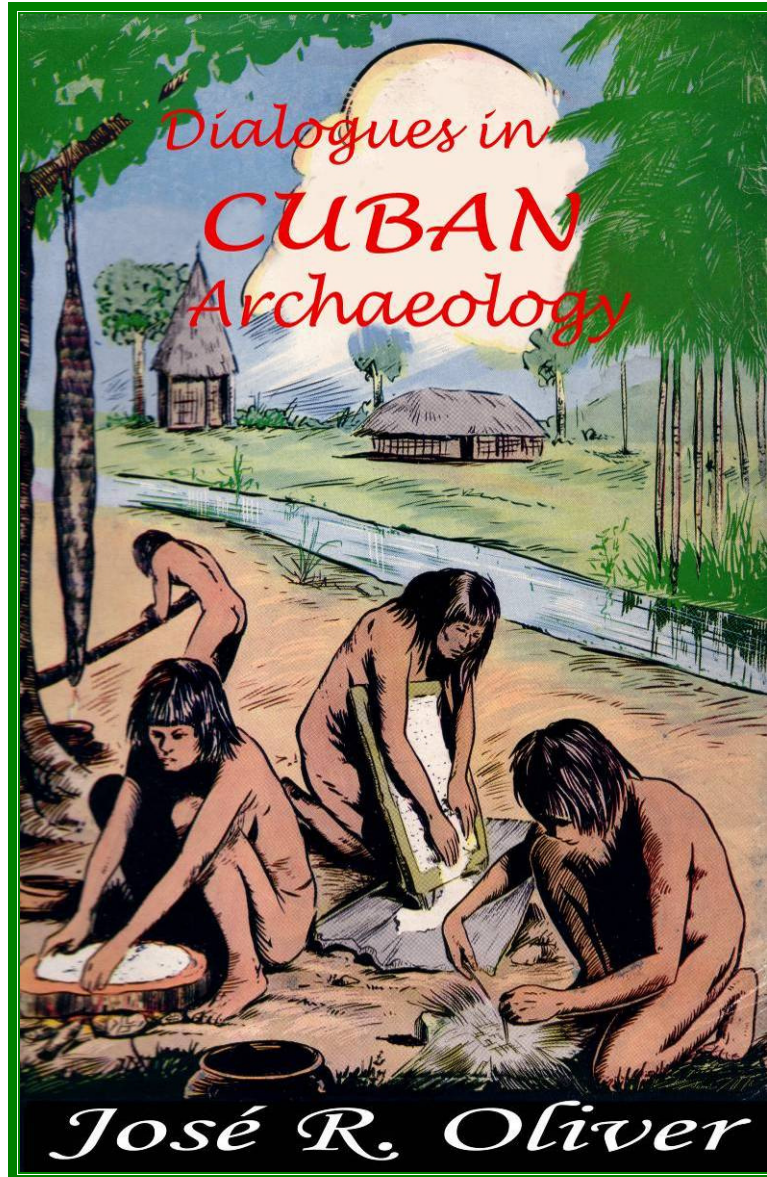
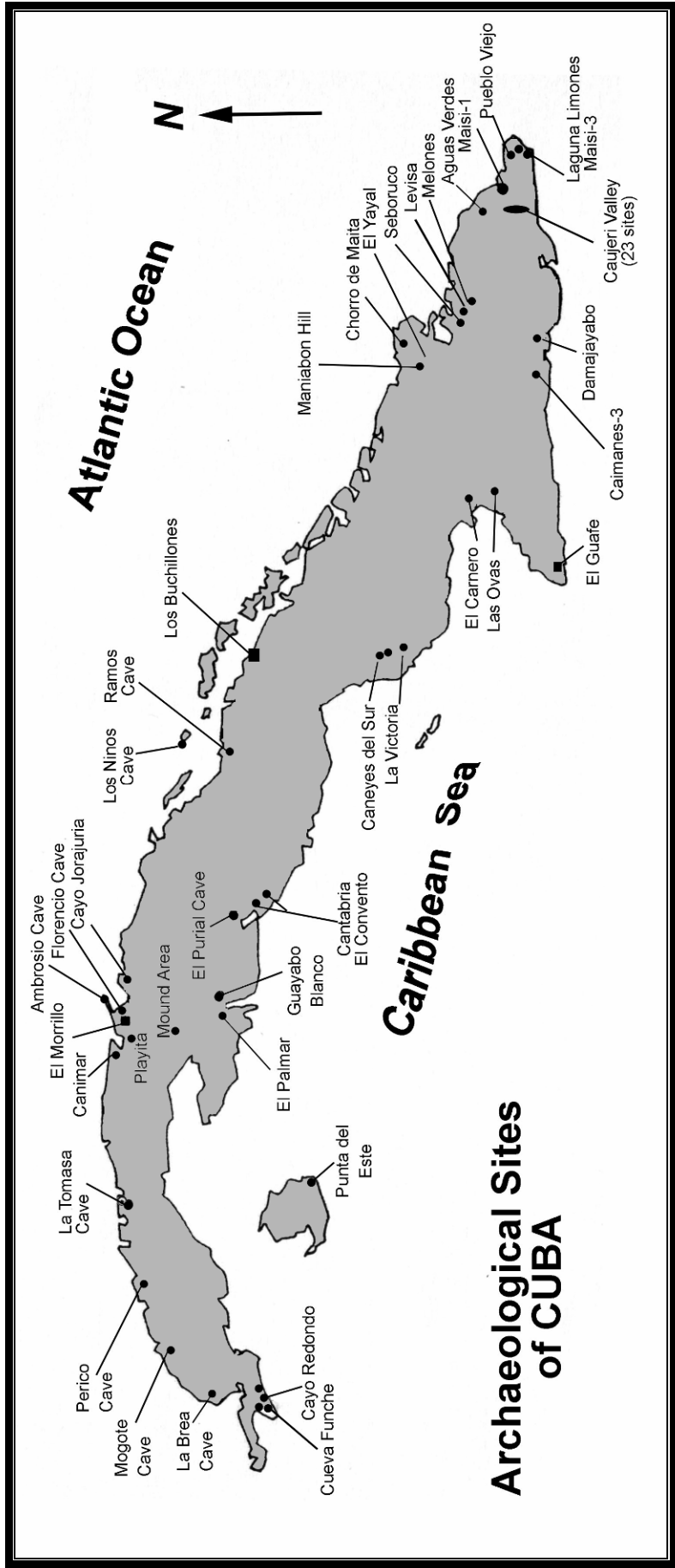


**Cuban Soliloquy:  
An Overview of Revolutionary Cuban Archaeology,  
1959-2004**



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## **Cuban Soliloquy:**

### **An Overview of Revolutionary Cuban Archaeology, 1959-2004**

#### **1. Introduction**

The preceding chapters—for reasons of space constraints and expediency—could only provide a small sample of the varied research themes and topics that have motivated archaeological research in Cuba, particularly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Shortly after the individual contributions were completed, I was asked to produce a concluding chapter. In the spirit of this book's title, I have entitled this chapter 'Cuban Soliloquy'. I have chosen it on purpose since a soliloquy is defined as a speech in which a person expresses his thoughts aloud and without addressing any specific person. Although neither a speech nor aloud (except in my mind), this chapter is a soliloquy that just happens to write down my thoughts and reactions as I read the previous chapters. I as well refreshed my memory by reading various articles and essays on Cuban archaeology, some of which I read for the first time. While perhaps better stocked than most non-Caribbean archaeologists, my personal library of Cuban materials still holds only a small fraction of the total Cuban production. Necessarily, my knowledge of Cuban scholarship is restricted to these materials. Only in the last few years I have maintained a stimulating exchange with several Cuban colleagues, all of who have contributed to my current appreciation of Cuban archaeology.

Instead of a closing summary for this book, this chapter intends to provide a context in which to place and comment on various themes and research papers presented in the previous chapters. On the one hand, the sociopolitical scenario in Cuba developing since 1959 will be revisited to provide a context in which to discuss various aspects of archaeological research. On the other hand, as I read the previous chapters, I found myself still asking the question of precisely how Marxism-Leninism informed archaeological analysis in the last four decades. An answer to these questions will also provide a backdrop against which to situate the most recent studies, including those presented in this book, particularly the chapters in the 'Substantial Archaeology' section. While I have not worked under a Marxist archaeological framework before, in this essay I will adhere to its spirit as the basis for exploration and commentary. The purpose here is not to criticize Marxism or any other competing theoretical perspectives but rather to examine how Marxism has played-out in Cuban archaeology up until present. I will also explore what is the direction that Cuban archaeology is taking in the light of international collaborations starting in the 1990s. Since the discussions throughout this book have assumed that the reader is already familiar with the cultural frameworks developed for Cuba, these will be briefly discussed here, as the literature may not be as easily available outside Cuba, and certainly not in English. It will conclude with a discussion of one of the hot research topics at the moment: the significance of the so-called incipient or proto-agricultural stage or phase.

As I mused about the papers presented in this book, by sheer coincidence, I happened to also be reading Thomas Hughes's 2001 revised edition of the 1971 monumental historical analysis, entitled *Cuba: In Pursuit of Freedom*. This exegesis covers the period from the capture of Havana by the British Earl of Abermarle (1762) to the period immediately after the October Missile Crisis (1962). Professor Isaac Saney's book *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion* (2004) presents a brilliant analysis of the political, economic and social developments in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989) and the dissolution in 1991 of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) that resulted in Cuba's 'Economic Crash' of 1990-94. Saney (2004) comments on the 'miraculous recovery' that followed from the economic measures implemented by the National Assembly, starting in 1994 (the so-called *Período Especial*) and concludes with the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Tower Center and the situation in Cuba as of early 2004.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt that both Thomas's and Saney's analyses—a Briton and a Canadian, respectively—represent but two perspectives and voices interpreting Cuban history, yet it leaves my mind in no doubt as to the nature of the complex webs of social, political and historical 'discourses' that have indelibly impelled Cuba and the United States together, as friends and, sadly, as foes. I suspect that most of the readers are only superficially aware, as I was just a few weeks ago, of the intricate webs of its history and, therefore, of the implications that the changing fortunes of Cuban life would have specifically on archaeology. However one might feel about post-processual approaches in archaeology, "the meanings we produce are always in the political present, and always have political resonance. Interpreting the past is always a political act" (Johnson 2002:107).

In contrast to most New Archaeologists and processualists, Marxist archaeologists had always been aware of how interpreting the past is conditioned by the politics of the present (Johnson 2002:92-94; McGuire 2002:10-12). The Marxist perspective rejected the claims for scientific objectivity (empiricism) by the neo-positivistic New Archaeology that, in their view, amounted to a 'pseudo-science' (see McGuire 2002:108-110, 119-129, 147-148). Such rejection was explicitly voiced in 1981 by Guarch Delmonte in his as yet unpublished dissertation. In this occasion, he bemoaned of how neo-positivism was deployed to mask "political posturing with personal or sectarian interests" thus obscuring historical reality through the dishonesty of hiding behind "apparent scientific 'truths'".<sup>2</sup> Moreover, such self-serving interests proceeded with:

...the apparent conciliatory ambiguity through philosophical methods and theories that produced, in latter times, hybridized creatures with which there have been pretensions to adopt some aspects of Historical Materialism. In addition, a great part of its habitual terminology, tied to idealist or neo-positivistic concepts, is deployed to offer [apparently] 'new' fallacious and opportunistic conceptualizations of the Historical Laws with no other objective than to distort the truth and confuse those individuals ignorant of Marxist-Leninist philosophy (Guarch Delmonte 1981:10-11; my translation and clarifications in straight brackets).

Given that Cuba had been on the grips of revolutionary ideology and action ever since Antonio Maceo (War of 1868), if not before, I marvel at the very fact that in spite of its turbulent history archaeology was able to prosper (see Dacal and Watters, Berman et al., and Domínguez in [Curet et al. 2005](#); Dacal and Rivero 1986).

The available statistics and census data on literacy and education, as cited by Thomas (2001), suggest that archaeology—like in other arenas of cultivated knowledge—was firmly the prerogative of an élite minority, whose composition and membership kept changing over time, but whose scholarly activities were in many ways an irrelevance to the vast majority of *cubanos*.<sup>3</sup> All of this was to drastically change after the Revolution of 1956-59. Today (i.e., 2003), more than ever before, Cuban archaeologists come from all sorts of backgrounds, all with an academic and practical level of preparation that is equal if not greater than in any other Caribbean nation.

## **2. The Cuban Revolutionary Scenario, 1959-1970s: Cuban Marxist Archaeology Arrives**

The revolutionary period, encompassing the last 45 years, should be of particular interest to Anglo-American scholars because it witnessed a radical departure from the past at all levels of society (Saney 2004), including the conduct of archaeology. The revolution led by Fidel Castro and his '26 of July Movement', as Thomas (2001:697-750) abundantly showed, was unlike any other previous one, including the Revolution of 1933 deposing General Machado, the 1898-99 War of Independence, and even the War of 1868. Right after 1959, Cuban-American relationships quickly soured (for a fuller account, see Saney 2004:158-178). Failing to secure US financial assistance and IMF funds (blocked by the US) in 1960, Cuba entered a trade agreement to swap sugar for Soviet oil and machinery, followed by the confiscation of three British-American owned oil refineries in Cuba that hitherto had refused to process Soviet crude oil (Saney 2004:167). Premier Khrushchev responded by warning that any US sponsored military intervention in Cuba "would be countered with Soviet rockets" (Brown and Shi 1999:1492). The first major clash came with the CIA-sponsored and failed invasion of 17-19/April/1961 at the Playa Girón/Bahía Cochinos (Bay of Pigs), which culminated in the October 1962 Missile Crisis. The economic embargo, or more accurately 'blockade', *de facto*, began on 3/January/1961 when the US suspended diplomatic relations with Cuba. One of President Eisenhower's last acts before the Kennedy administration came to power was to give (via Nixon) covert authorization to the CIA "to begin training a force of Cuban refugees (some of them former Castro stalwarts) for a new [counter-]revolution" (Brown and Shi 1999:1492). Cognizant of the imminent counter-revolutionary invasion at Bahía Cochinos, on 16/April/1961, Fidel Castro publicly declared Cuba "a Socialist State" (Thomas 2001:893; Saney 2004:162). U.S. economic reprisals, already begun in 1959 under Eisenhower, were formalized in 1962 by President Kennedy. He

imposed a total trade 'embargo' (medical materials initially excepted) by invoking the 'Trading with the Enemy Act'.<sup>4</sup>

Universities, institutes of higher education and institutions of scientific research are of special interest, since these would set the tone and priorities on the conduct of future archaeological work in the fledgling socialist state. By mid-1960 the "freedom in the University of Havana was finally destroyed" (Thomas 2001:874).<sup>5</sup> As Thomas explains:

The manner in which this ancient university lost its liberties was deplorable. Nevertheless, those liberties in the past led so often to licence, its institutional fabric was so rotten with politics and gang warfare, that mere reform could arguably never have altered the fundamental disequilibrium. The political stranglehold over the FEU [*Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios*] and its sub-committees held by perpetual students and the corruption and inefficiency of many teachers had given the university a terrible name. Like the press and the unions, this bastion of liberty had been often in disrepair... The new Board of Governors began to scour the world for replacements for the dismissed academics, while admitting that for a time education would suffer (Thomas 2001:875; my clarification in straight brackets).

As 1961 ushered, the Revolutionary Government declared it the 'Year of Education'. The achievements were considerable: before 1959 only 40 percent of 6 to 14 year old children went to school but by 1961 nearly 80 percent attended. Also there was some degree of reorganization of secondary schools, dropping the *bachillerato* (baccalaureate) and substituting it by a curriculum program designed to increase future enrollment at the university level (Thomas 2001:909). Thomas assessment was that:

The universities [not just Havana University], on the other hand, had not yet been formally reformed. But they were changing. Many teachers were in exile or had been removed. Heads of departments were all safe revolutionaries. In many departments foreign teachers had been recruited. In practice the universities were Marxist-Leninist in bias by the Spring of 1961. There had yet not been no radical revision of faculties to harness higher education to the needs of the economy (such as the abolition of arts courses) but the matter was already in the air. Students were far more strictly disciplined than ever before. Attendance at lectures was virtually compulsory, and those who did not wish to join the militia were in difficulties. Seventeen hundred students had been sent in 1960 to study by the Ministry of Industry to study in the Soviet bloc. Teacher training colleges had been founded at Batista's old tubercular centre at Topes de Collantes in Escambray and in the Sierra Maestra at Minas del Frío... The Revolution doubtless had increased the quantity of education; the quality of teaching probably had declined [for the short term]. But access to education perhaps matters more than the wisdom of education (Thomas 2001:909 my clarifications in straight brackets).

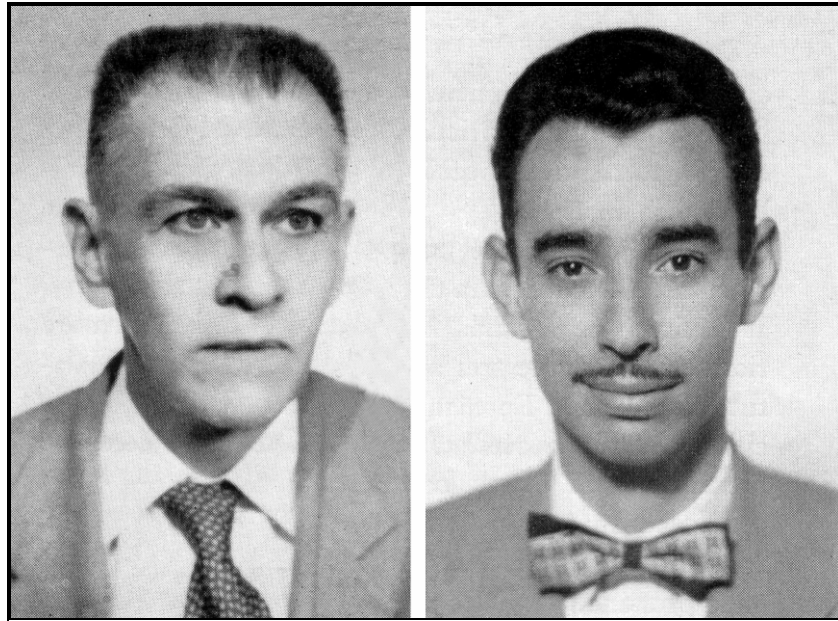
Thomas's evaluation above depicts in no uncertain terms just how 'revolutionary' were the changes that befell Cuba. The initial organizational chaos that ensued, including universities, was in part due to the over optimistic expectations of the power of *voluntarismo* ('volunteerism'). Certainly, in the following decades, the brilliant achievements of Cuba in many fields, such as higher education and various social services (e.g., public health), scarcely need to be stressed. What needs to be pointed

out here is that within two years of the victorious entrance into Havana of Fidel and Raúl Castro, Camilo Cienfuegos, Ché Guevara, and the rest of the *barbudos* ('bearded ones'; i.e., the militia), Marxist-Leninist philosophy was becoming the principal, if not the only, theoretical compass of, at least, academic teaching and scholarly research.<sup>6</sup> The actual praxis and implementation of Marxist-Leninist dogma in Cuban life is, of course, another matter worthy of study, but which is tangential to the themes explored in this chapter. However, it should be stressed that the current Anglo-American popular perception of a Fidel-centric, top-down, dictatorial government under an Soviet-style orthodox Marxist-Leninist praxis is far too much of a caricature of the political reality of Cuban society (Saney 2004: 3, 67), not to mention the fact that the political writings of Cuba's hero, José Martí, figure prominently alongside that of Marxist-Leninist political theoreticians. As Saney stated:

The Cuban Revolution is also a creative and valuable contribution to the corpus of Marxism. The tradition embodied in a socialist theory and praxis is the means by which the historical aspiration of the Cuban nation is actualized. Thus, the Cuban political system is firmly rooted in the socialist tradition. Within this context, the work of Rousseau, Marx, Engels, Lenin and the legacies of the Paris Commune and the Russian revolution have had—and continue to have—a critical influence. However, Cubans are not involved in merely replicating the experiences and forms of other socialist countries. Rather 'they have rejected *copismo* [copying]' (Saney 2004:49; my clarifications in straight brackets).

