish beads and bells for dress or decoration. Besides, the foreign objects were readily incorporated in native exchange networks. In conclusion, though the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries European accounts of eyewitnesses and other contemporaries offer unique information that would otherwise not have been known, a critical approach towards these sources is recommended, considering that the specific cultural context in which they were written often generated biased perspectives. In this sense, the official Spanish records, such as decrees and supply lists, might be considered as more reliable. Now that the ethnohistoric data have been scrutinised, it is time to turn to a second important dataset: archaeology.





## 6 | The Archaeology of the Colonial Period

### 6.1 Introduction

The information left to us by European chroniclers and other writers who reported about the things they had seen in or heard about the Caribbean is truly invaluable. Yet, when we aim to reconstruct history and try to better understand the intricacies of the colonial period, there is another indispensable dataset: archaeology. Archaeology is able to offer a unique perspective that might fill the 'gaps' that exist in written records. The material record consists of hard data we cannot deny; its configuration leaves no doubt as to their existence and as such can help to formulate fresh insights. But however useful, also archaeology has its limitations and problems. The difficulties involved in colonial-period archaeology are still many. For this reason, we cannot proceed without shortly taking note of them.

Sometimes, we have to remark, archaeology does not play a part at all or is of minor importance compared to the available written records. For example, material evidence of Columbus's short journey along the Bahamian islands is hardly visible (if even present) in the archaeological record. Where people left, lost or discarded their materials in the past obviously only those that have remained preserved can be used for archaeological investigation. Though, even when there are archaeological data stored in the ground, it falls to the archaeologist to recover them, and to interpret them. And just these factors, being left to human hands and minds, turn out to be the most troublesome, adding biases and subjectivity to the 'pure' archaeological record. Naturally, the researcher has to be aware of this when handling the available data.

The epistemological problems underlying the limited amount of archaeological research at postcontact Taíno occupation sites have been discussed in Chapter 1. On top of these there are some serious methodological problems. Many of these sites are not easy to identify (not saying these were absent), which is mainly due to the sudden and constant relocations of the villages' indigenous residents and indeed their generally rapid annihilation by the intruding colonising power. Furthermore, European contact with the people from these villages was generally rather short-lived, only few artefacts would have been discarded, so that barely (or mostly no) reliable time markers would have been saved. Furthermore, European materials, often being just tiny fragments, may not always be particularly prominent and therefore risk to remain unnoticed. Dating is then restricted to faunal and floral remains. However, the collection of these natural remains demands specific sampling and fine screening methods that are not generally applied in Caribbean archaeological research (see discussion in Deagan 2004, 603-605). Deagan (2004) stresses the necessity to do so in order to locate a substantially higher number of postcontact sites, while also L. Antonio Curet (1992b, 2003) has promoted Caribbean archaeologists to scale down their research towards the fine-grained recovery and analysis of the household level. Unfortunately, these recommendations are still rarely incorporated. The scarcity of European material culture in postcontact Taíno villages and the methodological problems related with their archaeological recovery and analysis may cause researchers to draw false or incomplete conclusions. Interpretations are further troubled through complex cultural processes like transculturation that resulted in the gradual merging of two formerly distinct sets of material culture. In terms of exchange, in many cases it is almost impossible to define how the Taíno acquired the European goods. This either happened

through interacting with the Spaniards themselves or indirectly through their connections with other indigenous groups. We have to conclude that archaeology alone does not produce definitive answers. Hence, the two datasets – ethnohistoric accounts and archaeological remains – have to be correlated to each other. They might be matching, complementary or conflicting, yet their simultaneous consultation is a prerequisite if one aims to acquire a – as far as possible – complete view of the dynamics of the early colonial period. With this having said and with having already consulted the written records in the previous chapter, the current chapter will proceed with an overview of what the archaeology of the colonial period has contributed so far.

## 6.2 The archaeology of Amerindian postcontact sites

Given the difficulties just outlined, making a classification of the various Amerindian sites that were inhabited after European contact is not an easy task. Previous chapters have shown that we cannot uncritically label the obviously different phases within the colonial process with homogenising terms like ‘contact period’ (Silliman 2005; Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* in press). Instead, we have to distinguish between “middle ground” and “*terra nullius*” (Gosden 2004) or more specifically between initial contact, conquest and colonisation (Anderson-Córdova 1990; Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* in press). However, the conceptual importance of acknowledging these colonial temporalities is only one step towards an increased understanding of Indo-Hispanic interaction. The application of these ideas to the archaeological dataset proves to be much harder. As mentioned earlier, to determine whether an indigenous site was occupied both before *and* after the coming of the Europeans is naturally difficult; certainly so when no European-derived artefacts are encountered. One could imagine that to correlate such sites to a particular temporality of the Spanish colonial presence is even more complex. In 1978 a methodology was set up by Lourdes S. Domínguez. In her approach she distinguished between ‘contact sites’ and ‘sites of transculturation’ (Domínguez 1978, 37). Key to her classification is the way in which European material culture is represented. Sites where European material is minimally present, in unmodified forms and often only on the surface are referred to as ‘contact sites’. In contrast, ‘sites of transculturation’ are those sites where European material is present in much larger quantities and shows evidence of indigenous reuse or modification. Also present are indigenous items imitating European characteristics. Finds are not restricted to the surface, but appear in other levels as well. According to Domínguez (1978), the differences between these two site types imply different modes of Indo-Hispanic interaction. Whereas contact sites would indicate short or indirect interaction, sites of transculturation point to prolonged interaction and cultural exchange. Although this is true on a general level, in practice there are many sites that cannot be attributed to one of either category, simply because they do not meet all the criteria proposed. For example, while the (limited) presence of modified European artefacts indicates postcontact activity at an indigenous site, it does not mean Spaniards and Indians were in direct contact at that place. In this case, the European material may well have been obtained by way of indigenous networks of exchange, either already in its remodelled form or being modified afterwards. Also a possible indifference towards European materials should be left open. It is, however, questionable whether we would be able to define these peculiarities at all. Therefore, the overview of sites that follows next does not explicitly make a distinction between ‘contact’ and ‘transculturation’, but between early colonial and late(r) colonial. In so doing it acknowledges the different forms of interaction and cultural complexities over the course of differing colonial temporalities, yet leaving room

for multiple interpretations. The one thing we might assume is that reused or remodelled items of European origin date to a relatively later period than unworked examples. But before being classified as 'late' also changes in indigenous material culture should be perceived at the site. We also know that Cuba was the last of the Greater Antilles that was colonised by the Spaniards. Taíno occupation lasted longer than on the other islands so that the effects of Indo-Hispanic interaction and exchange are better visible. Many of the Cuban sites therefore likely date to a later period as well. Unfortunately we can only make a relative chronology. Which sites show characteristics we would assign to an early phase of interaction and which sites show evidence of longer relationships and cultural entanglement typical for later times?

A number of sites have been selected. Two things were important in composing the list: (1) the focus is on the island of Hispaniola and (2) the aim is to provide a representative overview of the quantity, variety and meaning of European materials as encountered at indigenous postcontact sites. It soon appeared that the data available from Hispaniola were not able to sufficiently fulfil the goal that was stated, especially so for answering questions about the role of European artefacts in indigenous society. So, in order to picture the various material expressions of Indo-Hispanic interaction for the period of 1492 to 1518 – before the large-scale introduction of African slaves and the development of creolised society – also some sites from other islands are included here. These sites either give better insight into the postcontact cultural dynamics and exchanges or simply show striking cases of indigenous use and integration of European materials. It is believed that, albeit located in other geographic areas, the non-Hispaniolan sites are both relevant to and explanatory for the way European material culture was dealt with by indigenous groups on Hispaniola. These other sites are primarily located on Cuba, while also Long Bay – Columbus's presumed place of first anchorage and exchange in the 'New World' – is included because of its historical significance. The selected Hispaniolan sites represent a good deal of the current dataset of European materials found in indigenous contexts on the island. Most finds were made haphazardly while searching for pre-Columbian remains, while only one colonial-era site (En Bas Saline) has been subjected to extensive research. Of all those sites where only one or a few, often unworked surface finds have been collected – which comprises the largest number of sites – just a couple representatives are picked. Some other sites where interpretations are troubled are also included. This is done in order to illustrate by examples the scarcity of data and the difficulties of interpretation that characterise post-Columbian archaeology. Besides, some remarkable cases are highlighted. Furthermore, the sites of En Bas Saline and El Cabo will be discussed. En Bas Saline for its historical importance and large dataset; El Cabo both because it is one of few sites where colonial material has been analysed in relation to indigenous components and since it has been excavated by Leiden University.

### *6.2.1 Early colonial sites*

#### *Long Bay, Bahamas*

The Lucayan-Taíno site of Long Bay, near Bamboo Point on the western side of the island of San Salvador, the Bahamas, is the only fully excavated site in the Bahamian archipelago that has yielded both European and Taíno materials. Situated on the island where Columbus presumably first went ashore in the 'New World', approximately one hundred to two hundred metres from the beach, the site contains

exclusive information about the earliest items that the Europeans traded with the native Caribbean people.<sup>97</sup> During the summers of 1983-1985 Charles A. Hoffman (1987a, 1987b) and his team from Northern Arizona University, assisted by representatives of the Bahamas Archaeology Team from Nassau, uncovered a diversity of European objects dated to the late fifteenth century (Brill *et al.* 1987). Among these are a coin, glass beads, fragments of metal and glass, and ceramics (table 1). The coin, identified as a Spanish *blanca*, was probably minted in Seville between 1471 and 1474. It was also determined that the manufacture of the encountered type of glass beads did not continue after 1516. Isotope analysis confirmed that the leads used in the manufacture of above items all had a European origin. Sherds of Spanish *melado* earthenware were found “lying flat, right next to pieces of Palmetto Ware on a flat rock” (Hoffman 1987a, 242). These flat rocks were distributed throughout the site on a number of spots, generally at the same level and, notably, all in flat position. This makes Hoffman assume that the rocks “were shelves such as people living in sandy areas might use for placing items upon” (Hoffman 1987a, 242). Unfortunately, Hoffman provides no further information on the context of the European findings.

**Table 1.** European items found at the site of Long Bay, San Salvador, Bahamas (Hoffman 1987a, 241-242).

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**Long Bay, San Salvador, Bahamas**

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1 amber glass seed bead  
 6 whole and 3 fragments of green glass seed beads  
 38 sherds of *melado* pottery  
 2 sherds of majolica (too small to classify, grey paste, white enamel, no marks or decoration)  
 10 planking nails or spikes (the metal has apparently been almost entirely replaced)  
 2 metal hooks (or bent planking nails)  
 4 metal knife (blade?) fragments  
 1 bronze D-ring  
 1 bronze buckle  
 1 copper coin (*blanca*)  
 1 copper grommet  
 1 metal button, plain  
 many fragments of flat metal  
 many fragments of green glass

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There were also found Lucayan artefacts, which included plain and decorated sherds of Palmetto Ware, shell ‘heishi’ beads, a polished petaloid celt and shell fragments. Also fish bones were recovered. More finds associated with the Lucayo were made along the Bay. Over a distance of some seven kilometres north-south, surface finds were detected, suggesting native activity and the possible presence of (clusters of) huts in prehistoric times. In this area also a well was located, which may be another indication of some form of pre-Columbian habitation nearby (Hoffman 1987a, 240). Certainly there were many more native villages or campsites in the Bahamas in 1492, as also Columbus already frequently referred to in his log (see e.g. Berman and Gnivecki 1995; Berman and Pearsall 2000; Keegan 1997; Rose 1987). But, except for the European materials encountered at the site of Long Bay, the archaeological visibility of Lucayan-Spanish contact in the archipelago is disappointing. So far, there is only mention of four more pieces of Spanish olive jars that have been collected on the surface of a number of uncontacted Lucayan village sites situated on Long Island, Little Exuma and Acklins Island (Keegan and Mitchell 1987). According to Keegan (1992b), also a musket ball was found.

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<sup>97</sup> For a discussion on the landfall issue, see note 33.

*En Bas Saline, Haiti*

The site of En Bas Saline, situated on the northwestern coast of Hispaniola, some twelve kilometres east of present-day Cap Haïtien, Haiti, is the only systematically excavated Taíno site of the island that was occupied both before (from about A.D. 1250) and after contact (Deagan 1987b, 1988, 2004). It was located by Dr. William H. Hodges in 1977. Most of our present-day understanding of the site is derived from investigations carried out by Kathleen A. Deagan of the Florida Museum of Natural History between 1983 and 1988 (Cusick 1991; Deagan 1987b, 1987c, 1989). Initially, the archaeology of the site was oriented towards locating the site of La Navidad (Deagan 1987c, 1989, 1990b). Today, it is thought En Bas Saline was the town of Guacanagarí, the *cacique* who hosted the wrecked Spaniards on Columbus's first journey (Deagan 1987b, 1988, 1989, 2004). Upon returning to the island and perceiving the dead of his men Columbus left for establishing La Isabela, after which En Bas Saline and its inhabitants were left alone. This situation changed, however, with the founding of Puerto Real, only a couple of kilometres away, in 1503 (Deagan, ed. 1995). No later than 1515 the site was completely abandoned (Deagan 1987b, 1988).

The site covers nearly 100,000 square metres which makes it the largest known site in the area. Its size suggests that the town had a central function in the larger *cacicazgo* (Deagan 2004). The site was bounded by a more or less "C"-shaped raised earthwork that was open to the south and southwest. The earthwork surrounded an open plaza that was itself divided by mound structures into two sections, that presumably were elite residence areas. Excavations of the central mound exposed several superimposed elite structures of at



**Figure 45.** Some of the European materials that were found at En Bas Saline. Top row, left to right: Melado glazed earthenware, Columbia Plain Majolica, fragments of iron. Bottom row, Left to right: Burned green glass, Redware earthenware. Source: [www.flmnh.ufl.edu](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu).

least fifteen metres in diameter. Opposite to the earthen ridge the densest Taíno occupation refuse middens of the site were found. Also some feasting pits were located, of which one included an infant burial. From a total of 188,482 artefacts only 17 are of European origin (Deagan 1987b, 2004). These comprise mainly majolicas, glazed earthenware and glass fragments, while also a nail was recovered (table 2). Only one of these items, a piece of clear glass, was found in a non-elite residential area. All other objects were retrieved from the central elite mound, the postcontact residence zone where the highest-ranked individuals are supposed to have dwelled. This elite household also contained the highest number of Taíno ornaments and ritual items and showed the largest and most varied assemblage of pottery types. Also European faunal remains were found throughout the site and these can be assigned to rats (*Rattus rattus*), pigs (*Sus scrofa*), mice (*Mus musculus*) and cats (*Felis domesticus*).

Deagan (2004) has pointed out that postcontact En Bas Saline showed slight differences in comparison with the precontact site, primarily caused by the sudden dislocation of men who had to work for the

Spaniards. Male activities such as hunting and the production of tools and sumptuary goods dwindled, although women might have taken over some of the tasks. Finished items such as ornamental objects were now presumably restricted to ritual contexts and were thus missing in household use. Taíno terrestrial diet, largely composed through hunting, was partly replaced by a subsistence that was based on fishing and the collecting of marine resources. Since the women stayed in the town, the domestic sphere remained largely unchanged, reflected in the stabilisation, and indeed a high degree of continuity, of ceramic production and food preparation. Only a slight decline in pottery decoration and the quality of ceramic surface treatment might have occurred, while some of the types of pottery might have been preferred above others (Cusick 1991). Though, in general, the Taíno population of En Bas Saline appears to have been able to sustain their cultural practices for some years after contact, at least until the establishment of Puerto Real, when they were possibly displaced from their village (Cusick 1991; Deagan 1987b, 1988, 2004).

**Table 2.** European items found at the site of En Bas Saline, Haiti (Deagan 2004, 613).

<b><i>En Bas Saline, Haiti</i></b>
1 Columbia Plain majolica
1 <i>melado</i> ware
7 <i>bizcocho</i> majolicas
3 clear glass (of which 1 non-elite)
1 latticino glass
1 opaque red glass
1 patinated glass
1 white glass
1 iron object

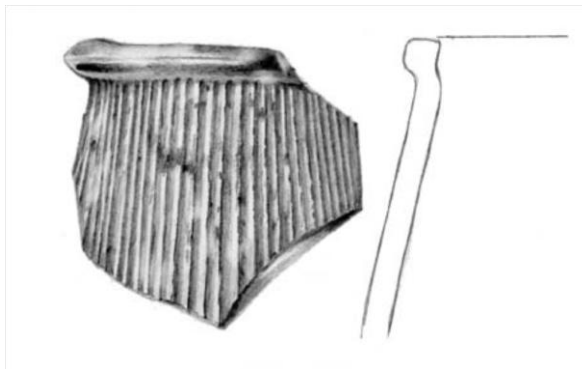
#### *El Cabo, Dominican Republic*

The site of El Cabo de San Rafael, in the La Altagracia province, is situated on a stretch of limestone coast in the southeastern part of the Dominican Republic, overlooking the Mona Passage out to Puerto Rico. The larger area in which the site is located is bordered by high vertical cliffs or *farallónes* through which is formed a higher second calcareous platform. Archaeological activity at the site commenced in the 1970s (see Samson 2010, 97-104), when on account of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano two test pits were dug (Ortega 1978, 2005). This resulted in the identification of two occupation phases, namely an Ostionoid and a Chicoid (Boca Chica style) component. Systematical and extensive excavation of the site and its surroundings was carried out by Leiden University under the direction of Menno L.P. Hoogland and in collaboration with the Museo from 2005 to 2008 (Hofman *et al.* 2005, 2006, 2008; Johnson 2009; Samson 2010, 2011; Samson and Hoogland 2007). Numerous features, mainly bedrock postholes were located, which made it possible to reconstruct a series of overlapping, succeeding house structures (Samson 2010, 2011). On Hispaniola, El Cabo is the only village site with house plans, apart from possible En Bas Saline (Deagan 2004; for a discussion of structure excavations in the Caribbean, see Samson 2010, 18-26 ). After the finding of European materials the duration of the latest phase of occupation was revised. It is now believed El Cabo was inhabited from c. A.D. 600/800 to 1500 (Samson 2010). The village was probably abandoned somewhere after 1504, when it witnessed the impact of the wars of Higüey, one of the last provinces the Spaniards still had to subdue (Churampi Ramírez 2007; Oliver 2009b, 193-198; Samson 2010, 96, 258). In recent times, a modern community used to have their village near the site of El Cabo, but these people were tragically swept away in favour of tourist development to the close of 2011.

**Table 3.** European items found at the site of El Cabo, Dominican Republic (Samson 2010, 282-284).

<b><i>El Cabo, Dominican Republic</i></b>
≈ 80 sherds of green glazed olive jar (early style)
≈ 20 sherds of white glazed majolica (possibly Columbia Plain)
3 Nueva Cadiz beads (iridescent blue/green/white)
2 pieces of cobalt blue beads (may belong to same item)
Hand-blown piece of Venetian-style ornamental glass (decanter, vial or liquid containing vessel)
European faunal remains (pig teeth and bones)
Items of glass
Items of metal (iron)

The site covers some three and a half hectares and shows horizontal segregation between the Ostionoid habitation to the north and the Chicoid habitation to the south (Samson 2010). The two areas are separated by a large ring-shaped Ostionoid midden that encircles the former habitation area. The investigations carried out by Leiden University focused primarily on the latest phase of occupation, sampled in the northeastern corner of presumed Late Ceramic Age Chicoid habitation, covering an area of some 1030 km<sup>2</sup> that directly faces the sea. Next to numerous food remains, precolonial ceramics and tools, also a fair number of Taíno beads, pendants, ritual and religious paraphernalia and *zemí* items were found on the site (for a more detailed discussion of the precolonial archaeological material, see Hofman *et al.* 2005, 2006, 2008; Ortega 1978, 2005; Samson 2010; Samson and Hoogland 2007). Concerning the European material at the site, there have been recovered faunal remains (mainly pigs), but, as pointed out by Samson (2010, 283), hitherto there are no conclusive answers as to determine their association with either subrecent periods or indeed with the first decades of contact and colonisation. The European artefacts are more promising in

**Figure 46.** Fragment of glassware, El Cabo. Illustrator Erik van Driel (Samson 2011, 285).

this respect (table 3). An estimated total of more than hundred pieces have been unearthed, mainly comprising green glazed olive jar ( $n \approx 80$ ) and white glazed majolica fragments ( $n \approx 20$ ), presumably being Columbia Plain pottery (see also Ernst 2011). Next to ceramics, several beads were found, of which three are determined Nueva Cadiz type. Also glass and metal fragments were found, though not all of these can surely be attributed to colonial times. One of these, however, can be identified as a hand-blown Venetian-style glass lip. Most of the materials were recovered from the main unit, where they are clustered in a tightly circumscribed distribution. Each of the distinctive ceramic types seem to have been clustered as well (Samson 2010, 282-285). Interestingly, most of the European material was found in association with some of the most elaborate Chicoid paraphernalia (i.e. the largest three-pointer of the site and a *guaíza*) in house structures presumably pertaining to the colonial period (*ibid.*, 290-291). Additionally, two pieces of European bottle glass were found in postholes of another structure.

#### *Playa Grande, Rio San Juan, Dominican Republic*

The archaeological site of Playa Grande is situated on the northern coast of the Dominican Republic, between the modern cities of Puerto Plata and Nagua, in the María Trinidad Sánchez province.

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Archaeological investigations are currently being carried out under the supervision of Adolfo López (Proyecto Turístico Playa Grande), in collaboration with the Museo del Hombre Dominicano and the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas de la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo. The project is one of the largest excavations of the country thus far. No reports have been published yet, but several articles in national newspapers have revealed some of the results (El Nuevo Diario 21 March 2012; Herrera 18



Figure 47. Glass bead found at Playa Grande, Dominican Republic. Courtesy of Jorge Ulloa Hung.

March 2012). An important discovery is a field of agricultural mounds (*montones*), never located in the Caribbean before, that have been dated to around A.D. 750/800 and probably remained in use until 1505 (see below). The mounds measure some three or four metres and are about fifty to seventy centimeters high. Large amounts of Taíno materials have been found as well, including some seventy jade axes, hammers, food remains (studied by Renato Rimoli), human skeletal remains (studied by Abelardo Jiménez Lambertus) and beautiful pieces of pottery (studied by Jorge Ulloa Hung). Given the ceramic remains, it is suggested that both Chicoid, Ostionoid and Meillacoid peoples have lived on the same spot. The incredible amount of axes may indicate local production, which would not be surprising, as a source of the material is located very close, in Rio San Juan. There have also been found European materials, all without any signs of modification. They include some pieces of pottery, a glass bead, some pieces of bronze and iron, and, most striking, a coin. The coin is very special because it was specifically minted to be used in the 'New World', on 15 April 1505, after Nicolás de Ovando had been complaining to King Fernando that there was too little money in circulation in the colony. Half a million pieces of one, two and four maravedís were shipped almost instantly. Today the coins are extremely rare and therefore valuable. The unearthed piece represents two maravedís. The inscriptions are FERNANDVS : ET HELISABET : DEI (front) and REX : ET : REGINA : CASTEILEGIO : ARAGO (back). Remarkable is the inscription of Isabela's name, as she had just died. Possibly Fernando wanted to continue honouring her this way (Adolfo López, pers. comm. 2012, courtesy of Jorge Ulloa Hung).

