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Island Shores, Distant Pasts: Archaeological and Biological Approaches to the Pre-Columbian Settlement of the Caribbean

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Island Shores, Distant Pasts: Archaeological and Biological Approaches to the Pre-Columbian Settlement of the Caribbean. Scott M. Fitzpatrick & Ann H. Ross (eds.). Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010. xvi + 246 pp. (Cloth US\$ 75.00)

When did pre-Columbian settlement occur in the Caribbean? How many waves of migration were there and where did these settlers come from? Although previous research has provided some answers, this edited volume shows how innovative methodologies can provide new insights to these classic questions. The contributing scholars draw from the latest research in radiocarbon dating, genetics, skeletal biology, computer simulation, and isotopic analysis to create a rich and nuanced understanding of pre-Columbian Caribbean settlement.

The one name that appears in nearly every paper is that of Irving Rouse, who created the best-known model for Caribbean settlement. Rouse's model was based largely on varying material culture traditions, particularly ceramic traditions, found throughout the Antilles. However, as many of the authors point out (most cogently in the chapter by Reniel Rodríguez Ramos, Joshua M. Torres, and José R. Oliver), using material culture traditions has certain limitations, particularly when establishing absolute dates for migration. Unfortunately for Rouse, carbon dating was still in its infancy when he did much of his studies; he created his model relying on only a few radiocarbon dates.

The attraction of using radiocarbon dating to explore early human migrations is understandable. Yet the chapter by Jaco Cooper and the one by Scott M. Fitzpatrick, Michiel Kappers, and Christina M. Giovas clearly demonstrate that it is more complex than usually thought. They show that a complete understanding of site formation processes and depositional histories is needed if accurate dates are to be achieved. Indeed, this volume is not for the scientific faint of heart as many of the chapters include detailed discussions about the science that influences the research. While those interested in the authors' final conclusions will skim these sections, the inclusion of this information is important for other scholars wishing to utilize similar methodologies.

One of the exciting approaches to human migration studies comes from three chapters that focus on biological data. Juan C. Martínez-Cruzado and Theodore G. Schurr explore how genetic information, particularly

mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), can be used to trace human migration in the past. Mitochondrial DNA is inherited from the mother and has a rapid mutation rate. These two factors allow scholars to map particular mtDNA variations through space and time. Both authors demonstrate how these new sources of data add greater complexity to our understanding of the peopling of the Caribbean. Along similar lines, the chapter by Ann H. Ross and Douglas H. Ubelaker utilizes craniometric and geometric morphometric methods to convincingly argue that the Taíno of Cuba were significantly different biologically from the Taíno peoples of Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica.

Not to be lost amongst these biological approaches are the intriguing papers by William F. Keegan and Richard T. Callaghan. Keegan utilizes a comparative approach to understanding cultural changes and human migration. Through an innovative project that compares the settling of the Caribbean and Polynesia, Keegan searches for the cultural and social reasons for the observed settlement patterns. Also curious about the particularities of why settlement patterns appear the way they do, the Callaghan contribution utilizes computer models to explore the settlement pattern of the Lesser Antilles during the Archaic Age. In particular, Callaghan teases out the effects that the active volcanoes in the region had on both archaeological site formation and Caribbean settlement.

There is one odd paper amongst the bunch. Menno L.P. Hoogland, Corinne L. Hofman, and Raphaël G.A.M. Panhuysen do not directly deal with Caribbean settlement, but utilize strontium analysis to demonstrate the connections between Guadeloupe and its surrounding islands. While slightly off theme, I felt that the inclusion of this article was essential. Hoogland et al. drive home a point that all of the authors either implicitly or explicitly make: people did not move through the Caribbean islands as if they were stepping stones that once left were long forgotten. Instead, there was always movement between islands in all directions which created significant cultural and social relationships. The peopling of the Caribbean was not simply a unidirectional northerly spread but rather a creation of a dynamic region where people moved constantly both on the islands and between the islands.

The only qualm I have with the book is that the introduction includes only a brief description of the essays. This is particularly striking as the following chapter has in-depth summaries of many of the papers along with

its own research-based argument. If the first half of Chapter 2 had been included with the introduction, the book would have been framed by a literature review with summaries to prepare readers for the ensuing material. However, this is only a minor organizational critique.

Island Shores, Distant Pasts is an exemplar of the scientific process. Building on the work of their archaeological predecessors, particularly Irving Rouse, the authors do not seek to tear these early works down but rather build upon them. They recognize the value in the previous studies while also highlighting the limits. To address these limits, they look beyond the field of archaeology to include new techniques from genetics, computer simulation, and physical anthropology. By taking these techniques and integrating them with archaeology, the authors demonstrate how rewarding interdisciplinary studies can be. The volume unquestionably moves our understanding of the settling of the Caribbean forward and provides several new provocative avenues for further exploration.

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