As commented by Berman et al. (this volume), given the fracture of diplomatic relations in 1961 and the US economic blockade against Cuba from 1962 onwards, it is not surprising that by that time there was a conscious and deliberate decision to steer archaeology towards a path that was theoretically and pragmatically consistent with the Revolutionary Government's political, social, and economic programs. Importantly, that year the Archaeology Section of the Academy of Sciences of Cuba was created and the posts filled by some of the most notable and productive archaeologists for decades to come. Tabío and Rey recorded the event for posterity:

And so, such was the state of affairs [before 1959] when our Revolution in the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1959 triumphed and opened a new era in the history of our country. Despite the tremendous commotion —of all kinds—that shook the nation during those years, the Revolutionary Government—which from the beginning placed special emphasis and impetus on developing education, science and culture—, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, 1962, created the *Comisión Nacional de la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba* by Law 1011, which states... that "the progressive development of the sciences constitutes an essential condition for building the material and technical bases of the Socialist Society and for the creation of the *bienes culturales* [cultural patrimony] of the people" (Tabío and Rey 1966:8; my translation).



**Figure 1. René Herrera Fritot (left) and Antonio Núñez Jiménez (right) led the newly created Section (later Department) of Archaeology at the beginning of the Revolución. Photograph from 1957.**

Long-time veterans René Herrera Fritot and Antonio Núñez Jiménez (Figure 1), led the newly created Section (later Department) of Archaeology (see Linville, and Dacal and Watters, in [Curet et al. 2005](#)) along with relatively newcomers Ernesto Tabío Palma and Estrella Rey.<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter they were also joined by José Guarch Delmonte, Ramón Dacal Moure, Milton Pino and Rodolfo Payarés (Bermann et al. this volume). The colonial/postcolonial ('historical') archaeology research program in the Academy of Sciences gained momentum when, in 1969, Lourdes Domínguez González joined the Department of Archaeology (Domínguez 1984: frontispiece). Presently, Domínguez is the Assessor Archaeologist for the Office of the Historian of City of La Habana and internationally renowned for her research on colonial period Cuba.

Of this group it would be Tabío and Guarch Delmonte (Figures 2, 4) who would become the staunchest of defenders of Marxist orthodoxy in Cuban archaeology. Upon the encroachment of the revisionist Marxism of the *Arqueología Social*, as articulated by Sanoja and Vargas (1974; cf. Vargas Sanoja 1999) and Veloz Maggiolo (1976-1977) in the mid-1970s, Tabío responded by stating that the authors misapplied the concepts of socio-economic formation and mode of production:

We recognize that it is interesting what these Venezuelan archaeologists [Sanoja, Vargas] said in their exegesis on the 'theocratic mode of production', but their arguments do not demonstrate in any way that even in this more developed 'mode of production' the aboriginal groups had exceeded, socio-economically and structurally, the essence of the mode of production of the primitive community, which is characterized, as we have already noted, by the following features: relations of production founded upon common property of the means of production; the exploitation of Man by Man does not exist and



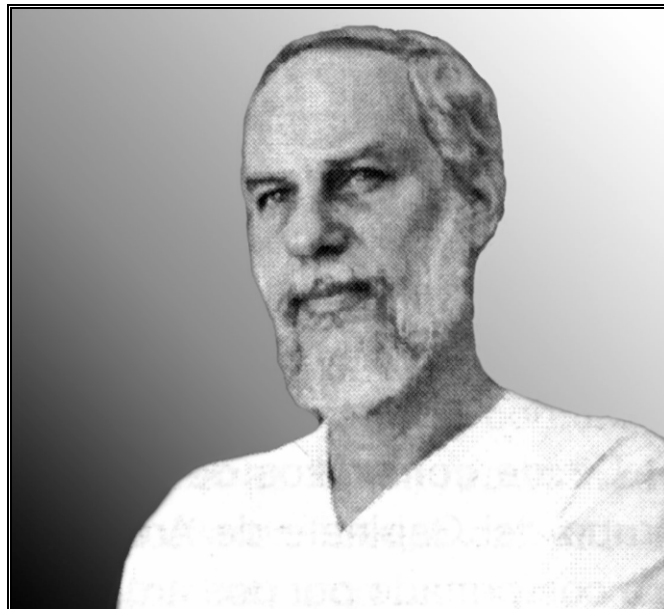
there are neither social classes nor State... we think that the 'modes of production' of Sanoja and Vargas [1974] as much as those of Veloz Maggiolo [1976, 1977] are nothing other than modalities [variants] of the mode of production of the primitive community (Tabío 1978:13; my translation and clarification in straight brackets).



**Figure 2. Ernesto Tabío**



**Figure 3. Manuel Rivero de la Calle**



**Figure 4. José Guarch Delmonte**

Guarch Delmonte (1981, 1987) would continue the defense of orthodox Marxism through the 1980s:

This monograph [Guarch's 1981 doctoral dissertation] will not traverse through the weak and thin thread of [Marxist] revisionism nor it will precariously [rest upon] dubious philosophical concepts. Much less have we borrowed the epistemological riddles proposed by some authors in the field of archaeological research, including some [of those authors] from the Antilles. We have, as a conceptual-philosophical base, the Dialectical and Historical Materialism as applied by Marxism-Leninism in an orthodox form and without the pretense of introducing other [revisionist] elements, unless these are circumstantial and specific to the research problems of the communities that inhabited the Antilles, particularly Cuba (Guarch Delmonte 1981:10-11; my translation and clarifications in straight brackets).

Again, in a later 1987 article, Guarch Delmonte pounded hard at the doors of neo-positivism and revisionist Marxism, particularly criticizing those he called 'the marxologists', a not-so-veiled reference to the 'Vieques' theory research group within the *Arqueología Social Latinoamericana* movement (cf. Politis 2003:121-122; Oyuela-Caycedo et al. 1997; Vargas and Sanoja 1999):

Added to the above [Marxism revisionists] there are also the 'marxologists' who have broken into archaeological research with the entire repertoire of historical and dialectical materialism inserted within a theory that is regularly neo-positivistic, structuralist or even diffusionistic. Their causes [political motivations] are very similar to the [Marxism] revisionists (Guarch Delmonte 1987b:10 my translation and clarifications in straight brackets).

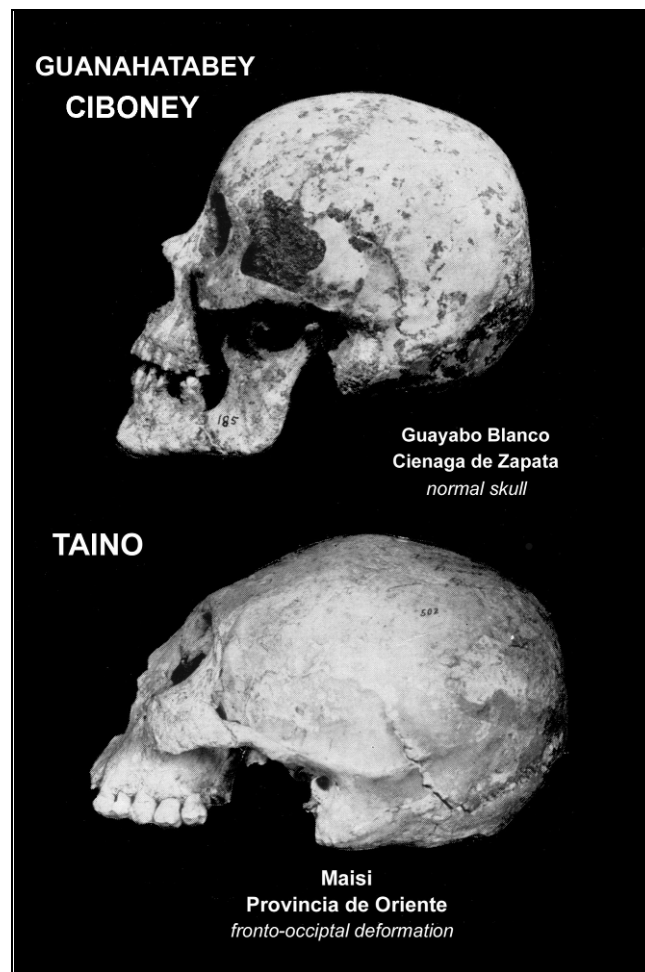
It was, however, Manuel Rivero de la Calle (1928-2001) who played a key role at the University of Havana and the Museo Antropológico Montané (Figure 3). In 1952, at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Batista regime, Rivero de La Calle became a professor of biology and anthropology at Las Villas Central University, a post he held until he moved to Havana in 1959.<sup>8</sup> Once in the capital, Rivero became instrumental in training new university students in biological anthropology/archaeology (Goodwin 1979).<sup>9</sup> That first year of the Revolution he received a scholarship to conduct post-graduate research in physical anthropology at the Royal Institute of Tropical Research in Amsterdam (1959-60) and at Utrecht University in Holland (1961). In 1961 he became professor at the University of Havana and from 1962 until 1976 was the director of the fabled Museo Antropológico Montané as well as Head of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Biological Sciences. Although Rivero had collaborated with many other archaeologists and scientists, in his later archaeological work he developed a particularly close relationship with Ramón Dacal Moure (e.g., 1986, 1997; Dacal and Watters, in [Curet et al. 2005](#)).

Already by 1965, Rivero and colleagues from the University of Havana and the Academy of Sciences of Cuba were deep into fieldwork in the Yateras region in Guantánamo. The project team also included scientists and ethnologists from the former Republic of Checkoslovakia and the Soviet Union (Russia). The Yateras project represented first Cuban multidisciplinary research project involving archaeology, ethnography and biological anthropology. Like Soviet archaeologists at this

time (McGuire 2002:60), the project was partly concerned with research on ethnic origins, or 'ethnogenesis' of the modern Yateras population, exploring their indigenous bio-cultural heritage (Dacal and Rivero 1986:157; Rivero 1978). Indeed, this marked a key point in Caribbean archaeology: it negated the non-Marxist notion of pitting prehistory against history; it argued against the received notion that the native peoples of Cuba had been totally exterminated by the Spanish conquistadors in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and, thus, opened-up the potential that this kind of research can have in searching for the processes from colonial to post-colonial formation of peasant or rural (*guajiro*) peoples—a topic that is just now being gaining popularity in the other parts of the Caribbean (e.g., Rivera Fontán and Oliver 2003).

While Rivero subscribed to a Marxist philosophical framework, the published works that I have read do not strike me as being overly concerned with Marxist theory. Nevertheless, *Arqueología Aborígen de Cuba* (Dacal and Rivero 1986) is implicitly framed in Marxist terms. Ironically, perhaps intentionally so, the English, reworked version published in 1996 by the University of Pittsburgh Press was entirely devoid of any direct or even indirect reference to a Marxist framework.

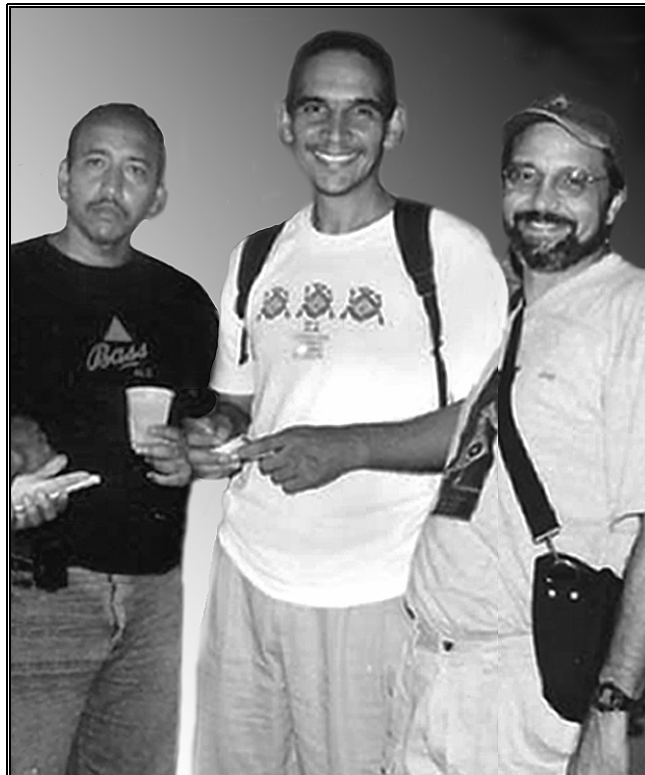
Sadly, Rivero died on September 2001, the same month that Guarch Delmonte (1931-2001) passed away.<sup>10</sup> Although, thematically, his publications cast a wide net, Rivero will be best remembered for his work in physical/biological anthropology (e.g., Pospisil and Rivero 1968; and Rivero 1980) and for his syntheses of Cuban archaeology co-authored with Dacal (1986, 1996). Most importantly, his leading role as teacher and advisor has enriched Cuba by shepherding a new generation of biological anthropologists and archaeologists. Among them are Roberto Rodríguez and A-J. Martínez Fuentes both of the Museo Antropológico Montané. Rodríguez is currently working on his doctoral degree in Physical Anthropology at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico. With colleagues from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico he has recently published the results of paleonutritional implications of trace-element analysis (Sr, Zn, Ba) on skeletal materials from the pre-agricultural Ciboney-Guayabo Blanco complex (Rodríguez et al, 2003:5-14) (Figure 5). The study argues that the great variation in Strontium values suggests a utilization of heterogeneous marine food resources among the inhabitants of Ciénaga de Zapata during the span of 2700 years 4000-1300 BC). Martínez in collaboration with scholars from the University of Barcelona, University Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) and the University of Oxford conducted mitochondrial-DNA research on Ciboney human skeletons from Perico-1, Mogote La Cueva and Canímar sites (Lalueza-Fox et al. 2003). The latter study produced the first direct evidence that three of the five major mtDNA Amerindian lineages (A, C, and D) are present in Cuba, with tentative support for a phylogenetic derivation from South America rather than from Central or North American phyla (Lalueza-Fox et al. 2003:8). (For location of sites see map on page 1.)



**Figure 5.** Crania from the Archaic Guayabo Blanco site in comparison with the “Taíno” fronto-occipital deformation as a sign of “ethnic” differences from Punta Maisí site, Cuba.

As noted by Dacal and Watters (in Curet et al. 2005), it befell on Ernesto Tabío and Estrella Rey (1966) to produce the first archaeological synthesis within an explicitly orthodox Marxist framework (see also Tabío 1978, Guarch 1981). Together with the technical analysis of excavations conducted at Caney del Castillo in southern Camagüey (Guarch and Payarés 1964) and Arroyo del Palo in Mayarí (Tabío and Guarch 1966), *Prehistoria de Cuba* became a benchmark in Cuban archaeology. McGuire, in his study *Marxist Archaeology* (2002:65, 87), stated that "this Soviet-style archaeological study had a profound effect on a generation of Latin American archaeologists, who saw in it a way to link their revolutionary politics with archaeological practice". He goes on to assert that its effect was comparable to that of Binford's (1962) *Archaeology as Anthropology* article in the US. While I would not dispute this assertion, it is curious to find out that *Prehistoria de Cuba* played no apparent role in the development of the theoretical positions of the *Arqueología Social Latinoamericana* (see Vargas and Sanoja 1999), at least in Venezuela and the Antilles. The key publication of Sanoja and Vargas (1974:19-26, 74-78), *Antiguas Formaciones y Modos de Producción Venezolanos*, neither commented

nor cited Tabío and Rey's work. In their recent overview of the *Arqueología Social*, Tabío and Rey did not even figure at all (Vargas and Sanoja 1999). Only Veloz Maggiolo's (1976:16, 1977) landmark volumes of *Medioambiente y Adaptación Humana* (Environment and Human Adaptation) acknowledged Tabío and Rey (1966), yet it is entirely absent in his more theoretical min-monograph, *La Arqueología de la Vida Cotidiana* (Veloz Maggiolo 1985). None of Cuban publications were really employed as inspirations to apply a Marxist theoretical approach to inform and interpret the archaeological data from the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean (cf. Veloz Maggiolo 1985, 1991). Instead, Veloz Maggiolo (e.g., 1976:235-38; 1985); explicitly subscribed to both the revisionist Marxist framework proposed by Sanoja and Vargas (1974) and to Betty Meggers' environmental determinism and cultural ecological normative framework, which Veloz Maggiolo has continued to elaborate upon ever since (e.g., Veloz Maggiolo 1991).



**Figure 5. The young generation of Cuban archaeologists, Jorge Ulloa Hung (left) and Roberto Valcárcel Rojas (center) with the author (right) at the 20<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Caribbean Archaeology in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in July 2003** 

I am old enough to remember Tabío and Rey's (1966) positive reception of the book (in Puerto Rico) and to recall how it was subsequently employed by various archaeologists and seriously committed amateurs from early to the mid-1970s. It was tapped as a source for broad, regional comparison with archaeological complexes from other islands, and appraised from a largely culture historic (chronological and stylistic) perspective. In other words, it was 'read' for its descriptive and not as much for its theoretical content and potential application (i.e., praxis). Indeed, outside those

archaeologists professing adherence to *Arqueología Social Latinoamericana* in the Antilles—specifically the members of the 'Vieques Group' (Vargas and Sanoja 1999:62)—no one was producing archaeological research within any Marxist framework outside of Cuba in the Caribbean of the 1970s. Also, as late as 1975, most of the Caribbean was essentially following either Irving Rouse's (Greater Antilles) or Ripley P. Bullen's (Lesser Antilles) culture historic, 'functional' approach and a normative, artifact-oriented, 'telephone-booth' archaeology. In fact, the US New Archaeology (processual) theory and methods did not reach the Caribbean archaeology until the end of the 1970s, and then in some islands only. A quick review of the papers published between 1963-1977 in the proceedings of the International Association of Caribbean Archaeology (IACA) will attest to these facts. The Cuban presence in twenty IACA congresses thus far held was rare and sporadic until this very last one (20<sup>th</sup> IACA) held in June-July 2003 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (see Figure 5).<sup>11</sup> In short, Marxist-oriented archaeology was then, and still is at present, a largely 'alien' theory in Caribbean pre-Columbian *archaeology*. However, this was and is not the case among a number of historians, anthropologists, ethnohistorians and social/political scientists dealing with the early Indo-Hispanic colonial period (e.g., Cassá 1974, 1992; Sued Badillo 1978; Moscoso 1986, 1999).

Since 1959 the Cuban Revolution has undergone several phases of development. Until the beginning of the 1970s the period "was characterized by revolutionary experimentation in all areas of social organization, including comprehensive government management and control of production and distribution" (Saney 2004:18) that involved the destruction of the old order (Castro himself called it the 'iconoclasm' phase), and the massive construction of a new one (Saney 2004:18-19). The early to mid-1960s was "a period of almost boundless revolutionary enthusiasm, in which formal structures and methods were eschewed in favor of revolutionary spontaneity" through *voluntarismo* ('volunteerism') (Saney 2004:20) followed by a realization, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, that Cuba:

"...could not by sheer force or will skip stages in the economic development. It would have to first create the material conditions necessary for such a transition [i.e., from primary agricultural producer to industrialized nation]. The Cuban experience reflects the ongoing debate about the relationship between national material conditions and the possible developmental trajectories available, especially vis-à-vis the construction of socialism in countries that are predominantly based on agricultural productive and social relations (Saney 2004:19; my clarifications in straight brackets).