### *La Cucama, Dominican Republic*

The site of La Cucama is situated in the south-central part of the Dominican Republic in the Santo Domingo province (former National District). It is considered one of the richest and most iconic indigenous sites of the country and was first discovered by Emile de Boyrie Moya in 1957. From 1972 the Museo del Hombre Dominicano has conducted extensive excavations at the site. Preliminary results were published (Veloz Maggiolo *et al.* 1973; see Mañón Arredondo *et al.* 1971), but the final report has never, unfortunately. La Cucama is a large coastal settlement that is situated some hundred and fifty metres from the sea. The site encompasses a cemetery, *conuco* fields and habitation areas and provides evidence of long-time occupation, as suggested by the presence of both early Ostionoid and late Boca Chica style ceramics. Among the artefacts encountered are effigy vessels, three-pointers, a manatee bone drug inhaler, two small thin gold sheets, and collars, of which one has more than a thousand beads. Most of the burials (mainly associated with Ostionoid layers) – the most notable one being two





Figure 48. Coin found at Playa Grande, Dominican Republic, 1505. Courtesy of Jorge Ulloa Hung.

persons presumably interred together<sup>98</sup> – contained grave goods such as ceramic vases, amulets, pendants, axes, vomit spatulas, mortars and pestles, as well as a stone-head *zemí* representing the “face of the dead *cacique*” (Morbán Lauer 1979, 36, quoted in Oliver 2009b, 146). Also dog remains have been found in association. Most interesting is that one of the burials had a funeral offering of a *lebrillo* (large basin) fragment, a ceramic cup or bowl of sixteenth-century Spanish manufacture. On the site’s surface also Spanish majolica was found. Ortega (2005) mentions these finds in his compendium, but does not mention any quantities nor any possible physical differentiation.

Hints may be derived from two added pictures that portray a total of fourteen sherds, of which one is clearly distinguished as a handle (Ortega 2005, 71-78; see also Veloz Maggiolo *et al.* 1973).

#### *El Variar, Barreras, Dominican Republic*

The site of El Variar is situated near the town of Barreras in the south of the Azua province, in the southwestern part of the Dominican Republic. The site is covered with flint. The only archaeological activities at the site took place in 1975 and were conducted by Elpidio J. Ortega and Raúl Ortega. The area was populated by groups associated with late Chicoid ceramics and was one of the last redoubts of the Hispaniolan Indians. A special find was made half a hillside underneath a large rock of chert and limestone. It was composed of “(1) a clay pot with incised and punctuated decoration and with anthropomorphic handles of the late Chicoid period, used in rituals as container of beverages or hallucinogenic powders; (2) another similar but smaller one; (3) an anthropomorphic squatted stone amulet with a plate of metal of 2.5 cm long and 0.5 cm wide attached to the amulet with a natural resin, [and] also the amulet showed signs of having had metal decoration in the eyes as well; (4) an anthropomorphic crouched shell amulet, with signs of having had metal decoration around the neck; (5)

<sup>98</sup> Based on an anecdote written by the chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdez (1851 [1535], 134), many scholars have assumed this to be a *cacical* grave in which were lying a deceased chief and his wife, the latter buried alive upon her partner’s interment. Nevertheless, the story seems to be false (Oliver 2009b; Samson 2010, 47).

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a necklace made of 262 cylindrical-shaped stone beads and 89 shell beads<sup>99</sup>; (6) two rectangular metal pendants; and (7) two circular plates of metal” (Ortega 2005, 240, my translation). Hereby, the smaller pot served as the top-piece of the other one, while the other artefacts were inside the covered pot, together probably being an offering. The find of burials is not reported though. Interestingly, the El Variar find thus shows the deliberate composition of both Taíno prestige goods and five European metal fragments. Analysis of the metal confirmed that the material is red brass (*latón*) (Ortega 2005, 240-244; see also Vega 1979).

### *Sabana Yegua, Dominican Republic*

The site of Sabana Yegua is a rock-shelter site located in the region of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic and is believed to date to the early colonial times. Here, a remarkable artefact cache was found, that Bernardo Vega acquired from a smuggler in 1977 (Vega 1979). The set comprised both European metal objects and Taíno stone objects that had thus been found in conjunction. The European materials comprised five *cascabeles* or hawk bells, twelve sickle-shaped pieces of flat metal, five buckles, six stirrup rings each bearing a little coloured stone, and the base of a lamp. The metal of the semilunar sheets is identified as brass or *latón* (85% copper and 13% zinc). The Taíno materials, on the other hand, included three stone collars, three amulets and two earrings made of amber. Two of the amulets, of which one is produced from shell, show anthropomorphic figures. The brass metal sheets all contain a small hole, suggesting they were part of a collar, possibly in configuration with the hawk bells and rings, that could have been inserted easily.

### *La Caleta, Dominican Republic*

Another discovery by Emile de Boyrie Moya was made in 1953 at the Indian cemetery and village site of La Caleta, where he found Spanish colonial material. The site is located some twenty-five kilometres east from Santo Domingo, near International Airport Las Americas. Although the Indian cemetery was already known, the European materials associated with it were not. There have been found three fragments classified as Columbia Plain and one unclassified piece of ‘blue on white’. Yet another majolica piece (type *cuerda seca*) was once part of a large *escudillo* (carinated bowl). Most striking, however, is the alleged finding of a Spanish honey-coloured ceramic bowl, that was covered with a Taíno pottery vessel and contained a skull (Goggin 1968, 31). Goggin (1968, 31) remarks that it was found by a local pothunter. Reliable archaeological information is lacking and it may therefore be questioned whether this remarkable composition does indeed exist. Unfortunately, more details are not provided, while later literature about the site does not mention the find (Ulloa Hung, pers. comm. 2012).

### *Guayabal, Dominican Republic*

Guayabal, province of Azua, is situated along the riverbanks of the Las Cuevas in the Cordillera Central in the centre of the Dominican Republic. In the centre of the present-day town an archaeological site stretches over an area of some five hundred metres. Ortega (2005) reports the finding of Spanish materials on the site’s surface, though he does not specify this observation any further. In the underlying layers (max. depth of 75 cm) both Chicoid and Meillacan earthenware was found, as well as amulets,

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<sup>99</sup> In contrast to the 262 stone beads mentioned in the text, the caption of one of the accompanying figures states a total number of 162 (Ortega 2005, 244). The latter seems more likely when estimating the amount of beads in yet another printed photograph (*ibid.*, 242).

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shell pendants, stone materials, petaloid axes and numerous *adornos*. Also four burials not containing any grave goods were encountered. The site is furthermore known because of the presence of petroglyphs (Ortega 2005, 272-276).

### *Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic*

The site of Juan Dolio is situated some fifty kilometres east from Santo Domingo, to the west of San Pedro de Macorís. Here, Spanish sherds were found both on the surface and in excavations from 1952 to 1955 by Emile de Boyrie Moya. In his study about majolica John M. Goggin (1968) reports about these European ceramics. Among the sherds were early type olive jar fragments, honey-coloured ceramics and other glazed Spanish wares, but quantities are not given. The majolicas counted a total of 355 fragments of which the majority consisted of Columbia Plain (267), Isabela Polychrome (42) and Caparra Blue (24) (Goggin 1968, 30).

### *Mendoza, Villa Faro, Dominican Republic*

Situated in the eastern part of the city of Santo Domingo, National District, this site is believed to have been occupied by Taíno groups in the years after contact. The small place was probably short-lived. In the early 1970s surface collections were made, resulting in the encounter of Chicoid as well as Spanish ceramics. A photograph in the book of Ortega (2005) shows five rather big sherds, of which two clearly feature parts of the rim. The sherds are described as parts of roof tiles, basic ceramic forms and a *lebrillo* (large basin) that all correspond to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Given the close distance to the colonial city of Santo Domingo and the relatively late dates of the objects, it is quite possible that the distinctive cultural remains have only been intermingled during the last five centuries instead of having been exchanged between Spaniards and Indians. So far, no excavations have been carried out to clear the case (Ortega 2005, 82-83).

### *Playa Bávaro, Dominican Republic*

Playa Bávaro is located in the northeastern part of the eastern province of La Altagracia, Dominican Republic. Here, in the late 1970s Elpidio J. Ortega encountered a midden with a considerable number of scattered ceramics on the surface, where he subsequently dug one test pit of 1.0 x 1.0 m and one of 1.2 x 1.2 m. Also the deeper layers yielded archaeological finds, as well as two hearths (Ortega 1978). The ceramics can be identified as Chicoid, with some pieces featuring incised Boca Chica style decoration. Among the other artefacts that were found are a pendant composed of olive shells, griddle fragments and tools from stone, shell and coral. Furthermore, a variety of faunal remains from both land and sea were recovered, which suggests that the occupants lived from gathering, fishing and the production of cassava. Regarding the colonial materials, only one fragment of Spanish glazed ceramics has been reported, corresponding to an early type of olive jar that was produced between c. 1500 and 1550 (Ortega 1978; 2005, 102-106).

### *Boca de Chavón, Dominican Republic*

The site of Boca de Chavón is located eight kilometres from modern day La Romana, La Altagracia, Dominican Republic, near the Chavón river. In 1923 the Danish archaeologist Gudmund Hatt encountered a shell midden and the remains of a ceremonial plaza in this place (Hatt 1932, 1978). His small-scale excavation yielded plenty decorated Chicoid ceramics and one colonial find, an iron horseshoe at a depth

of 35 cm (max. 1.0 m) in quite undisturbed context. From test excavations and survey collection by Boyrie Moya in 1958 more Chicoid ceramics were recovered, of which many feature geometric designs and/or anthropomorphic appliquéd *adornos* for vessel handles. The site also contained abundant shell food remains (Ortega 2005, 180-181).

### 6.2.2 Late colonial sites

#### *El Chorro de Maíta, Cuba*

The site of El Chorro de Maíta has long been believed to have been occupied from the Late Ceramic Age until the first decades following European contact (Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007, 195; Valcárcel Rojas 1997; Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2005, 132). Recent research has, however, offered the possibility of an entirely post-Columbian occupation (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2010, 2011). Although situated outside Hispaniola the site is particularly noteworthy to discuss here, since it features a unique and well documented case of Indo-Hispanic interaction in the Caribbean and has offered valuable insights into the cultural processes of the colonisation period, that are still regularly updated (see Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2011 for latest interpretations). The site is located in the Banés area of the Holguín province in northeast Cuba, on a hillside four kilometres from the coast, and is one of the largest excavated sites in the region. The site has been known from the early twentieth century under the name of “Yaguajay” (Rouse 1942, 103-106). It was only from 1979 that systematical research began to take place and the site received its current name (Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2005, 131; for the site’s archaeological history, see Persons *et al.* 2008 and Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2011). Elaborate studies were carried out in 1986 and 1987 by the Departamento Centro Oriental de Arqueología de Holguín under the direction of José M. Guarch Delmonte (Guarch Delmonte *et al.* 1987). From 2006 the Departamento has carried out a collaborative field project at the site with the University of Alabama (Persons *et al.* 2008). The work at El Chorro de Maíta revealed an extended cemetery that covered some 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Around this burial space another 22,000 m<sup>2</sup> encompassed the site’s settlement and domestic areas (Guarch Delmonte 1996). In the past, El Chorro de Maíta has due to its size and material assemblage been argued to reflect the development of incipient social stratification and sociopolitical complexity, a process in which the site may have functioned as a regional centre whose *cacique* exerted power over subordinate chiefs in the region (Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2004, 2005). Today, the site features an archaeological museum and a reconstruction of an Indian village (Persons *et al.* 2008).

**Table 4.** Early European ceramics from surface collection and close-order subsurface tests, Campo Moisés (after Persons *et al.* 2008, Table 5).

<b>Campo Moisés, El Chorro de Maíta, Cuba</b>			
<b>Ceramic type</b>	<b>Surface</b>	<b>Tests</b>	<b>Total</b>
Olive jar	19	12	31
Green lead-glazed coarse earthenware (lebrillo)	4	1	5
Green lead-glazed coarse earthenware (bacín)	2	-	2
Honey-coloured lead-glazed coarse earthenware (melado)	3	-	3
Undecorated majolica	3	-	3
Isabela Polychrome majolica	2	-	2
Caparra Blue majolica	-	1	1
Santo Domingo Blue on White majolica	1	-	1
Mexican red painted	2	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>53</b>

Not surprisingly it is the large cemetery that has attracted most attention through time, not least because it shows a sharp contrast to other funerary sites in the region, where human interment commonly occurred in caves and middens (Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007, 195; Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2005, 134). Over one hundred burials have been identified, of which the majority was indigenous in nature, though ‘exotics’ with very different ancestries, notably European, African, indigenous Caribbean and mixed, were also represented (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2011). Recent research by Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* (2011) has indicated the presence of traditional indigenous mortuary practices in combination of new cultural influences as a result of European contact. The latter include a shift from flexed to extended (Christian) burial position and the incorporation of European artefacts in indigenous graves. Only twenty-five burials, most of them clustered towards the centre of the cemetery, contained grave goods. It appears to have been primarily women, children and adolescents with whom were interred these rich gifts. The materials recovered from grave contexts were quartzite beads, beads and ear spools made of fish vertebrae, pearls, vegetable resin and possibly coral, while more common grave goods apparent in the region, such as ceramics, stone celts and necklaces, were peculiarly missing (Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007; Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2005). Striking, however, is that most of the interred items were metal objects. Several of them were made of native alluvial, placer gold (*caona*) or the ternary alloy *guanín*, indicating their pre-Columbian origin and manufacture (Cooper *et al.* 2008; Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007; Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2010). The native gold was only represented in two tiny beads (2 mm in diameter), while the *guanín* pieces constituted a cache of metal fragments that is extremely uncommon to encounter archaeologically. These included an ornitomorphic pendant, a lobular pendant and four laminar, triangular pendants. Remarkably, the entire set was found interred with a young woman (fig. 49). Her grave also contained possible coral and quartzite beads, three pearl beads, two beads presumably manufactured from gold wire, and a hollow spherical bead of *guanín* (Guarch Delmonte 1996, 21-22; Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2005, 137; Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2010, 2011). Most of the metal pieces encountered, however, were neither made from gold nor *guanín*, but from what appeared to be the copper-zinc alloy brass or *latón* (Cooper *et al.* 2008; Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007; Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2010, 2011). These were in total 28 small metallic tubes with an average length of 29 mm and a diameter of 2 mm, found in a total of 17 graves (fig. 50).<sup>100</sup> Analysis and research by Martín-Torres *et al.* (2007) concluded that the production of the metallic material was a European affair. The moulding of their tubular form was accomplished through the rolling of thin sheets of this ternary material. It was ultimately figured out that the tubes were lace tags or aglets (*agujetas*) from European clothing. The preceding chapter already described the European usage of these items as objects of exchange. The position of the aglets in the graves is mostly near the neck, thorax, pelvis and wrist, indications of their usage as pendants, necklaces or other body ornaments. Yet, in association with five of these metallic tubes and a copper-alloy disc or possible medallion, located next to the knee of one of the skeletons, cotton remains were found. Cotton remains were also detected adhering to some of the other tubes, supporting the idea that perhaps some individuals were buried with European clothes (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2011). The grave of the young woman described above also contained one of these tubular brass pieces. All in all, metallic objects were found in burials of adult men (n=6), adult women (n=6), adolescents (n=2) and children (n=3), suggesting ascribed status differentiation and restricted

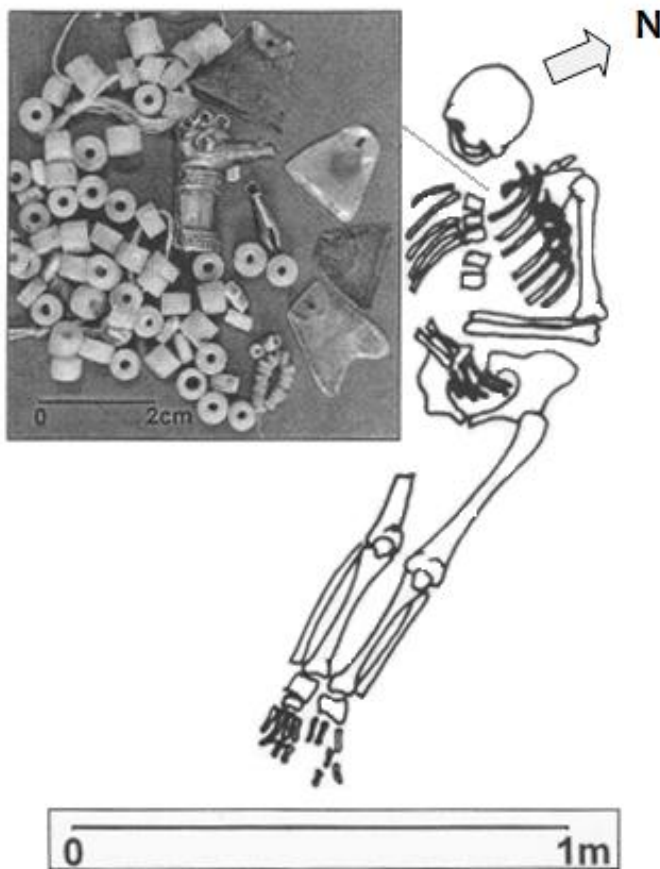
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<sup>100</sup> Similar aglets were found in contemporaneous neighbouring Alcalá, as well as some other Caribbean sites (Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007, 199).

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access to this kind of artefacts of high value (Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2004, 2005; Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2011).

Additionally, also other European materials were encountered at the site, especially during the 2007 campaign that was directed at the areas outside the cemetery (Persons *et al.* 2008). Already in the late 1980s Guarch Delmonte found olive jar sherds, plain and decorated majolica, lead-glazed earthenware, metal fragments and the remains of pigs. In 2007, broad-scale sampling of the residential zone surrounding the burial ground yielded one undecorated olive jar shard, one piece of green lead-glazed coarse earthenware (*lebrillo*), one *melado* fragment, and an iron fragment, possibly part of a firearm. Subsequently, close-order sampling and initial formal excavations were carried out in an area referred to as Campo Moisés, to the northwest of the cemetery. Surface sampling revealed thirty-six European ceramic fragments, while tests revealed another seventeen sherds (table 4). More than one half was identified as olive jar, others were majolicas or glazed earthenwares, reflecting both storage containers and tableware. Also a possible iron buckle fragment was found. A formal excavation of a unit of 3.0 x 2.0 m in the Campo Moisés locale yielded five olive jar fragments and two pieces of lead-glazed coarse earthenware, restricted to the upper layer of the pit. In total, the picture thus shows a remarkable, relatively high concentration of early European artefacts in this specific area. The total number of European artefacts recovered at the site is approximately three hundred (Samson 2010, 282; Valcárcel Rojas 1997).



**Figure 49.** El Chorro de Maíta burial no. 57. Woman interred with guanín artefacts (after Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2010).



**Figure 50.** Two of the brass/turey tubular 'pendants' from El Chorro de Maíta, one of them as found (bottom) and the other one after mechanically removing the corrosion layer. Their length is 30 mm (after Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007, 199).

*La Loma del Convento, Cuba*

Though located in Cuba, Loma del Convento (Hill of the Monastery) is a site worth to discuss here, because it has generated interesting data concerning Indo-Hispanic interaction (Knight 2010). The hilltop site is located in the south-central region of Cuba, some four kilometres from the sea, near the city of Cienfuegos, and was discovered by archaeologists in the 1970s. Nine midden-mounds in horseshoe configuration were found and partly excavated. Subsequent research was carried out by Lourdes S. Domínguez in 1985 and, more intensively, by a Cuban-Soviet team from 1986 to 1988. Two structures and a hearth were found and the site was argued to have functioned as a regional centre during the Late Ceramic Age. The site has attracted considerable attention due to its well-defined stratigraphically-based internal chronology and different pottery styles. Furthermore, it was believed that an *encomienda* granted in 1514 to Bartolomé de las Casas in reward of his service during the conquest of Cuba was situated in the vicinity, which indeed appeared to be Loma del Convento.<sup>101</sup> This conclusion is partly based on the finding of some European artefacts, among which were several small sherds of Columbia Plain pottery, of which one modified for suspension, and a small rectangular piece of ferrous sheet metal. The most remarkable artefact, however, is one-half of a bronze navigator's compass that was used as a pendant (fig. 51). It is grooved on the upper part of the piece, which Rodríguez Matamoros (2004, 70) postulates to be an Amerindian modification "to emulate stylised anthropomorphic pendants of tabular shell" (in Knight 2010, 34).



**Figure 51.** Reworked navigator's compass, La Loma del Convento, Cuba (after Knight 2006, 9).

*El Yayal, Cuba*

The site of Yayal, located in the northeastern province of Holguín, Cuba, was the locus of a large indigenous settlement that was inhabited during the colonial period (Deagan 1988; Domínguez 1984; Rouse 1942, 115-119). The settlement may have been occupied until about 1580, given the presence of a coin (Domínguez 1984, 71). Archaeological investigations were carried out since the early decades of the twentieth century and are summarised by Lourdes S. Domínguez (1984). Although no Spaniards are known to have ever resided in the immediate vicinity, a considerable amount of European material, constituting some ten percent of the total material assemblage, was recovered (Deagan 1988; Domínguez 1984). Deagan (1988, 203), who synthesises some of the results of Domínguez (1984), mentions that these imports included fragments of metal items such as horseshoes, knives, nails, copper sheeting, coins, bells and rings. Also pieces of glass and sherds of Spanish ceramics (mainly majolica) were found. Remarkable is that the majority of these items were reworked for Taíno usage, formed into pendants and disks, but also net weights and spindles. There was even a piece of iron cast to form a petaloid celt (Domínguez 1984, 65; Rouse 1942). Other European-influenced changes are perceived in some of the Taíno materials, most often ceramics. A proportion of indigenous-made pottery at the site has European forms, representing a plate and chamber pot. Typical Late Ceramic Age earthenware *adornos*, characterised by their anthropomorphic and/or zoomorphic

<sup>101</sup> Las Casas (1992) himself refers to this town as Canarreo. In 1515 already, Las Casas renounces his *encomienda* to state (and reiterate) his aversion against the maltreatment of the Indians by the Spaniards (Knight 2010, 39-40).

forms, now featured the images of large mammals, probably representing horses or cows (Deagan 1988; Domínguez 1984).

### *Other sites*

Some further information of Taíno incorporation or adaptation of European materials is mentioned in the available literature. Deagan (1988), for instance, refers to the work of Rouse (1942) who located nine colonial-era sites in the Maniabón Hills region of Cuba. Here, pieces of Taíno pottery were found that were produced in the form of European wares. Also, comparable to the case of the Yayal *adornos*, Rouse encountered a shell pendant that he believed to represent a pig (Rouse 1942, 144). Interestingly, European ceramics and metals were also used as utensils to manufacture indigenous artefacts. Another such utilitarian function European materials acquired is reported from eastern Puerto Rico. Here, European ceramics were reworked to serve as spindle whorls (Torres and Carlson 2011). Lastly, also Florida (or La Florida as it was called by the Spaniards) has a series of archaeological sites from which remarkable finds have been reported (e.g. Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith mounds), material evidence of Indian contact with Spaniards who took part in expeditions led by Pánfilo de Narváez and Hernando de Soto in the early sixteenth century. One of the most prominent and striking of these settlements is the site of Tatham Mound (dated prior to 1550), where more than three hundred and fifty Indian burials were located, of which a considerable number contained (often reworked) European artefacts, including such items as metal, glass beads, spikes, chisels and nails. The discussion of these Florida sites falls, however, beyond the scope of this research and can be found elsewhere (Hutchinson 2007; Mitchem 1989; Mitchem and Hutchinson 1987).