Since sugar still remained the one export capable of generating substantial foreign exchange earnings, emphasis was placed on expanding, mechanizing and modernizing the sugar sector. Despite almost achieving the objective in 1970 of a '10-million-ton-harvest' of sugar (a record 8.5 million tons was indeed harvested), the result was nevertheless "a severe dislocation of the economy" (Saney

2004:20). Consequently the existing strategic economic plans and the decision-making process would be revised. The 1970s decade was period characterized by:

"...the institutionalization of a new economic, social and political order where the goals was to establish stable regulatory forms and the formal institutional setting for popular input into national decision-making. This included a new Cuban Constitution and the re-organization of the political system, administrative structures, and the legal system... The institutionalization of the Revolution was formally marked in 1976 with the establishment of the National Assembly of Peoples' Power and ratification through popular referendum of the new Constitution. (Saney 2004:20).

Instead of the idealistic aspiration of effecting a truly revolutionary (rapid) transformation into a socialist state, its realization was now conceived as a long-term process consisting of several intermediary stages—the Cuban Revolution, as Saney's title for his book aptly captures—is still in *motion*. Petras and Morley (1992:96) add that Cuba embarked on a program of economic liberalization based on "market mechanisms, material incentives, financial accountability, private consumer markets, and greater managerial/ministerial autonomy within the overall pattern of central planning".

The growing economic ties with the Soviet Bloc also resulted in a increasing number of archaeologists and ethnohistorians receiving graduate and postgraduate degrees abroad. Rey and Tabío received their degrees from the Institute of Ethnography 'Miklujo Maclay' of the USSR's Academy of Sciences. Others, such as Guarch Delmonte and later Jorge Febles—the leading lithics expert in Cuba—would follow and receive doctorates at the USSR Academy of Sciences, including numerous students obtaining higher level degrees comparable to the Master of Arts (Berman et al, this volume). By the mid-1980s Cuba already had over 40 universities and institutes of higher education in the country. However, no university yet confers PhD degrees in anthropology and/or archaeology. Instead, they offer licentiate degrees (comparable to a BA plus an undergraduate research thesis) in history with a mention (specialization) in archaeology. Courses in archaeology are taught in the Faculty of Marxism and History as well as the Faculty of Historical Sciences at the University of Havana. Lourdes Domínguez became the first archaeologist to receive a PhD in historical sciences with specialization in archaeology from a Cuban university (Berman et al., this volume).

The publications that I regard as being absolutely indispensable for the period encompassing the 1960s are those authored by Tabío and Rey (1966), Tabío and Guarch Delmonte (1966), Núñez Jiménez (1959, 1967) and Rivero (1966). For the 1970s, the key works are those of Guarch Delmonte, published mainly in the *Serie Arqueológica* (1972a, 1972b, 1973, 1974, 1978), Dacal (1970), the Polish archaeologist Janusz Kozłowski (1974, 1975) and Núñez Jiménez (1975). The work in the Levisa area by Kozłowski and Cueva Funche by Dacal (1970), Pino (1970b) and Guarch Delmonte (1970) would produce the earliest dates of human occupation in Cuba at Levisa site (cal.

4250-3700 BC 1 sigma; Wilson et al. 1998: 346). The publication of the two volumes entitled '*Cuba Arqueológica*' by multiple authors (1978, 1980) brought together the excavation and research results obtained in the 1970s. Only Tabío (1978) published an explicit critique in terms of archaeological theory and method in the 1970s. The overwhelming majority of the publications were largely concerned with descriptive analyses or reports on surveys or individual sites, and much of the focus was on artifact typological analysis and functional interpretations.

Although considerable fieldwork was carried out, in terms of publications, three topics seem to predominate: (1) the continued effort to update and build a register of known/surveyed archaeological sites in the different regions of Cuba, which continues to the present (e.g., Martínez Arango 1982; Jardines and Guarch Rodríguez 1996:39-44); (2) the production of descriptive excavation reports on several key sites or areas such as Cayo Jorajuría (Herrera Fritot 1970), Cueva Funche, Levisa and the 'Mayarí group' of sites (Pino 1970b); and (3) the continued systematization of surveying and recording pictographic sites (Núñez Jiménez 1975). The published materials, however, represent only a small fraction of the feverish fieldwork and research activity that took place in the 1970s.

### **3. The Scenario from 1980-1990: Marxism Recedes into a Deeper Background**

By the mid-1980s the Cuban government implemented a campaign of 'rectification' in order to correct for and eliminate problems that had emerged from the mechanical copying and implementation of the models and policies from the USSR and Warsaw Pact countries (Saney 2004:20), particularly streamlining the stultifying bureaucratization of the institutions. Cuba was acutely aware of her vulnerable economic over-dependence on the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA; active from 1972-1991). Petras and Morley (1992:96) and Saney (2004:21) also pointed out that various capitalist tendencies and practices had emerged by the early 1980s such that 'middle men' in the marketplace were, in fact, "able to accumulate considerable wealth at the expense of the rest of the population giving rise to an individualistic ethos that led to widespread inefficiency, pilfering and waste of resources" (Saney 2004:21). Azicri (cited *in* Saney 2004:21) concludes that even though the 'rectification' campaign was curtailed by the economic crash of 1990, it provided "resilience to face the problems that the 1990s were bringing to the embattled island".





**Figure 6. Colonial Havana has been a World Heritage Site since 1982.**

Through the 1980s Cuban archaeology continued to proliferate both in terms of the specific research problems and regions investigated, all the while the decisions made on the priorities and implementation of research programs became increasingly more decentralized (e.g., the creation of the *Departamento Centro Oriental de Arqueología*). More and different regional institutions and advocate associations were engaged in archaeological research than ever before. 'Ciboney' sites such as Melones (Febles and Rives 1989), Playita (Dacal 1987) and the 'Taíno' site of Loma del Convento (Rankin Santander 1980) were added to a growing list of about 400 key sites known for Cuba by the end of the decade (Guarch Delmonte, editor 1990). By 2001, the number of registered sites increased dramatically: the Province of Villa Clara alone yielded 585 aceramic and 25 ceramic sites (Jouravleva 2002:36). Moreover, the Old Havana (Figure 6) and its fortifications and Trinidad-Valley of the Ingenios (sugar mills) were successfully declared World Heritage Sites (WHS) by UNESCO in 1982 and 1988, respectively. The WHS site of San Pedro de La Roca Fortress in Santiago would be added in 1997 (<http://whc.unesco.org/archive>). These nominations provided a renewed impetus to colonial archaeology, as well as restoration and conservation, particularly in Havana (Domínguez 1984 and this volume; Hernández and Alvarez 1997; Martín Lozano 2002; and articles in the journal *Gabinete de Arqueología*, 2001-present).

The 1980s is the decade where my own library, including that of the Institute of Archaeology-UCL, is most lacking. Judging by the cited references of those I do have, a large number of reports/articles were published, but had a limited, largely internal, distribution. Among the key

publications I am familiar with are Guarch's (1987) monograph on methodology and systematics in archaeological research. Febles' (1984) manual for the study and analysis of lithics is a key methodological treatise following a system derived from the Bordes and Semenov (1964) 'schools'. Tabío's (1984) revision of the chronology and stages of development in Cuba set the stage for further work from the 1990s to the present. Navarrete Pujol's (1981) report on the 'proto-agricultural' occupation Caimanes III site was, at least for me, the first solid indication of the local invention of pottery, *independent* from ceramic-bearing groups coming from Hispaniola (see also Navarrete 1989). Dacal and Rivero's (1986) monograph produced a synthesis aimed at high-school level students, while Febles (1982) produced an exquisite lithic analysis of the Canímar-1 complex, defining a microlithic technology that would become important in the discussion of 'proto-agricultural' groups. In colonial archaeology, Domínguez (1984) published a study of two sites, Casa de la Obrapía (Havana) and Yayal (Holguín), and a key monograph on the Pre-Columbian archaeology of south-central Cuba, based on her and Rankin's (1980) work through the late 1980s (Domínguez 1991). It was in the late 1980s too that La Rosa (1988) published his research on the *palenques* (settlements) of the *cimarrón* (Maroon) slaves, just translated into English by Mary Todd (La Rosa 2003a).

Work at the hugely important burial site of Chorro de Maíta in Holguín, although known since the 1940s, really took-off in the mid-1980s under the leadership of Guarch Delmonte (Guarch 1988, Guarch et al 1987; Rivero et al. 1989; Valcárcel 2002; Rodríguez Arce 2003; Valcárcel and Rodríguez, this volume;). The articles and reports published in *Reportes de Investigación del Instituto de Ciencias Históricas*, *Boletín de Historia* (Holguín), *Revista Cubana de Ciencias Sociales*, and occasionally in *Islas* (a broad social science journal from Las Villas University), exemplify the varied breadth and broad scope of the research themes addressed by Cuban archaeologists.

Overall, archaeology continued to be informed by orthodox Marxist theory, but the vast majority of articles and reports are largely descriptive in nature, with very few aimed at theoretical discussions. Epistemological considerations on theory informing analytical methods, explanations and interpretations are largely implicit. It should be kept in mind that the 1980s saw as well a new generation emerging, who in the 1990s became the most active, productive archaeologists of Cuba. In a personal communication (30/April/04) Valcárcel commented that, "...our archaeology has always published too little and the splendor of the Marxist propositions in Cuba reached its peak in the mid-1980s; as a result, a great deal of the Marxist ideas remained in closed debates that were most often led by the individuals of the earlier generation" (my translation).

However, the realization that the cultural-chronological framework—in place since 1966—did not adequately address the significant nuances and variations of archaeological complexes (labeled as 'cultural variants') excavated since then pushed Tabío (1984) and Guarch Delmonte (editor, 1990) to overhaul and refine the stages, phases and periods in the 1980s. The primary focus of their refinement

was on discriminating between different cultural complexes (*grupos/variantes culturales*). In other words, methodologically, archaeological assemblages and site components were distinguished in terms of a range of attributes or traits, following the same procedures used in 'normative' archaeology. Of course, infrastructural characteristics were given pride of place, albeit superstructural traits (art, ideology) were not ignored, particularly in regard to interpretations of mortuary practices, pictographs and selected portable artifacts (cf. Godo and Celaya 1990; Godo, Linville this volume).

#### **4. The Economic Crash & the 'Miraculous' Recovery, 1990-2004: Beyond Marxist Archaeology**

The effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989-90) and the CMEA economic union (in 1991) cannot begin describe what it meant to Cubans; cold statistics and quantitative assessments can only give a vague indication of the qualitative impact. Eighty-five percent of Cuba's trade came from CMEA members states, with an economy that grew an average of six percent (GNP) between 1971 and 1989 compared to 1.3 percent for Latin America as a whole (Saney 2004:22). By 1992, trade with the Eastern Bloc was down to seven percent and between 1989-1993 Cuba's GDP declined a further 35-40 percent, while per capita income declined by 39 percent. By 1993 the budget deficit spiraled out of control to 33.5 percent of GDP. In short, the economic catastrophe was assessed by the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAF) in the following terms: "the interruption of commercial relations with the CMEA countries constituted a loss of markets more severe than that brought about by the Great Depression" (ECLAF report cited *in* Saney 2004:22).

The human cost was severe, not only in terms of jobs and public services, but in health: the average caloric and protein intake was as much as 30 percent below the levels in the 1980s, leading among other things to an epidemic of optic neuropathy, with 50,000 people loosing sight and experiencing other associated sensory problems (Saney 2004:24). The crisis was compounded and magnified out of proportion by the aggressive move by the US to enact legislation in order to deliver what was hoped to be a *coup-de grace* to the Cuban regime: the Cuba Democracy Act of 1992 (or Torricelli Act) and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act (or Helms-Burton Act) of 1996 (Saney 2004:25). Both legislative acts were aimed at delivering a crippling blow to Cuba's remaining economic resources and trade links, expecting that it would lead to political and social destabilization and, in effect, the demise of Cuba as a socialist state. But clearly US legislators and Cuban expatriates underestimated the resilience of Cuba.<sup>12</sup>

Through it all, the 'emergency' measures implemented during this 'Special Period' (see Saney 2004:25-29) resulted in not just halting the decline but actually of stimulating a period of sustained growth, which began to rise in 1994 from 0.7 percent to 5.6 percent in 2000, despite the detours

caused by Hurricane Georges in 1998. Other economic indicators discussed by Saney (2004 and references therein) clearly point toward the resilience of Cuba. Indeed, Saney's appreciation is worthy of an extended:

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s and the strengthening of the United States economic blockade, many 'experts' have predicted imminent collapse of the Cuban Revolution... However, 'clearly defying' the logic of the specialists and perplexing them 'the world over', not only has the Cuban Revolution and government of President Fidel Castro continued to defy conventional wisdom and survive, Cuba has also been able to develop and grow economically. Yet... the island continues to be ignored by both development theorists and technocrats in charge of implementing and administering [neo-liberal] programs that are supposed to lead to the improved well-being of the world's people... in spite of this almost universal dismissal, the development trajectory of the Cuban Revolution represents a profound challenge to conventional approaches. Cuba highlights like no other country does, the debate surrounding the necessary conditions and instrumentalities to achieve development (e.g., the strong and interventionist state versus the free market, privatization and neoliberal prescriptions). The Cuban Revolution offers not only a different conception of development but also a unique model of development. On the one hand, the island demonstrates the limitations that external geopolitical and economic conditions and internal material constraints impose on the socio-economic transformation paths available to countries of the South. On the other, the Cuban Revolution indicates the possibilities open to those countries that pursue radical developments... the Cuban experience offers significant insights into not only a different paradigm, but a paradigm that has been largely successful—especially given the objective limitations of a small, poor, underdeveloped island nation—in utilizing the country's resources and wealth for the public good (Saney 2004:1-2).

The 'Economic Crash' between 1990 and 1994 severely affected the scope and intensity of archaeological activities, as it did in all other areas of Cuban life. Publications in archaeology also suffered due to the severe shortage of resources, including print paper and ink. Yet, by the mid-1990s, through sheer will power and ingenuity, Cuban archaeologists opened-up new avenues of international collaboration and revived dormant field research projects. In part this was made possible by the government's relaxation policies implemented through the *Período Especial*. Not surprisingly, the opening of international collaboration meant that orthodox Marxist archaeology has—in my view—begun to 'relax its grip' and allow for alternative approaches to be considered. The very recent, sad passing away of Dacal, Rivero and Guarch signals that the new generation of archaeologists formed during the 1980s are currently in positions of leadership; the older generation are no longer present to actively defend orthodox Marxism as the only legitimate theoretical approach in archaeology, as Guarch last did in print in 1987 (more on this below).



**Figure 7. Cuban archaeologist Pedro Godo on a rare visit to the United States through a Heinz Foundation Grant at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh. Here Godo and the late Andrés L. Oliver, MD (a volunteer at the Carnegie) examine artifacts from the Carnegie's Caribbean collections.**

#### *4.1 Beyond Marxism and Superstructure: Grappling with Art, Symbols and Meanings*

A shift from orthodox Marxism is reflected in the direction that 'superstructural studies' have taken in this last decade. For example, Celaya and Godo (2000:70-84; Godo and Celaya 1990; Godo, this volume) have devoted considerable attention to the analysis of iconography, art and symbolism, to the methodological assumptions by which meanings may be deduced, and to what these imply in terms of social dynamics. Familiar with the pioneering work by José Juan Arrom—a Cuban-born, long-time US resident and Professor Emeritus of Comparative Languages at Yale University—these authors wished to go beyond the mere correlation (identification) of 'personages' mentioned in the Taíno myths collected by Friar Pané (ca. 1497) with particular archaeological Taíno sculptures or iconographic designs. Godo's (Figure 7) research draws from several 'art-and-archaeology' theoretical approaches. They also incorporate elements from French Structuralism (including Lévi-Straussian approach through López-Baralt [1977]) and from Marxist Structuralism, both with roots in Saussurean linguistic/semiotic theory, and on semiotics in general as developed by Humberto Eco (1972). To these Godo (this volume) adds the 'Tartu-Moscow' theories of communication, as articulated by Lotman (1982, 1994), and is aware of others; for example, my own contextual-structural approach to the Puerto Rican petroglyphs from Caguana (Oliver 1998).<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 8. Pictographs from Cuba**



**Figure 9. Pictograph from Cuba**

Not evident yet in Cuba is a consideration of the various theories of agency, or actor-centered theories, applied to material culture studies in Europe and Anglo-America. It would be interesting to see how such theories would add 'texture and color' to an already rich tapestry of pre-Columbian 'art' objects ranging from the enigmatic '*dagolitos*' (dagger-like ceremonial ground stone) of the pre-agricultural societies to Taíno wood sculptures and to the prolific pictographic art of Cuba (Figures 8, 9). Here I am specifically thinking of the theories such as developed by late Alfred Gell (1998) at the London School of Economics. Gell developed an anthropological theory of art focused on social dynamics (specifically, agency) that is explicitly *not* based on semiotic or linguistic theory—as is Godo's case. In Gell's argument, art objects and human (even animal) actors are agents enmeshed in mutually binding causal relations. The meaning and role of art materials are understood in term of Gell's concepts of the 'distributed person' and the 'extended mind', where the socially constructed boundaries are not limited to the physical border of either the art object or the (skin) of individuals.

Gell's approach is not dialectical in the Marxist sense of entailing fundamental contradictions, yet it is amenable to the dialectic concept of 'tensions' between relational categories, although this is not the only possible relational value of socially constructed art objects. Godo's contention that particular designs prevalent in agricultural-ceramic deposits may well have something to do with community (or ethnic) identity would have found Gell's theory particularly illuminating.

Given the fact that so many of these works of indigenous Cuban rock art and 'ceremonial' burial artifacts are in cave contexts (see Linville, [in Curet et al 2005](#)) and given the strong suspicion that shamanistic (*behique*) activities and rituals, most likely involving hallucinogens (*cohoba* or *Anadenanthera peregrina*), are crucial to their analysis, theories on shamanism and shaman agency, such as those elaborated by Pearson (2002), would have also added theoretical substance to enrich interpretation. The recent work of Lewis-Williams (2002) on western European Upper to Middle Paleolithic rock art is an excellent example of how agency and shamanistic theories can offer key

insights into past social dynamics, addressing such key questions of who controls access to or knowledge about pictographs (communal or privileged access?) and what such social relations might imply regarding egalitarianism or division of labor. Their questions mimic precisely the questions I have right now about Cuba's parietal art (Figure 9), but which have not been as yet addressed. Cognitive archaeological approaches, such as Lewis-Williams' (2002:101-135) and Pearson's (2002:39-40), derive strength from a rich body of knowledge emanating from the most recent advances in neurological sciences in the arena of Altered States Consciousness (ASC) and on philosophical arguments about social consciousness. A shift of focus from the objects (rock art) to the individuals or social actors (e.g., shamans) should provide new insights and perspectives about the roles that art had in ancient societies (see Figure 9). Such a cognitive, actor-centered and contextual approach has been fruitfully applied to Taíno materials from Puerto Rico (e.g., Oliver 2000, 2004). Indeed, 'art objects', like the *cemís* of the Taínos, are empowered actors, and as I have argued elsewhere, *cemís* have the power to (agency) make or brake 'kings' (*caciques*) (Oliver 1998, 2004).<sup>14</sup>

Agency-based theoretical frameworks do not, in and of themselves, contradict the postulates of Marxist archaeology, but certainly would cast a new light on the complex 'tensions' between infrastructure and superstructure where neither is necessarily the determinant 'force' in the formation of societies. The detailed work of Núñez Jiménez (1975) and Guarch Delmonte's (1987a:69-100) analysis of pictographs and petroglyphs as 'ideographic systems' have provided the basic data at the macro-regional to intra-site scales to now be in an advantageous position to address questions about agency and formulate interpretations of what the socially-constructed meanings of these images might mean in terms of the social dynamics of, for example, the 'Ciboney' primitive communities. As Godo and Linville (in Curet et al 2005) noted, Cuban archaeologists are eager to explore theoretically and methodologically sound frameworks in which to interpret rock and portable art materials, beyond the traditional emphasis on spatial distribution analyses in search of patterns that may signal 'ethnic' affiliations.

As contextual archaeological approaches sink further into quotidian archeological field research, I expect that Cuban archaeologists will increasingly be in a position to address research questions that hitherto have eluded satisfying answers. Caves during the pre-agricultural/pre-ceramic periods, are particularly interesting (e.g., see La Rosa 2003b; La Rosa and Robaina 1994; La Rosa in Curet 2005): some have only yielded pictographs, while others included only burials, and still others added evidence of 'domestic habitation' (permanent?, residential?) either within the cave or in the open, adjacent area (or both), providing a range of different contexts for enacting (past) social activities and behaviors, where segments of a social group *and* the pictographs were either included or excluded, but which always formed a dynamic part of. Who and how many could view or have access to a particular pictograph wall or section of the cave? What sorts of activities took place within the cave

and how these might relate (or not) the pictographs? How do the activities within the cave differ from the activities immediately outside the cave? I am convinced that future Cuban research will most likely plunge into the issues raised by these novel theories of agency, shamanism, art and symbolism, and cognition, within a contextual approach, if only because such literature is now beginning to circulate in Cuba.

#### *4.2 The Los Buchillones Project, Ciego del Avila, North-Central Cuba*

The first example of an international research project, starting in 1994, is that of Los Buchillones. The collaboration is led by Calvera, archaeologist for the Ministry of Environmental Science and Technology (CITMA), and Pendergast and Graham, then at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada. Calvera and Jardines initiated work in the coastal region of Ciego del Avila in 1983 (Pendergast et al. 2002:6). By the late 1980s, the large number of 'classic' Taíno style wood artifacts found by local fishermen in the Los Buchillones area (Figures 10, 11) led to the discovery of a settlement spanning a critical period for understanding the processes of transformation of pre-Columbian native societies during the early Spanish colonial period (Calvera and García Lebroc 1994; Mesa González et al. 1994; Graham et al. 2000; Jardines and Calvera 1999; Calvera et al. 2001; 1; Pendergast 1997; 1998) (see map, page 1).



**Figure 10.** A miscellaneous sample of wood artifacts recovered from Los Buchillones.



**Figure 11.** Excavation of a wooden house post from Los Buchillones, Ciego del Ávila, Cuba.

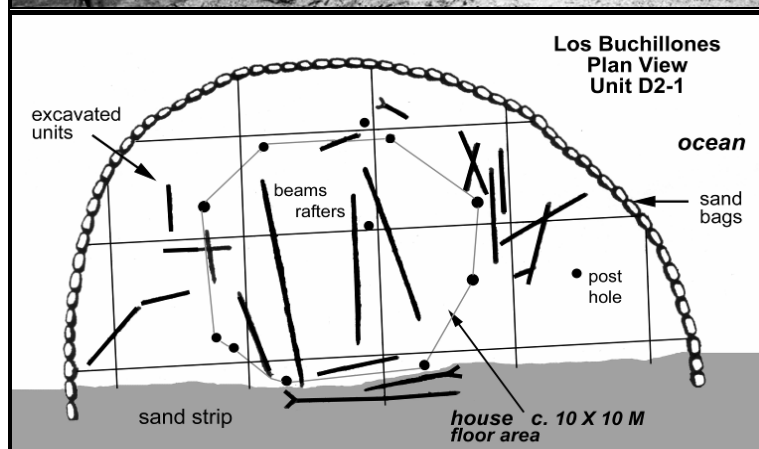
Presently located in a marine-intertidal/wetland zone, Los Buchillones site ranks among the most exciting discoveries in Caribbean archaeology. It has yielded abundant carved wood artifacts as well as several house structures, two of which have been recently discussed in publications (Pendergast et



al. 2001; Pendergast et al. 2002). House-1 has a 26 meter circular plan whereas House-2 (partly excavated) has a rectangular or square plan. Both are wood, cane-and-thatch houses that had collapsed *in situ*, in a marine intertidal/wetland zone backed by mangrove marshland (Figure 12). It would seem that in the past the Los Buchillones settlement was established on dry land that, as a result of deforestation and beach erosion, was overtaken by the encroaching ocean (Calvera et al. 2001). The 11 AMS dates from beams, rafters, and posts taken from House-1 range from cal. AD 1295 to cal AD 1655 (1 sigma); the six  $^{14}\text{C}$  assays from House-2 cluster in two groups, cal AD 1435-1445 and cal AD 1650-1655 (Pendergast et al. 2002) (Figure 13).



**Figure 12. View of the excavations of house D2-1 area at Los Buchillones.**

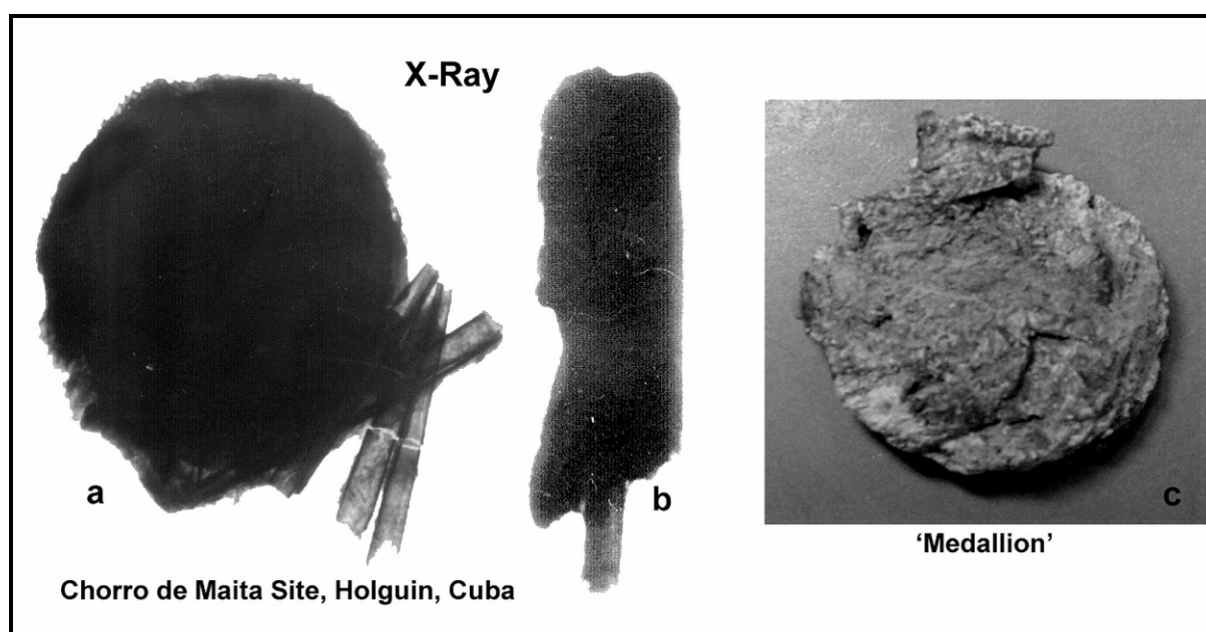


**Figure 13. Plan view of the house in Unit d2-1 at Los Buchillones.**

After Graham and Pendergast joined the University College London (UCL), the collaborative research at Los Buchillones has continued between CITMA and Institute of Archaeology at UCL, with its most recent field season just conducted this past February, 2004, where new house structures were targeted for excavation (Figure 11). The London-Cuba connection is also generating interest among British students one of which, Jago Cooper, is currently conducting PhD research at Los Buchillones in collaboration with Calvera and associates.<sup>15</sup>

### 4.3 Chorro de Maíta, Banes (Holguín)

Another international research collaboration involves the work at Chorro de Maíta, a Taíno settlement that includes a large cemetery with over 100 burials dating between AD 800/900 and circa AD 1550 (Valcárcel and Rodríguez, in Curet 2005) several of which included metal artifacts. Two of the *guanín* (copper-gold-silver) alloys ultimately originated from the Zenú (Sinú) and Tairona gold regions of Colombia. Other alloys, like tin and bronze, came from Spain (Oliver 2001). However, some metal cylindrical objects, once part of a necklace, have been identified as tin alloys associated with two burials directly dated to ca. AD 870 and AD 1080 (Figure 14), raising questions on whether knowledge of smelting technology was known prior to the arrival of the Spanish. To resolve these and other pressing questions, Valcárcel has successfully pursued international collaborations with Roberto Lleras and Juanita Sáenz de Samper, of the *Museo del Oro* in Colombia, and with Marcos Torrest Martínón and Jago Cooper, at the Institute of Archaeology in London, to conduct specialized analyses to address questions of metal technology and provenience (see, Valcárcel 2002).<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 14. X-Ray of the medallion with tin tubular ‘danglers’ found at Chorro de Maíta.**

As Valcárcel and Rodríguez (in Curet 2005) discussed, the site's rich mortuary data is ideally suited to address questions regarding the nature of social differentiation and inequality among the late Pre-Columbian societies in Eastern Cuba (Figure 15). What is more significant is that the Chorro de Maíta excavation forms part of a well conceived regional settlement pattern approach in order to contextualize the inter-relationships of this site to other habitation loci as well as special-purpose sites (e.g., burial caves). For example, the presence of contemporaneous burial cave sites nearby that may be linked to Chorro de Maíta raise questions about why some of the deceased were singled-out for

cave burials whereas others were buried in the settlement's cemetery. Additionally, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish chronicles, particularly Columbus' journal of 1492, mention the custom of keeping ancestors' skulls and bones in baskets hanging from the roof inside the houses (i.e., cult to the ancestors), indicating yet another possible funerary practice in this region (cf. Curet and Oliver 1998). Presumably, the cult to the ancestors practiced among the Chorro de Maíta settlers would have not just one axial focus (cemetery) but also radiating linkages to caves *loci* dispersed throughout the immediate region (cf., Valcárcel et al. 2003). Suddenly, the 'community', which is as much defined by the living as by the dead kindred, extends far and beyond the settlement. The caves, the settlement's houses and cemetery ('residences' for the living *and* the dead) and trails, all comprise the community's *site*. The narrow equation of an archaeological site with a tightly bounded physical boundary (based largely on trash) dissolves and thus demands different fieldwork approaches and strategies to 'site' excavation, if the object of analysis is the ancient *community*.



**Figure 15. Detail of a human burial from Chorro de Maíta, currently a**

The inter-relationship between different kinds of sites (residential village, dispersed farmsteads, extractive-processing work-stations, burial caves, etc.) to the landscape, as a socially constructed domain, seems to be the next step in future regional analysis. Indeed, I predict that before too long, landscape archaeology—which derived from the New Geography 'school' at the University of Cambridge, UK (e.g., Ucko and Layton 1999; Pollard and Reynolds 2002)—will become a fruitful arena for research and interpretations of Cuba's pre-Columbian communities. The Banes region, for example, should inform us about the *social construction* of the landscape in this variegated (karst) region, going beyond the traditional understanding of the geographic space mainly as a natural,

ecological 'canvas' for resource exploitation by humans (see also Gragson 1998). The most fruitful theoretical approaches to landscape studies in the tropics, superseding much of the materialist cultural ecology, has been articulated through historical ecology (see Baleé 1998; also McEwan et al. 2001; Pärssinen and Korpisaari 2003). I believe historical ecology will provide a counterbalance to the 'adaptationist', cultural ecological approaches that sometimes surface in Cuban and Caribbean archaeology.

The study of death and mortuary practices of Pre-Columbian societies, their implications in terms of beliefs, of social dynamics (e.g., sex-age division, social equality), individual/population health (disease and trauma pathologies), and body physiognomy (e.g., cranial deformation, stature), have long been a strong component of Cuban archaeological research (e.g., see Goodwin 1979; La Rosa and Robaina 1994; Rodríguez Arce and Ulloa 2001; La Rosa 2003b; Rodríguez Arce 2003). Valcárcel and Rodríguez's work in Curet et al. (2005), however, is among the very few to *explicitly* explore the question of social and political equality/inequality issues in reference to mortuary practices, and to do so by a critical use of published references that emerged from US and British archaeologists with diverse theoretical leanings, such as Gary Feinman, Paul Bahn and Colin Renfrew, yet without ignoring Marxist scholars such as Cassá or Guarch Delmonte.

#### ***4.4 La Loma del Convento—Arimao Valley Project (Cienfuegos)***

As I write, other research collaborations in the planning stage are being prepared to start around 2005 (Vernon Knight, personal communication, 2004).<sup>17</sup> The proposed project is, in essence, a development and outgrowth from the investigations of the south-central region of Cuba conducted in the 1980s by Rankin (1980) and, particularly by Domínguez (1991) in 1987 and 1988 at La Loma del Convento site—a joint Cuban-Soviet project that fell apart as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Currently, the proposed joint project will involve Rodríguez Matamoros from the Provincial Center of Cultural Patrimony of Cienfuegos and US scholars Vernon (Jim) Knight (University of Alabama), John O'Hear (Cobb Institute of Archaeology-Mississippi State University), John Worth (Randell Research Center-University of Florida, and with the collaboration of archaeobotanist Lee Newsom (Penn State University). The proposed multi-year project intends to deal with various research questions arising from a micro-regional approach, such as the development of social, political and economic inequality, but it is the colonial period Loma del Convento site that is, to me, particularly important. This site has long been suspected to be the locus or settlement whose natives were granted in 'assignment' (*encomendados*) to Las Casas and Pedro de Rentería around 1515. In fact, I cannot recall any Caribbean project that has yet focused on a legitimate indigenous settlement subjected to an *encomienda* regime. The colonial/contact period sites of Puerto Real and En Bas

Salines, in Haiti, as well as that of La Isabela in the Dominican Republic (Deagan 1987; Deagan and Reitz 1995; Deagan and Cruxent 2002; Newsom 1995) are anything but indigenous *encomienda* settlements.<sup>18</sup>

If one puts the ongoing work in colonial Havana by Domínguez (in Curet et al. 2005), the historical and archaeological research on slave societies by La Rosa (2003a; La Rosa and Perez Padrón 1994), Singleton's (in Curet et al. 2005) work on colonial coffee plantation, together with the Loma del Convento project, five crucial manifestations of the Spanish colonial experience are being covered:

- (1) the capital-urban milieu;
- (2) the dispersed rural coffee haciendas and sugar mill (*ingenios*) plantations;
- (3) the *palenques* and ephemeral hideaways (e.g., caves) of runaway slaves (*cimarrones*);
- (4) the Amerindian settlements impacted by the *encomienda*;
- (5) the conservative, traditional Taíno settlements, yet within the Spanish colonial period.

The Taíno inhabitants at Los Buchillones, with dates as late as AD 1650, would appear to have resisted the onslaught of Spanish colonization and conserved an indigenous way of life for well over a century beyond what once was regarded as the 'extinction' of Caribbean natives. The results of these investigations, no doubt, will re-write Cuba's early colonial history and shed new light on the processes by which 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century Indio identities emerged and eventually, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, modern Cuban national, ethnic and cultural identity coalesced into Cubanía.<sup>19</sup>

Because of their temporal span, Los Buchillones (AD 1300-1650), Chorro de Maíta (AD 900-1550) and Loma del Convento (AD ?-1520?) are yielding, or will yield, a rich corpus of evidence to build arguments and hypotheses about the transformation (syncretism) and *resistance* of the indigenous Taíno societies in the face of Spanish colonial onslaught into as late as the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. What of the indigenous way of life in Cuba survived into the 1600s and why? What were the mechanisms developed to resist the Hispanic power and cultural ways? Was it just because of Los Buchillones geographical remoteness or socio-economic marginality, or were there other reasons? Given that the spirit of the law of Indian *repartimiento* (distribution) and *encomienda* (assignment) was regularly violated, how were native settlements such as Loma del Convento impacted? The Chorro the Maíta cemetery included a burial of a 'Europoid' (Spanish) skull within their predominantly native cemetery. Did s/he become one more member of the Taíno community of revered ancestors? Had this Spaniard gone 'native' or could there be other reasons for its burial in the cemetery? How did the sudden availability of foreign, valuable metals affect the social and economic fabric at Chorro de Maíta? Do the domestic economies of the two Indo-Cuban contact period sites

contrast sharply with that of *encomienda* settlements, such as Loma del Convento? The task ahead is to determine the significant variations in the ways that Indohispanic social relations and interactions enmeshed in a colonial context and to outline the sociocultural processes contributing to the ethnogenesis of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century urban and rural life in Cuba.

Questions posed by Cuban archaeology are no longer narrowly limited to inferences that point out the (obvious) Spanish exploitation of native (and slave) labor or to the consequent collapse of the natives' mode of production (and its implied change in forces and relations of production). Rather, projects aim at broadening the scope of research questions, at documenting and analyzing the rich diversity of regional manifestations of Spanish interactions with the indigenous and imported slave populations, at issues of identity and agency and how the latter are contested and/or negotiated, Although the emphasis has been on slave resistance or Spanish dominance, let us not forget the potential that sites such as Los Buchillones have in illuminating indigenous resistance and persistence of a 'traditional' lifeway. One also ought not to forget that it could well be that some, perhaps many, of the natives still pursuing an Archaic or proto-agricultural way of life from the AD 1200s to 1500s probably also wielded their own 'battles' of resistance to the agricultural way of life of Taíno –related settlers in the Oriente province. I have always felt that such 'Taínos' would have seemed to a 'Guanahcabibe' or 'Guahatabey' native as strange or as foreign as a Spanish would, that the strategies traditionally developed to deal with 'otherness' in the pre-Columbian past would be put into the service for dealing with the onslaught of '*Hispanidad*' in Post-Columbian times.

#### ***4.5 International Publications: El Caribe Arqueológico***

Another type of example of a significant achievement for Cuban archaeology made possible through international collaboration is the publication of the annual journal, *El Caribe Arqueológico*. The Cuban journal *Del Caribe* began publishing articles of diverse topics in social sciences in 1983. Due to the specialist nature of archaeological articles there was a concern that some of them would "risk becoming lost" (i.e., not published). At the same time the feasibility of publishing a separate archaeology journal amidst the 1990-1994 economic crash made it impractical to implement. Nevertheless, in 1996, through the sponsorship of Meggers (Smithsonian Institution) and Veloz Maggiolo (Dominican Republic) with the financial backing of Taraxcum, S.A., the *El Caribe Arqueológico* became a reality.<sup>20</sup> It is fast becoming *the* national and international reference for current Cuban archaeology. The majority of contributors are Cuban and the articles are about Cuban archaeology, but it also regularly publishes articles by non-Cuban archaeologists and about other Circum-Caribbean countries, most frequently Venezuela, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

The presence among the editorial and advisory board of Sanoja, Vargas and Veloz Maggiolo (leaders of the 'Vieques Group') is also significant, since now their *Arqueología Social* theoretical

perspective had an effective platform—*El Caribe Arqueológico*—for dissemination among the present generation of Cuban archaeologists. The influence of Veloz Maggiolo and Meggers can be appreciated, for example, in Ulloa's work (in Curet et al. 2005). However, the editorial board is also eager to publish articles with all sorts of theoretical approaches and methodological perspectives—not just Marxist-Leninist or the revised Marxism of the *Arqueología Social*.

This journal is therefore different from previous periodicals in that a much broader scope of theoretical and methodological approaches are sometimes explicitly debated and, more often, implicitly applied within its pages. Only a decade before, as an outside reader, my sense was of a strong resistance put by some of the key senior Cuban archaeologists, like Tabío (1978) and particularly José Guarch Delmonte (1981, 1987b; 1990) to even consider perspectives other than a strict, orthodox Marxism.

## 5. The Orthodox Marxism in the Archaeology of Tabío and Guarch Delmonte

Very few Cuban scholars have spilled ink to write and discuss about how Marxist theory was, in fact, applied to archaeological research in Cuba. As Valcárcel commented recently:

In contrast to *Arqueología Social Latinoamericana*, Cuban [archaeology] has generated almost no texts reflecting upon theory from a Marxist perspective. None of the principal publications on Cuban archaeology I know—other than in some article—there is a precise discussion of a single socio-economic formation with a single mode of production. However, in essence, this is the underlying idea in these works [i.e., Tabío, Rey, Guarch Delmonte] (Valcárcel, personal communication, 30/April/04; my translation).