### *6.2.3 Discussion*

The quantities of European remains found in association with Amerindian settlement turned out not to be very large. Nevertheless, variations in their numbers can be perceived. Many sites contain only one or several items, mostly being ceramics (e.g. Guayabal, Mendoza, Playa Bávaro and Boca de Chavón). Other sites, such as El Cabo, El Chorro de Maíta and Juan Dolio, have yielded much larger numbers, though not exceeding a couple of hundreds. Striking are the differences between the European assemblages of the larger sites. En Bas Saline, despite its location near the town of Puerto Real, revealed only seventeen pieces of European material! This limited number led Deagan (2004) to conclude that Spanish items were only rarely incorporated into the material life of the town's inhabitants. It also supports the idea of "Taíno indifference to and rejection of Spanish cultural elements and values" (Deagan 2004, 621). On the other hand, during this earliest phase of contact the objects received from the Spaniards were so scarce, exotic and prized that they would likely have been incorporated in native exchange networks instead of being discarded casually (Deagan 1988). Following claims of Oviedo, also the material wealth of deceased *caciques* – who would have possessed most of the European offerings – would have largely remained in circulation in systems of reciprocal exchange (Oliver 2009b, 106). Evidence of the absorption in native exchange networks is also provided by the appearance of European ceramics at sites in the Bahamas that were not visited by the Spaniards. Apparently, European items were thus redistributed from their original place of acquisition. For all cases it should thus be taken into account that – obvious perhaps – the presence of European material does not mean that Europeans actually went to that place, and exchanged their goods in direct encounter with Indians. Again it should be stressed how difficult it is



to determine how items of European origin were acquired by indigenous people. In fact, only the ethnohistoric sources give us unambiguous prove of direct exchange between Spaniards and Indians, while, for instance, the anecdote of the Taíno peddler recounted in Chapter 1 hints at the indigenous redistribution, or indirect exchange, of such items.

The most common European artefacts comprise Spanish ceramics, metal fragments and glass beads. It could be that the highest-ranked individuals had more or privileged access to (certain) European materials, though solid evidence is lacking. The site of En Bas Saline (Deagan 2004) might support this view, while also El Chorro de Maíta shows signs of differential access to European goods (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2010, 2011). Striking, however, is that European materials not seldom occur together with high-prestige goods of Taíno manufacture, such as body ornaments and religious paraphernalia (e.g. El Chorro de Maíta, El Cabo, El Variar, Sabana Yegua). The area of Campo Moisés at El Chorro de Maíta, thought to be an area of special importance or elite-related activity, shows a restricted distribution of European materials (Persons *et al.* 2008). Whether also the European items could therefore be associated with the elite remains unclear. Also in El Cabo some form of differential access to these exotic artefacts is implied, as European material and Taíno valuables were found in spatial association with a restricted number of structures (Samson 2010, 311). Any exclusively elite access to these goods is, however, not attested (but see Ernst 2011). But not always the indigenous artefacts found in co-occurrence with European ones are of high value, like at the site of Long Bay. Interesting here, however, is that Spanish and indigenous pottery (or at least fragments of it) appear side to side on a presumed single Lucayan rock shelf. No vessels could be refitted from the few pieces that were found, making it questionable why individual sherds would have been placed on a shelf, certainly so for the pieces of Palmetto Ware, normally discarded after breakage of the vessel. The European sherds were probably exchanged in their broken form and not as whole vessels, as the ethnohistoric accounts indicate (Chapter 5). Also the fragments are too few to make up a complete pot. According to Columbus, pieces of crockery were given to great number of Indians. It is thus likely that access to these European objects was universal and not restricted to a selected number of individuals.

One place where the native treatment of European artefacts is best expressed is in the context of a Taíno burial. Especially El Chorro de Maíta, but also the sites in Florida and La Cucama, provide evidence of Taíno inclusion of European materials in the graves of the deceased, often in direct association with indigenous materials. Next to 'contact sites' and 'sites of transculturation' that Domínguez (1978) proposed, El Chorro de Maíta seem to have been a particular expression of the latter type, which could be called an *encomendero pueblo*. Characteristic is the selective appropriation of European materials and customs. Apart from these finds recovered from either Taíno occupation areas or burials, also more isolated caches were found, such as the combined Indian-Spanish vessel of La Caleta that included a skull (although controversial), and the set of metal artefacts that was hidden together with Taíno objects in the safety of a rock-shelter in Sabana Yegua. Sometimes, objects were manufactured that were a configuration of European and Taíno elements, such as the attached metal fragments of El Variar.

Not only were Spanish artefacts used as funeral offerings among the Taíno, they were also used in daily life. Even the possibility of Indians wearing European clothes upon interment is suggested (Valcárcel Rojas *et al.* 2011). Both at the sites of El Chorro de Maíta and La Loma del Convento Spanish ceramics,

brass tubes, and even a part of a navigator's compass showed signs of having been reworked into pendants, necklaces or body ornaments (Knight 2010; Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007). European items were also reworked for utilitarian purposes, such as is seen in the net weights and spindles encountered at Yayal (Domínguez 1984) and Puerto Rico (Torres and Carlson 2011). Besides, European materials might have been used as utensils themselves to craft or mould other, indigenous artefacts. Contact with the Spaniards also resulted in alterations in Taíno material culture. At En Bas Saline these changes were not yet experienced, presumably because of the restricted duration of its postcontact occupation. The only changes that occurred in, for instance, ceramics were the result of the forced disintegration of Taíno society due to the obligation for non-elite men to work for the Spaniards, causing shifts in the division of gender-specific activities (Deagan 2004). In contrast, other sites, such as Yayal, do instead show the adoption of European traits in indigenous artefacts. Remarkable is the fact that no Spanish occupation was present at the site, so that direct influence of the colonisers would not have been likely. Quite interesting is the finding of the piece of iron that was cast to form a petaloid celt. This would either indicate that the Taíno had meanwhile acquired the appropriate techniques or that they were able to ask the Spaniards for its production. Either case would reveal interesting aspects of the position of the native. Examples of European influence are furthermore seen in vessels that were produced in European forms. Also, the portrayal of European animals can be recognised in indigenous ceramic *adornos* (El Yayal) and a shell pendant (Maniabón Hills). In general, the Indian sites that were discussed show a persistence of traditional Indian culture, at least until the native population was relocated as a result of the European-installed *encomienda* system. Taíno diets have not drastically changed (but see VanderVeen 2011), and artefacts such as ceramics, personal adornments and ritual paraphernalia remained in use along with introduced European artefacts and European-influenced indigenous artefacts. The indigenous reception and treatment of European goods through time was selective and conscious. It can be speculated that during the later phases of contact and colonisation the imports were increasingly appropriated for their utilitarian purposes, as the novelty of the items waned and the relationships with the colonists changed. Yet, in earlier phases the objects were indeed considered high-prestige goods and must have been attributed specific sacred qualities. The reasons for their presumed indigenous valuation will be discussed in the next chapter, but not before having discussed some of the archaeology of three Spanish colonial sites.

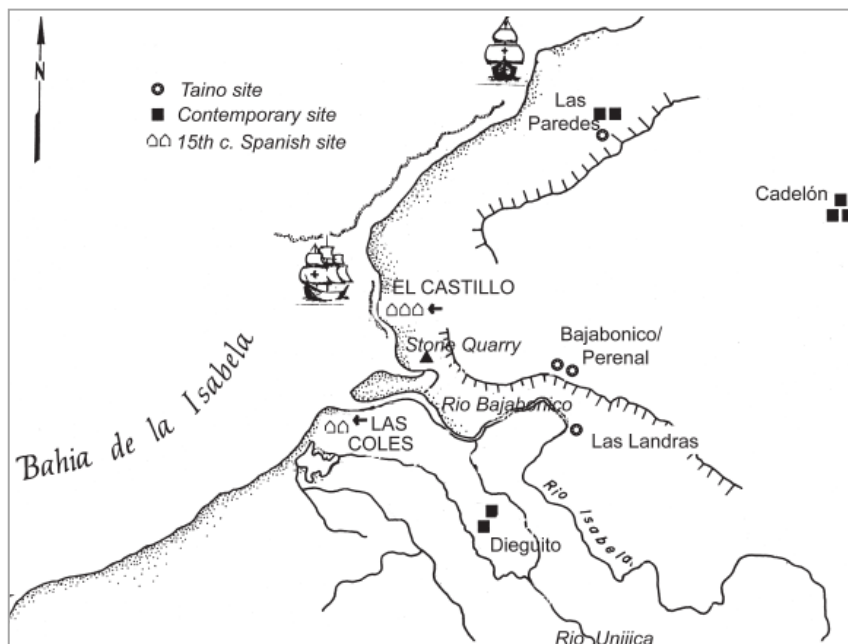
### **6.3 The archaeology of Spanish colonial sites**

In Chapter 1 it was criticised that much of the archaeology of the colonial period is in fact Spanish colonial archaeology. Having discussed quite some indigenous sites above, I hope to have shifted the balance somewhat. Yet, of course, Spanish colonial archaeology should not be denied altogether. Certainly not. Above all, the remnants of Spanish activity during the period of colonisation are much more visible than we might ever hope to retrieve from Indian colonial-era presence. Their investigation has not only incredibly improved our understanding of Spanish colonial life and strategies in the 'New World', but also of the nature and dynamics of Spanish-Indian interaction and exchange. The material evidence from Spanish colonial sites reveals the quantity and variety of all those artefacts present in the new European colony. In addition, we might infer what items were imported from Spain and which were obtained or produced locally. We may see changes in European material culture that are brought about by contact with indigenous people. Taíno people often resided in the Spanish towns after the installation

of the various colonial institutions. Although both groups generally resided in restricted parts of the settlements, traces of their cohabitation (or at least daily contact) are likely to be encountered in the archaeological record.<sup>102</sup> In this section three of the more significant and archaeologically best known Spanish settlements will be discussed in their order of construction, namely La Isabela, Concepción de la Vega and Puerto Real.

### 6.3.1 La Isabela (1494-1498)

Some hundred and fifty kilometres east from the ruins of La Navidad, on a rocky cliff in a bay along the northern coast of Hispaniola, Columbus established La Isabela on 6 January 1494. The town was located close to the Taíno trade route leading to the alleged gold deposits of the Cibao valley. The settlement has become known as the first Spanish town in the ‘New World’, initiating the permanent European occupation of the Western Hemisphere. La Isabela became the stage of Spanish attempts to recreate the Iberian homeland and witnessed the systematical introduction of European plants and animals. Also, it was the first place of sustained Spanish-Taíno interaction. For the Spaniards the town was the principal harbour until activities shifted to Santo Domingo on the south coast. Initial colonial strategies, however, dramatically failed. The settlers were sick, starving and unmotivated, while the harsh Caribbean reality was far from what was expected. Fire destroyed parts of the town, while also Indian aggressiveness had to be resisted. Within four years after its establishment La Isabela was abandoned (Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 2002b; see also Chapter 5).



**Figure 52.** Location and surroundings of La Isabela (after Deagan and Crucent 2002b, 49).

Archaeological exploration of the site began already in the late nineteenth century, though structural analysis commenced only in 1983 under the auspices of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano (Caro Alvarez 1973; Chiarelli and Luna Calderón 1987; Goggin 1968; Ortega 1988; Palm 1945; for an archaeological history of the site, see Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 76-93). Particularly the decennial research of Kathleen A. Deagan and José M. Crucent (2002a, 2002b) has contributed much to our

<sup>102</sup> Recently, almost plain Indian and African ceramics have also been found in mines (pers. comm. Hofman 2012).

knowledge of La Isabela and its surroundings. An important discovery was made by Cruxent in 1986, who across the bay, close to the Bajabonico river (Río La Isabela), located a satellite campsite where agricultural and artisanal activities had been practiced (Cruxent 1990). This site came to be known as Las Coles, a 'service' settlement to the other, 'real' La Isabela, the fortified town that is referred to as El Castillo (fig. 52). Furthermore, in between the two sites, close to El Castillo, a stone quarry was detected. These discoveries considerably altered scholars' perceptions of early Spanish colonial strategies.

The main settlement of La Isabela, El Castillo, has a total coverage of approximately 250 x 200 m or 50,000 square metres and exhibits a clear medieval character, indicated, among other things, by its non-regular arrangement (Cruxent 1990; Deagan 1992; Deagan and Cruxent 1993). The fortified medieval town was enclosed by an earthen wall and contained several masonry buildings, namely the *Casa de Colón* (Columbus's house), the *iglesia* (church) with *campanario* (bell tower), the *polvorín* (powder house or munitions magazine), the impressive *alhóndiga* (custom- and storehouse) and a *torre* (watchtower) (fig. 53 and 54).<sup>103</sup> There were also a plaza and a cemetery where both Spaniards and Indians were buried. In the eastern part of the site was a residential area (the *poblado*), though the colonists' homes, believed to have been some two hundred palm thatch and wood dwellings, have not been recovered due to their fragile and perishable construction. Presumably, men of high status (*hidalgos* and *caballeros*) lived closer to the plaza and public buildings than the commoners (Deagan and Cruxent 1993, 2002a, 2002b). Also Las Coles was walled with packed earth (*tapia*). Here, mills, water wheels and pottery kilns were constructed to exploit the available water, clay and fertile soil. Next to ceramics, the kilns produced construction materials for the El Castillo site, such as *ladrillos* and *tejas* (roof tiles). Las Coles also had a small domestic settlement. The identification of Las Coles confirmed early ideas of the possible local manufacture of the El Castillo ceramics (Cruxent 1990; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 2002b). Basically all of the unglazed coarse earthenware was made in the new colony. Though European utilitarian ceramics were thus locally made, other ceramics, especially glazed tableware such as *majolica* and *melado*, were shipped from Spain. Interestingly, the ceramic forms and vessel types of both local manufacture and import clearly show the medieval, late fifteenth century *mudejar* (Iberian Christian-Muslim or Moorish) tradition (Deagan and Cruxent 1993, 2002a, 2002b; see appendix 6). At El Castillo food was mostly imported, though because of short rations the Spaniards diligently accepted food offerings from the Taíno. In general, Spanish kitchen utensils and diet (apart from cassava) closely resembled those at Iberian homes.

### 6.3.2 Concepción de la Vega (1502-1562)

In 1495 the fortress Concepción was established in the valley of the Río Verde in the Vega Real, in the territory and very close to the village of the Taíno *cacique* Guarionex. Due to Taíno aggression (the series of battles fought in the Vega Real, described in Chapter 5) a new fort was built only a league away in 1498. Close to this fort also a settlement was built that came to be known as Concepción de la Vega. The settlement's location in the Cibao, the central part of Hispaniola, made it well suited to exploit the goldmines, trade for gold and further subdue the area. It was a sizeable, wealthy town and the economic

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<sup>103</sup> It is believed the church's bell was taken to Concepción de la Vega after the abandonment of La Isabela (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 118-119; 2002b, 120). Additionally, stone materials from the site might have been used for the construction of the later site of Puerto Plata (Caro Alvarez 1973, 50; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 72; 2002b, 8-10).

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Figure 53. The church of La Isabela. Top-right the house of Columbus. Photography by author.



Figure 54. View to the bay from the house of Columbus. Photography by author.



**Figure 55.** The fortress of Concepción de la Vega. Photography by author.

profits were high, taking advantage of a considerable Indian labour force present in this densely populated area. Because of its location and prosperity Concepción de la Vega became an important administrative centre from which other early European towns were governed. The success of Concepción de la Vega was in large part effected due to the enormous stimulus of manpower carried by Ovando's fleet of some 2,500 people. Many of these men were eager to search for the gold of the interior and found their residence in this town, which from 1502 thus developed into America's first boom town. In 1506 the first American sugar was produced at Concepción. However, with decreasing gold deposits and the decline of the native population, the town gradually disintegrated. Concepción de la Vega was ultimately destroyed by an earthquake in 1562 (Concepción 1981; Deagan and Crucent 2002a, 213-215; Kulstad 2008, 32-93; Moya Pons 1987).

The main area of Concepción de la Vega was excavated by the Dirección Nacional de Parques (DNP) of the Dominican Republic between 1976 and 1994. From 1996 to 1999 a collaborative project by the University of Florida and DNP has taken place, conducting additional research and analysis. In total the town measured some 250,000 square metres and was presumably arranged in a grid pattern, as opposed to the medieval settlement layout of La Isabela. Its size made it the largest Spanish settlement in the Americas during the colonisation period. There were roads, domestic areas and a *plaza de armas*, but also an aqueduct system running from the surrounding hills to transport water to the town (with well and cistern present at the site). The site contains some remarkable architectural remnants, including a Franciscan monastery, a cathedral with buttresses and a fortress exhibiting slotted crossbow openings in its tower (fig. 55). There must also have been a gold or metal foundry (*Casa de Fundición*), a hospital, stables, a slaughterhouse, a courthouse and a city jail. The monastery was located some five hundred metres from the *fortaleza* and had an extensive cemetery next to it, with both Spanish and Taíno burials.

Also, there must have been quite some non-masonry buildings, especially non-elite households (for both Spaniards, Indians and Africans). Noteworthy, not all buildings, at least not the monastery, were built during the early years of Concepción's founding. Furthermore, most structures might initially have been built from perishable materials before their erection with *ladrillos* (flat adobe bricks) (Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 275-281; Kulstad 2008, 108-157; Ortega and Fondeur 1978a; Palm 1952).

The archaeology of the site has revealed the apparent ability of the Spanish colonists to adapt to the local circumstances far better than previously attempted at La Isabela. Much more were the Spaniards able to maintain the Spanish lifestyle they had intended to recreate already upon first arrival (see appendix 6). The variety of structural hardware, domestic items and other amenities recovered shows Spanish affiliation with traditions from home (Deagan and Cruxent 2002b, 273-299). However, in this secondly-built Hispaniolan town also traces were perceived of the mixing of Spanish and Taíno cultural traditions. A remarkably distinct type of pottery has been unearthed, studied and reported by Ortega and Fondeur (1978b). These ceramics have typically Spanish forms, but are fabricated and decorated with Taíno hands. The pottery came to be called "La Vega". The 896 investigated pieces mainly exhibit red-on-white paint or iron-oxide coating and have varying decorative motifs, often geometric and incised. The finding of red ochre in combination with the presence of the aqueduct system asserts the assumption that this type of pottery was locally produced (Ortega and Fondeur 1978b). On other, later sixteenth-century sites such hybrid pottery styles have been found as well (Ortega 1982; Ortega and Fondeur 1978a; see also Smith 1986, 1995 for African-made "colono-ware" at Puerto Real).

### 6.3.3 Puerto Real (1503-1578)

Puerto Real was built in 1503 as one of the Spanish towns Nicolás de Ovando ordered to be established throughout the island to control the secured areas and accommodate the newly arrived Spaniards. It was one of the most outlying towns, located along the northwest coast of Hispaniola, only a couple of kilometres from the remnants of former La Navidad and the Taíno village of En Bas Saline (near present-day Cap-Haïtien, Haiti). The marginal economic activities of the community mainly focused on cattle ranching, farming and the production of hides, though initially it had been the nearby copper mines at Morne Rouge that were exploited. Unlike Concepción, the town relied for the most part on African labour force, with a small party arriving as early as 1505. From 1508 Puerto Real got an important additional function when it became port of transit for the slaves imported from the Bahamian archipelago. When the labour pool of the adjacent islands became exhausted this had a direct effect on Puerto Real's economy, as on all of Hispaniola. The decline continued after the location of new mineral wealth on the mainland. The profits were shipped in convoy by Spanish 'treasure fleets' along the *Carrera de las Indias*, a route that did not call at the harbour of Puerto Real. As a result, practices of illicit trade (*rescate*) between the town's inhabitants and foreigners and corsairs of rival European nations were of daily occurrence along the north coast of Hispaniola. Because of these illegal activities, the town was forcibly abandoned by the Crown's order in 1578 (Ewen and Williams 1989; Hodges and Lyon 1995).

Puerto Real has been located and partly excavated by Dr. William Hodges in the 1970s. The site has since proven to be a valuable place to study European adaptive strategies as well as Spanish-Taíno interaction and cultural exchange, results that were mainly derived during extensive excavations carried out by the University of Florida during the 1980s (summarised in Deagan, ed. 1995 and Ewen 1991; see also Deagan

and Cruxent 1993, 2002b, 273-299; Ewen 1990a, 1990b; Ewen and Williams 1989; McEwan 1986; Reitz 1986, 1990; Smith 1986; Williams 1986). Spatial patterning of the site indicated a total coverage of the town of 16 or 17 ha, or approximately 500 x 400 m. The town was built east of the *Rivière du Fossé* and followed a rectangular grid plan, thus representing one of the earliest examples of town planning in the Americas (Williams 1986, 1995). The town was organised around a public space, including a plaza with large public buildings such as a monastery or *audiencia* (town hall), an elaborate church with adjacent cemetery, a possible tower in between and a possible market place close to the main entrance of the church (see Marrinan 1995; Willis 1995). Over the whole site, the spatial distribution of artefact groups in relation to a total of 57 recovered masonry structures reflected a clear segregation by economic status. High-status European residence is associated with the areas directly bordering the town's plazas which contain the highest proportions of Spanish majolica, glass and European faunal remains. The northern and western parts of Puerto Real were occupied by people of lower economic status, suggested by low amounts of masonry structures, few majolicas and relatively high amounts of non-European coarse earthenwares. This could either indicate a prehistoric indigenous occupation of the site or a historic occupation of either lower-status Spanish households or Indian or African slaves. Most of the areas were multifunctional and used for residential occupation, commercial activities and specialised production (Williams 1986, 1995).

Further analysis of the site revealed that the Spaniards indeed adjusted their diet, incorporating turtle, local fish and plants like manioc (*cassava*) and maize, though for the main part kept relying on Spanish imported foodstuffs (Reitz and McEwan 1995). A study of Spanish domestic contexts furthermore indicated the presence of non-European ceramics, generally utilitarian ware used for cooking and storage (McEwan 1995; Smith 1995). The early European towns' populations consisted mainly of men and intermarriage between Spanish colonists and Taíno (later also African) women was therefore common practice, and even encouraged by the Church and Crown (Deagan 1983, 1995, 1996; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 219-222). The women subsequently used their locally produced pottery in the Spanish kitchens and households, like they did with griddles, *manos* and *metates* (stone grinders) as well. But also utilitarian wares of Spanish origin remained in use, indicating Spanish persistent attraction to the Iberian culture and traditions (see appendix 6). Individualised tableware, glassware, majolicas and other glazed ceramics, however, had no Indian parallel that could function as substitute, which made them remain in great demand in the colonies (McEwan 1995). It must be said that, considering the town's demographic makeup, most of the locally produced non-European pottery at Puerto Real was of African manufacture, called "colono-ware" (Smith 1986, 1995). Only during the earliest occupation phases of the site there may have been used simplified undecorated Taíno pottery, though only small amounts have remained. Sometimes, as in Concepción de la Vega, these ceramics had European formal elements (Smith 1986). Apart from a considerable number of precolonial ceramics and limited Taíno influence on Spanish foodways, no visible archaeological traces of the unfree Taínos have been found.

### 6.3.4 Discussion

All three sites discussed above show a different character, clearly illustrating Spanish struggling of how to settle the new colony, adjust to the local environment and deal with its native population (Deagan 1993, 1996; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 2002b). The initial Spanish idea to construct thriving *factorías* and tap into the existing trade networks of the local population had obviously failed. Nonetheless, as



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evidenced by the satellite community of Las Coles, the Spanish quickly started the local production of a variety of materials, notably unglazed utilitarian ceramics. The sites of Concepción de la Vega and Puerto Real reveal the development of a local colonial economy and the establishment of additional industries, seen in for instance the minting of coins and the melting of gold. The male crew and predominantly military character of the first transatlantic voyage set out to reach Asia dramatically differed from later Caribbean ventures when also women and children as well as men with very diverse occupations reached the overseas colonies. This promoted the recreation of both Spanish family life and societal organisation, which is reflected in the later, sixteenth-century settlements. When colonisation was well under way and the colonies were more firmly established, mercantile activity and shipping between Europe and the Caribbean drastically increased, initiated by the mass arrival of those who accompanied Nicolás de Ovando in 1502. Additionally, merchants sailed to and fro in order to bring consumer goods. Only ten years of European presence in the 'New World' had elapsed, though much had changed in the meantime. The perception of the Caribbean must have been radically different for those who built La Isabela and for the subsequent settlers of Concepción de la Vega, Puerto Real and other later towns. Deagan (1995, 419) notes: "A series of experiments in economy, governance, labour, technology and settlement took place between the founding of La Isabela and the establishment of Puerto Real, and by 1503 the demographic and political constitution of the islands had changed dramatically." All these developments cannot be seen in isolation from what was happening in Europe at the time. The Middle Ages were gradually succeeded by the Renaissance, a process that entailed technological, commercial and intellectual changes, something that is evidently seen in both the architecture and material culture of the early Spanish settlements (see appendix 6).

La Isabela had a medieval character. The configuration of the buildings is somewhat random, though public structures as well as the house of Columbus were firmly located in the centre of the town. The town was relatively small and walled. Concepción de la Vega and Puerto Real show quite a distinct way of town planning, exhibiting a regular grid pattern and being built around a plaza and church or cathedral. These settlements were notably larger than La Isabela and were not enclosed by walls. Striking differences between La Isabela and its successor towns can also be seen in their material culture, which evidently reflects changes in lifestyle (see appendix 6). The material from La Isabela reflect the medieval, late fifteenth century Andalusian, Moorish tradition. Tableware, for instance, had an obvious Islamic character, as had personal adornments and household furnishings. The shift towards a Renaissance-inspired material assemblage can be seen in both Concepción de la Vega and Puerto Real. The variety of artefacts increased, which is notably to be observed in the international character of the imported goods, among them mostly tableware and glazed ceramics of Italian origin, but also goods from, for instance, Germany and Portugal. Traditional medieval *mudejar* stylistic influence did not suddenly disappear, however, and remained to a lesser extent apparent in smaller items of day-to-day life, as well as in, for example, weaponry and armour. The diversification and enhanced volume of European artefacts encountered at these sites is directly related to the increase in shipping activities. The presence of women and children is reflected by items such as jewellery, toys, hairpins and sewing equipment. The interference of women also contributed to processes of transculturation between Europeans and indigenous people. Women, both Spanish and Indian, were apparently more inclined to adopt local or imported foods, respectively, turning their original diets into a mixed European-American cuisine. Concomitantly, Taíno ceramic wares were adopted and new syncretic forms of ware evolved

because of daily Indo-Hispanic contact. Again there is a remarkable distinction between the town of La Isabela and the later settlements. At La Isabela there was a predominance of European ceramics whereas at the other sites Indian and African influences prevail. Doing away with traditional European vessel forms was inconceivable at La Isabela, where they were produced in high quantities, yet after 1500 their use seems to have been terminated in favour of Taíno and African items. Inexpensive and mundane pottery for daily activities such as food preparation, service and kitchen activities was more easily substituted by Taíno pottery than were individualised artefacts. The phenomenon of Spaniards adopting locally produced non-European wares to be used in Hispanic-American kitchens and households is seen throughout the circum-Caribbean (e.g. Deagan 1983, ed. 1995). In general, the material assemblage of the three sites illustrates that the Spaniards maintained many elements of Spanish (material) culture, reflected in town planning, architecture, Andalusian tableware and personal adornments. Yet the longer they stayed and got accustomed to their new island homes, the more can be seen of cultural exchange and hybridisation. Taíno influence is most obvious in the Spanish adoption of indigenous kitchen pottery, as the household gradually became the domain of Taíno women due to intermarriage or their role as servants and concubines (Deagan 1996; Deagan and Cruxent 2002a; Moya Pons 1987). Also for building purposes local materials were commonly used, although these were fabricated in European forms with European tools (nails, hardware, etc.) (Deagan and Cruxent 2002a, 109-112).

#### **6.4 Conclusions**

It has been demonstrated that archaeology is a useful source of inquiry when the dynamics of the contact and colonisation period are tried to be unravelled. Admittedly, the amount of European remains far exceeds the total assemblage of what is left of Indian presence during the colonial period. Though, while it turned out to be a difficult task to isolate the Taíno component and retrieve archaeological information about Taíno appropriation of European objects or the replacement of native elements by Spanish elements, some important finds have been done. These finds, whether Amerindian sites with European material culture or isolated caches where Taíno and European objects appear in conjunction, give us a glimpse of how both cultures reacted on or were influenced by the material culture of the other. Also Spanish colonial sites show signs of Indian presence, most notably in the domestic area and pottery industry. Archaeological investigations have thus contributed to a better understanding of the cultural processes set in motion after the first European-American encounter. Now that with Chapters 5 and 6 both the ethnohistorical and archaeological data have been scrutinised let us proceed to the next, interpretative chapter in which the nature and meaning of the various exchanged objects will be investigated.

## 7 | Interpreting the Exchanges of an Exceptional Encounter

### 7.1 Introduction<sup>104</sup>

The preceding chapters have shown that from the onset of contact between the Taíno and the Spanish they both started to exchange all kinds of objects. Obviously, the cultures in question were very different from each other: they had other histories, had developed different modes of exchange and possessed material cultures hardly comparable to each other. As a matter of fact they considered quite distinct things to be important, be it socially, culturally, aesthetically, and so on. This chapter seeks for an answer to why the Taíno appreciated the things that the Spanish gave them. Curiosity alone would be hard to imagine. Common politeness to accept whatever was offered neither. And why, then, particular objects seem to have been favoured above others? This chapter deals with values, looking at cultural differences and trying to explain where these values come from. But, answering questions about values demands a critical appraisal of what exactly constitutes these values and how the distinction is made between 'valuable' and 'valueless'.<sup>105</sup> Much about this may be clarified by unravelling the cultural layers. However, the differences between the European and the Caribbean cultures might be deeper grounded. The existence of a more profound distinction will tentatively be examined before looking deeper into the cultural values that made up Taíno society and that determined their meanings attached to both their world and goods, and, subsequently, to the introduced European articles.

### 7.2 Critical criteria: values that make valuable

Everyone makes up one's own values by defining what is beautiful or important. There is no single standard of value. Neither when it comes to things or objects. Although it may seem quite straightforward what contains worth and what not, the truth is far from that. It may sound clear that – in Western societies – the worth of a woman's wedding dress far exceeds the worth of a tatter kept in a box somewhere in the attic. However, this may be different when the tatter embodies a strong personal, emotional value, when it is, for example, linked to a specific important or defining moment or person in life. The dress, on the other hand, may have been worn at a wedding with a man the woman has now divorced from, making it lose considerable value. Values are therefore personal and subjective.

#### *Commodities, valuables and "sacra"*

From the above example it is evident that there is a hierarchical distinction in the valuation of the material things of life. After all, some things you consider more worth than others. Basically, there are everyday, commonplace commodities and there are special goods or valuables. Both terms –

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<sup>104</sup> An earlier version of this chapter has been published in an edited volume by Hofman and van Duijvenbode (2011) titled *Communities in Contact: Essays in Archaeology, Ethnohistory and Ethnography of the Amerindian Circum-Caribbean* (see Keehnen 2011).

<sup>105</sup> In fact, there are many anthropological theories of value, all elaborating upon the traditional theories that arose in the fields of ethics and economics, notably those of Adam Smith (1994 [1776]) and Karl H. Marx (1967). Marx introduced the 'labour theory of value' that held that the value of an object equalled the amount of labour invested in its production (intrinsic theory of value). Georg Simmel (2004), on the other hand, argued that value arises from exchange instead of human labour. Thereby, the value of a thing is determined by how much one is willing to give (up) in order to obtain it (subjective theory of value), an idea Appadurai (1986) later assented to for its applicability beyond market economies. For a broad overview and re-examination of the leading theories that have been proposed during the last century, see David Graeber (2001).

commodities and valuables – have circulated widely in anthropological literature on exchange and gift-giving, discussed in the seminal work *Essai sur le don* by Marcel Mauss (1990), and elaborated upon in other influential works by, among others, Bronislaw K. Malinowski (1922), Annette B. Weiner (1985, 1992, 1994) and Maurice Godelier (1999). Although obviously there are many commonalities between a discussion on ‘value’ and the theories mentioned, it is not my aim to unfold any of the latter in this chapter. Nevertheless, in this case a short reference is both obligatory and useful. In exchange theory, scholars make a distinction between market economies, typical of modern, Western societies, and non-monetary economies, as observed in ‘premodern’ (i.e. non-state) and non-Western societies. The former system is based on commodities, that are bought and sold, whereby the aim is to make profit. As opposed to this economic system, anthropologists define gift exchanges. Here, gifts, referred to as things or fetishes instead of objects, are the driving forces of exchange. Not the economic aspect, but the personal aspect, or relationship between the one who gives and the one who receives (reciprocity), is the most important (Mauss 1990). These exchanges are often ceremonial and include high-prestige goods. This does not mean everyday commodities – such as foodstuffs, ceramics etc. – are not being exchanged; these may well be shifting hands through barter transactions at the same time. Vice versa the same is true in market economies. Hence, gift-giving or reciprocity and market exchange are not mutually exclusive (Davis 1992; cf. Sahlins 1972).

Between commodities and gifts (or valuables) a series of oppositions can be drawn (Gregory 1982; 1983, 104; reproduced in Thomas 1991, 15). One of the dichotomies scholars often apply is that of *alienable* versus *inalienable* (e.g. Godelier 1999; Gregory 1982, 1997; Mauss 1990; Thomas 1991; Weiner 1992). Alienable objects – commodities – are ‘like things’ (Strathern 1988, 176-182). They are common, expendable and suitable to give away; they can be expressed in value (for instance ten euro) and are independent from their owner. There is no relationship between the alienable object and the person, which means it can easily be exchanged without creating a lasting relationship between giver and receiver (Gosden and Marshall 1999). In contrast, inalienable objects – gifts or valuables – are ‘like persons’ (Strathern 1988, 176-182). They have no quantitative, but qualitative value; they are personally valuable, are full of cultural meanings and values, and may have spiritual connotations. Nevertheless, inalienable objects are still exchangeable (see Thomas 1991, 14-22). As opposed to commodity exchange, gift exchange is not a relationship between objects, but between persons. The exchanged object always maintains a certain link with the person who gave it away.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, gifts are socially more valued than commodities and inalienable objects are worth more than objects that are easily alienated. These two categories, however, do not include all things. There are things you just cannot exchange: the most valued and most inalienable things, which are symbolically “dense”, as Weiner (1994, 394) called it. These are the real irreplaceable, priceless goods (or indeed persons, such as marriage partners), which are referred to as “sacra”, inalienable objects that must be kept and not given (Godelier 1999). In the exchanges between the Spaniards and the Taíno, the initial gift exchanges typically included such valuable objects. In the later phases of *rescate* and tribute the balance gradually shifted towards the almost exclusive, non-personalised exchange of less meaningful things and commodities.

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<sup>106</sup> Comparable to the *hau* of the gift that Mauss (1990) described – an intrinsic spiritual power within the object that forces it to return to the giver one time.

## Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

Now with the discussion of “sacra”, valuables and commodities we have covered all forms of material wealth and revealed some of the relative value of valuables. This, however, does not mean a thing or object is restricted to any of the three stages, as was already illustrated in the example above: a woman’s wedding dress may after time be valued as a tatter and vice versa. In other words, what is inalienable could be alienated, and what is alienable may be transformed into a gift, which for the receiver may subsequently turn into something inalienable. For the Taíno, the European ‘trinkets’ were considerably more valuable than for the Europeans themselves. This is what anthropologists have described as the ‘cultural biography of objects’, a concept closely related to that of materiality (Appadurai 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hoskins 1998; Kopytoff 1986; Miller 2005; Thomas 1991). According to this theory objects are supposed to have their own accumulated life history and agency. Throughout their ‘life’ – from production to consumption to destruction – they proceed through various stages as they are exchanged and circulate. Through recontextualisation the object’s meaning constantly changes. It then depends heavily on the time and context which of the three statuses the object takes (see Mol 2007). Alterations in an object’s status may also occur when they cross cultural boundaries; in other words, when peoples of different cultures exchange. This then typically results in a recontextualisation of the object, one expression of this being commoditisation (Kopytoff 1986; Scaramelli and Scaramelli 2005; see Chapter 2). Trinkets may become ‘treasure’ and ‘treasure’ may become trifles. For the purpose of this thesis I will proceed with discussing those things that are inalienable, the so-called “socially valued goods” (Spielmann 2002) or social valuables, to infer some of the qualities that make them prized.<sup>107</sup>

### *That what makes an object a valuable*

There is a number of cross-cultural criteria that seem to influence the worth of a particular thing, i.e. transform an object into a social valuable, whether this being the crown of a random medieval Spanish monarch or the *duho* the Taíno *caciques* sat on in Late Ceramic times. Let us take a closer look at some of these ‘requirements’ that cause things to be valued.

Virtually all cultures have valuables. Generally these are prestige objects, whose use is for display rather than functional. They are therefore tokens of wealth and power, making their possession, access and usage restricted. But what causes an object to be valued? And how does an object become a social valuable? In his book *Symbols of Excellence* Grahame Clark (1986) has surveyed the range of materials peoples seem to ascribe the highest value. Among these are feathers, ivory, shell, amber, jade, colourful stones, gemstones, gold, copper, silver, faience, glass and fine textiles. From this he drew that there are certain recurrent qualities that most of these valued materials fulfil, namely rarity, durability and being visually conspicuous. The last quality, aesthetic appearance, may be expressed by the brightness of its colouration and by shininess. Together these qualities peoples almost cross-culturally value as “symbols of excellence”, qualities that make the materials gain their prestige value.

But, although the material is what the object is made of, the material alone does not make the object. There are more qualities that appear to have a near universal value. Such as exquisite craftsmanship (Helms 1993). When the production costs are high and the object exhibits the special skills of the

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<sup>107</sup> For an application of the concepts of exchange, gift-giving and “socially valued goods” (Spielmann 2002) to the Caribbean, see Mol (2007, 2008).

craftsperson, its particular value is almost warranted. Not only the aesthetic value of the object is thus increased, the ability of fabricating the object can be restricted to a very selected group or a single person, who possesses special knowledge acquired through years of training and practice or transmission of knowledge (Mol 2007, 55). Another such quality is exoticness, a valued quality obviously related to the rarity of the material the object has been fabricated from. Rare materials do not often occur nearby, so if desired, they have to be imported over long distances. Their faraway provenance adds to their value as it embodies the mystique and the unknown (Helms 1988). For that reason it is not unusual that also more common artefacts are transported from distant areas. But exoticness is not only expressed in geographical distance; also when an object is associated with the ancestors or the supernatural, the link with another or outside world is established. Therefore, those who have the knowledge to access the spirits and mediate between the different worlds are the most powerful. If this connection becomes materialised into highly spiritually loaded objects, these become indeed very costly valuables (Helms 1998). Additionally, some societies believe that particular objects, such as the Kwakiutl coppers, were created by superhuman agents, something we, in an *etic* view, would see as the mystification of the object's biography. Clearly this allusion attributes to the costliness of the valuable, embodying both supernatural craftsmanship and exoticness.<sup>108</sup>

Lastly, it is the narrative of the object that makes the object socially valued. It is the narrative that makes the object part of a bigger entity. As noted above, when considering the object's life history, it became apparent that an object possesses a personal character, sometimes carrying a honorific name, giving it a distinct uniqueness. The object contains and embodies peoples' memories and personal experiences. The value of an object increases when it is frequently exchanged and continuously moves around within socially meaningful contexts. It could well be that the meaning of an object is established more by its particular life-history or narrative than its material configuration. Thus, it is the *idea* behind the object that is distributed "and not the object itself that has the greatest value" (Mol 2007, 68). Similarly, very old objects (e.g. heirlooms) could be equally valued as distant objects, simply because of their accumulated 'life experience'. In sum, we have shortly been introduced to some qualities that peoples adhere to in their estimation of value. Clearly, these qualities are most often observed in the things or objects we consider inalienable, whose specific worth additionally makes them particularly suited to serve as gifts. After this valuable interruption, we will now turn back to the main subject of this thesis and see if we can indeed apply some of these theoretical considerations to the intercultural encounter of 1492. The first step of this inquiry is an investigation of possibly more fundamental differences between the two cultures.

### 7.3 Conflicting cosmologies

The exchange relationships between the colonists and the colonised in the early colonial period were heavily influenced by the "sociocosmic universes" (Dumont 1970) of the involved actors: two different cultures that did not share the same perceptions tried to come to the best possible mutual

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<sup>108</sup> Social valuables can also be immaterial things, like knowledge, stories, songs, dances, rituals etc., to which the same qualities may apply. They can be 'crafted' or acquired over years, as well as being exotic and having allusion to ancestral themes (Mol 2007). Furthermore, next to material and immaterial things, also animal species may be considered social valuables. An example would be the rare, exotic and visually conspicuous animals the Chinese emperor Zheng He imported (Wilson 1999; see section 3.6).

understanding, not seldom resulting in a complete misunderstanding of which they were often unaware (Mol 2008).<sup>109</sup> These perceptions can, however, be interpreted as constructs of more fundamental differences in cognition; the convergence of dissimilar cultures being a collision of different cognitive frameworks. These peoples had different worldviews and different modes of thought. Arguably, these differences can be traced back to the places of origin of those peoples. The way human perceptions of value develop depends on the sociocultural context in which a person is raised. Recently, a sociopsychological study of Nisbett et al. (2001) has proposed that social organisation is influential in two basic ways for establishing different modes of thought: “indirectly by focusing attention on different parts of the environment and directly by making some kinds of social communication patterns more acceptable than others” (Nisbett et al. 2001, 294).<sup>110</sup> For example, Nisbett and his colleagues contrast Western and Eastern thought, and question the assumption of an existing universality of basic cognitive processes among all human groups (see also Nisbett 2003). Their basic premise shows that peoples from the East are “holistic, attending to the entire field and assigning causality to it, making relatively little use of categories and formal logic, and relying on ‘dialectical’ reasoning, whereas Westerners are more analytic, paying attention primarily to the object and the categories to which it belongs and using rules, including formal logic, to understand its behaviour” (Nisbett et al. 2001, 291).<sup>111</sup>

Although this study has been conducted among Westerners and Asians, the same oppositions can be observed between Westerners and other peoples around the world (e.g. Havisier 2008; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1981, 1996). The sociocultural context of a culture affects the way by which the world is known in that particular culture; how the sociocosmic universe is constructed, and how worldview affects the way of thinking. The oppositions between the Oriental and the Western mental templates are much the same as those between Amerindian peoples and Europeans. Systems of Amerindian classification and meanings are based on animistic beliefs and a holistic cosmovision. Different objects, phenomena, materials etc. are seen as belonging to the same class or group, sharing roughly the same significance and meaning. On the contrary, the Western classification is taxonomic; it divides the world into kinds of physical matter, which makes us hierarchically distinguish animals from plants, and minerals from trees (Descola 1996; see also Oliver 2000).

The ‘New World’ encounter thus was not only a collision of different cultures, but even more so a clash between peoples with totally different mental templates. The unfamiliarity with the sociocosmic universe of the other is demonstrated in numerous occasions during the early colonial period (Mol 2008). As discussed in Chapter 5, indigenous Amerindians all over the Americas who were confronted

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<sup>109</sup> The definition of “sociocosmic universe” that I follow here is provided by Angus Mol (2007, 9n1): “A socio-cosmic universe is a normative social system comprised of the *totality of social action* – i.e. interactions among human agents, but also interactions among *and with* agents of a non-human and even superhuman nature – going on within a specific social sphere of relations and is heavily dependent on the way the world is structured by an individual and his or her community. A socio-cosmic universe is flexible, since new social actions, which enter the social sphere of an individual or community through new social connections, are included within the socio-cosmic universe immediately, provided there is no descriptive taboo preventing its inclusion.”

<sup>110</sup> Thanks to Jay Havisier, who brought to my attention the article of Nisbett et al. (2001) during a presentation he gave at Leiden University a couple of years ago. For Havisier’s application of this study, see Havisier (2008).

<sup>111</sup> Different modes of thought follow different logics. These modes of thought are culturally specific, which means this are not innate differences that are somehow caused by any ‘racial’ distinctions. Hereby I wish to stress the mental unity of humanity in which there is no variation in mental faculties whatsoever among peoples around the world.

with the arrival of Europeans, tried to fit the newcomers and the objects and ideas they brought with them into existing cultural and social categories. Their encounter needed to be inserted in existing cosmovisions and cognitive patterns, which was not an easy process. During the colonial period there was the continuous problem of how to treat these foreigners and how to classify them according to the indigenous system of value (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Wilson 1990a). This uncertainty was reflected in the initial responses to the presence of the Europeans that were logical and sensible from a Taíno point of view, but might have seemed strange and inexplicable to Europeans (Altman and Butler 1994). Obviously, vice versa the same was true.