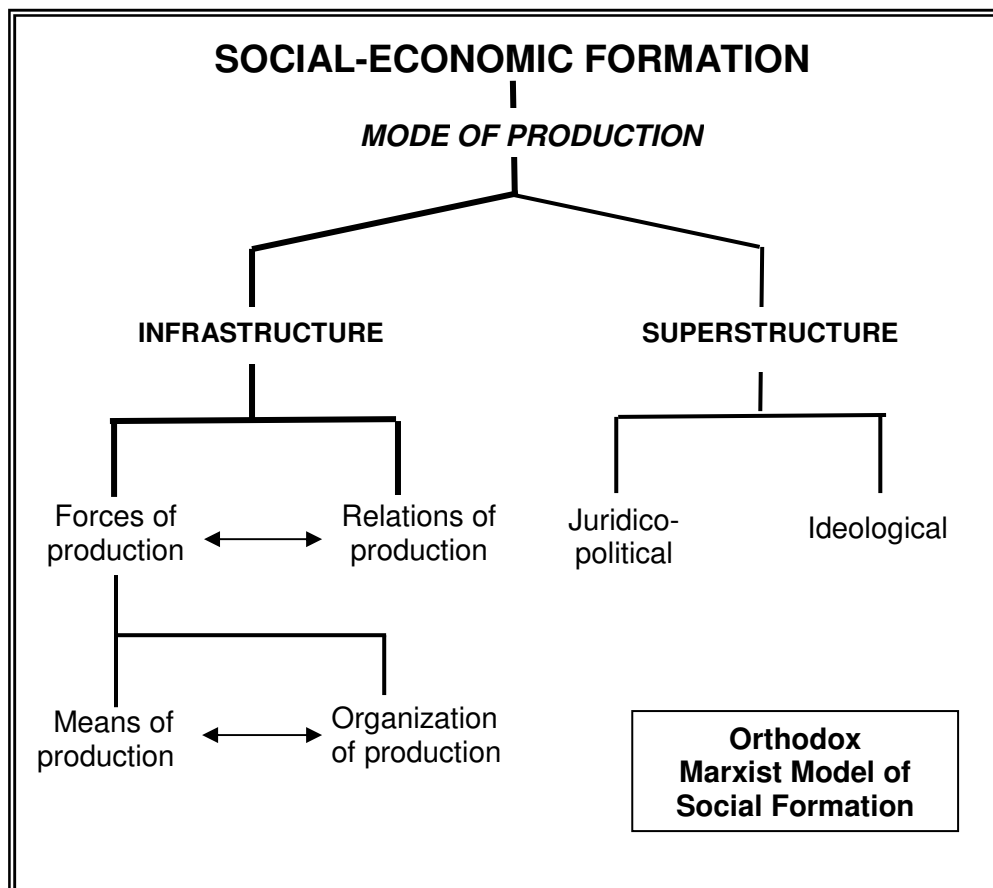
The conceptual and methodological 'jump' between data-on-the-ground (or lab) to interpretation *via* Marxist analysis, if any, was relegated to unspoken understandings that the authors assumed to be common knowledge (or common sense) and thus shared by all readers. Of course, this is an unwarranted assumption. Still, Tabío and Guarch Delmonte, were among the few to have devoted some space to discuss Marxist theory.

### 5.1 Mode of Production and the Primitive Communities of Cuba

The key theoretical concept in Marxism is the 'mode of production'. It is an articulated combination of the forces of production and the relations of production, structured by a dominance of the latter (Barnard 2000:88). Tabío and Rey (1966, and Tabío 1978), as well as Guarch (1981), have relied on the 'classic' conceptual definitions of Marx-Engels (see Figure 16):

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations which are dependent of their will, namely, the relations of production, which are

independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a definite stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the [socio-]economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life... At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... (Marx [1859] cited in Patterson 2003:18-19; my clarifications in straight brackets).



**Figure 16: Orthodox Marxist model of Soci-economic formation for Indigenous Cuba**

The *relations of production* define a specific mode of appropriation of labor and the specific form of social distribution corresponding to that mode of appropriation of labor, which is found in all societies. However different societies 'appropriate' labor in different ways. For example, the primitive community appropriates labor collectively, whereas in slavery or feudalism labor is appropriated by non-labor classes (ruling elite, feudal lords). The *forces of production* involve the 'mode of appropriation of nature' (its natural resources) while the *means of production* refers to those economic activities that individuals or groups practice, such as hunting, fishing, gathering or farming (Barnard 2000:88). The latter implicate a corresponding *organization of production*. The mode of



production—derived from the forces and relations of production— thus comprises the infrastructure of a social-economic formation (Figure 16).

The economic base (infrastructure) in each society engenders a *superstructure* consisting of political, judicial, religious, philosophical and artistic concepts (ideologies) and their corresponding institutions. Tabío (1978:10) explained that the *social-economic formation* comprises the "economic regime" (infrastructure) together with its superstructure, whose features and characteristics correspond to a determined *stage (etapa)* of historical development. Tabío and Guarch would agree with Thomas Patterson's (2002:25) most recent summary of the *essential* characteristics of societies manifesting a primitive communist mode of production. These are:

- (1) a collective 'ownership' of the primary means of production;
- (2) the absence of a social division based on a class structure in which members of one group permanently appropriated the social product or labor (usufruct) of the direct producers to increase productivity.

Such communities lacked hereditary status and gender hierarchies, since all its adult members were engaged in a "direct participation of in the [appropriation or] production, distribution, circulation and consumption of social product" (Leacock cited in Patterson 2003:25). In the 1966 book, Tabío and Rey characterized the organization of the primitive communism of Cuba using a terminology that reflects a strong indebtedness to Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* ([1877] 1964:61-62). They speak of the *gens* and of *gentile* social relations. In Morgan's words, "a gens is a body of consanguinei descended from a common ancestor, distinguished by a gentile [clan] name, and bound together by affinities of blood. It includes a moiety only such descendants" ([1877] 1964:61). The 'gens' parallels the use of the term 'kin-based' and 'corporate' social relations of other writers (cf. Curet and Oliver 1998).

Tabío (1978) argued that the history of the development of a society is above all the history of the modes of productions "as these replace one another" over time (Tabío 1978:10). Each new mode of production "indicates a new, superior step in the developmental history of humanity" (Tabío 1978:10). Thus, a mode of production *determines* a corresponding superstructure (ideology) and it also *determines* the character of the socio-economic formation. Tabío and Rey (1966; Tabío 1978) and Guarch Delmonte (1981, 1987a, 1987b), argued for the application of Marxist theoretical concept and method of *dialectic*, which is the key concept for interpreting both spatial and temporal changes that societies (and cultures) 'experienced'. Yet none of these authors *explicitly* defined or discussed precisely how they understood and applied dialectic to archaeological problems. As McGuire (2002:92) noted there is "no universal agreement exists, either inside or outside [M]arxism, about what the dialectic is".<sup>21</sup>

### 5.2 Tabío: 'One Socio-economic Formation-One Mode of Production'

In a critique against the theoretical approach advocated by Sanoja and Vargas (1974) and Veloz Maggiolo (1976, 1977; also 1980, 1991), Tabío (1978) set forth an *exposé* of his orthodox position in regard to the proper interpretation and application of Marxism-Leninism theory. He rejected, or at least ignored, what Randall McGuire (2002:32-44) labeled as 'Western Marxism' (e.g., Frankfurt School, Structural Marxism). As already noted earlier, Tabío (1978) objected to the way in which Sanoja, Vargas and Veloz Maggiolo had understood the concept of mode of production, thereby failing to capture the very essence of the social-economic formation. Tabío insisted that only *one* socio-economic formation could be inferred—primitive communism—and that only *one* mode of production could be adduced from the archaeological record. Instead, Sanoja, Vargas and Veloz Maggiolo, proposed several modes of production consolidating several socio-economic formations. Like Tabío (1978), Guarch Delmonte (1981; Valcárcel, personal communication, 30/April/04) also argued for a single socioeconomic with a single mode of production applicable to all communities from all periods in pre-Columbian Cuba.

Recalling past conversations with Caribbean colleagues I realized that some of us (including myself) had confounded the means of production (e.g., hunting, fishing, gathering, farming), with different modes of production—in the way, for example that Veloz Maggiolo did for Hispaniola (1976, 1977) or Sanoja and Vargas (1974) did for Venezuela. Veloz Maggiolo (1976, 1977), for example, established an 'Agricultural-Ceramic' social-economic formation characterized by three modes of production: (1) Proto-Agricultural, (2) Tropical and (3) Theocratic (see Figure 17). This is clearly *not* how Tabío and Guarch Delmonte envisioned a mode of production. The reason is quite straightforward: they interpret the archaeological evidence as reflecting 'communities' whose members are all producers *and* consumers; no one exploits the usufruct of another fellow being; these communities lacked evidence of class formation and 'property' ownership. Thus, Veloz Maggiolo's modes of production are regarded as variations or modalities whose differences are in part the result of more complexity developing over time but which did not alter the fundamental egalitarian ethos of society.

Veloz Maggiolo (1977, 1980, 1991) and Vargas and Sanoja (1999), to avoid mounting criticism from the Oaxtepec Group and Cuban archaeologists, later would shift their focus toward *modos de vida* (modes or ways of life), nearly replacing the mode of production as the key abstract concept for defining socio-economic formations. Their 1999 synthesis (a manifesto) of their most recent theoretical posture, now recast as 'Archaeology as Social Science', presented a myriad of conceptual categories, some apparently enmeshed in hierarchy, that will require a magician—no kidding—to decipher precisely how archaeologists can make use of these and apply them to archaeological data on the ground. In other words, most of the enunciated conceptual categories still need explicitly be made

operational. I have attempted to organize these categories in a flow chart (Figure 18) to serve as a contrast to the conceptual structure of orthodox Marxist followed in Cuba (Figure 16).<sup>22</sup>

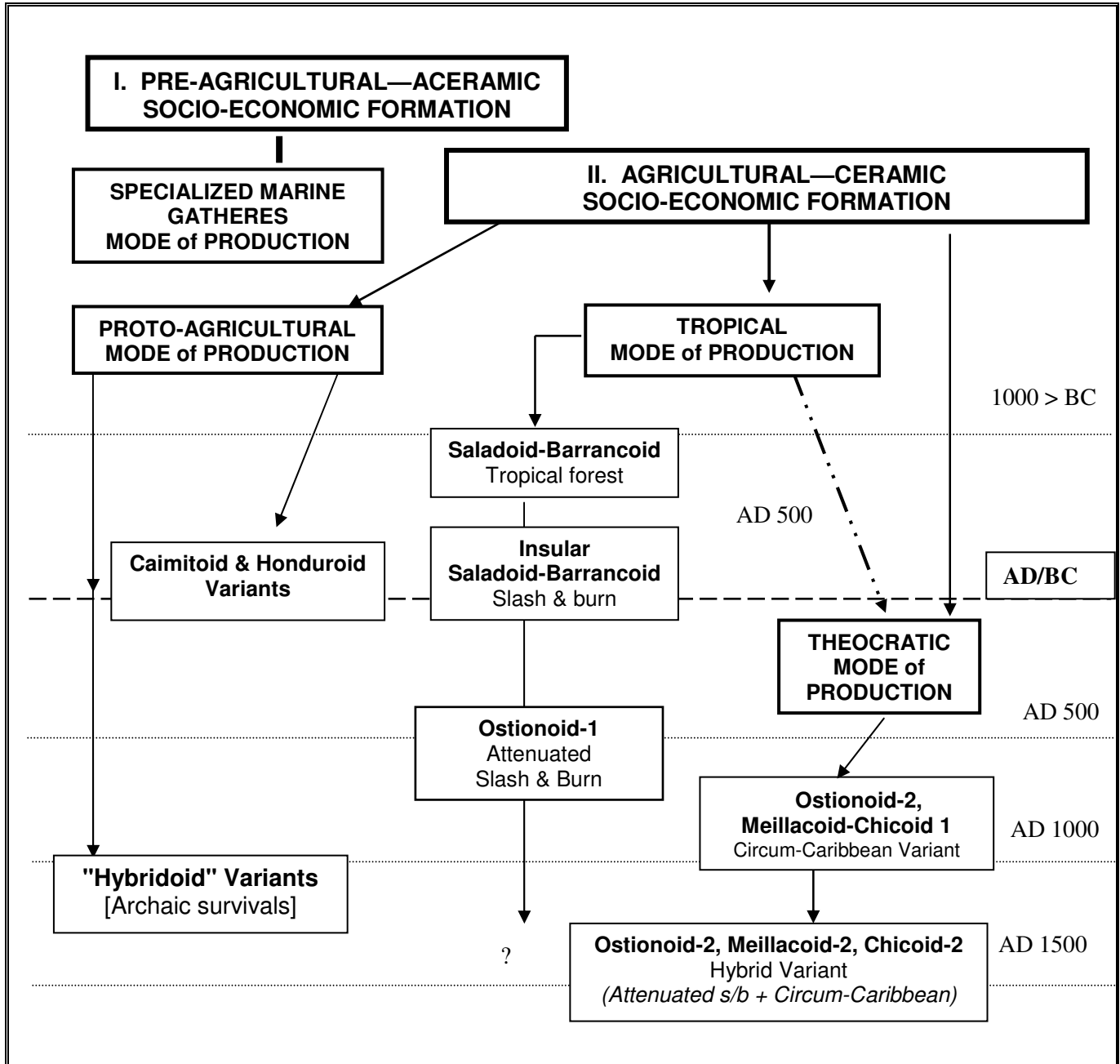


Figure 17. Schematic model of Socio-economic Formation adapted from Veloz Maggiolo (1976)

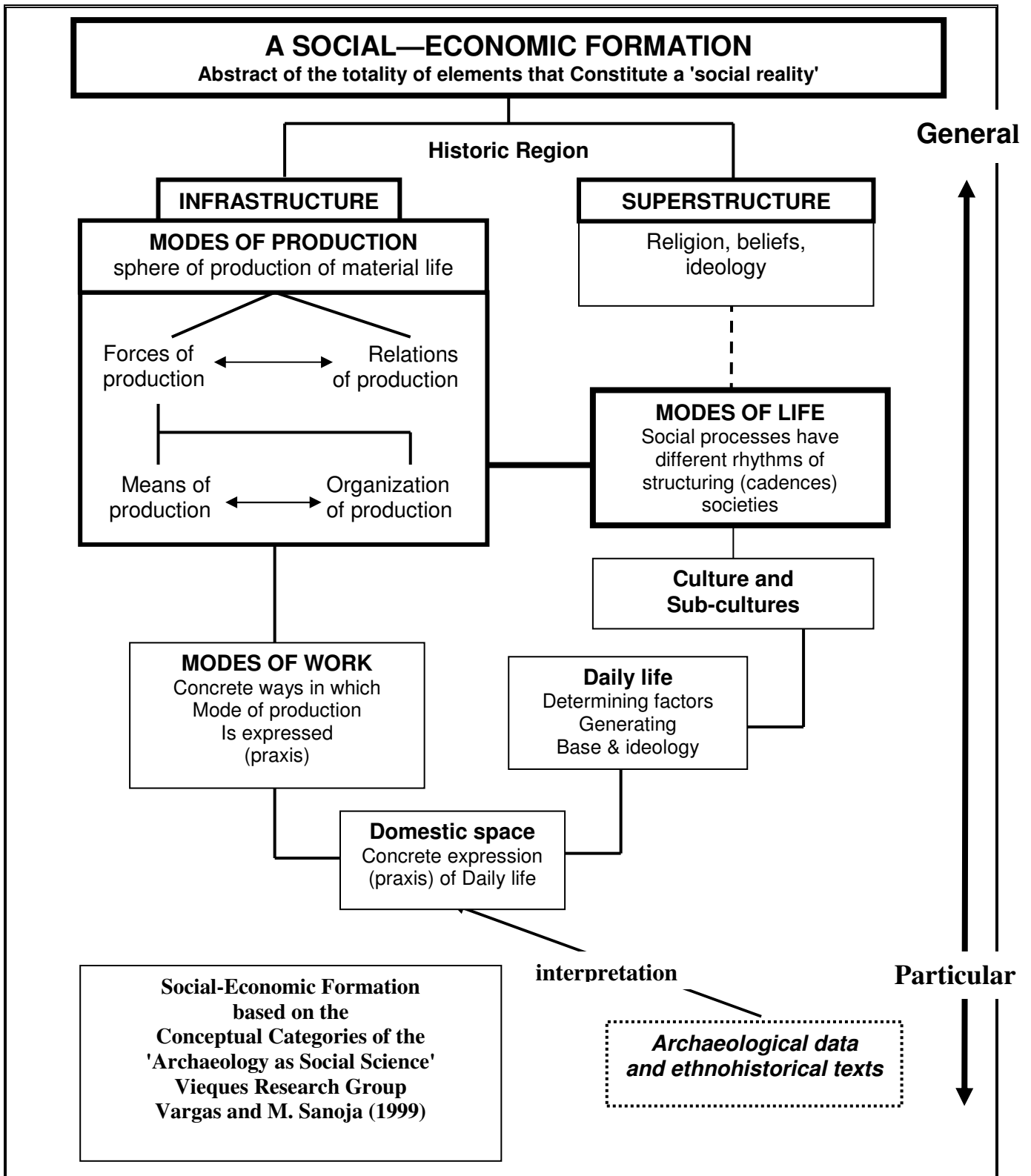


Figure 18. Social-economic formation model adapted from the Vieques “Latin American Social Archaeology Group” (Vargas and Sanoja (1999).

If there is one critique to be made at this point it must be the way in which 'community' is left undefined for archaeology. There is too much uncritical laxness in the way which archaeological inferences and explanation move—conceptually— from artifacts to 'community'. A site with midden deposits in a given spatial configuration is not a community, nor a society or a culture. Even when the authors are aware that such a 'community' is an abstract concept, there is a tendency to directly interpret archaeological traits of a given site as 'a community'. How one defines and abstracts 'community' from the archaeological data requires a set of explicit theoretical assumptions and a methodology that, hitherto, has remained obscure. If a characterization of the *social*-economic formation (that is, society itself) is the ultimate objective, again there is the problem of a lack of theoretical and methodological discussions on how social relations are being discerned (i.e., inferred) out data on the ground (site), especially since the favored conceptual (and classificatory) unit utilized in Cuba is the 'cultural variant' (see Figures 19, 20). Does that literally mean that all such 'cultural variants' are local variations of the *same* 'culture'? If so, the purported singular 'culture' would have to be the Cuban 'primitive communist' culture. If there is a cultural variant, does it imply a 'social variant' as well? In some instances 'a cultural variant' is equated, or appears to be coterminous with, 'a community' or 'a society', but these abstract concepts are not, by anyone's definition, interchangeable. How patterns of artifact traits/types are reconstituted as a community in contrast to a society or culture, or to variants thereof, is not something overtly discussed in most Cuban publications.

Although having reached the conclusion that only one single socio-economic formation and its corresponding primitive communist mode of production characterized pre-Columbian Cuba, Tabío and Rey acknowledged that their analysis presented numerous difficulties. These derived from "the slow development of the forces of production" and "the low celerity with which the social variations", in the end, would have to lead to changes in their socio-economic formation. They also added that: "the regional peculiarities"—that is, local environments—also produced "differences of some consideration in all this [historical] process" (Tabío and Rey 1966:9), leaving implicit the idea that historical contingency obscured evolutionary trends. In other words Tabío and Rey were wrestling with the perennial debates of cultural evolution on the one hand, and of historical contingency on the other.<sup>23</sup>

Since their orthodox Marxist view allows for only one mode of production and social-formation to have historically developed or evolved, all that is left to 'theorize' about are local or regional 'cultural variants' that express difference or variability through time and space. Change is then a matter of historical contingencies accounting for variations, while evolution was, in a sense, suspended: it started and ended with one socio-economic type of society lacking changes of sufficient magnitude to justify the emergence of a new 'species' of society (slave, feudal, etc.). Little wonder, then, that the focus has been on making sense of the classification and implications of 'cultural variants', of their

temporal sequencing and spatial distributions, and in documenting degrees of developmental complexity—altogether, goals that are not much different from those of culture history, albeit with a strong materialist basis.