### *Amerindian cosmovision*

In order to understand what effect the Amerindian mental template had on the valuation of European objects, let me make a couple of explanatory remarks about the Amerindian cosmovision. Important to note, once again, is that this cosmovision is animistic and holistic: basically everything contains, or is, a spirit or a soul (hence alive and dynamic), while all things of life – people, objects, natural phenomena, but also feasts, religious gatherings, etc. – are in some way connected to each other by common symbolism or links of power. The Amerindian universe is generally believed to have been divided into three layers: the celestial vault above, where the superhuman beings dwell, the earthly plane where ‘normal life’ takes place, and the subterranean waterworld below, where the dead reside (fig. 56). Neither of these layers was good or bad, they were just different kinds of spheres. Between the various layers, connected by sacred caves, the *axis mundi* manifests itself, along which the different spirits (notably those of the deceased!), but also shamans, could traverse (Siegel 1997).<sup>112</sup> Next to the belief in a total spirituality of the universe, also metamorphism is part of the Amerindian worldview (e.g. García Arévalo 1997). According to this concept one’s appearance is not a fixed one: easily people can transform into animals, trees, rocks or whatsoever. Vice versa the same is true. Dualism, furthermore, is omnipresent in daily life (e.g. Roe 1997). Virtually every element has its opposite, like male-female and day-night, but also close-remote, and is associated with one of either three cosmic layers (see especially Stevens-Arroyo 2006). The underworld, for instance, is the domain of the women, but also the moon, night, water, south, west, crocodile, turtle and fish. While its opposite, the spirit layer, is reserved for male, the sun, drought, north, east, harvesting, eagle, jaguar and parrot. This chain of associations is what constructs the Amerindian cosmovision.

### *Taíno zemiism*

Grounded within the broadly shared ideological framework just described, we can distinguish a particular insular Caribbean expression of this cosmovision that came to be referred to as *zemiism*, a belief that was founded on the veneration of deified ancestors (García Arévalo 1997; Siegel 1997).<sup>113</sup> Much of what we know about Taíno religion comes from the work *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* by Fray Ramón Pané (1999 [1571]), a late fifteenth-century chronicler whom Columbus appointed to live among the Amerindians for a number of years (Arrom 1992). From the many

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<sup>112</sup> Typical entrances to, for instance, the underworld were dark caves and lakes.

<sup>113</sup> The concept was already mentioned in Chapter 4, though that part only focused on the material expression of *zemiism*, i.e. artefacts symbolising *zemís*. Both sections complement each other, as the term *zemi* “refers variously to gods, symbols of deities, idols, and bones or skulls of the dead” (Siegel 1997, 106). For detailed studies of Taíno mythology and the concept of *zemiism*, see also Oliver (2009b) and Stevens-Arroyo (2006).



(origin)myths Pané recorded it appears that Taíno cosmology was hierarchically ordered, with a supreme god or creator and fertility goddess (Alegría 1997; Arrom 1997). These were supported by a number of lesser *zemís*, who “helped humans attain the goals presented in the myths, and were therefore vitally important in maintaining the proper cosmic balance between the corporeal and the spiritual” (Siegel 1997, 106). The configuration of the cosmos was mirrored on the surface of the earth, where, for instance, the concentricity of the layers was copied to the village level by making circular arrangements of the houses, as was observed among present-day South-American communities. Similarly, the

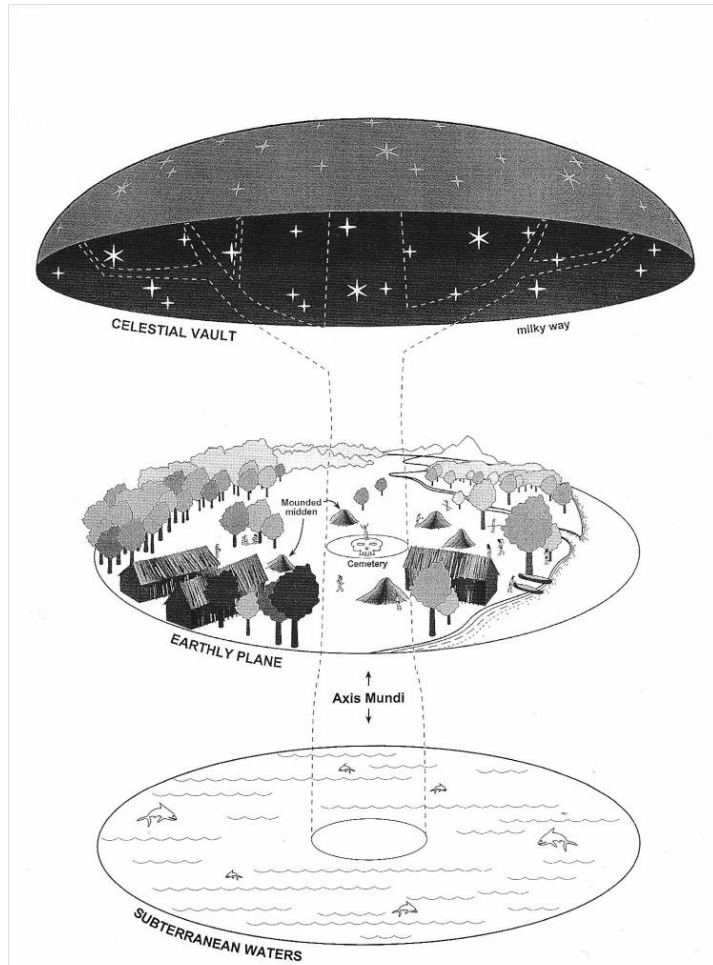


Figure 56. The three layers of the Amerindian cosmos connected by the axis mundi (after Siegel 1997, 108).

central house post represents the *axis mundi*, as may be the case for a communal burial ground.<sup>114</sup> To this sacred realm also belong, among other things, men, social life and ritual activity. The profane is represented by peripheral areas, women and children, and, for instance, domestic life (Siegel 1997). Also the social organisation of a community reflects the cosmic world. Thus, everything in life – as well as in supernatural ‘life’ and afterlife – is carefully constructed, interrelated and mutually constitutive, making nothing to exist without a deep symbolic meaning.

The discussion so far has shown that in essence values are subjective, though they are formed within the system of values that constitute a particular culture or society. Taking it a step further, explaining these cultural differences is a delicate matter. Though one must be cautious not to become too essentialist, it appears that *grosso modo* we can perceive some fundamental oppositions between the Western and non-Western mental templates. On top of this ‘layer’, the cultural makeup subsequently determines how a culture’s worldview is constructed and how particular values are given shape. Moreover, we can distinguish several universal characteristics that nearly every culture attributes a high value.

<sup>114</sup> Also a tree, rainbow or the shaman’s *duho* are representations of the *axis mundi* (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975).

#### 7.4 Desirable objects and their Amerindian precedents

Different cognitive perceptions, worldviews and systems of value also brought along differences in aesthetic cognition (Haviser 2008). In other words, what was considered beautiful, desired or otherwise prized by the Spanish was naturally not the same as that what the Taíno attached value to – at least not in the same way. The protagonists themselves became soon enough aware of these discrepancies, as was illustrated earlier in Chapter 5. In this case, both parties thus had to seek for a “middle ground” (Gosden 2004) in order to create a platform of mutual understanding. An attempt was made to bridge these differences through objects; objects as mediators between the distinct mental and physical worlds of the ‘New’ and the ‘Old World’ peoples (Miller 1987). Although there were clear, visible distinctions in the aesthetic expressions between these peoples – their worldview being translated into their material culture – at first instance it was very difficult to define which objects were proper to give, and what objects in return would have been of commensurate value. Perhaps, for the Europeans, experiences of seemingly uneven exchanges of earlier gift-giving with native groups along the western coasts of Africa were wrongly taken as indications that notions of value and property were non-existent for the peoples who had been encountered in the non-Western world. The intentions of the giving of gifts in the early colonial Caribbean – a well established practice among both parties – most likely were different: the Spanish, in a general sense, tended to see gifts in their economic value, calculating and intended to acquire the greatest return for the least expenditure, whereas the Taíno gifts were more heavily imbued with symbolic meaning, often gestures of wealth, respect or dominance (Axtell 1992).<sup>115</sup> Social valuables were given and received by both parties but only interpreted and understood in their own cultural contexts. The unfamiliarity with the sociocosmic universe of the other led to many objects being given (especially to the Spanish) of which the meaning was not completely understood by the receiving party. Very soon, however, the peculiarities of the other became more fully understood, although still not completely (Mol 2008). The last two chapters have learned us which European artefacts seem to have played the most prominent role in the intercultural exchange relationships between the Taíno and the Spanish, namely (glazed) ceramics, (glass) beads and metal objects. Remarkably, I think, is that they share a common quality that I would refer to as brightness or shininess, both (universal) characteristics Clark (1986) called “symbols of excellence”. Apparently, it is this process of hybridisation – of finding common ground – that resulted in a focus on objects that appeared equally attractive to both sides because of a single characteristic: a shiny surface. To both cultures this characteristic was already important in their own cultural contexts, yet the reasons for this were very different. Next to gold and silver, the Europeans valued only a couple of other shiny objects, like pearls and emeralds, that had high exchange rates at the European markets.<sup>116</sup> For the Amerindians, however, shiny objects and the interplay of light on their surfaces were considered much more important and formed integral parts of daily life (Saunders 1998, 1999, 2003).

##### *Worlds of brilliance*

A glittering appearance and shiny surface turned an object into a social valuable for the Taíno. Valuing objects of light was, however, not restricted to the Taíno or the Caribbean. Nicholas J. Saunders (1998,

<sup>115</sup> An obvious example of this is the coronation of Columbus by Guacanagarí that was described in Chapter 5.

<sup>116</sup> Moreover, these objects also served important social and political functions. Many were also ascribed symbolic meaning and as such were used as frequent gifts at the royal courts of Europe (Davis 2000; and see for the role of pearls in Europe Saunders 1999, 251-253).

1999, 2003) has called this phenomenon “the aesthetic of brilliance” and has shown its prevalence across the Americas. Its expression differed through time and from culture to culture. The materials used to exemplify this aesthetic, along with the technologies preferred to fabricate objects from these materials, varied, as well as the philosophies that influenced these choices. Although cultural traditions could be very different from each other, they were based upon a common theme in Amerindian thought – caused by a collective cosmovision that is believed to have been shared by many of the indigenous peoples of the Americas (Saunders 1998, 226-230; 2003). Here, the concepts of cognitive theory are applicable, suggesting that this collective cosmovision is a direct result of the underlying cognitive patterns shared by the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Americas; a mental template that consists of a holistic mode of thought that is influenced by social organisation. Shared sociocultural settings would have geared them for this “aesthetic of brilliance”; definitely this was an aesthetic cognition that differed from that of the Europeans!

Understanding the structure and concepts of the Amerindian cosmovision is a prerequisite if one aims to explain the enchantment brought about by these shiny matters. Although some of its basic premises have already shortly been introduced above, we will now focus on the concept of light and brightness in particular. Ideas concerning the spiritual and creative power of light were integral parts of Amerindian cosmovision. Through time there are numerous cultural elements, myths and stories that imply the presence of a spiritual brilliance in the worldview of these peoples. It seems that a general shamanic worldview existed across the Americas, in which light, brilliant colours and glittering matter were indicators of the presence of spirits or a supernatural essence (Saunders 1999, 2001, 2003; see also Hamell 1986, 1992; Miller and Hamell 1986). The power of light was a source for strength and energy. The social, material and cosmological worlds were imbued with this power, functioning to symbolise, but also generate and maintain life. Saunders (1999, 245) gives only a glimpse of the evidence available for the existence of this spiritual brilliance. For example, the reflective property of snowy mountains and lakes indicated the presence of portals by which the world was connected with the spirit realm (e.g. Reichel-Dolmatoff 1981, 28). For the Inca, light brought structure and order to the universe (Classen 1993, 38). Many other cultures across the Americas used strength-giving light in their battles (Czitrom 1994, 193, 196; González 1992, 215) and symbolic forms of war (Vennum 1994, 36). The accumulation of brilliant objects displaying the manifestation of light served as indicators of wealth and power for Taíno elites and noblemen (Oliver 2000, 205-209).

The opposite, Saunders (1999, 245) states, is also true; where light signified life, darkness was death, illness, misery and cosmic disorder, for instance with disease or during eclipses. Among the Aztecs a person’s soul was luminous if healthy and living right (López Austin 1988); otherwise it would turn dark (Gingerich 1977, 324; Ruiz de Alarcón 1984, 162). This opposition makes the power of light an ambivalent force that is transformational and therefore possibly dangerous. Only shamans, priests and others who had mastered these forces through their knowledge and performance of rituals, were therefore able to configure the cosmic (Saunders 1999, 245). The Amerindian cosmological world was not only governed by analogical reasoning, but also put more emphasis on multisensory experiences – in which one sensory stimulus would have led to automatic experiences in a second cognitive pathway – than Europeans. This is, for instance, experienced by shamans when using hallucinogenic drugs to enter a specific state of consciousness. This synaesthetic aspect to their shamanic worldview shaped the meanings attached to

the lights, sounds, tastes and smells of ordinary life. These were quite contrary to European experiences, which were mainly focused on visual stimulæ (Saunders 1999, 245; see also Classen 1990; Howes 1991, 3-5).

Brilliance was deemed a powerful and sacred force, and was as much present in daily life as it was infused in the world around them. It manifested itself in many natural phenomena, like the sun, the moon, water, ice and snow, clouds and rainbows. The same can be said about many natural materials (Saunders 1998, 226-230). In the Caribbean, for example, brilliant colours and shininess can be found in all kinds of translucent shells, of which the *Strombus* spp. and *Olivia* spp. are good representatives as they were often used for decorative purposes. Also feathers and plumage from colourful parrots and macaws had the connotation of brilliance. The fact that these materials occurred naturally in animated and sacred landscapes contributed to their value. Because these materials possessed the positive spiritual and creative power of light, artefacts that were made from such matter were by definition given the same status (Saunders 1999, 246). Artefacts with such a value were often made from shell, polished wood, minerals like jade, greenstones and gemstones, but also “burnished and slipped pottery and ceramics of clays and temper with sparkling inclusions” (Saunders 2003, 21). Headdresses were composed of macaw feathers displaying a wide range of colours. Also objects fabricated from metal alloys possessed this inner sacredness, as will be discussed below (Saunders 2003). Saunders (1999, 246) states that “making shiny objects was an act of transformative creation, converting – in a sense recycling – the fertilising energy of light into brilliant solid forms via technological choices whose efficacy stemmed from a synergy of myth, ritual knowledge and individual technical skill”. Because the energy in the natural materials needed to be transferred to the objects that were fabricated from them, special meaning was given to the production of shiny items: the physical forms were embodiments of the power of light. The same importance was given to the exchange and ritual display of these objects (*ibid.*). Many of these items were reserved for elites and *caciques* as to display their status and justify their divine origin and power (Oliver 2000, 296). Their unique ability to mediate between the different worlds was represented by the objects they wore. Moreover, the extensive use of these objects in exchange relationships across the entire Caribbean area indicates their importance as social valuables (e.g. Boomert 1987, 2000; Hofman *et al.* 2007; Rodríguez Ramos 2011).

### *Caribbean precedents*

The attractiveness of brilliant objects, acknowledged by cultures all over the Americas, made them particularly apt for wide circulation. Saunders (2003, 16) states that “[w]hile tight-fitting significances were rarely transferrable *in toto* between cultures, the objects themselves could move considerable distances, which is suggestive of a shared underlying significance accorded to brilliant media.” Although local reinterpretations were possible, expressed in different philosophies, cultural meanings and symbolic associations, as well as the preference of certain technologies and materials, shared ideological traditions made the exchange of these items possible. Chapter 4 has shown that in the precolonial circum-Caribbean the exchange of objects embodying these spiritual connotations can be placed in a diachronic perspective, starting from at least the Early Ceramic Age and continuing with fluctuations up until colonial times. The movement of these articles originated from early interisland transactions of personal adornments, after which the foundations were laid for the development of long-term macro-regional interactions. In terms of quantity and variability of materials, these exchanges culminated in

what Rodríguez Ramos (2010) called the “Iridescent period” and later again in Late Ceramic and protohistoric times. These peaks are typically associated with the peoples we refer to as Saladoid and Taíno. Characteristic materials of these exchanges included exotic rocks and minerals (notably “green stones”, worked into animal-shaped pendants and beads), shells and *guanín*. Through time these occurred in archaeological deposits as non-local components, variably sourced to surrounding or further away islands and mainlands, indicating their absorption in the long-distance exchange networks that were in operation among the peoples inhabiting the circum-Caribbean area (e.g. Boomert 1987; Hofman *et al.* 2007; Rodríguez Ramos 2010). A case in point for the dispersal of shiny matter over this period is exemplified by the first documented find of a *guanín* artefact at the site of Maisabel, Puerto Rico (ca. A.D. 100), which is associated with the archaeological Hacienda Grande period (Siegel and Severin 1993). This find indicates that already in Early Ceramic times the material must have been desired by the inhabitants of the Greater Antilles, who otherwise would not have invested time and effort to acquire it over vast geographical distances. The material apparently remained highly valuable, as it still figured prominently in the ethnohistoric descriptions of the early sixteenth century. Similar notions may apply to the distribution of exquisite micro-lapidary work consisting of jadeitites, turquoise and a variety of other gemstones, motivated in order to acquire the highly esteemed material containers of value and power. The artefacts were used for various purposes, including “social and political transactions such as alliance formations, marriage payments, and homicide compensations [while] they obviously formed key elements in personal adornment and status rivalry among precolonial peoples and may have been used in competitive exchanges with dramatic displays and transference during dance feasts” (Hofman *et al.* 2007, 260; see e.g. Boomert 1987, 2000).

### *The sacredness of metals*

With the arrival of the Europeans, a special class of objects having a shiny surface became particularly important: metals – especially copper alloys – attracted the attention of the Taíno. Studies of Bernardo Vega (1979), José R. Oliver (2000) and Nicholas J. Saunders (2003) have focused on the symbolism and classification of metals from an *emic* perspective. These works provide a useful background to understand the relation between the aesthetic of brilliance and the cognitive significance of copper alloys seen from an indigenous point of view. In the case of metals it was however not only their (often reddish) colour and shininess that accounted for their brilliance that were valued, but other characteristics seem to have played an equal role here. Remoteness, heavenly connotations, but also smell and taste are considered to be (at least) equally important reasons for their valuation (Helms 1988; Oliver 2000). This statement touches upon the concept of *guanín*, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Although endowed with a glimpse of brilliance, the least valued metal was pure gold (or *caona* in native terms), probably because of its natural occurrence and less appealing colour. Quite contrary to European ideas, the Taíno only used gold for good appearance rather than wealth. The carefully crafted composition of gold with other materials, for instance nuggets of gold used as inlays in wooden statues (*duhos*) was valued the most. It was the configuration of gold with other (more valued) materials that gave it its power and that enhanced the value of the total display of regalia. The material itself was significantly less esteemed and less sacred than metal alloys that were based on copper. More important therefore were *latón* or brass (copper and zinc), *billón* (copper and silver), and *guanín* or *oro de baja ley*

(gold, copper, silver) (Oliver 2000, 198). One thing we can immediately conclude from this is the existence of a discrepancy among the values the Taíno gave to ‘things of brilliance’; normal gold did not have the same attraction, despite having the same brilliance! Presumably, thus, an aesthetic of brilliance alone is not enough to account for pre-Columbian indigenous valuations of metal. The metal that was the most special and valued was *guanín*. Its distant provenance and association with geographically and cosmologically remote places made it a very attractive material (Helms 1988). *Guanín* does not occur naturally, but was a manmade product that had to come from the South American mainland. For the acquisition of the material some suggest a direct route across the Caribbean Sea, while others think a route through the Lesser Antilles is more likely. For the Taíno there was no way of understanding how this amalgamated material could have been formed: unlike the peoples from South America, the Taíno did not know the technique of melting. The alloy therefore had connotations with a divine origin and the spirit world. In contrast to gold and copper, which were found on Hispaniola, *guanín* was thus considered to be a very rare material. Usually *guanín* artefacts were worn by *caciques* in combination with other adornments such as *caona*, shell-beaded belts or quartzite necklaces (*cibas*). These regalia displayed their chiefly power and their privileged role as mediators between the profane and sacred worlds (Bray 1997; Martín-Torres et al. 2007, 202; Oliver 2000, 203-209; Valcárcel Rojas et al. 2010; also Steverlynck 2008).

The importance of brass only becomes noticeable after conquest, since it was undoubtedly imported by the Spanish (Vega 1979). Las Casas (1992:I, 287) mentions the indigenous material’s denomination as being *turey*, referring to something from the sky, as their name for sky was *turey*. This material shared most characteristics with *guanín*. It originated in a remote place – the celestial disk (Siegel 1997) – and was therefore imbued with sacredness. Linguistically, *guanín* and *turey* “correlate with and allude to the quality of iridescence that was imputed to a divine and remote origin” (Oliver 2000, 206). Furthermore, its peculiar appearance and smell further added to its sacred character (*ibid.*, 198-199). As we have seen, one of the items the Spanish used for exchange purposes were brass hawk bells or *cascabeles*. The Taíno were very much fascinated by these trinkets because the material they were made of was thought to be *guanín*. Also the sound they produced when tinkling was appealing (Vega 1987, 44-46). *Cascabeles* that were tied together resembled the Taíno rattle-like musical instruments that they used during their social and religious *areytos* (Las Casas 1992:I, 286-287).

#### *The essence of things guanín*

So, the explanation of the value of *guanín* (and therefore all other European materials which the Taíno thought to be *guanín*) cannot be restricted to its worth as a gold-copper-silver alloy alone. As mentioned earlier, Amerindians divided their world into classes comprised of different objects, phenomena, materials, etc. that share roughly the same significance and meaning. José R. Oliver (2000) argued that the metal *guanín* was therefore only one material belonging to a whole class of *guanín*. Many more things were considered to be *guanín*: stars, the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), the Cuban bee hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) and specific flowers (e.g. *Cassia occidentalis* and *Passiflora foetida*). In Taíno mythology even a South American offshore island is mentioned that is called Guanín, which is also the term being used by the Taíno when referring to the south (Sauer 1966, 61; Vega 1987, 44). Oliver (2000) postulates that the relation of these ‘things of *guanín*’ is demonstrated by the linguistic evidence from Taíno vocabulary. The prefix *gua-* seems to return in denominations of many indigenous social

valuables, like *guanín*, *guacamaya* (the Taíno word for parrot), *guaní* (the hummingbird) and *guaíza* (or shell face); names of chiefs and mythical beings contain the prefix as well.<sup>117</sup> Also the words for the turtle (*caguamo*) and the *tagua-tagua* plant (i.e. *Passiflora foetida*) contain the morpheme *-gua-*. The symbolic importance of trees from the *Guaiacum* sp. may be just another addition to this intriguing class of valuables (Ostapkowicz *et al.* 2011). Possibly we can speak of the essence of ‘things *guanín*’ (Oliver 2000). These objects or phenomena all possess the aesthetic of brilliance characterised by: a reddish (-purplish) colour, like the *guanín* metals; an appealing iridescence, like the feathers of the macaw; or resplendent and shiny qualities, like the natural pearls or manufactured beads. In addition they also share other characteristics such as a sweet, pungent or peculiar smell, like some plants, or, importantly, an exotic origin. A combination of these treasured characteristics would have produced a greater effect; this could have occurred in a natural combination, but more often were actively brought together through the recombination of separate materials into one object.

### *European imports*

Thus, unintentionally in the first place, lots of objects that were brought along by the Spanish displayed characteristics that were valued by the Taíno. Pieces of majolica, glassware, beads and hawk bells were assigned with a supernatural or spiritual character because they conveyed various notions of the aesthetic of brilliance. Glass, for example, was highly valuable due to its reflective and translucent properties; the Taíno were even happy with a broken piece of it since it could, for instance, be used as a mirror. The Spanish ceramics had, unlike Amerindian pottery, brilliant colours and resplendent glazed enamel, which was therefore highly appealing to the islanders. Beads were made of glass, amber, stone and carnelian; all crafted in such a way as to display a gleaming surface. The spiritual brilliance and the power of light that were from a Taíno point of view inextricably bound up in the materials of the aforementioned objects arguably formed important reasons for them to value these European items. Most likely, because of the materials the European objects were made of, many other imported items must have attracted Taíno attention as well.<sup>118</sup> The concepts of remoteness and the mystique surrounding the creation of these foreigners’ shiny goods – symbols of esoteric knowledge and cosmic power – would only have contributed to the instant esteem with which they were accepted (Helms 1988).

## **7.5 European manipulation and revaluation**

Although initially the Spaniards seem to have had no other choice than to accede to local terms of exchange, we cannot ignore their active role in structuring the intercultural exchanges, not least because they were the suppliers of the valuable objects the Taíno obtained through them. What will be

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<sup>117</sup> Next to their personal names, Taíno *caciques* and principal men often bore several honorary titles, which “almost invariably contained a reference to precious metals, celestial bodies, and their shiny qualities” (Oliver 2000, 205). For example, the *cacique* of Xaraguá, Beuchios Anacauchoa, carried additional names like Tareigua Hobin, which means “prince resplendent as copper” and Starei, which means “shining” (Martire d’Anghiera 1970:I, 387, quoted in Wilson 2007, 134). Similarly, we recognise *caona* in personal names like Anacaona and Caonabó and the prefix ‘*gua-*’ in, for instance, Guacanagarí.

<sup>118</sup> Among these were religious and ritual objects like crosses, medals, amulets, and other items believed to possess magical properties that were taken for Spanish magico-religious purposes as well as for the indoctrination of the indigenous peoples with the Catholic Church. Probably some of these were used as gifts rather than for use by the Spanish. Finger rings, nails and coins would have had the same connotations (Deagan 2002, 37-38, 87).

considered here are some of the ways the Europeans apparently made use of the situation, i.e. deliberately influenced, intimidated or otherwise moved their Amerindian counterpart to their own best benefit. Accordingly, examples – some of which have been described in Chapter 5 already – will illustrate some of these tactics. It has been described above that during postcontact times European values and ideas concerning shiny matter were obviously conflicting with those of the Taíno. The major ambition of the European colonists was the acquisition of gold, a material that was only valued from a commercial standpoint, its mineralogical purity and weight as an index of convertible wealth. Conversely, *guanín* was the most prized indigenous metal. Yet, the mineralogical impurity of this alloy made it of little value to Europeans. In the course of the colonial period the Spanish cunningly misused the Taíno value system by exchanging European trinkets in order to have the least possible expenditure for the greatest return. In this manner, the Spanish obtained exchange rates of 200 *caona* for 1 *guanín* (Bray 1997). Additionally, it is known that the Spanish promoted the import of *guanín* from the South American mainland to be used in their exchanges with the Taíno on the Greater Antilles, as to acquire pure gold in return (Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007).

But, there are other instances in which the Spanish skilfully misused their ideas about the Taíno value system. Like when Columbus intended to capture Caonabó, written about in Chapter 5, who was chief of the Maguana region and whom the Spanish regarded a major threat, because he was held responsible for the massacre at La Navidad and allegedly planned on organising a rebellion.<sup>119</sup> Caonabó reportedly was promised a gift by Alonso de Hojeda, whom had been sent inland by Columbus. The gift was very special, made of *turey* from Biscay, the Spanish region renowned for its ironworks, and Hojeda showed it to the *cacique*. He told Caonabó that this *turey* “had come from the sky and had a great and secret power and that the *Guamiquina* or kings of Castilla put them on like jewels when they did their *areytos*, which were dances” (Las Casas, quoted and translated in Wilson 1990a, 86). In fact, this gift of *turey* were silver, high-polished manacles and handcuffs. Caonabó was then encouraged to take a bath in the nearby river, where he would thereafter receive the present. At a certain moment, when the two men were secluded from the rest, Hojeda executed the prearranged trick and snapped shut the manacles. Caonabó, hoisted on Hojeda’s horse, was thus taken captive and carried to La Isabela. He eventually died while imprisoned at one of Columbus’s ships. If all this is true, this instance shows that the Spaniards had “a rather sophisticated understanding of some of the Taino concepts of cosmology and power” (Wilson 1990a, 89), and how they were indeed able to use their material culture for manipulation in order to achieve a political goal.

The qualities of indigenous valuables were often neglected by the Europeans and these objects became revalued according to a European system of commercial exchange. Saunders (1999, 246) describes it effectively as “where previously an object’s value had depended on a mixture of the general and personal meanings attached to it, it was now judged by physical characteristics alone”. This European recontextualisation and revaluation of indigenous material culture had a dramatic impact for the Taíno attitude towards certain objects. Moreover, it resulted in redefined relationships between the Europeans and indigenous peoples (see also e.g. Pugh 2009; Thomas 1991). Hence, with the arrival of the

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<sup>119</sup> There are three versions of this story (see Tyler 1988, 162-165). The most credible is the one offered by Las Casas (1992:I, 425-426) that is recounted here (see also Keegan 2007, 28-31; Wilson 1990a, 84-88). Other accounts are provided by Columbus’s son Fernando and Martire d’Anghiera (1970:I, 106-115; also in Parry and Keith 1984, 208-212; and see Las Casas 1992:I, 426-428).



Europeans, changing social and material worlds were created. For example, Saunders (1999) has demonstrated this by applying a biographical approach to pearls. He states that “Amerindians traded pearls for European shiny objects on the initial understanding that the latter's brilliance embodied similar identities, physical and spiritual obligations, and cosmic power to their own” (Saunders 1999, 249; and see Saunders 1998, 234-237). At the same time, the Europeans (both in the Caribbean as in Europe itself) were demanding ever increasing amounts of pearls, requests that they tried to satisfy by forcing Amerindians to work as pearl divers. Many died during these risky ventures, which drastically changed the significance of pearls for them. A similar process took place in the Caribbean where the function of the hawk bells was altered in the course of the conquest period when they began to serve as a measure for tribute payments (Las Casas 1992:l, 437).<sup>120</sup> Now when these had become a symbol of colonial suppression, the significance these objects had in the value system of the Taíno changed considerably. The same must have been true for gold, silver and gemstones (Saunders 1999, 246). It appeared that in the end, differences between Amerindian and European worldviews and systems of valuation were not reconcilable (*ibid.*, 244). As a result, changing attitudes towards objects like the *cascabeles* are characteristic of the changing relationships between the Spanish and the Taíno.

### 7.6 European objects in Taíno society

The exchange of objects, the negotiation of different value systems, and the exchange of cultural information can be seen as part of a continuous process of creating social relationships. Related processes of transculturation and ethnogenesis were a direct result of these contacts (Levinson 2006). Transculturation was somewhat rigid in the beginning, but later on cultural elements from ‘the other’ were gradually adopted in daily life. Forms of earthenware began to look alike, but also intermarriage between Spanish men and Taíno women became more and more common practice. For the Taíno, several elements of the European material culture acquired such a status – whether cosmological, practical or otherwise – that after time these became part of Taíno society. Positive changes thus, other than those developments entailed by the recontextualisation of certain European materials like the hawk bells. As has been argued above, most of the incorporated elements were relatively easily integrated because they fitted into already existing cultural categories. Brass, for instance was conceptually transformed from a European functional metal into a symbolic and ornamental *turey* in Taíno cosmology (Martín-Torres *et al.* 2007, 202). Similarly, sherds of majolica and glass beads have been found in Taíno burial contexts (García Arévalo 1990a, 271). Hence, these items were most likely used as funeral offerings, where the Taíno beads, referred to as *cíbas*, had now been replaced by Spanish beads. It is known that among the Taíno the dead were buried with some of their most prized personal possessions, a function that could well have been (partly) taken over by European materials. Their glittering appearance, distant provenance and cosmological connotations may certainly have constituted much of this value. Religious syncretism and symbolic substitution of lots of items seemed to have been common phenomena in the colonial period. Additionally, bells were presumably used as musical instruments during Taíno *areytos*, while beads and other items would have been used as personal adornments.

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<sup>120</sup> See section 5.4.6 for the usage of hawk bells as tribute measures.

## 7.7 Conclusions

This chapter has offered different strands of argumentation that are thought to be helpful in the determination of the role European material culture played in the exchange relationships between the Taíno and the Spanish in the early colonial period. With different cognitive frameworks, mutual understanding of the other's value system was hardly possible: processes of hybridisation resulted in reinterpretations of the materiality of the objects the other used to exchange. The very different attitudes to light and brilliance, as a result of conflicting cosmologies, exemplify the stark contrast and incommensurability of Amerindian and European systems of value. For the Taíno the items that were brought along by the Europeans fitted in their already existing sociocultural framework, since these objects displayed all of the symbolism an object would be valued for. An important characteristic, substantially adding to the value of the object, was the "aesthetic of brilliance". Its shininess indicated its nature as a powerful cosmological substance, while the ability to produce it was regarded as a supernatural and magical talent (Axtell 1988, 131; Saunders 1999, 247). Thus, a long Caribbean cultural tradition in which artefacts with gleaming surfaces had been widely circulating made the introduction and appropriation of European shiny materials partly a continuation of already present patterns (Hamell 1986, 1992; Miller and Hamell 1986; Saunders 1998, 1999, 2003). However, as the different indigenous valuations of pure gold as opposed to copper alloys have indicated, we must be cautious with giving too much explanatory power to the concept of the "aesthetic of brilliance". Shininess would have been an important quality of objects in pre-Columbian value systems, but remoteness (in geographical and symbolic distance) and esoteric knowledge (Helms 1988), for example, would have been given similar importance.

The valuation of things that have a gleaming surface (or are otherwise considered to be brilliant due to their direct relation with other shiny phenomena) is closely linked with the esteem that was given to the class of "things *guanín*" that Oliver (2000) has discussed. These are not identical concepts, however, since not all the values attributed to "things *guanín*" correspond to those attributed to objects displaying the "aesthetic of brilliance"; rather, the "aesthetic of brilliance" can be interpreted as a principle characteristic of the essence of "things *guanín*", a concept evolved from a particular *emic* cognitive perception of the world. The attraction the Taíno had for the European objects has been proposed to originate from shared sociocultural settings among the peoples inhabiting the circum-Caribbean area (Rodríguez Ramos 2010). This provided them with the same cognitive makeup responsible for the development of a holistic cosmovision and way of thinking, a product of symbolic reasoning. The "aesthetic of brilliance" (Saunders 1999) and the essence of "things *guanín*" (Oliver 2000) are concepts that are constitutive of the value given to a specific class of objects and/or materials that Westerners do not recognise as autonomous categories of value. These concepts would have developed through time by materialising them into objects that circulated across the Caribbean Sea.

## 8 | Conclusions

### 8.1 Aims and questions restated

This thesis set out to determine the role of European material culture in the interactions between the Spaniards and the Taíno of Hispaniola over the course of the early colonial period. In so doing, the aim was to contribute to our understanding of the dynamic intercultural relationships as these developed in the decades following the encounter of 1492. Thereby, the intent was to approach the subject from a Taíno point of view in order to emphasise notions of indigenous agency, as opposed to a long-held dominant theory of a passive culture that suffered swift eradication. It was acknowledged that such an understanding could only be achieved by adopting a multidisciplinary approach that combines knowledge from the fields of archaeology, anthropology, history and even, tentatively, social psychology and cognitive theory. Importantly, any assessment of the events and processes of the period under study cannot be reached satisfactorily without a thorough investigation of the cultural-historical backgrounds of the contacting groups. Together, these aims and assumptions led to the formulation of the following questions: what elements and structures were the two different precontact exchange networks composed of before their convergence; which Taíno and European objects composed the basic 'gift kits' that were used in the early colonial exchanges; how is European material culture reflected in the archaeological record of indigenous settlements; what does the archaeological record tell us about the significance of European material culture to the Taíno peoples; can we explain the focus on particular objects that were used in the exchange relationships of the colonial period; and, which criteria made the Taíno value European goods?

This study did not pretend to provide definite answers to these questions, neither would a single thesis be able to succeed doing this. Entire books could have been devoted to any of the questions alone and still we would not have come to an absolute truth. Through an abbreviated discussion of the individual topics some questions have been answered, while others have proven more difficult to grasp. It could be argued that in their order of mention, the above questions became increasingly harder to answer. By definition, any questions concerned with past people's thoughts confront archaeologists with an arduous task. Matters related to the nature of culture-specific value systems are therefore less easy to solve. Nevertheless, what has been aimed at here is to re-examine in a more integrated way the intercultural exchanges of the early colonial period so as to explore opportunities for future research. The following section recapitulates the conclusions drawn from the discussion in the previous chapters in order to formulate an answer to the main research question.

### 8.2 Results reviewed

This section will consecutively synthesise the antecedents of the 1492 encounter, the interactions between the Spaniards and the Taíno, and their mutual exchanges. Thereafter, the focus will be on the role of the European material culture. It first addresses the different ways in which the Europeans themselves used their goods and materials. Then, Taíno perspectives will be scrutinised through a threefold discussion centred on appropriation, incorporation and valuation.

### 8.2.1 Antecedents

Prior to their encounter, both the Spaniards and the Taíno had already been accustomed to take part in lively networks of trade and exchange. Around the Mediterranean Sea, peoples had increasingly been seeking contact with each other from Antiquity onwards. An active trade developed that linked southern Europe with North Africa and the Near East. During the Middle Ages, part of these interconnections were realised by the establishment of crusader states in the eastern Mediterranean. These developments set in motion a process known as the “commercial revolution of the Middle Ages” (Lopez 1971). Long-distance contacts were limited. Medieval merchants and travellers sporadically made their way to Asia across the Silk Roads, while Africa was only believed to extend not much further than the equator. Later, the harshness of overland travel became rapidly replaced by the currents of the sea. Other parts of Europe, especially those areas bordering the Atlantic Ocean, got connected to the Mediterranean interaction networks. Exploratory trips were made along the western coasts of Africa and also the Atlantic archipelagos were mapped. In this way, trade was practised in a diversity of ways towards the end of the Middle Ages. Common people would not have travelled much outside their own villages and were therefore typically served by local fairs and markets. Medieval cities were larger and sometimes developed into vital centres of commerce. At the same time, more adventurous people established colonies and trading factories in the Near East and West Africa, while the Atlantic archipelagos were economically transformed in exploitation areas of goods and people. In this commercial web, merchants were the ones who kept the systems running. They travelled widely and provided the (exotic) commodities Europe desired in an increasingly internationalising world.

Religion proved to be a crucial factor through time. Not only did it constitute medieval society and prescribe human behaviour, it also encouraged certain political and military acts. Hence, the spread of Christianity opened possibilities for trade; for instance, when Constantinople was seized by the Christians. The constant threat of Islam at times hindered trade with peoples farther away, yet the interaction between Islamic and Christian societies also favoured commercial activity, as desired goods and new products were mutually exchanged. Furthermore, the existence of the Islamic barriers would be an important – if not prime – motive for the Europeans’ search for alternative, seaward routes to Africa and Asia. Importantly, European long history of interacting with other peoples would influence their attitude towards as yet uncontacted peoples. In a sense they acted as were they superior, enslaving black Africans and expelling Moors and Jews from the Iberian peninsula. Obsessed by the Holy Faith, they were convinced of the right to subdue the Canary Islanders, a tragic act of colonisation that would be repeated in the Caribbean. In this context, during a process of expansionism and inspired by the device of “God, Gold and Glory”, it was the determination of a single man that eventually resulted in the collision of Europe with the ‘New World’.

Meanwhile, as said, also the Caribbean had a long occupation history of actively interacting peoples. The islands had been populated relatively late and obviously did not resemble the large contiguous landmasses of the ‘Old World’ continents. Yet, the Caribbean peoples had transformed the sea which their islands enclosed into a dynamic islandscape that facilitated insular, regional and long-distance interactions. The islanders made optimal use of their swift sailless canoes both up-river as on the open sea. Through time, regional exchange networks shifted, contracted and expanded depending on historical contingencies as well as supply and demand of goods and commodities. In these networks,

provisioning typically occurred via down-the-line-exchanges, while also the practice of gift-giving between higher-ranked individuals was well established. The latter exchanges generally took place as part of communal events that were often attended with elaborate religious ceremonies and feasting. At the same time, a steady long-term connection with the South American mainland was always secured. Perhaps people occasionally crossed the Caribbean Sea directly. While trade connections of the islanders with South America, the origin of many of the Caribbean peoples, are undisputed, it is debated whether the Taíno peoples maintained contact with Central America. It is believed, though, that in the area we know as the circum-Caribbean, people, goods and ideas must have circulated widely, thereby sustaining shared panregional ideologies and cosmovisions.

The islands exhibited a considerable degree of cultural differentiation, with the so-called 'Classic Taíno' of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico having attained the highest level of sociopolitical complexity. Much of this variation was the result of various migrations from South America into the islands, of which the Saladoid peoples are the most notable example. Also, new cultural expressions developed locally, often stemming from prolonged interaction between different insular peoples. The Caribbean peoples lived in an animated world, which made the Taíno cosmos and society essentially constituted of spirits and souls. All things of life were intricately connected and embodied a plethora of meanings and connotations. The *cacique* and the *behique* were powerful individuals for their ability to connect with the supernatural beings. Also Taíno prestige objects were encoded in myth and cosmovision. Especially desired objects – often beautifully crafted adornments or sculptures – were made of semiprecious stones and other gemstones, shell, *guanín* and hardwoods. Regional or local specialisation in the manufacture of certain items was present in the islands, while other materials had a restricted natural availability. Artefacts made of *guanín* were only derived from the mainland and, among other things, their exoticness contributed considerably to their value. Not anticipated upon was the arrival of some ninety white bearded men from a much more distant place. Thus, on 11 October 1492, first contact was made between people from the 'Old' and the 'New Worlds'.

### 8.2.2 Interactions

Hence, the encounter was a collision of two radically different cultures. Through the adoption of a theoretical framework that centred on culture contact and colonialism we have been introduced to various forms of intercultural interaction that may occur after the establishment of first contact. Importantly, the discussion stressed entangled processes instead of static events and put an emphasis on notions of indigenous agency. From this, it was gathered that the term 'culture contact' cannot be used to describe actual forms of colonialism as it would not account for the entwined historical processes created through the agency of all who were involved (Silliman 2005). Contact implies 'to touch and retreat', or sporadic interaction at best. So, when contact is sustained and continuous, the term 'colonialism' would be better used, in order to acknowledge the dynamic processes set in motion after the encounter. At the same time, the term 'colonialism' is often only used in relation to European expansionism and the attendant violent subjugation of indigenous peoples. In fact, expressions of colonialism can be perceived in a variety of other instances where cultures are interacting (Gosden 2004). In the colonial Caribbean we can distinguish between two types of colonialism: a short middle-ground period and a type called *terra nullius* that soon came to replace the former type. The existence of

a middle-ground phase is not often acknowledged, yet it was certainly there. During the earliest interactions the power relations were still balanced. Both the Spaniards and the Taíno probably thought to be in control of the situation. Simultaneously, each strived to attain their own aims for their own best benefit. This equality facilitated friendly exchange and the creation of a working relationship through which effective interaction was possible. It was an exploratory phase in which the cultural logics of both parties were not yet fully understood by the other, at times causing misinterpretation and not understanding. Yet, practices such as gift-giving or general notions of hospitality had parallels in both cultures, which enabled the creation of a platform of mutual understanding. In this manner, the Spaniards and the Taíno reasoned from their own cultural framework to make sense of the things and people they saw and experienced. Therefore, this period was typically characterised by the mixing and hybridisation of cultural forms and elements. When after some time the Europeans had somewhat established themselves in the 'New World', the power balance shifted to their advantage. Thereby, the middle-ground negotiations were over and a new form of colonialism, called *terra nullius*, emerged. This colonial type was characterised by violence, coerced labour, the disruption of native society and mass death on the side of the Taíno. However, the Taíno never thought of these processes as final. Instead, they employed a wide range of different strategies to adapt to the circumstances they had seen themselves confronted with. Presumably they were able to maintain much of their cultural traditions outside the Spanish-contact zones for quite a while. Due to sustained interaction in, for instance, the *encomendero* settlements, but also through intermarriage between Spanish men and Taíno women, cultural elements of both cultures were interchanged during a process of transculturation. Through time, these cultural exchanges, certainly so with the introduction of African slaves after 1518, resulted in the creation of new identities in a new *criollo* or *mestizaje* colonial society.

### 8.2.3 Exchanges

In a sense, the Spanish-Taíno relationships in early colonial Hispaniola were constructed by the different exchanges the two cultures conducted with each other. Much of these were determined by the incessant European desire for wealth and profit. The initial transactions provided a contact zone whereby objects served to bridge differences in worldview and valuations of wealth. Both parties sought which objects were gladly received by their counterpart, while at the same time making clear what they themselves desired. The Spaniards showed the Taíno gold and pearls and asked where to find it, while the Indians called *chuq chuq* in order to receive hawk bells. Exchange occurred both between sailors and *naborías* and between Columbus and *caciques*. The former happened through barter (*rescate*), with the single aim of acquiring the other's offering, while the latter were occasions of gift-giving that proceeded along the lines of Taíno ritual exchange. Such exchanges transcended their goal of mere bartering, as the gifts embodied particular meanings for both the one who gave and the one who received them. These ceremonies also provided the ideal situation to conclude political alliances and invest in sustainable relationships. The goods that were most frequently used for exchange together constituted a so-called "gift kit" (Brain 1975). The Spanish one included such items as bells, beads, pieces of glass and earthenware, and several metal objects, while the Taíno offered gold, cotton, javelins, parrots and hammocks in return. Of, for example, parrots we know that these already figured in precontact elite exchanges, while also many other items probably were part of native trade networks. Gold nuggets and artefacts were added to the Taíno gift kit as soon as the Spaniards revealed their

interest. The Spanish gifts, on the other hand, were generally not regarded as valuables by their givers. Rather, their composition derived from earlier exchanges with 'ignorant peoples', among whom these 'trifles' had appeared to be of much esteem. Later, with the Spanish installation of an official system of barter, the number of informal, haphazard exchanges decreased. However, given the lure of value both cultures saw in the objects of the other, an absolute end was probably never given to them. The disappointing revenues from barter caused the Spanish to implement a tribute system, as a result of which the material exchanges between both parties were degraded into one-way transactions at the expense of the Taíno.