The changes reflected by stages or levels of development (pre-agricultural to agricultural) were viewed largely as the result of external causes (migration, transculturation, environment), rather than understanding such changes from within society and culture. I suspect that the conviction of the existence of only a single social-economic formation is the main reason why the vast majority of publications these days are *not* concerned with theoretical discussions about modes of production but rather on how to best structure the details of the historical-developmental framework, focusing on the one conceptual unit that did offer variability: culture. In sum, the concern is with stages and levels of development of subsistence economy, as reflected by each cultural variant, which in turn is conceived as a variation of the same primitive communism. Guarch Delmonte (1981) summarized it best:

[Within the] Mode of production of the pre-class communities [there are] differences as a result of the gradual development of the forces of production, or as [as a result of] specific [circumstances], often the result of local developments, that were influenced to some extent by the environment. All these aspects conditioned the culture of the different Antillean groups and that of Cubans as well, of Cuban (Guarch Delmonte 1981: quoted from Valcárcel, personal communication 30/April/04; my translation and clarifications in straight brackets).

Differences between 'cultural variants' were to be 'explained' as manifestations that differed according to local environmental conditions; that is, as local adaptations (even if that word was not used). Cultural variants were, of course, based on norms inductively abstracted from typologies generated from the archaeological material record. The same sorts of broad 'events' and 'processes' for change/continuity invoked by culture historic and evolutionary archaeology (e.g., migration, diffusion, local invention, transculturation, acculturation; parallel, convergent or divergent developments) were also co-opted in 1970-80s as 'explanations' for change/continuity, and can still be appreciated in some of the individual articles in the *El Caribe Arqueológico* journal.

## 6. The Historic-Developmental Framework of Cuba's Primitive Communities

The framework characterizing the historical and evolutionary development of the primitive societies of Cuba was that of Tabío and Rey published in 1966. A revised version incorporating new data was also produced 18 years later by Tabío (1984). The last major revision, and incorporating new criteria, was developed by a team of about 35 Cuban archaeologists, under the general editorship of Guarch Delmonte (editor, 1990) in a CD-R format, entitled *Taíno: Arqueología de Cuba. Historia aborígen de Cuba según Datos Arqueológicos*, published in Mexico.<sup>24</sup> Although the author and

architect of the 1990 framework was Guarch Delmonte, the participation of such a large team of archaeologists necessarily entails a general acceptance of its validity and usefulness. With few modifications owing to new finds, the 1990 framework still remains operational today.

<b>PRIMITIVE COMMUNITIES OF CUBA</b> E. Tabío & E. Rey 1966			
<b>Development Level</b>	<b>Cultural Group</b>		<b>Chronology</b>
<b>AGRICULTURALISTS WITH CERAMICS</b>	<b>Arawaks</b>	<b>TAINO</b>	AD 1450-1520 (?)
		<b>SUBTAINO</b>	AD 800-1570 (?)
<b>INCIPIENT AGRICULTURE WITH CERAMICS</b>	<b>Mayari</b>		AD 800-1100
<b>GATHERERS- HUNTERS WITHOUT CERAMICS</b>	<b>Ciboney</b> Cayo Redondo Aspect		AD 1-1650 (?)
<b>HUNTERS- GATHERERS WITHOUT CERAMICS</b>	<b>Ciboney</b> Guayabo Blanco Aspect		1000 BC- AD 1000 (?)

**Figure 19. Tabío and Rey Chronological Scheme, 1966**

### *6.1 The 1966 Tabío and Rey Framework*

It was inevitable that the first framework developed early in the Revolution owed much to the classic cultural-chronological frameworks developed since the 1940s, particularly those by Osgood (1942), Rouse (1942), Pichardo Moya ([1942] 1990) Cosculluela (1946), and Morales Patiño (1952). Unlike previous frameworks, the 1966 framework did away with the concept of 'culture area', where a given geographic space and temporal block could only be represented by a single, dominant, and homogeneous cultural complex (Figure 19). Although only one social-economic formation—primitive communism—was considered to have developed in Cuba, Tabío and Rey (1966) recognized that different levels of development (complexity) had been attained throughout the history of pre-Columbian Cuba. They also claimed that these levels of development reflected a general evolutionary trend (stages) that had applicability worldwide. These levels of socio-economic development were distinguished by terms (concepts) familiar to functionalist culture historians and neo-evolutionists. The developmental stages were defined on the basis of diagnostic traits that, in turn, defined the

forces (raw materials, technology) of production and the means of production (hunting, fishing, farming), and by the presence/absence of one additional technological trait: pottery.

FRAMEWORK OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL TECHNO-ECONOMIC STAGES OF THE PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES OF CUBA				
TECHNO-ECONOMIC STAGES	PHASES	Cultural variants-groups	Temproral Span	
<i>Economy of Labor Exploitation</i>	<b>Early Spanish Colonial Phase</b>	Loma de El Convento Los Buchillones Chorro de Maita	AD 1600 AD 1500	
<b>Economy of Production</b> (food production)	<p>(<i>monton, slash &amp; burn</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p><b>Agricultural Phase</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>(<i>slash &amp; burn</i>)</p>	<p><b>Maisí</b></p> <p><b>Baní</b></p> <p><b>Cunagua-Jagua</b></p> <p><b>Bayamo</b></p> <p><b>Damajayabo</b></p>	AD 1500 to AD 800	
		<p><b>TRANSITION</b></p>	<p>LATE</p> <p><b>Mayarí</b></p> <p>EARLY</p> <p><b>Canimar</b> <i>Playita, -Canimar- Aguas Verdes</i></p>	AD 1000 to 200> BC (?)
<b>Economy of Appropriation</b> (food procurement)	<p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p><i>Fishing-gathering</i></p> <p><b>Pre-Agricultural Phase</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p><i>Hunting</i></p>	LATE	<b>Guacanayabo</b> <i>formerly Cayo Redondo Aspect</i>	AD 1500 to 100 BC
		MIDDLE	<b>Guanahacabibes</b> <i>formerly Guayabo Blanco Aspect</i>	AD 1000 to 2000 BC
		EARLY	<i>Levisa</i> <b>Seboruco</b>	2000 BC to 5000> BC

Figure 20. The most recent developmental framework developed by consensus among Cuban archaeologists in 1990 under the leadership of José Guarch Delmonte.



From least to most developed or complex, four stages were defined: (1) hunting-gathering/aceramic, (2) gathering-hunting/aceramic, (3) incipient agriculture/ceramic(?), and (4) agriculture/ceramic. Each level (and stage) of development correlates with one or more 'cultural groups' that would be replaced in the 1990 framework by 'cultural variants'. The cultural groups were the Ciboney, Mayarí and Arawak. The Ciboney were further distinguished in terms of a Guayabo Blanco and a Cayo Redondo Aspects, here loosely based on Osgood's (1942) use of the McKern's Midwestern Taxonomic System. The Arawak were also differentiated into Taíno and Sub-Taíno cultural 'groups'. The Ciboney and Arawak (Taíno and Sub-Taíno) taxa still carried with them the same loaded and biased connotations given by culture historians (e.g., Rouse 1942, 1948). Finally, each level of development, and its corresponding cultural group, was provided with an estimated, relative temporal span, given the near absence of radiocarbon dates for Cuba. The spatial distribution of the archaeological sites belonging to each of the five defined cultural groups was presented in five maps (Tabío and Rey 1966:11; ). (Later editions of *Prehistoria de Cuba* presented a single map of site distributions, with each cultural group marked by a different symbol.; see Figure 20).

The 1966 framework was fundamentally built with the same methodological premises as those utilized by 'orthodox' culture historians like Rouse (compare Rouse 1942:167, Table 7 and Figure 19). The main difference was that Rouse gave primacy to stylistic norms based on morphological or formal traits, whereas Tabío and Rey made an effort to recast these traits in terms of their *assumed* functions, which in turn were expected to cast light on the character of the forces and means of production. This difference in emphasis is not altogether too different than that between Julian Steward and Alfred Kroeber. Because of his interest in multilineal evolution and cultural ecology, Steward focused on 'core culture', comprised of all those traits that are related to subsistence economy, the rest being regarded as secondary traits. By way of contrast, because of Kroeber's interest in cultural patterns and configurations, he focused on 'value' traits (i.e., Steward's secondary) as best suited for constructing particular culture histories (Hatch 1973). Much like Kroeber, Rouse (cf. 1992) focused on configurations and patterns of styles to build cultural histories. Unlike Steward, Rouse was not particularly concerned with subsistence and techno-economic traits. These show as 'associated traits' rather than defining ones in Cruxent and Rouse's classic monograph on Venezuelan archaeology (1958-1961). Rouse's reasoning, I suspect, would go something like this: A fishing-gathering techno-economy at a given stage of development in Cuba is not unlike the fishing-gathering techno-economy elsewhere in the Circum-Caribbean; differences in culture are most salient by inferring the norms (via modal analysis) that produced particular artifact morphologies. E.g., Cuban 'scrapers' are of a different style/form than Puerto Rican ones, even when both are tools used for, say, fish processing. For Rouse what was interesting were the cultural differences exhibited in the

*morphology* of scraper types, not so much that they functioned to scrape fish-scales. Tabío would on the other hand focus on the function/use aspect (on the scraping) of the artifact. To him what mattered was not so much what was the shape of the scraper but what was it used for. At this level of analytical inference, there are no substantial differences between Tabío and, say, Steward.

The intermediate level of 'incipient agriculture' was proposed only *tentatively* by Tabío and Rey (1966), based on the investigations of several sites in the Mayarí region, particularly at Arroyo del Palo (Tabío and Guarch Delmonte 1966), then with only two <sup>14</sup>C dates of ca. AD 800 and AD 1200. In essence, the Mayarí data suggested that the artifact and ecofact assemblages were in every respect like the 'classic' Ciboney-Cayo Redondo assemblages, with the difference that ceramics were present. In those days, ceramic technology was regarded as an almost sure indicator of some form of agriculture being practiced. What was surprising for them was the absence of clay griddles (*burén*), which in those days was equated with baking cassava bread and thus of manioc as a staple crop.<sup>25</sup> And here is where the effects of normative archaeology—rather than applying dialectic reasoning—led the authors to classifying (Mayarí culture) as a bounded, static entity when Mayarí represented (at least in theory) a phenomenon in transition to something else. Their ambiguity was reflected in their either/or classification argument: either Mayarí was best interpreted as an agricultural group or as a Ciboney fishing-foraging group that in some cases it also happened to have simple pottery. The strong pull of the false notion that pottery necessarily entails agriculture, in the end, won the day.

Of course the primary evidence to resolve the question of agrarian status of Mayarí was extremely deficient. Paleobotanical recovery methods and analyses were absent from any archaeological site excavations at this time. Aboriginal diet patterns were over represented by the better preservation (and, thus, fuller analyses) of zooarchaeological elements. At least, hunting, fishing and capturing of animals were based on concrete remains, whereas plant gathering and foraging—even cultivation of either wild or domesticated plants—could only be conjectural and colored by 16<sup>th</sup> century ethnohistoric documents or modern ethnographic analogies. Lithic tools, such as hammerstones, *manos* and mortars were assumed to have processed only wild vegetation; most others were designated as tools for scraping, cutting, slicing, puncturing, or having multiple functions ('Swiss army knife'), albeit the correspondence of these with processing particular food groups (meats, mussels, fish) remained hypothetical.

In Tabío and Rey's (1966) discussion there was a lack of concern in addressing questions about the *processes* (the 'why') that might have led to the development (historical/evolutionary) of different 'cultural groups' beyond vague references to the 'local environment' being a variable to consider. But why and under what conditions and which 'forces' may have impelled an increased complexity in one or another direction over time remained vague. Why, for example, would hunter-gatherer 'Ciboney' groups that remained steady-fast in their foraging food quest technology change to 'incipient

agriculture' (with its concomitant uncertainties and risks) when so many others had continued to etch a successful living for millennia without it? The answer in 1966 was the same as Rouse's: knowledge of agriculture was brought about by immigrant farmers from Hispaniola. In fact, Tabío and Rey (1966:108) admitted that Mayarí ceramics shared various traits with Haiti's Macady (Ostionan Ostionoid) and Meillac styles (Meillacan Ostionoid). The implication is that agricultural knowledge and pottery in this incipient stage may have been, ultimately, introduced and adopted instead of being independently homegrown. What troubled Tabío most was the absence of clay griddles, which equaled absence of Cassáva bread. But why should this trouble him when plenty of other staple meals derived from root-crops could be invoked?

The agricultural stage was largely understood to be the result of migration from first Meillacan and later Chican Ostionoid (to use Rouse's latest terms) groups from Hispaniola into eastern Cuba. The Meillacan Ostionoid, arriving earlier (ca. AD 800), spread westward displacing local hunter-fisher and gatherer Ciboney groups. The Meillacan were regarded as less complex (thus labeled as Sub-taíno) and associated to what Rouse (1942) identified as Baní culture (Tabío and Rey 1966:126-127, 156). Although lacking evidence, Tabío and Rey (1966) proposed that a slash and burn (swidden) agriculture was introduced by Sub-taíno cultures. The Chican Ostionoid (i.e., Taíno), who were thought to have migrated later, were regarded as a more elaborate and complex culture, brought in new agricultural knowledge in the form of *montón* (artificial topsoil mound), a technique described by 16<sup>th</sup> Century chroniclers for Hispaniolan Taínos. The Taíno cultural 'group' was thought to be limited to easternmost Cuba, not having had sufficient time to expand further west because of the arrival of the Spanish. In short, the explanations for the change from fishing/hunting and gathering to proto-agriculture and agriculture were faithful to previous culture-historic formulations, particularly Rouse's.

There is no doubt, however, that Tabío and Rey's tentative postulation of an intermediate, proto-agricultural stage was their key contribution. Although they generally bought the orthodox culture history model based on migration and diffusion, they at least showed ambivalence with respect to the status of Mayarí. They were not entirely convinced of Mayarí's affiliation to and derivation from Rouse's Macady or Meillac cultures. The ambivalence however was first and foremost a question of lumping/splitting classification, not of fundamental epistemological problems with the normative approach of culture history.

## ***6.2 The Revised Frameworks of 1984 and 1990***

By the early 1980s it was clear that the framework could no longer cope with the large number of new archaeological finds accrued since 1966. As a result, Tabío (1984) presented a revised version of the 1966 framework (Figure 20; for sites see map on page 1). From simple to complex, three stages

of development are proposed, each of which is based on the 'diagnostic' techno-economic (subsistence) traits: (1) Pre-agricultural/pre-ceramic; (2) Proto-agricultural; (3) Agricultural/ceramic (Figure 21). Each of these is divided into several (up to three) phases of development, each with a particular chronological span. Instead of formally defining cultural groups or variants for each phase within each stage, Tabío proceeded to summarize the techno-economic characteristics and diagnostic artifact types from what he evidently regarded as key sites. Numerous sites with 'simple' pottery and a predominantly pre-agricultural techno-economic emphasis (i.e., the former Ciboney-Guayabo Blanco or Cayo Redondo) were classified into a 'proto-agricultural' stage, still conceived as transitional. But an abundance of sites and more radiocarbon dates were taken as an indication that the hypothesized incipient or proto-agricultural phase was a wider phenomenon—a pattern—and not a 'fluke' (i.e., the unique Mayarí cluster of sites). This 'stage' was no longer tentative but regarded as a valid and useful one (Tabío 1984:45-46).

- **Early Phase (4000 BC-1000 BC) of the Pre-Agricultural/aceramic Stage.** The earliest occupation for this phase dates to  $5140 \pm 170$  BP or cal. 4250-3700 BC at 1 sigma from the site of Levisa (Wilson et al. 1998: Table 1)].<sup>26</sup> Here the early components of the sites in the Levisa and Seboruco areas are briefly described and presumably represent the same long-lived cultural 'group' or 'variant' generally recognized as Seboruco in other works (Guarch Delmonte editor, 1990). But in effect this 'cultural variant' (Seboruco) is a cultural *tradition*—hardly a community or a culture— lasting over three millennia. Nevertheless, Wilson et al. (1998) have recently reviewed the hypothesis of a Belizean (Central American) origin and have concluded that it is still viable, even though the suite of radiocarbon dates from Colha, Belize are no earlier and largely contemporaneous to those from Levisa or Barrera-Mordán. Cuban authors have not discounted yet that in this and especially the subsequent pre-agricultural/aceramic phases (e.g. Canímar) there may have been migrations out of Florida into Cuba (Dacal and Moure 1996).
- **Middle Phase (2000 BC-AD 1000) of the Pre-Agricultural/aceramic Stage.** This phase corresponds to the former cultural group designated as Ciboney-Guayabo Blanco Aspect. To describe the diagnostic characteristics of this phase Tabío (1984:42-44) focused on Cueva Funche (Guanahacabibes Peninsula), Guayabo Blanco (Bahía Cochinos swamps), and Perico-1 Cave (Pinar del Río). Tabío further notes greater variability in terms of site size and location, and more elaborate burial practices. The pictographic tradition is strongly suspected to have initiated early in this phase, though an earlier, pre 2000 BC beginning date is not discounted (cf. Guarch Delmonte, editor, 1990).
- **Late Phase (100 BC-AD 1500) of the Pre-Agricultural/aceramic Stage.** This phase corresponds to the former cultural group designated as Ciboney-Cayo Redondo Aspect. It is regarded as an outgrowth from the Middle Phase, with greater emphasis in grinding tools

(mortars, pestles, manos; many polished) than before, with a flaked chert (silex) technology (rare to absent in the Middle Phase) and, in some instances, more elaborate burial practices than before. Elaborate lithic daggers (*dagolitos*), spherical polished stones and other eccentric ground stone sculptures of purported 'ceremonial' function, are as well frequent. Although Tabío (1984:44-45) mentioned regions (e.g. south coast, Camagüey or the mouth of Cauto River) and some individual sites (Los Niños Cave, Sancti Spiritus Province) there was no attempt to formally establish a 'cultural variant' or 'group'.

- **Proto-agricultural Stage (100 BC-AD 1000).** Described as a 'transitional' stage, it now recognizes an earlier phase that included the assemblages of Canímar, Playitas and Aguas Verdes and a later phase that included several Mayarí site components (the same Mayarí 'cultural group' of Tabío and Guarch [1966]). Tabío (1984:45) argues that much of the lithic and shell tool kits and artifacts in this stage correspond to the same assemblages of the Late Phase of the Pre-Agricultural Stage, albeit distinguished by the "limited use of ceramic vessels, almost always small-sized and simple, with little decoration, if any at all". By the later Mayarí times, pottery did become somewhat more decorated, but still regarded as 'simple'. Thus, were it not for the presence of pottery, such sites would have been (and were) otherwise classified in the pre-agricultural stage (i.e., Middle/Late Phase—Ciboney-Cayo Redondo). He again remarked on the total absence of clay-griddles (*burenes*) which, for Tabío, indicated the absence of baking cassava bread made from manioc (*Manihot esculenta* CRANTZ) and thus an indirect proof on the absence of a 'fully developed agriculture', whatever that might mean. Whether 'proto-agriculture' or 'incipient agriculture', both refer to the same idea of transition, of 'neither/nor'. However, 'incipient' remained vaguely conceptualized; it was not discussed in reference to any theories available at the time regarding the origin and evolution of tropical agricultural systems. In spite of it all, the fact that some of these proto-agricultural complexes with ceramics were now dating as early as 100-200 BC ruled-out the possibility of an Ostionan or Meillacan Ostionoid origin for early Cuban pottery. It also opened up the possibility that incipient agriculture may have been locally developed. Even though Tabío (1984) did not explicitly say so, I am convinced that he was well aware that in Hispaniola, a similar phenomenon had been identified at El Caimito. This complex with ceramics *and* without clay griddles, dating between 200 BC and AD 120 fitted well with the notion of an 'incipient' or proto-agricultural stage (Veloz Maggiolo et al. 1973). Like the Cuban situation, without its pottery, the remaining El Caimito artifact assemblage and food remains would have comfortably fitted pre-agricultural and pre-ceramic complexes such as El Provenir.

Veloz Maggiolo et al. (1974:12) had already rejected the hypothesis that the presence of pottery in El Caimito could be explained in terms of contacts with late Saladoid groups since these arrived no

earlier than AD 500 to eastern Hispaniola (i.e., La Romana style/culture) from Puerto Rico (Cuevas style/culture). Now Cuba and Hispaniola seemed to share parallel developments from pre-agriculture to proto-agriculture and, seemingly, a development of pottery technology unrelated to the Saladoid or later Meillacan/Ostionan Ostionoid series. Veloz Maggiolo (cf. 1991), however, would later invoke non-Saladoid long distance migration from Colombia or Venezuela to account for the appearance of pottery (see Ulloas' discussion, in [Curet et al. 2005](#)).

- **Agricultural Stage (AD 800-1500).** This stage bears the shortest chronological span in Cuba (700 years). Like the earlier framework, a distinction was maintained between Sub-Taíno and Taíno cultural groups, with the latter being regarded as the most complex. Their presence in Cuba is largely understood in terms of migrations from Hispaniola and subsequent expansion and diffusion in Cuba. Three features are highlighted by Tabío (1984:46-50). The first is an early slash-and-burn (swidden) agricultural field (*conuco*) preparation technique (Sub-Taíno) to which later the *montón* (artificial topsoil mounds) is added (Taíno). Second, he postulated an emphasis in tuber cultivation, at least manioc and sweet potatoes, as staple crops. Third, he stressed the continued importance gathering and small game hunting among agricultural groups. While zooarchaeological remains do support the latter, the paleobotanical research shines for its absence (but see; Reyes Cardero 1997; Delgado et al. 2000); the nature of plant food procurement and production it is primarily inferred from 16<sup>th</sup> Century ethnohistoric accounts, but as yet poorly documented through archaeology.

The construction of the 1966 and 1984 frameworks is anchored in procedures and methodological assumptions that do not substantially differ from those used by 'normative' archaeologists—like Rouse—steeped in a culture historic approach, albeit with an emphasis on subsistence and functional inferences from artifact assemblages rather than based on morphology or aesthetics (stylistic). The Marxist dialectic method for discussing change and variability, or contradictions and tensions is difficult to appreciate in the two texts, so 'loaded' with traditional culture historic methods and assumptions underlying classification.

### 6.3 The 1990 Framework by Guarch and Colleagues

Guarch Delmonte (editor, 1990) and around 35 colleagues proposed yet another revised techno-economic and developmental framework for Cuba (Figure 21). This time around the only major change was that the stage would use the criterion of whether the basic subsistence economy was based on the *appropriation* of the products directly from nature (food procurement) or whether it was fundamentally based on the *production* of food. The stage thus represented the highest taxon in the overall classificatory framework. Each stage was then subdivided into phases: (1) Pre-Agricultural, (2) Proto-Agricultural, and (3) Agricultural. Each phase could be further split into early, middle and

late developmental phases, when the data so warranted. Cultural variants representative of each phase were then explicitly identified and described.

For the most part, each cultural variant turns out to be, in effect, a cultural *tradition* lasting from as little as 700 years to as much as three millennia. In Figure 20, I have tried to illustrate the framework using the same 'architecture' as was used by Tabío and Rey in 1966. Aside from the novelty of the stages being based on appropriation versus production economies, the other innovation lied in adding new cultural variants and/or changing their nomenclature. The former Ciboney-Guayabo Blanco Aspect became Guanahacabibes, whereas Ciboney-Cayo Redondo Aspect became Guanacayabo. However, I believe these are largely cosmetic changes, for the traits upon which these are constructed have not fundamentally changed. The appropriation versus production distinction did not resolve the 'transition' problem. The conceptual distance between appropriation and pre-agriculture or production and agriculture could be measured in microns rather than meters. No one has problems with either end of the appropriation (or pre-agriculture)—production (or agriculture) continuum, but it so happens that it is within the huge gray area between these two poles where much of Cuba's pre-Columbian archaeology is 'locked' and which contains the largest number of sites.

The 1990 CD-R publication edited by Guarch Delmonte, however, provides far more details than Tabío did in his 1984 revision. It is a good synoptic (descriptive, interpretative) discussion about the diagnostic features for each stage, phase, and cultural variant. Despite its generality (as this was meant for a broad readership), I found this CD-R most useful to gain a general sense of how archaeologists perceived and structured Cuba's Pre-Columbian past, even though it does lack chapters on colonial period archaeology.

The CD-R text is organized into chapters for each stage and phase. For each phase condensed discussions are given on the same topics. The topics include: origin and chronology; human physiognomy; settlement characteristics; fire utilization; economic activities, namely, hunting, fishing, capturing, animal domestication, farming; transportation/communication routes and sources of raw materials. These are followed by the characterization of the means of production or manufacturing industries; namely flake lithics, ground-stones, shells, bones, wood, ceramics, basketry, textiles and cordage. Next, the relations of production are described with reference to superstructural data (if known). The latter topics include language, society, family composition, aspects of ideology (burial practices, dress and body adornments) and, finally, art manifestations (including rock art).

Inevitably, much of what is said about, for example, relations of production or about society in general is largely conjectural and either colored by ethnohistoric documents or by self-fulfilling predictions emanating from orthodox Marxist theory. For example, the Guanahacabibes and the

Guanacayabo fisher-gatherer cultural variants (and societies) are characterized along the following lines:

[While] they were separated from the primitive horde by millennia of social evolution, they cannot be considered 'developed primitive communities' either. In the Antilles this term is reserved those groups who overcame the economic stage of appropriation and who possessed a well established [economy] of production; that is, true agriculture. Considered in such terms, it is reasonable that these Fisher-Gatherers were grouped into gentile (kin-based) communities, with the social nucleus composed of various clans or gens, where they practiced a gentile dual matrimony [exogamy exchange?]. . . the level of the forces of production are ultimately more clearly defined by the archaeology and the characteristics of the natural environment as it developed through history, [thus, these data] induced us to consider that the fundamental economic nucleus of that society was, indeed, that of the gentile community (Guarch Delmonte, editor 1990: Chapter 1, heading 'La Fase Pescadores-Recolectores'; sub-heading 'La Sociedad'; my translation and comments in straight brackets).

The description goes on to give details about family composition and how the economic activities were organized and so on. On occasion, as in the above quote, the ghost of classical evolutionary jargon, via Morgan, still retains currency—Primitive hordes? At any rate, as far as I can tell no archaeological excavations of a preceramic/preagricultural site or group of sites, neither in Cuba nor the Caribbean, has yet generated the necessary minimal data to discuss the nature of their social organization. Indeed, there is as yet no archaeological data that could support any description of a fisher-gatherer household—as a the key unit of economic production and reproduction. I believe that defining such unit purely from archaeological contexts has to be the single most important priority, not only in Cuba but also the Caribbean. Presently, inferences about economic organization rely far too much on midden deposits. With very little data linking midden garbage to residential or other activity areas, middens alone will generate little information about socio-economic dynamics of the community. Even when house structures are defined, as is the case of the Taíno village of Cocal-1 in Puerto Rico, inferences about the social-economic dynamics are still fraught with problems (Oliver 2003). I am, however, an eternal optimist and am convinced that future research focusing on household (and "cave-hold") archaeology should illuminate far more clearly the economic organization of 'primitive communities' than what we have thus far accomplished by focusing largely on middens.

## **7. The 'Proto-Agriculture' in Pre-Columbian Cuba: Discussion**

One of the most fascinating subjects currently addressed by Cuban archaeologists refers to the questions surrounding the nature and timing of the so-called proto-agricultural groups in Cuba. On the one hand, it is a fugitive concept that refuses to be tied into a neatly bounded taxonomic category and, on the other, it encompasses the key questions needed to shed light on the processes and



conditions that stimulated the rise of subsistence techno-economies based on food *production* among some, though not all, aboriginal groups. There is the question of origin: Was it an independent, autochthonous development in Cuba or was it related to a wider phenomenon (interaction) in which Cuba participated? Or was it, as some had claimed in the past, the result of migrations into Cuba of 'fully developed' agricultural populations? There is also the question of when *cultivation* (in contrast to agriculture) was first initiated and of what were the associated pattern(s) of disturbance in the landscape. In fact, what and how early were the first signs of anthropogenic disturbances of the vegetation in Cuba? What plants were cultivated as opposed to gathered? Which cultivated plants were domesticated and which were wild? Were 'house gardens' or experimental plots maintained by these groups? Does the overall diet of a group reflect a broad (generalized) or a narrow (specialized) diet spectrum? Which of the food plant sources are those that ranked highest (if any) in terms of efficiency and how these compare to animal food sources? How mobile or sedentary were these groups? How much variation there is in population or group size and density? Finally, what were the processes/causes that led from one kind of subsistence pattern to another? While these other related questions still await answers, they are nevertheless being asked with renewed insistence today.

The intellectual history and background that gave rise to the proto-agricultural stage or phase has been discussed in depth by Godo (1997) and by Ulloa and Valcárcel (2002; Ulloa [in Curet et al. 2005](#)). As Godo (1977:19) noted, already in the 1940s Herrera Fritot (1943) and Royo (1946), argued against Rouse's (1942) characterization of the hunter-fisher and gatherers by emphasizing the mixed nature of food resources (i.e., broad spectrum diet) and raised the possibility of plant cultivation—not just gathering. Since then much of the discussion focused on what would be the necessary and sufficient criteria to identify (classify) archaeological complexes that did not comfortably fit either the pre-agricultural or agricultural end to the food quest spectrum. The selection of different criteria (be it simple pottery or particular types of lithics or ground-stones) led to inclusion or exclusion of particular complexes as being either agricultural or not. Therefore, membership in the proto-agricultural category varied according to criteria favored by the archaeologist (Ulloa and Valcárcel 2002; Godo 1997). With membership in a constant state of flux, it becomes evident that what needs to be re-evaluated is the very concept of 'proto-agriculture'. Ulloa ([in Curet et al. 2005](#)) has eloquently examined the various approaches used in grappling with what is meant, in archaeological terms, by proto-agricultural. After noting the weaknesses and limitations of each approach—largely concerned with normative classification and chronology—Ulloa reached the following conclusions:

- (1) that predominantly hunting-gathering societies using pottery in the Caribbean—as elsewhere in the Americas—is a common not an anomalous phenomenon; in other words, pottery is not an index for the presence of agriculture, as Oyuela-Caycedo (1995) has demonstrated for San Jacinto-1 in Colombia or as Roosevelt has argued for Brazil and Guyana (Roosevelt 1995, 1997; Williams 1997; cf. Oliver 2001);

- (2) that in the South American tropical lowlands the presence of very early ceramics in Archaic contexts has been correlated with a shift from a peripheral to a dominant role of plant consumption, thus a similar situation might as well be expected for the Caribbean; albeit, I would not venture to suggest that this is always the case (see Oyuela-Caycedo 1995).
- (3) that resource-rich environments can/will promote the onset of sedentarism and potentially lead to incipient or initial agriculture (see also Lathrap 1977; Oliver 2001);
- (4) that a 'unilateral' approach has dominated the study of the transition to agriculture process in detriment of a clear understanding of socio-economic changes.

Rather than focusing purely on classificatory issues of style and chronology Ulloa advocates a multi-pronged or 'multilateral' strategy where sets of criteria are chosen for their appropriateness for "evaluating the phenomenon [transition to agriculture] in its variability and spatial relations". Ulloa notes that it is desirable to "disentangle" what are local from regional manifestations and that we should focus on the broader socio-economic patterns. Although focusing on the materialist (subsistence) economic base, Ulloa's discussions are not strictly Marxist, nor he explicitly advocated a dialectic approach. He appears to be receptive to a variety of theoretical approaches so long as these are focused on resolving questions regarding socio-economics. The influence of Veloz Maggiolo and Meggers are palpable in Ulloa and Valcárcel's discussions (2002); albeit Ulloa (in Curet et al. 2005) is less concerned with filling-in conceptual niche-categories, such as 'way of life' or 'mode of production' that in reiterating the need to gather archaeological evidence about how broad socio-economic patterns formed and changed through time and space.

I am in agreement with Ulloa's plea to move beyond chronology, 'crude' functionalism, and from typological arguments that result in endlessly arguing about *the* proper (lumping/splitting) classification, whether of a stage, phase, cultural group or artifacts. It was Rouse who once, long ago pointed, out to me that there is not one singular road to proper classification (and assumptions) and that, rather, classifications must respond to the questions being addressed. Thus there ought to be 'best fit' between kinds of questions and kinds of ordering and organizing data sets. I also agree that until context-sensitive data are systematically gathered from archaeological sites (broad area excavations), inferences about socio-economic behaviors at an intra-site (e.g., household) level will be largely conjectural or unduly filled-in by ethnohistoric or ethnographic analogies, or supplied by what Marxism theorizes these should be.

In my view there are two basic deficiencies facing the proto-agricultural 'problem' that hopefully will be surmounted in due time. First is the need to obtain sufficient suites of absolute dating (<sup>14</sup>C, AMS) for a much, much larger number of archaeological sites and diverse contexts (not just midden refuse). Such an array of dates are indispensable if we are to shed light on processes of

persistence/change in patterns of subsistence economy, especially since the 'transition' is likely to be a process lasting different spans of time in different localities.<sup>27</sup>

The second deficiency is perhaps just as critical: paleobotanical research programs should become a standard fixture of fieldwork, not just in Cuba but everywhere in the Caribbean (e.g., Newsom 1995). It should focus not only on human habitation loci but also on the surrounding landscape. Cuba already is beginning to deal with bio-archeological aspects of diet and is increasing the arrays of absolute dates, but there is still an acute shortage of archaeobotanists—and the latter is a Caribbean-wide problem. Other experimental techniques, such as starch and blood residue analyses on tools and artifacts, along with standard pollen, phytolith, and macro/micro-botanical analyses are indispensable if we are ever to address questions about plant use, cultivation and agriculture. As noted earlier, it is the lack of plant and vegetation data, and particularly the detection of anthropogenic disturbances, that has resulted in the an impressionistic over emphasis on the 'animal' side of the food economy and thus reified fishing-hunting-capturing of animals at the expense of plants. In a real sense what matters is the total diet and what each dietary element means in terms of labor organization and the subsistence economy of a given archaeological community.

While, as Ulloa suggested, we should be considering broad patterns, I still would argue that we must constantly shift between broad and specific generalizations. I prefer to first apply high-resolution archaeology at a micro-regional context in several key study areas in Cuba and other islands such as Hispaniola, before attempting generalize about broader patterns. The 'broad picture' still depends on the substance and quality of the data gained from a host of carefully selected (paradigmatic) 'little pictures' generated from the site and its immediate food catchment area.

Ulloa Hung (in [Curet et al. 2005](#)) is also correct in voicing dissatisfaction with the stranglehold that the normative culture-historic model had in repressing the possibility that (a) the pottery was probably independently developed in Cuba; (b) that notions of cultivation or, even farming, could and probably did develop in Hispaniola and Cuba *independently* from the migratory expansion followed by the bearers of the Saladoid series, into Hispaniola and by the later bearers of the Ostionan(?), Meillacan or Chican Ostionoid series into eastern Cuba.

The possibility of plant cultivation (wild and/or domesticated) in the context of a dominant fishing-hunting and gathering economy has a fairly broad geographic distribution dating at least as far back as 7000 BC without pottery and as early as 5600 BC with pottery in the tropical lowlands of South America (cf. Oliver 2001). The question is whether first colonizers of Cuba (and other Caribbean islands) already included groups practicing house gardening cultivation and/or forest management strategies or whether that knowledge and practice was entirely developed within Cuba and/or other islands of the Caribbean, out of an earlier food hunting-foraging economy, perhaps out of a Mordán-

Barrera or Levisa-Seboruco. I am skeptical of the claim that groups represented by Levisa-Seboruco or Barrera-Mordán were all characterized by an economy of appropriation (procurement), merely plucking-out food sources growing in nature. Doubtlessly these groups did so but whether exclusively so is another matter.

Has the archaeological evidence from Seboruco and Guanacayabo (Guayabo Blanco) conclusively refuted that their economy was *not* in fact 'proto-agricultural' from the start? Could it not be that in the Caribbean there never was a group/tradition that did not have from its inception some form of transitional 'incipient' agriculture or proto-agriculture? It may well be that 'pre-agricultural' is as much a 'transition' as would be any other intermediate stage in the quest for, and use of, food, if from the very first human occupation in the Caribbean, domesticated/wild plant cultivation and wild plant gathering, and/or harvesting seed/fruits from managed forests were already practiced. And the dependency on (proportion of) plant cultivation versus plant gathering may have varied widely from group to group and through time—and not necessarily in one or the other direction (i.e., toward or away from agriculture). Of course, under certain circumstances, agricultural groups can 'reverse' the direction toward hunting-fishing and foraging of exclusively wild resources either temporarily or on a more permanent basis, as has been repeatedly shown around the world and for different time periods, at least since the inception of the Holocene (see articles *in* Baleé 2002; Posey 1994; Politis 1996; Oliver 2001:81-82).

What is surprising to me is that after Ulloa ([in Curet et al. 2005](#)) made an excellent argument favoring a local development toward incipient agriculture and invention of pottery, he still felt required to invoke long distance migrations to explain the origin of pottery in terms that are more 'migrationistic' than Rouse ever was. The implication would be that the bearers of such foreign pottery knowledge into Cuba stimulated new ways of preparing and processing plants into edible meals (i.e., cooking), thereby creating the conditions by which plant gathering diversified and intensified, and thus leading to increased dependency on plants. The long distance migration theory is no doubt due to the influence and respect that Ulloa Hung has for both Meggers' and Veloz Maggiolo's theories. Perhaps Ulloa's advocacy for a 'multilateral' approach led him to give equal opportunity to such speculations.

Meggers' hyper-diffusionist theories, such as the transpacific migration of Jomon fishermen into Valdivia, coastal Ecuador, have been duly refuted on the face of abundant and imposing evidence to the contrary. Likewise, Zucchi's theory of a Cedeñoid migration from the Orinoco into the Upper Llanos and through the Yaracuy Gap, then navigating directly to Hispaniola, and now Cuba also, is purely speculative. The relationship between the as yet undated Camay complex (in Lara State, Venezuela) and Valdivia (Ecuador) is at best hazy, and its relevance to the Caribbean's 'early pottery' is certainly obscure. True, Ulloa is only mentioning all possible sources and has made clear that he

has not yet bought into these theories; but he is also ambivalent when he warns us that "these cannot be completely discounted". I am certain that they can and have been discounted. Instead, my bet is with Ulloa's initial instincts, that Archaic period pottery was developed or invented independently and not derived from contacts with, or invasions by, potters of the Ostionan, Meillacan or Chican subseries. If anything, one might argue—depending on dates—that the source of the early Archaic pottery in Cuba is in the Dominican Republic (e.g., El Caimito-Musié Pedro) or vice versa.