#### *8.2.4 European material culture*

The Europeans used their objects in a variety of ways in their interactions with the Taíno. They seldom gave away their things without them serving an explicit goal. Sometimes it were gifts, intended to initiate friendly relations, take away native fear or trepidation, and to assert their natural goodness. Also gifts were given to chiefs as signs of peace and for the creation of political bonds. Moreover, European objects were media of exchange for Taíno goods, food, services and even plots of land. All this was directed at the establishment of a Spanish foothold in the 'New World'. By creating such favourable conditions, the objects in fact became tools for colonisation. Actually, they were also used to aid in Christianisation (e.g. religious jewellery) and civilisation (e.g. clothing). The capture of Caonabó, for instance, exemplifies that European materials were even used in sheer manipulative ways as soon as the Spaniards recognised the Taíno delight for their objects. Additionally, for the simple European colonist, it was extraordinary tempting to use his 'worthless trifles' to barter for valuable amounts of gold.

#### *Appropriation*

The Taíno attitude towards European material culture is much harder to assess. Through a combination of evidence from archaeology and ethnohistoric accounts it has been tried to achieve an understanding that goes beyond the popular believe of Europeans trading beads and mirrors for heaps of gold with foolish and naive Indians. One thing that must be concluded is that, certainly during the early years after contact, the Taíno were absolutely interested in the objects the foreigners brought. It may well have been that the Taíno used other forms of hospitality than the Europeans were used to, such as presumed by the act of natives swimming to the European ships, so that the acceptance of gifts and the willingness to trade were not directly linked to the objects. Yet, the same practice occurred in the Canary Islands. Moreover, these actions were repeated time and again. Also, Columbus mentions that Indians came to La Isabela day and night with the sole intent of trading. When an Indian returned to the beach after having exchanged goods with Columbus at sea, all others came up to him to take note of what he had been given. The frequent mention in the ethnohistoric sources of an apparent Taíno desire to obtain certain goods, as well as the enthusiasm with which such items were received (e.g. "going crazy" for hawk bells), cannot be denied either and are, as I believe, indicators of a more profound interest in, indeed, the objects of the Europeans. The fact that one particularly asked for (return) objects transcends mere acts of giving and thus hospitality. Hospitality was expressed through elaborate ceremonies, feasting and the abundant offering of food. When during one of these dining receptions Columbus saw Guacanagarí being interested in a tapestry he had in his room, Columbus offered it to him. Had Guacanagarí not shown his admiration, Columbus would probably not have given the chief this present.

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The Taíno thus took an active attitude towards the acquisition of Europeans goods. Moreover, from ethnohistoric mentions it is known that European items were rapidly absorbed into native exchange networks. Also archaeologically there are some indications. On a number of Bahamian islands, European potsherds have been found, while the Spaniards are not believed to have ever visited those places (Keegan and Mitchell 1987). The same is true for a site like Yayal, Cuba; no Spaniards are known to have ever resided in the immediate vicinity, though some ten percent of the total material assemblage is European of origin (Deagan 1988; Domínguez 1984). Arguments against the wide circulation of European objects throughout the Caribbean can also be put forward. Beyond the Greater Antilles at least, Europeans were generally welcomed in similar ways as on Hispaniola – e.g. Florida, North America and Caribbean coasts of Central and South America. Also, after some ten years, still tens of thousands of ‘trinkets’ were shipped to the ‘New World’, either indicating that they were still in demand in the Greater Antilles or that they could be equally used in yet to be explored areas. The latter case is likely, though it presumes that European items were not being transported over such large distances.

### *Incorporation*

Ethnohistorians have described how the Taíno adopted European objects as ornaments, while bells were employed as musical instruments during Taíno *areytos*. But next to these written records, it is mainly archaeology that has proven important for our estimation of how European goods were used by the Taíno. Although the amount of European artefacts in postcontact Taíno contexts is generally scant at best, they have been found in a variety of deposits. Illustrative of their meaning is that European objects have been found in Taíno burials, most often in association with Taíno paraphernalia. In these contexts we may recognise forms of symbolic substitution, as, for instance, *cibas* were replaced by Spanish beads. Taíno deceased were often interred with personal belongings and things they would need in afterlife. The incorporation of European materials as offerings in such a personal, restricted context certainly supports ideas of their high value. Secondly, European material culture has been recovered from Taíno occupation areas. Remarkably, in these cases European objects have been found in occasional co-occurrence with Taíno prestige goods. This might imply a usage restricted to the elite. Nevertheless, I consider this questionable. Higher-ranked Taíno might certainly have received items that were not generally acquired by the common people. Yet, the ethnohistoric documents make frequent mention of the distribution of ‘trinkets’ to the general populace, without any regard to what is given to whom. Therefore, also lower-ranked Taíno were in the position to obtain such goods. A third context in which European objects have been encountered is in caches. These finds often are a combination of European and Taíno objects too, pointing to their full integration in indigenous society. Striking is that European items are sometimes worked into a configuration of goods from both cultures, such as is exemplified by two Taíno amulets from El Variar, Dominican Republic, to which seem to have been attached items of metal. Other items were deliberately reworked into pendants and other ornaments. Both the burials and the isolated caches show that certain European objects and materials were given the same importance as Taíno valuables. Yet, on the other hand, archaeology has revealed evidence of European items being transformed into objects of daily use such as net weights and spindle whorls. Additionally, they appear to have been used as tools for the manufacture of indigenous artefacts. However, the sites that yield such utensils are located in Cuba and Puerto Rico (as far as thus known), both islands where Taíno resistance and the existence of a distinct Taíno cultural component lasted much longer than on



Hispaniola as the impact of colonisation was experienced later. This duality – ceremonial and utilitarian functions – I would suggest as being the result of sustained interaction, of object familiarity and incorporation, a particular material expression of transculturation. For over perhaps a decade or so, European objects must have been considered as foreign and valuable (see below); later, when both peoples had become more acquainted with the material culture of the other, these objects were commoditised, i.e. were considered part of the own culture (Silliman 2009). In other words, this meant that potential practical use came to replace former cosmological connotations. Moreover, it is not unthinkable that this process would have been accelerated as the true nature and intents of the Europeans had become clear and Taíno resistance towards them increased. Lastly, the influence of European material culture is also seen indirectly as Taíno potters fabricated earthenware in Spanish forms. Additionally, a number of Taíno vessels exhibit iconography that presumably represents European animals like horses and cows (Deagan 1988; Domínguez 1984). Non-material alterations in Taíno society as a result of the incorporation of European objects have not been considered in this thesis.

### *Valuation*

The question that remains is the most difficult one: why did the Taíno value European objects? One of the ideas proposed here is that an important factor of their valuation was found in their brilliance, or gleaming surface. This “aesthetic of brilliance” (Saunders 1998, 1999, 2003) is believed to have been part of a long cultural tradition shared by the peoples inhabiting the circum-Caribbean area, in which brilliance was deemed a powerful cosmological force. It manifested itself in a range of natural phenomena as well as naturally occurring materials. In fact, the world was infused with brilliance. Hence, people materialised shininess into a variety of objects that came to circulate widely throughout the region as items of prestige and embodiments of power and mythological connotation. With the introduction of European goods, similar characteristics were recognised, which made their acceptance and incorporation considerably easier. Accordingly, through their shiny qualities, artefacts of European origin must have been both valued and desired greatly. Other reasons for their valuation are found in a second concept, which is described as “the essence of things *guanín*” (Oliver 2000). *Guanín* not only referred to the gold-copper-silver alloy that the Taíno imported from South America; more so, *guanín* represented a whole class of objects, materials and phenomena that shared a number of high-valued qualities such as a specific smell, colour, iridescence and indeed shininess. In linguistics, these spiritual connotations appear to have been captured in the prefix or morpheme *gua*, which also frequently occurs in the names of *caciques* and Taíno mythology. Thus, it is argued that such diverse things as stars, turtles, plants and *guanines* all possessed similar supernatural essence. Such a variegated class of things Westerners do not recognise as autonomous categories of value, which makes the true value of ‘things *guanín*’ almost beyond our understanding. A third main reason proposed to have contributed to the value of European objects lies in their exotic origin. In Taíno mythology, closeness and remoteness constituted an important binary opposition. Remoteness was valued in both symbolic and geographical distance. Similarly valued was esoteric knowledge (Helms 1988). The European objects would certainly have carried these connotations. The same may be said of the Europeans themselves. How the Taíno conceived of them possibly stemmed from established notions towards strangers (see Keegan 2007). Yet, there is much uncertainty about just how these foreigners were ‘valued’. Their distant origin,

whiteness, ships, horses and objects may well have been reasons for the Taíno to regard the Europeans as supernatural beings – and treat them accordingly. It is possible that part of the attraction of the European goods was because of their relation to the ones who brought them. However, as soon as the European stay was prolonged and the detrimental effects of their coming were experienced by the Taíno, these notions may have gradually faded. In sum, an aesthetic of brilliance alone – indeed seen in many cultures worldwide! – would not be enough to account for the ways the Taíno appropriated and incorporated European goods. At the same time, there is ample evidence in, for instance, mythology, linguistics and iconography that there existed particular notions of value that we are only beginning to recognise tentatively.

### **8.3 Limitations**

A number of important limitations need to be considered. While archaeology has proved particularly helpful in our understanding of the role of European material culture, much of its potential has still to be exploited as a result of long-lasting epistemological problems in the field of Caribbean postcontact archaeology. In addition, considerable methodological problems are involved in the archaeology of this period. Hence, the limited amount of present archaeological data can not at all fully account for the various mechanisms of exchange and incorporation that occurred in colonial times. A major problem concerns the way the Taíno appropriated European objects. Whether these goods were directly exchanged with the Spaniards or that they were distributed via native trade networks is hard to determine in most cases. The presence of European material culture in Taíno archaeological contexts is no prove of an actual Spanish visit to that place. Moreover, it may be that such items were lost or casually discarded by the Spaniards. Even possible is that the Taíno just took European artefacts if they were in the occasion to do so. Second, as concerns Taíno postcontact settlements, it is often very difficult to make any temporal distinctions within the period of some five decades after contact. This hinders our understanding of possible shifts in the Taíno attitude towards European objects. Third, regarding the ethnohistoric sources, we must continue to be aware of the one-sided perspective these records express. In the past, scholars have often uncritically accepted that what was stated by European medieval writers. Indeed, Caribbean archaeology has still to contend with a presumed Taíno-Carib dichotomy (Hofman *et al.* 2008). Lastly, our understanding of the nature of indigenous systems of valuation is rather limited. Using this knowledge to infer the Taíno perception of European objects and materials may therefore be considered opportunistic; while at the same time it is aimed to be an incentive to future research in this field.

### **8.4 Opportunities for future research**

The archaeological record pertaining to the early colonial period in the Greater Antilles has not yet yielded the broad dataset archaeologists would like to have at their disposal in order to generate conclusive answers. Much more research is needed to map the presence of European material culture and to infer the processes of Taíno use and appropriation of these objects. This is only achieved when archaeologists pay more attention to the dynamics of this defining period of history. Too often, colonial archaeology is approached from a mere European perspective or as an offshoot of pre-Columbian research. Instead, an integrated approach is needed that erases the still present schism between prehistoric and historic archaeology and that unites not only the different fields of archaeology, but also

those of anthropology, ethnohistory, linguistics and ethnography. Moreover, it is encouraged to explore other disciplines such as cognitive science and sociopsychology to assess their possible contribution to our understanding of systems of valuation and cultural interaction.

Also more specific opportunities for future research have come to mind. Due to the restrictions imposed on this thesis it was only sporadically possible to incorporate evidence of interactions between Europeans and native peoples beyond the island of Hispaniola. Yet, it would be especially interesting to broaden this study to not only other Caribbean islands, but also to regions like Florida and the Caribbean coasts of Central and South America, in order to see how those people conceived of the Europeans and their goods. Likewise, a comparison between practices in Hispaniola and those in the Canary Islands may provide valuable data. A number of striking similarities have already been addressed in this thesis. There could even be made cross-cultural comparisons with West Africa as the composition of the European gift kit was apparently inspired by earlier exchanges there. Also, more elaborate studies in pre-Columbian archaeology directed towards the use and circulation of 'shiny' prestige items and materials like *guanín* have the potential to offer valuable contributions to questions of Amerindian value systems. These studies should be encouraged to incorporate the circum-Caribbean in its entirety in order to further explore shared notions towards brilliant media. Just recently, an unprecedented wealth of gems and gold artefacts has been recovered in Panama that might be just another valuable addition (Williams 2012). Furthermore, questions have raised about the possible Taíno refusal of and indifference to certain goods. Also interesting would be to know what function European material culture had in Taíno intersocietal contacts. Was the accumulation of European goods a marker of status? Did Taíno chiefs derive power from their possession? Hence, would they thus be able to increase their social and political influence?

### **8.5 The modern Caribbean**

The search for the unknown, instigated by the lure of profit and improvement or the possibility of being better off, has been initiated by peoples worldwide and throughout history. Peoples from the American mainlands decided to move into the Caribbean archipelago, while medieval Europeans actively sought ways to reach centres of trade in Africa and Asia. In a sense the encounter between the 'Old World' and the 'New' was just another instance of peoples making contact with each other. Yet, at the same time it initiated a process of globalisation in which the world is increasingly becoming a unified whole. The encounter was unique since it resulted in the creation of a new world characterised by profound changes in both hemispheres. Shortly after the collision, the so-called "Columbian exchange" (Thomas 1990) commenced, making people, animals, plants and goods being transhipped between the different continents. Also many immaterial things of life got rapidly exchanged and entwined. Today, Wilson (1990a, x-xi) notes "we are still in the 'contact period' between the Old World and the New, between Western and non-Western peoples. The lessons of the encounter on Hispaniola are compelling today."

The present number of native American Indians living in the Caribbean islands and the tropical lowlands of South America is just ten percent of the total population that is believed to have occupied these areas in pre-Columbian times. Most of them dwell in the sparsely populated jungles of Surinam and the Guianas, while only a very fragmented part lives in the islands, mainly on Dominica, St. Vincent and Trinidad. The mosaic of peoples, languages and cultures that characterises the area today has principally

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been formed during historical times. First, soon after the Europeans had colonised the islands, they began to establish plantations for which they needed an extra supply of labour, to be imported from Africa. The African slaves brought their own cultural traits with them and interbred with the peoples already inhabiting the islands. Subsequently, the existence of a lot of different colonies has played a critical role in the development of the migration currents in historical times. When legalised slavery was ended all over the Americas around 1900, contract workers from India, Indonesia, China and other Southeast Asian countries started migrating to the area. Today, the faces of the Caribbean people are manifestations of a complex entwined historical period. Taíno traces are still there, to be found in foods like cassava, corn and sweet potato, but also in words like hammock (*hamaca*), barbecue (*barbacoa*) and canoe (*canoas*) (e.g. Ferbel-Azcarate 2002; Vega 1981; Wilson 1997a). Moreover, groups of contemporary Caribbean people have been concerned with Taíno revivalism, also referred to as 'neo-Taíno' (e.g. Castanha 2011; Forte 2006; Haslip-Vieira 2001). There is an increasing awareness and pride in Taíno heritage and a rising number of people, especially groups living in Puerto Rico, have expressed and promoted a presumed cultural affiliation with the Taíno peoples. Over recent years a number of contemporary Taíno movements and organisations such as The Jatibonicu Taíno Tribal Nation of Boriken, Puerto Rico (1970) and The United Confederation of Taíno People (1998) have been established. They aim to be treated as a recognised tribe and foster Taíno culture. Furthermore, studies of DNA have been conducted to trace Taíno ancestry through bloodlines (Lalueza-Fox *et al.* 2003; Martínez Cruzado 2002; for an overview and critique, see Haslip-Viera 2006). Also, Taíno culture is ever more frequently displayed in museum exhibits throughout the Caribbean region. Hence, the Taíno live on in a variety of ways. They are the living result of the multicultural networks that developed during the colonial period, which at their turn proceeded from the early interactions between the Spaniards and the Taíno Indians, facilitated by the trinkets and treasures of both.





## Abstract

One of the most defining moments in history is Europe's discovery of the 'New World' in 1492. It is generally known how Columbus succeeded in crossing the Atlantic Ocean, while trying to reach Asia via a westward route. It meant a sudden and unexpected encounter between two radically different cultures. According to popular belief, the Spaniards offered beads and mirrors to 'ignorant' Indians and took home all the gold they could find. The Taíno were passive bystanders in the process of Spanish imperialism and colonialism. This thesis aims to eliminate these misconceptions through a critical reassessment of the role of European material culture in intercultural contacts in Hispaniola during the first decades of the colonial period. The discussion centres on the Taíno attitude towards these new objects, while emphasising their active participation and creative responses to the impacts of Spanish domination. An understanding of the dynamics, interactions and exchanges of the colonial encounter cannot be achieved without knowing the cultural-historical backgrounds of both parties. Their descriptions constitute Part I of the thesis. In Part II it is investigated which objects the Taíno received from the Spaniards and what they gave in return. The main questions to be answered are why the Taíno accepted the seeming trinkets of the Europeans and how and to what extent these were integrated into native society. Archaeology offers an indispensable dataset that, however, hitherto has not reached its full potential, not least because of the many difficulties involved in the archaeology of postcontact Taíno settlements. This thesis provides a current state of affairs by listing a representative number of site descriptions that have not been published in a similar way before.





## Samenvatting

Een van de meest bepalende momenten in de geschiedenis is Europa's ontdekking van de 'Nieuwe Wereld' in 1492. Het is algemeen bekend hoe Columbus erin slaagde de Atlantische Oceaan over te steken, terwijl hij probeerde Azië te bereiken via een westelijke route. Het betekende een plotselinge en onverwachte ontmoeting tussen twee totaal verschillende culturen. Veel mensen denken dat de Spanjaarden kralen en spiegel-tjes aanboden aan 'onwetende' Indianen en dat ze al het goud dat ze konden vinden naar huis meenamen. De Taíno waren passieve toeschouwers gedurende het proces van Spaans imperialisme en kolonialisme. Deze scriptie heeft tot doel deze misvattingen weg te nemen door middel van een kritische herwaardering van de rol van de Europese materiële cultuur in de interculturele contacten in Hispaniola gedurende de eerste decennia van de koloniale periode. De discussie richt zich op de Taíno houding ten aanzien van deze nieuwe objecten, met nadruk op hun actieve deelname en inventieve reacties op de gevolgen van de Spaanse overheersing. Een goed begrip van de dynamieken, interacties en uitwisselingen van de koloniale confrontatie kan niet worden bereikt zonder de cultuurhistorische achtergronden van beide partijen te kennen. Hun beschrijvingen vormen Deel I van de scriptie. In Deel II wordt onderzocht welke voorwerpen de Taíno ontvingen van de Spanjaarden en wat ze in ruil daarvoor gaven. De belangrijkste vragen die beantwoord worden zijn waarom de Taíno de ogenschijnlijke snuisterijen van de Europeanen aannamen en hoe en in welke mate deze geïntegreerd werden in de inheemse samenleving. Archeologie biedt een onmisbare dataset, welke echter tot nu toe zijn volledige potentieel nog niet heeft bereikt, niet in het minst vanwege de vele moeilijkheden die de archeologie van postcontact Taíno nederzettingen kent. Deze scriptie geeft een actuele stand van zaken door een opsomming van een representatief aantal site beschrijvingen, die niet eerder op een soortgelijke manier zijn gepubliceerd.



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## APPENDIX 1: THE CROWN'S LIST, 1494<sup>121</sup>

From the Crown's memorial for the factor, Don Juan de Fonseca, on supplies needed to sustain approximately one thousand for one year in Hispaniola.

### Foodstuffs

Wheat, 600 *cahices*<sup>122</sup>  
 Barley, 100 *cahices*  
 Biscuit, 600 *quintals*<sup>124</sup>  
 Wine, 12,000 *arrobas* (in casks)<sup>125</sup>  
 Vinegar, 2,000 *arrobas* (in casks)  
 Oil, 410 *arrobas* (in jars)  
 Beans, chickpeas, and lentils, 70 *cahices*  
 Bacon, 500 sides  
 Beef, 100 carcasses (in casks)  
 Raisins and figs, 200 *quintals*  
 Unshelled almonds, hazelnuts, and walnuts, 30 *quintals*  
 Salted fish, 300 barrels  
 Onions, 4,000 bunches  
 Garlic, 5,000 strings  
 Sugar, 50 *arrobas*  
 Mustard, 6 flasks  
 Honey, 9 *arrobas*  
 Molasses, 10 jars  
 Other seeds and vegetables

### Livestock and fowl

Mares, 12  
 Asses, 12  
 Sheep and goats  
 Calves, 20  
 Chickens, 400

### People

Miners from those who are in Almadén  
 [mercury mines]  
 Wool experts  
 Spice and perfume experts  
 Goatherds  
 Peasants and labourers

### For maintenance of people

Medicines [60,000 *maravedís* worth]<sup>126</sup>  
 Shoes and sandals  
 Other items of clothing and footwear  
 Nails of all kinds for houses and ships  
 French saws, 1 dozen [1,500 *maravedís* each]

*Anujos* [?] for wine, 20  
 Wine flasks of 2, 3, or 4 *azumbres*<sup>123</sup>  
 Water casks, 500 dozen  
 Strainers and *ajonarlos* [?], 10 dozen  
 Sieves and sifters, 10 dozen  
 Glass lamps, 3 dozen  
 Chamber pots in 6 straw boxes, 5 dozen  
 Coarse cloth [*jerga*], 1,000 yards  
 Coarse canvas, 1,000 yards  
 Measures for bread, wine, and oil, plus other glasses  
*Lenteduas* [?], 5 dozen  
 Tallow, 59 *quintals*  
 Soap, 10 *quintals*  
 Wax, 2 *quintals*  
 Gunpowder, 30 *quintals*  
 Iron  
 Steel, 20 *quintals*  
 Lead, 15 *quintals*  
 Quicksilver, 2 *quintals*  
*Mangarras* [?], 200  
 Fishing nets, 4  
 Harpoons and arrows, 5 dozen  
 Fish hooks of all types, 20 dozen  
 Fish hooks from Cardona, 2 dozen

### For maintenance of ships

Oars for small ships, 12  
 Oars for boats [*bateles*], 100  
 Oars for caravels, 100  
 Pintles and gudgeons for rudders, 11  
 Mariner's compasses, 1 dozen  
 Mariner's watch glasses, 1 dozen  
 Medium-sized anchors, 10  
 Rigging of all kinds, 60 *quintals*  
 Rigging of all kinds made from *esparto* grass  
*Alonas* [?] for sails, 1,200 wings  
*Gelisano* thread, 6 *quintals*  
 Alcohol for varnish, 20 *quintals*  
 Oakum, 30 *quintals*  
 Tar, 10 barrels

<sup>121</sup> After Parry and Keith (1984, 185-187) and its reproduction in Deagan and Crucent (2002b, 301-302).

<sup>122</sup> 1 *cahice* = 12 *fanegas*, or about 18.5 bushels.

<sup>123</sup> 1 *azumbre* = about 4 pints.

<sup>124</sup> 1 *quintal* = 4 *arrobas*, or about 100 pounds.

<sup>125</sup> 1 *arroba* = approximately 4 gallons liquid, 25 pounds dry.

<sup>126</sup> 375 Spanish *maravedís* equal 1 ducat (Dunn and Kelley 1989, 631n).

## APPENDIX 2: REQUIRED BY THE ADMIRAL AND HIS HOUSEHOLD, 1494<sup>127</sup>

Clothing and footwear for himself	A grill to roast fish
A bed made of 6 mattresses of fine Brittany linen	Forks, 2
Pillows of cambric, 4	A colander
Bedsheets of half cambric, 3 pairs	Kitchen towels of thick linen cloth, 12 yards
A light quilt	A large basin for cleaning
A blanket	Large tapers, 12
Green and brownish serge silk cloth	Candles, 30 pounds
A cushion [ <i>alhambra</i> ]	Candied citron, 20 pounds
Cloth tapestries depicting trees	Sweets without pine kernels, 50 pounds
Door hangings of the same, 2	All types of conserves, 12 jars
Coverings with his coat of arms, 4	Dates, 4 <i>arrobas</i>
Decorated coffers, a couple	Quince preserve, 12 boxes
Perfumes	Rose-coloured sugar, 12 jars
Paper, 10 quires	White sugar, 4 <i>arrobas</i>
	Water scented with orange blossoms, 1 <i>arroba</i>
<i>For His Kitchen</i>	Water scented with roses, 1 <i>arroba</i>
Tablecloths of 8 <i>cuarteles</i> , 5 yards each, 4 pairs	Saffron, 1 pound
Small cloths, 6 dozen	Rice, 1 <i>quintal</i>
Towels, 6	Raisins from Almuñecar, 2 <i>quintals</i>
Tablecloths for cupboards and for his men when they eat, 6 pairs of 6 yards each	Almonds, 12 <i>fanegas</i>
A pewter cutlery	Good honey, 4 <i>arrobas</i>
Silver cups, 2	Fine oil, 8 <i>arrobas</i>
Jugs [silver?], 2	Olives, 2 jars
Salt cellar [silver?], 2	Fresh pig's lard, 3 <i>arrobas</i>
Spoons [silver?], 12	Ham, 4 <i>arrobas</i>
Brass candlesticks, 2 pairs	Chickens, 50 pairs
Copper pitchers, 6	Roosters, 6
Large pots, 2	
Small pots, 2	<i>For His Household</i>
A large cauldron	Ordinary mattresses, 12
A small cauldron	Thick bedsheets, 12 pairs
Large frying pans, 2	Ordinary blankets, 12
Small frying pans, 2	Green and brownish cloth, 80 yards
Stewing pans, 2	Shirts, 80
A large copper pot with lid	Leggings and jackets, 4
A small copper pot with lid	<i>Vitre</i> [coarse canvas], 100 yards
A brass mortar	Ordinary shoes, 120 pairs
Irons spoons, 2	Black thread, 6 pounds
Graters, 1 pair	Fine yarn, 6 pounds
	Black twisted silk, 3 ounces

<sup>127</sup> After Parry and Keith (1984, 187-188) and its reproduction in Deagan and Cruxent (2002b, 302-303).

### APPENDIX 3: STORES REQUIRED FOR THE VOYAGE, 1502<sup>128</sup>

Provision for making 10,000 copper coins to take and leave there with the faces of Their Highnesses and around Them the letters *f. y. rex et regina hispania*, and something religious on the reverse.

Provision for artillery; on each ship it seems there should be 16 lombards of iron, 10 crossbows, 10 dozen pikes, 10 dozen javelins, and 10 dozen bucklers.

Provision of men for these things and salary for them.

Memorial of the biscuit, wine, salt beef and fish, vinegar, oil, seeds, spices, and medicines that are needed for 150 men.

Wine, 2,000 *arrobas*  
Biscuit, 800 *quintals*  
Bacon, 200 slabs  
Olive oil, 8 *pipas*  
Dried beef, 24  
*Tollos* [?], 80 dozen  
Fish, 60 dozen  
Cheeses, 2,000  
Chick-peas, 12 *cahices*  
Beans, 8 *cahices*  
Mustard  
Rocket  
Garlic  
Onions  
For medicines, 10,000 (i.e. in *maravedís*)  
Fishing nets, 4  
Fish hooks and line  
Tallow, 20 *quintales*  
Pitch, 10 *quintales*  
Nails, 10,000 without heads, and 20,000 with heads  
Burlap and hemp

### APPENDIX 4: TRIBUTE GOODS RECEIVED BY THE ADMIRAL, 1495-1496<sup>129</sup>

*Report of the gold and jewellery and other things that the Señor Admiral had received and afterwards had been sent by the receiver, Sebastián de Olaño from this island to Castille from the 10th of March of 95 years.*

On the said day, March 10, received three masks with 19 pieces of gold leaf and two mirrors, the reflecting parts of gold leaf, and two 'tortueruelos' of gold leaf that a brother of Caonabo brought on the said day.

Moreover, on the 11th of the said month, a mask with 10 gold leaves that was gained by ransom.

Also, on the said day, were delivered into the chamber two hammocks and two *naguas* and 11 *madejas* (skeins of thread?) of cotton that had been received as ransom.

On the 4th of April, the following items were acquired by ransom and brought by 'saddle' [pack-horse] were delivered to the chamber: 25 *naguas*, 15 hammocks, six *tiraderas*, one *macana*, nine Indian hatchets, one wooden *bocina* [bugle/horn], one robe of feathers, six mats, 14 parrots, three *arrobas* 21 pounds of woven cotton.

On the 6th of May were delivered to the said chamber to the clerk in charge the following, which came from the defeat of Caonabo: 14 *guayzas* worked with cotton and stone; three of them with seven gold leaflets, and one all-woven hammock and another and 76 old hammocks, and 10 *naguas* and one belt and one feather robe. Also, a weight of five ounces, three *ochavos* and three *tomines* of gold which was the weight of a chain received by his brother the *Adelantado* on the 3rd of June. Moreover he

<sup>128</sup> After Parry and Keith (1984, 107-108).

<sup>129</sup> *Colección de Documentos Inéditos, Relativos al Descubrimiento. Conquista y Colonización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de América y Oceanía*. Vol. X: pp. 5-9 (taken from Alegría 1985). Slightly other versions of the list can be found in Parry and Keith (1984, 212-213) and Deagan and Cruxent (2002b, 303-304).

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received 152 coloured stones that Juan Vizcaino had brought to La Concepción which came from La Fusta.

Also delivered on the 9th of July into the authority of the said chamberlain were four guayzas, two of them with 10 leaflets of gold, a belt with a green mask that held two leaflets of gold, a hammock and three matching naguas that some Indians brought from Caonabo. Also delivered to the said chamberlain on the 6th of October one guayza with four gold leaves.

Also delivered to the said chamberlain, nine hammocks and eight naguas which were obtained as ransoms.

Also received seven ounces and one ochavo of gold at La Concepción on the 11th of August – to make a melting of gold – and one large nugget of gold.

Also received on the 18th of December two marcos, three ounces, seven ochavos, five tomines, nine grains of gold and a nugget of gold shaped like a frog that could weigh an ounce and a half, and a belt with a face with four gold leaves that an Indian brought from Guacanari.

Also received two marcos, six ounces, three ochavos and six grains of gold that were brought to La Concepción and to St. Thomas by certain caciques as tribute.

Also received two tomines of gold which some peasants brought which had been hidden in some bohios.

Also received one ounce, one ochava, one tomin and nine grains of gold that some caciques had sent as well as three gold mirrors.

Also received five guayzas on the 21st of January with eight leaves of gold, and on the 2nd of February 1496, three guayzas with 11 gold leaflets that some caciques brought to this city. Also on the 2nd of February, a large face of doubtless gold which appeared in certain bundles of clothes which had been presented by the caciques and Indians of this island which was valued at seven marcos, three ochavos, one tomin; and five nuggets of gold of which the largest weighed two marcos and three ounces; and 16 gold mirrors, 10 gold leaves, two gold bugles and one mask with three gold leaves. Also the large face of gold that was given by some caciques and Indians of this island who were obliged to send tribute was one marco, one ounce, 6 ochavas, and three tomines of gold.

Also received on the 16th of February six ounces and seven ochavas of gold, five guayzas with 15 gold leaflets and one figure covered in gold leaf that Cristóbal de Torres (Master of the Chamber) brought and which was said to have been a god of Beféchio [sic].

Also received, for handing over to the holders of the treasure to be carried to their superiors, on the 19th of February, 10 marcos seven ounces and five grains of gold and the following presents: a belt with a face that had 15 gold leaflets, five arrobas of cotton, with 36 gold leaves, six torteruelos with surfaces of gold leaf, two zemes with 10 pieces of gold, a tiradera with nine pieces of gold, a cotton mask with nine gold leaves, three cotton mounted gold leaf mirrors, a belt with two faces, eight bugles in gold leaf, four guayzas with 21 gold leaves, a tao and four tablets covered in gold leaf, a cotton bonnet covered in gold leaf, four inhalers with 11 pieces of gold, one tao of guanin, a half-moon of guanin, another half-moon of madejita and probably little bits of brass in one bundle, a belt without gold, two torteruelos of amber, five canutos of amber, four little bits of madejita, two guayzas which are masks, with nine gold leaves around them, the gold of which weighed four ounces, one ochava, five tomines and six grains of gold.

Also received, four ochavas and nine grains of gold that Fray Alonso delivered which was brought to him by confiscation: the following objects were delivered to the keepers of the treasure by command of P. de Salcedo which had been seized from Caonabo and his heirs in exchange for prisoners: ... five ounces of two ochavas, two tomines and nine grains of gold; one mask with seven pieces of gold leaf; three cotton framed mirrors whose reflecting surfaces were gold sheet; two little bugles of gold leaf; and two arrobas of cotton with 17 gold leaflets; three tiraderas, a vomiting spatula with 29 pieces of gold; 101 strings of amber; seven stone collars; a copper mirror; five taos; two little plates of brass and a stone cross.

Also delivered to the said keepers: 42 arrobas and three pounds of cotton, three naguas, four pipes and a cask which Luis de Mayorga received by command of the admiral and marked the said pipes.

The admiral also received from Molina to whom a cacique had brought it, probably as ransom, a large mirror of gold and also 11 grains of gold which were not weighed because the admiral went away but they would have been more or less the weight of 10 gold pesos.



## **APPENDIX 5: EXCERPT FROM SHIPPING LIST COMPOSED BY THE TREASURER OF HISPANIOLA, CRISTÓBAL DE SANTA CLARA, 1505-1507<sup>130</sup>**

*RELACIÓN DE LA CUENTA QUE SE HIZO CON CRISTÓBAL DE SANTA CLARA RECEPTOR DE LA HACIENDA DEL PATRIMONIO REAL DE ESTA ISLA ESPAÑOLA DE QUE SE LE HIZO CARGO DESDE 15 DÍAS DEL MES DE NOVIEMBRE DE MIL Y QUINIENTOS Y CINCO AÑOS QUE SE FENECIÓ LA CUENTA CON EL HASTA 12 DÍAS DEL MES DE ABRIL DE MIL Y QUINIENTOS Y OCHO AÑOS ASÍ DE ORO Y ROPA DE ALGODÓN Y ESCLAVOS Y GUANINIES COMO DE OTRAS COSAS LA CUAL DICHA CUENTA DIO Y SE LE TOMÓ EN LA MANERA SIGUIENTE:<sup>131</sup>*  
[...]

Así que montó todo lo que el dicho Cristóbal de Santa Clara receptor ha dado y pagado y se le recibe en cuenta según que de suso se contiene ciento y diez y seis mil y doscientos y treinta y ocho (116.238) pesos y siete tomines y cuatro granos y medio de oro fundido y más once hamacas y treinta y seis naguas y veinte y dos camisas de algodón lo cual descontado de los dichos doscientos y tres mil y doscientos y un (203.201) pesos y tres tomines y dos granos y medio de oro y de la ropa de algodón y otras cosas contenidas en su cargo antes de esto escrito finca debiendo el dicho Cristóbal de Santa Clara al Rey y a la Reina nuestros Señores ochenta y seis mil y novecientos y sesenta y dos pesos y tres tomines y diez granos de oro fundido y más las cosas que de yuso irán declaradas que son las siguientes:

- Treinta y cinco hamacas de algodón que restan para cumplimiento de las que están cargadas.
  - Noventa y siete naguas de algodón.
  - Sesenta y cinco camisas de algodón.
  - Ocho medias camisas de algodón.
  - Sesenta ovillos de algodón hilado.
  - Dos redes de pescar para indios.
  - Seis hizos de cabuyas.
  - Veinte y siete arrobas y trece libras de algodón hilado.
  - Tres mazos de guanín que pesaba una onza y tres tomines y seis granos.
  - Una guayca y un yaguey con un rostro de hueso.
  - Treinta y seis duhos de asentar de madera.
  - Treinta y seis bateas de madera.
  - Un marco y una onza u cuatro ochavas y tres tomines de çibas que se dicen nigüey.
  - Veinte y dos bracas de çibas y aries en doce sartas.
  - Tres manojos de cabuyas.
  - Veinte y cinco piezas de esclavos de los de la primera guerra de Higüey.
  - Siete alpargates.
  - Un cemí de lenia con ojos y cataras de oro y una trenza de algodón al pescuezo y otra poca de leña que peso todo veinte pesos y cuatro tomines y seis granos.
  - Un puñal viejo.
- [...]

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<sup>130</sup> Taken from Mira Caballos (2000, 129-130).

<sup>131</sup> The excerpt here states 1508 as final date of the list. In fact, the engagement of Cristóbal de Santa Clara ended in 1507, since he was accused of practicing fraud, whereupon he was replaced by Martín de Gamboa (Mira Caballos 2000, 31-33).

## APPENDIX 6: ARTEFACT DISTRIBUTIONS AT THREE SPANISH TOWN SITES IN HISPANIOLA

	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
<b>European materials</b>						
<b>European ceramics</b>	85,487	86.2	154,253	93.5	27,865	83.0
Majolica	3,397	3.4	48,732	29.6	10,084	32.3
Bizcocho	499		-		359	
Columbia Plain	1,563		-		9,079	
Isabela Polychrome	223		-		14	
Other/Unidentified	1,112		48,732		632	
<b>Glazed wares</b>	10,444	10.5	32,565	19.7	5,793	17.2
Melado	6,127		24,839		750	
Vitreos (lead glazed)	4,119		5,228		1,413	
Green bacín	151		2,361		456	
Glazed olive jar	-		-		2,995	
Sgraffito slipware	47		-		-	
Pisan slipware	-		14		-	
Slipped redware	-		-		59	
Porcelain	-		8		70	
Cologne stoneware	-		115		50	
<b>Unglazed wares</b>	70,567	71.1	72,956	44.2	11,228	33.4
Loza Común	70,567		72,718		3,068	
Unglazed olive jar	-		238		7,459	
Redware	-		-		701	
<b>Household/domestic items</b>	77	0.1	65	<0.1	16	<0.1
Candleholder	4		25		1	
Candle snuffer	-		-		2	
Collander	52		-		-	
Copper cup	1		-		-	
Fork	2		4		-	
Handle	-		3		3	
Key	6		14		1	
Table knife	1		11		6	

Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
Mortar (metal)	1		1		-	
Pestle	1		2		-	
Metal pot fragment	4		3		-	
Spoon	3		-		-	
Strikolite	2		-		-	
Mano	-		-		2	
Metate	-		-		1	
Oil lamp (metal)	-		1		-	
Syringe	-		1		-	
<b>Furniture</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>&lt;0.1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>&lt;0.1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>&lt;0.1</b>
Clavo	1		-		-	
Copper tack	2		1		13	
Escutcheon	3		7		2	
Hardware	1		1		-	
Finial	2		-		-	
Handle	1		-		-	
Hinge	-		5		-	
Inlay	3		-		-	
Lock	1		3		-	
<b>Glass</b>	<b>3,361</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2,978</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1,741</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Aqua	207		11		-	
Cobalt	-		72		-	
Latticinio	-		33		-	
Patinated Brown	166		-		-	
Black	-		5		-	
Clear	575		1,457		-	
Decorated	4		449		735	
Dark green	8		1		-	
Green	302		81		-	
Olive green	3		-		-	

Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
Red	-		9		-	
Yellow	1		832		-	
Unidentified	2,087		2		1,006	
Vials	8		26		-	
<b>Architectural items</b>	<b>5,900</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>6,510</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>2,855</b>	<b>8.5</b>
Bolt	32		2		4	
Bolt nut	29		-		-	
Cuenca tile	-		15		38	
Door lock	2		9		8	
Estoperole	33		1		-	
Ceramic door pivot	3		7		-	
Round handle	1		-		1	
T-handle	3		-		-	
Hinge	-		9		10	
Iron object	307		1		-	
Latch	-		-		-	
Lead object	23		-		-	
Wrought nail	4,486		6,466		2,258	
Spike, unidentified	114		-		-	
Spike, wrought	733		-		499	
Staple	36		-		1	
Tack	47		-		32	
Washer	19		-		4	
Wire	35		-		-	
<b>Military items</b>	<b>1,318</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>&lt;0.1</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Armour buckle	10		-		-	
Brigandine plate	670		-		3	
Chain mail	47		13		7	
Gun-barrel fragment	5		4		-	
Brass object	1		-		-	

Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
Breach plug	1	-	-	-	-	-
Cannon fragment	26	1	1	-	-	-
Bolt head	9	3	3	2	2	-
Dagger	1	1	1	-	-	-
Escutcheon	3	-	-	-	-	-
Iron object	307	-	-	-	-	-
Lance	3	-	-	-	-	-
Lead shot	27	4	4	3	3	-
Shot core (iron)	103	-	-	-	-	-
Iron shot	2	5	5	-	-	-
Pike	14	1	1	-	-	-
Rivet	8	-	-	-	-	-
Scabbard tip	15	5	5	5	5	-
Shackles	-	1	1	-	-	-
Sword blade fragment	41	-	-	2	2	-
Sword pommel	2	8	8	2	2	-
Trigger	4	-	-	-	-	-
Lead sprue	18	-	-	2	2	-
Shot mould	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Horse-related items</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Bit	-	-	2	-	-	-
Harness buckle	31	2	2	11	11	-
Tack hardware	8	-	-	5	5	-
Bridle loop	2	1	1	20	20	-
Horseshoe	40	428	428	7	7	-
Horseshoe nail	11	-	-	7	7	-
Spur	2	3	3	-	-	-
<b>Clothing items</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>&lt;0.1</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>0.8</b>
Aglet	24	-	-	287	287	-
Bobbin (lace)	-	-	-	1	1	-

Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
Buckle	31		22		16	
Clasp	2		-		1	
Eye	2		-		1	
Fastener	8		-		2	
Grommet	2		-		-	
Needle	1		18		-	
Straight pin	9		32		293	
Scissors	-		5		4	
Thimble	-		5		4	
Strap end	14		-		-	
<b>Personal items</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Agate bead	2		-		-	
Glass bead	-		8		36	
Glass bracelet	11		1		-	
Brooch	1		2		-	
Chain	-		1		-	
Copper strip	3		-		-	
Earring	2		-		-	
Filigree	1		-		-	
Finger ring	13		-		2	
Pendant	17		3		1	
Jet fragment	4		-		-	
Brass star	-		-		6	
Crucifix	1		-		-	
Cross	1		-		-	
Shrine object	1		1		-	
Reliquary	1		-		-	
Bell	-		3		-	
Sculptured figure	-		2		-	
Cascabel	4		13		5	
Book hardware	1		11		13	

Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
Seal	1		3		4	
Coin	112		284		218	
Coin weight	1		3		-	
Cup weight	1		1		-	
Personal seal	-		3		1	
Red clay pipe	-		7		-	
Jaw harp	-		-		25	
Whizzer	-		-		1	
Game disc	4		-		9	
<b>Tools and implements</b>						
Awl	63	0.1	94	0.1	66	0.2
Axe	-		2		10	
Chisel	12		73		1	
File	2		1		4	
Hammer	-		2		1	
Knife	1		1		-	
Machete	2		-		7	
Punch	1		2		-	
Plumb bob	-		1		3	
Rule/scale	-		-		1	
Wedge	1		-		-	
Tool, unidentified	-		1		2	
Fishhook	15		1		-	
Harpoon	3		-		7	
Hoe	1		-		-	
Hook	-		3		2	
Hone	-		-		18	
Lead weight	1		1		-	
Copper tube	-		-		1	
Rivet	1		-		-	
Chain link	8		-		-	
	13		5		6	

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.	FREQUENCY	% EUR. TOT.
Loop	2		1		3	
<b>Metallurgy</b>	2,646	2.7	-	0.0	17	0.1
Crucible	49		-		7	
Galena	91		-		-	
Lead fragment	90		-		-	
Lead object	23		-		-	
Iron rod	1		-		-	
Iron strap	8		-		10	
Iron fragment	1,876		-		-	
Iron object, unidentified	367		-		-	
Copper sheet	8		-		-	
Copper strap	2		-		-	
Copper object	57		-		-	
Copper fragment	74		-		-	
<b>TOTAL EUROPEAN ITEMS</b>	<b>99,204</b>		<b>164,892</b>		<b>33,587</b>	

*Non-European materials*

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.
<b>Ceramics</b>	72,380	96.8	105,328	99.8	22,909	99.3
Indigenous decorated	5,285		1,250		155	
Indigenous plain	66,558		69,037		12,916	
Rims/bases	-		6,137		-	
Unidentified	28		-		-	
Chican decorated	384		-		13	
Colono	25		28,904		9,825	



Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.
<b>Tools and implements</b>	2,134	2.9	176	0.2	151	0.7
Burén (ceramic)	335		146		129	
Burén (stone)	-		10		-	
Grater	3		-		-	
Metate	1		2		1	
Grinding stone	1		5		1	
Axe	15		2		-	
Blade	1		-		-	
Celt	16		-		-	
Chisel	2		-		-	
Fishhook	3		-		-	
Hammer stone	1		1		-	
Punch	1		-		-	
Polishing stone	-		1		-	
Scraper	2		-		-	
Point	1		-		-	
Fishnet weight	186		-		-	
Tool, unidentified	15		-		-	
Chert core	1		-		-	
Debitage	1,556		-		-	
Flake	3		9		4	
Stone bowl	4		-		-	
<b>Ornamental/ritual items</b>	248	0.3	14	<0.1	1	<0.1
Bead	7		-		-	
Bead preform	1		-		-	
Shell bead	37		1		-	
Stone bead	26		2		-	
Cuenta colár	119		-		-	
Earplug	3		-		-	
Gorget	3		-		-	

Trinkets (f)or Treasure?

CATEGORY	La Isabela		La Vega		Puerto Real	
	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.	FREQUENCY	% NON-EUR.
Labret	1		1		-	
Pendant	17		-		-	
Stamp	1		-		-	
Stone ball	4		1		-	
Jadeite celt	1		-		-	
Pipe	4		-		-	
Phallus	2		-		-	
Shell plaque	3		-		-	
Zemi	12		2		1	
Carved coral	1		-		-	
Carved stone	5		2		-	
Carved shell	5		5		-	
Carved bone	1		-		-	
<b>TOTAL NON-EUROPEAN ITEMS</b>	<b>74,838</b>		<b>105,518</b>		<b>23,061</b>	
<b>TOTAL ALL ITEMS</b>	<b>174,041</b>		<b>270,985</b>		<b>56,648</b>	
% EUR.	57.0		60.8		59.3	
% NON-EUR.	43.0		38.9		40.7	





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