It goes without saying that the presence and use of the early Archaic pottery is not sufficient to deduce agriculture, incipient or otherwise. Pottery was first invented or developed for a good many different reasons, other than for cooking or rendering edible previously inedible or hard to digest plants, which in any case could be either domesticated or not, cultivated or gathered from the wild (Oyuela-Caycedo 1995). If the use of pottery is demonstrated to have involved cooking (e.g., carbon soot residues) then certainly it is a worthwhile distinction to maintain from those groups that did not. But it only refers to method of preparation, not what it is being prepared, unless organic residues can be identified. What needs to be specified in every instance is how the incorporation and use of pottery altered the nature of the subsistence economy. The mere replacement of a lithic bowl or gourd vessel for a ceramic vessel without entailing changes in the nature or quality of the food will not be all that significant in regard to subsistence economy (although it could be significant as status marker, or other social reasons).

My visceral feeling is that if we will eventually discover that, at least between Puerto Rico and Cuba, there was a broad, sloping horizon of fisher-hunter-gatherer groups exhibiting a relatively high degree of sedentarism who: (a) cultivated wild *and* domesticated plants, (b) maintained house gardens or experimental plots, (c) managed and tended forest food resources, and (d) hunted/captured terrestrial and marine animals, and (d) some may have used pottery for cooking, while others did not. I would venture to predict that the relative proportions between animal and plant consumption would relatively equal in terms of dietary efficiency. Variations in terms of emphasis would be expected and partly dependent upon the resource richness and diversity of the catchment areas. I would also expect that the breadth of diet not to be at either end of the diet spectrum (i.e., neither broad nor narrow).

Such 'incipient' or proto-agricultural Archaic communities probably diverged from and continued developing alongside Archaic groups with an exclusively appropriating (fishing/hunting-foraging) economy, although, as warned earlier, it could well be that from the start (circa 5000-4000 BC) the dependency on plant *cultivation* and wild plant management (curation) was far more substantial than thus far is contemplated.

I would expect that the development of pottery would take place after the Archaic "proto-agricultural" pattern, and its variants, had crystallized—and dates for pottery thus far would suggest


several centuries before 300 BC. It is probably wrong to single out those Archaic groups that had pottery (e.g., Canímar, Caimanes-III or El Caimito, Musié Pedro) from those that did not as being the best candidates for eventually developing agriculture or having an advantage in adopting agriculture, as it is still likely that both had contributed, even if in different ways, to agricultural knowledge. Indeed, by the time Ostionan(?), Meillacan or Chican Ostionoid groups from Hispaniola arrived to Cuba or had established close contacts, the agriculture was introduced into a Cuba that had already a substantial number of Archaic communities that had diverse food production economies that included cultivation as described above. The interesting question would be how the introduced patterns were selectively incorporated into the pre-existing economic systems and, vice versa, how the prevailing Archaic patterns (and local conditions) affected the introduced agricultural systems.


## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the issues I have raised about archaeology in Cuba since the start of the Revolution do show a trend toward ever more diverse research topics, issues and problems being tackled, particularly by the new generation. There is also a different sort of energy and enthusiasm for new and even radical approaches (from Cuba's perspective) to address their particular research problems. There is, in my view, an eagerness to explore, and experiment with theories and methods that, based on my reading of the materials published, was not there in the mid-1980s. Some of this is also the result of the effects of the *Período Especial* policies, but a lot of it I put down to the benefits of joint Cuban-international ventures thereby widening the window of dialogue and producing diverse voices. By this I do not imply that Marxist archaeology is dying or will necessarily decline in Cuba. On the contrary, because of a willingness to consider alternative approaches—even those falling in the positivistic camp—Marxist archaeology could not but be enriched, precisely as McGuire (2002) has portrayed in his book and the contributors to this volume (i.e., in Curet et al. 2005) demonstrate.

### The Aftermath (2008)

I would like to first and foremost thank my Cuban *amigo*, Roberto Valcárcel Rojas, for having provided me with reference materials missing from my library and to Valcárcel and Lourdes Domínguez for their insightful comments and guidance. It was thought back in 2003-4 by S. Dowdy (one of the editors in Curet et al. 2005) that some of the contents of this paper would have caused Cuban colleagues troubles or, worse, their jobs. This was most decidedly *not* so, as both Lourdes Domínguez and Roberto Valcárcel (and many others later) clearly and unambiguously communicated to me in the course of preparing this paper. Shannon Dowdy was simply wrong and overreacted to

(U.S.) political correctness that in effect, resulted in censorship. La Rosa Corzo (the other editor) had correctly indicated that my contribution exceeded the requirements of a “wrap-up” chapter (i.e., this paper) to close the book but I was not willing to cut it down to size or to sanitize my assessments of the intellectual history of Cuban archaeology and of its main players. It is for these reasons that I re-titled this paper as ‘Cuban Soliloquy’ as it seems that a frank dialogue overcoming political correctness gone amuck was not yet in the horizon. In any case, to avoid causing any further problems for the first editor, L. A. Curet and the prompt publication of the *‘Dialogues in Cuban Archaeology’* book. All in all, this book marked an important contribution to the re-engagement of Cuban and U.S.-based archaeologists in decades. 

Ironically, the original version (almost identical to this one) of this paper is now being used by Lourdes Domínguez in her teaching of Cuban archaeology in Havana (with my consent) and has been fairly well distributed among archaeologists in Cuba. *And, no one has lost a job as a result!* I have  given up updating this or attempting to publish it elsewhere. In the last four years there have been enormous advances not only in Cuban but also Caribbean archaeology. For example, my prediction of Archaic cultivators has been abundantly confirmed by starch residue analyses provided (and published) by Jaime Pagán Jiménez and by the recent publications by Reniel Rodríguez Ramos (including his 2007 PhD thesis). This paper is now mostly of historic interest and, despite the advances since 2004, I think it still provides a useful introduction to Cuban archaeology, one that links the specific case studies in the second part of Curet et al. (2005) volume and which gave further in-depth insights to the history of archaeology presented in the first part of that book. It also adds the various cultural and chronological frameworks that have dominated Cuban archaeology, thus helping to situate the importance of the contributed papers in the ‘Dialogues’ book.

Antonio Curet has been forgiving and understanding while I worked on this chapter, especially during the difficult time I had with the two other editors, even if this chapter, in the end, was not to become part of the ‘Dialogues’, becoming rather a soliloquy.

Leonard Frank graciously furnished the ‘La Havana Plaza Vieja’ photograph (for which I secured copyright), while Roberto Valcárcel, Liz Graham and Jago Cooper provided the illustrations for Chorro de Maíta and Los Buchillones: to all of them my deepest appreciation.

I wish to dedicate this paper to the memory of Manuel Rivero de La Calle, José Guarch Delmonte and Ramón Dacal Moure, giants of Cuban archaeology.

It goes without saying that all errors and misunderstandings are entirely my responsibility.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Thomas' tenor appears to me as dispassionate and balanced in analyzing the early history, yet more incisive and critical (but still equilibrated) as history overtakes the '*batistazo*'. Saney, on the other hand, is clearly critical of the current global neo-liberal and free trade economics and bemoans the dismissal of Cuba as a successful, alternative model for other developing nations of the South. Both Saney (2004) and Thomas (2001), however, backed their interpretations with profusion of reference sources.

<sup>2</sup> I have no access to Guarch Delmonte's 1981 dissertation. Thanks to Roberto Valcárcel, I received some pertinent quotes he extracted regarding Guarch's attitudes toward non-Marxist approaches. Much of the quote I have already translated. For those interested in the precise wording in the original Spanish I reproduce it below full, because sentiment and feeling expressed are hard to capture in the English translation.

*Detrás de cada una de estas estructuras metodológicas y técnicas, como sostén y acicate a la vez, se plantea la concepción teórica y filosófica de cada cual. No siempre mostrada pero si tácitamente expuesta; con la fidelidad de lo expresado y declarado que en la ciencia cobran las posiciones definidas; con la deshonestidad de la ocultación científica, mucho más si se trata de enmascarar posiciones políticas con intereses sectarios o personales; o con la aparente ambigüedad "conciliadora" de métodos y teorías filosóficas que producen, en los últimos tiempos, verdaderos engendros hibridizados en los que se ha pretendido tomar algunos aspectos del Materialismo histórico y del marxismo, además de gran parte de su nomenclatura habitual, para, acoplados a conceptos idealistas u neopositivistas, ofrecer "nuevas" concepciones falaces y oportunistas de las Leyes Históricas, sin otro fin que tergiversar la verdad, confundir a personas poco conocedoras de la filosofía marxista – leninista y tratar de dar una estructura conceptual nueva a formas filosóficas, políticas y metodológicas caducas y pseudocientíficas (Guarch Delmonte 1981:10).*

<sup>3</sup> Of course, in early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century some notable exceptions were in view, particularly the work of Fernando Ortiz (often mentioned in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, this volume), who was not descendent from old moneyed families. Still, by whatever means education and the pursuit of knowledge was achieved, it was the privilege of the few, a scene that continued until Castro's socialist republic turned the tables and the right to a public education became not merely an ideal, but a reality.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed the US actions "do not fall within the accepted legal definition of an embargo, which is a bilateral affair [which would involve only Cuba-USA]. The US has made great efforts to disrupt Cuba's [economic trade] relationships with other countries" (Saney 2004:167). In effect, the US action then (and now) amounts to an economic blockade or strangulation.

<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, university in Latin America are regarded as politically autonomous precincts where the State had no right to intervene in the political affairs of the faculty and student bodies. Well before Batista's second presidential period (1952-58) Cuban universities (especially La Habana) were not only a refuge for the freedom of political expression and rights of public assembly, but also where the most extreme forms of licence or *libertinaje* (abuse of freedom) took place, often harboring individuals who by any definition were gangsters, opportunists, and even terrorists. Indeed, more often than not, at times of political strife, Havana University was the largest repository of weapons outside the military and police forces. Little wonder that the Revolutionary Government set out to strip the university of its liberties.

<sup>6</sup> It ought to be remembered that the Cuban Communist Party, since the Bolshevik revolution, had been following the various Marxist-Leninist to Stalinist-Trotskyist promulgation from Russia as official party lines. But in the early years of the Revolutionary Government, the Communist Party was not in control of either the government or Fidel Castro. I suspect that Marxist-Leninist dogma as a dominant government dogma was not effectively pursued until 1961-62, but since the Communist Party, of all parties (including Castro's 26-M), was the best equipped and experienced in organization, many of its members filled important posts in government and civic institutions, thus they were most likely responsible for the early initial spread Marxist credo. Interesting, the communist reputation for efficient organization was probably due to the various Spanish Republican refugees, with experience in the Spanish Civil War. In Spain, the anarchists, the followers of Trotsky and Bukharin, and other radical leftist labor groups (e.g., POUM) finally succumbed to the Communist's (following Marxism-Leninism) superior discipline and organizational skills.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio Núñez Jiménez was trained primarily in geography. Thomas (2001:821) records that Núñez Jiménez was a key man at the INRA (*Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria*). This was the very powerful agency through which the Revolutionary Government implemented not only Castro's agrarian reform but also organized



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road-building, health, education and housing throughout the country. "Castro was the President of INRA, but the director in charge of the day-to-day operations was [also] part-author of the law itself, Dr. Núñez Jiménez. This appointment explained some of the errors of judgement committed in the next two years [1959-1962]: Núñez Jiménez was, according to Professor Dumont (who was generally sympathetic to revolutionary Cuba), 'better fitted to organize a meeting or ride a horse, banners in the wind, to occupy the territory of the United Fruit Company, than to organize, rationally, the socialist sector of the agriculture' ". Thus, by the end of 1961 Núñez Jiménez left INRA to co-direct the Cuban Academy of Sciences section of archaeology, a job for which he amply demonstrated his organizational skills and where he had contributed most effectively to revolutionary Cuba.

<sup>8</sup> By 1959 Rivero had already been active in archaeology, having become an 'alumnus' of Felipe Pichardo Moya (e.g., [1945] 1990) in Camagüey in the early 1940s. In 1945 he registered at the University of Havana, receiving his doctorate in Natural Sciences in 1949 (Fleitas Salazar 2003: 111-119). While in Havana he met Antonio Núñez Jiménez and, as a result, in 1947, he joined the *Sociedad Espeleológica* de Cuba, whose members had contributed so much to cave archaeology and pictograph research in the 1960s-70s (see Linville this volume; Dacal and Rivero 1996:30-31).

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Goodwin's 1979 paper reviewed the leading role of Cuba in developing and maintaining active research in physical (biological) anthropology and archaeology. Rivero de la Calle was the most important mid-twentieth-century heir of a long illustrious tradition of physical anthropology in Cuba.

<sup>10</sup> See the obituaries of Rivero and Guarch written by Crespo (2002:131), Fleitas Salazar (2003:111-119) and Valcárcel Rojas (2003:112-118).

<sup>11</sup> The 2009 IACA congress will be held in La Habana, marking the first time ever for it to be held in Cuban soil (note added March 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Saney indicates that: "It is estimated that the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba has cost the country in excess of \$60 billion U.S. [dollars]. One study estimated that a simple relaxation of some of the strictures of the economic blockade would result in such a significant increase in Cuba's import capacity that national income would rise by one quarter" (Saney 2004:25).

<sup>13</sup> I must admit that I am unfamiliar with the Tartu-Moscow theory of communication.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, such a cognitive archaeological approach has already furnished useful insights on the rock art of Puerto Rico. For example, such approach was undertaken in my analysis of the iconographic display of petroglyphs at the civic-ceremonial center of Caguana (ca. AD 1300-1450) and of other portable numinous 'art' objects of a class designated as *cemí* (or *zemi*). The *cemís* acted as agents, and articulated with *caciques* and shamans (*behiques*) in ritual or ceremonial contexts (e.g. *areítos* or dances/chants) in the exercise of political-religious power among the Taíno of Puerto Rico (Oliver 2004). Both the *cemís* (as petroglyph-icons or three-dimensional portable *objects d'art*) and the individuals (*caciques*, *behiques*) reflect the complex relations that Gell (1998) defined as the 'distributed person' and 'extended mind' and both are equally agents in the dynamic (changing) nature of political-religious power among the Taíno. Similarly, such an approach would provide novel insights of the significance of the unmovable cave pictographs or portable material culture and native societies in Cuba.


<sup>15</sup> Cooper has successfully obtained his PhD (2007) and has continued to work closely with the Cuban team at Los Buchillones (note added March 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Torres Martínón, Valcárcel and Cooper (2006) published the results in *Nature* (CITE) (note added March 2008).

<sup>17</sup> As a sign of the difficulties that still persist in conducting U.S.-Cuban archaeology, this proposed project, despite being funded by the National Geographic Society, had to be cancelled as a result of complications in the local CITMA obtaining the proper permits from the Cuban government on time, Jim Knight, however, has shifted his research with the group led by Roberto Valcárcel Rojas to conduct research in the domestic areas of Chorro de Maíta that still await excavation (pending NGS grant approval; note added March 2008).

<sup>18</sup> En Bas Salines is purportedly the settlement of *cacique* Guacanagarí, an early ally of Columbus; Puerto Real is an Indohispanic village where, apparently, both indigenous and Spanish colonists resided and where the former dominated economic relations; La Isabela is far more complex: archaeology has only dealt with the core, fortified area where Columbus' men established themselves, but also surrounded by what appears to be a large Taíno settlement. Archaeology in the indigenous settlement around La Isabela is as yet too limited to determine its relationship to Columbus' settlement, and in fact it is not known if the indigenous settlement was

an aggregation resulting from Columbus' foundation of La Isabela or if it was there prior to their arrival. In any case, none of these would fall into the category of indigenous settlements that were under an *encomienda* system. On the other hand, each provides a piece of the complex mosaic of Indohispanic relationships that developed in the early XVI century 'Hispanic' Caribbean. The Loma del Convento site is, thus, hugely important because of its potential status as an indigenous (not a Spanish or Indohispanic) settlement under the *encomienda* of Las Casas and Rentería. The social, political, ideological and economic dynamics in such a context, per force, have to be distinct from that of a settlement where colonials ruled and natives were co-residents.

<sup>19</sup> This aspect is explored by Oliver in a forthcoming book published by Alabama Press, titled '*Caciques and Cemí Idols: The web spun by Taíno rulers between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico*' (note added in March 2008). 

<sup>20</sup> Subscriptions to, and individual issues of, *El Caribe Arqueológico* can be purchased by writing c/o Betty J. Meggers at the following address: Taraxcun, S.A., Museum of Natural History-112, Department of Anthropology, Washington, D.C., U.S.A. 20560.

<sup>21</sup> My understanding of dialectic comes largely through McGuire's (2002) discussion. As a theory of relations, the dialectic defies the conventional western analytical view of an 'atomistic' world construed "in terms of parts that work smoothly together in a functioning system" and where "change in that world [is the] result of a linear chain of cause and effect that propels us from one steady state to the next" (McGuire 2002:91). Rather, the "dialectic bids us to see the social world as a fluid whole, made of relations that create the fleeting [temporally finite] apparitions that appear as distinct parts" (McGuire 2002:91). In addition the "relations define the parts in contradiction, so that the whole depends on conflict and opposition rather than harmony and integration. So, no cause can exist without its effect, and change occurs in a spiral motion that springs from contradictions found within the whole" (McGuire 2002:92). The contradictions that arise within unities and with the totality of social formation are relational, not based on formal logical contradictions: Relational contradictions involve the "idea that all social categories are defined by and require the existence of their opposite" (McGuire 2002:96). I suspect that Tabío (1978) and Guarch Delmonte (1981, 1987) must share some of the above views of dialectic.

<sup>22</sup> No doubt that if/when Vargas and Sanoja look at this flow chart they will find faults with it. Still, it is included here just to show how ambiguous and obscure is the language utilized by these authors to express their theoretical notions of social history. I hasten to add that I have studied in depth Marxist archaeology through McGuire and Patterson, and others so it is not simply a matter of my own limitations.

<sup>23</sup> Then and presently, Cuban archaeology has remained steadfast in their notions of cultural evolution, coming from the intellectual lineage leading from Morgan to Leslie White. Debates of neo-evolutionists such as Robert Carneiro and Charles Spencer (of the Morgan-White-Steward lineage) versus the neo-evolutionary Darwinism of authors such as Michael O'Brien and R. Lee Lyman (2000) seem to be largely unknown in Cuba (see also Carneiro 2003).

<sup>24</sup> In this CD-R publication (Guarch Delmonte, editor, 1990) there are contributions by Rey, Febles Dueñas, Alonso Alonso, Godo Torres, Domínguez González, Calvera Rosés, Pino Rodríguez, Rodríguez Arce, Jardines Macías, Rivero de la Calle, la Rosa Corzo, and Navarrete Pujol, among others.

<sup>25</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> IACA Congress in Santo Domingo, Miguel Rodríguez López (2003) has called attention to yet another archaeological complex from Puerto Rico characterized by a very crude, plain pottery stylistically unrelated to any of the complexes defined for the island. Pottery frequency and density in such sites is high. Such assemblages are also marked by the total absence of clay-griddles, to the point that López has labeled these as "*los sin burenes*" (the 'without clay-griddle' peoples). They are largely found along the north east and north-central coastal plains of Puerto Rico and are contemporaneous (Period IIIb-IV) to the Santa Elena and later Esperanza ceramic complexes defined by Rouse (1992).

<sup>26</sup> Martínez Gabino and Rodríguez (1991) in a mimeographed paper published 13 dates ranging between 8885±200 BP and 2420±120 BP based on human bone collagen for Cueva Calero in Matanzas; however, one date is too young (900 BP). Wilson et al. (1997) apparently did not know of these dates. For the moment, the early ca. 7000-5000 B.C. date range needs further confirmation, since bone collagen dates are notoriously erratic.

<sup>27</sup> In this regard I have serious problems with the use of Meggers' seriation methodology and its purported usefulness for making chronological inferences, especially the determination of the length of an occupation and the number/order of re-occupations of a site. When seriation from one excavation cut are extended to other on-adjacent cuts and beyond into large regions my discomfort intensifies proportionately for reasons clearly discussed by DeBoer et al. (1996).

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