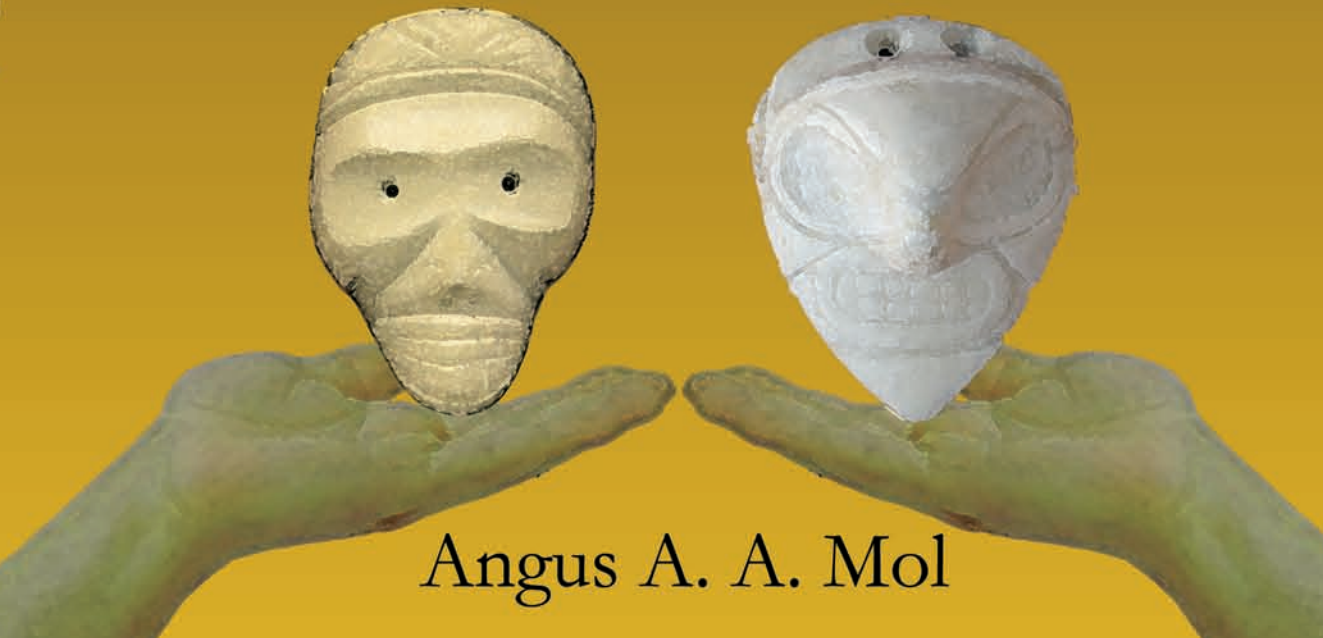
# Costly Giving, Giving *Guaízas*

## Towards an organic model of the exchange of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean



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Sidestone Press

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

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## Towards an organic model of the exchange of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean

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The object at the left side of the frontcover and the right side of the back cover are shell faces from the Regional Museum, Altos de Chavón, Republica Domincana. The object at the right side of the front cover is a shell face from the Gabinete de Arquelogía, Havana, Cuba. The objects at the right on the back cover and the object on the title page are shell faces from the Museo Indcubano Bani, Banes, Cuba.

*Voor Lex*,
*De vriend die geen studie nodig had om het belang van geven te leren kennen.*

We started our group. . .
our circle of friends. . .
and like that circle. . .
there is no beginning or end. . .
yesterday is history.
Tomorrow is a mystery.
Today is a gift.
That is why they call it the present.

**-Eleanor Roosevelt**

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# 1| Introduction

Interaction is the core of the social human being and exchange is the mechanism by which it is able to operate. All interactions are exchanges of some sort, because in a social universe that is vibrant, fluid and alive no interaction can occur without entities mutually changing each other by acting and reacting to one another.[1] An Archaeology of Exchange is therefore primarily an archaeology of human *sociality* and *anti-sociality*. Nevertheless, archaeological studies of exchange are numerous and varied, and archaeologists do not always approach exchange as a social mechanism, concentrating rather on the cultural, economical or political implications of exchange. Quite understandably, since if every archaeologist approached the issue of exchange from the bulky framework of human sociality no progress would have been made in this field from the time of, what could be considered to be, its earliest implementation in Childe's theory of cultural diffusion (1936). Even so, at times it is worth retracing the implicit theoretical steps that archaeologists have taken and look at human sociality through the eyes of exchange as something "new."

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[1] The term "social universe" is not a metaphoric way of saying "society" and should be taken quite literal. Its context is more than just societal – more than a way of behaving, speaking and producing knowledge – it is universal within its own social context: it is a socio-cosmic universe (Dumont 1972). A socio-cosmic universe is a normative social system comprised of the *totality of social action* – i.e. interactions among human agents, but also interactions among *and with* agents of a non-human and even superhuman nature– going on within a specific social sphere of relations and is heavily dependent on the way the world is structured by an individual and his or her community. A socio-cosmic universe is flexible, since new social actions, which enter the social sphere of an individual or community through new social connections, are included within the socio-cosmic universe immediately, provided there is no descriptive taboo preventing its inclusion. In the case of the original utilization of this concept for the caste system of India, Louis Dumont, a student of Marcel Mauss, found that there were descriptive boundaries in place that prevented exchanges between different castes. Another example of a descriptive boundary that could be in place in a socio-cosmic universe is the proscription of exchange of gender-specific social valuables, such as in the case of the men of the Baruya of New Guineau that jealously guard and hide certain artefacts –*kwaimatnie*–, used in specific boy initiation ceremonies, from the women of their community (Godelier 1999).

That is exactly what I wish to do here, by concentrating on what Polanyi (1957) has termed "reciprocal exchange" in the later part of the Late Ceramic Age of the Greater and Lesser Antilles – approximately AD 1000/1100-1492, or Rouse his "Period IV" (Petersen et al. 2004; Rouse 1992). The Late Ceramic Age as a whole is a period that has been researched mostly from a perspective of political evolution and consolidation and diffusion of cultural traits. Herein, exchange acts as a multi-functional tool to provide insight into these issues (e.g. Boomert 2000; Crock 2000; Crock & Petersen 2004; Curet 1996, 2002; Hofman & Hoogland 2004; Hofman et al. 2004; Hoogland & Hofman 1999; Siegel 2004; Roe 1998; Keegan & Rodríguez Ramos 2004; Keegan et al. 1998; Knippenberg 2007; Oliver 1997; Valcarcél Rojas 1999). In this thesis, however, an inquiry into exchange is not a tool, but the subject. A critical revaluation of the conceptualizations and theoretical implications of previous scholarly work by Caribbean researchers is not overdue yet, seeing that this regional archaeology is actually a very young discipline that has already laid bare critical information concerning the prehistory of Caribbean exchanges. Still, it has been postulated by some that Caribbean archaeology is in a theoretical crisis, so the time to be proactive in a formulated theory of exchange is now (Keegan & Rodríguez Ramos 2004). This formulation will be achieved by theorizing a model of exchange that will subsequently be tested with a Late Ceramic Age case-study that will result in an organic, integrative framework for the study of exchange in the Caribbean. In this fashion this thesis is not "hardcore" archaeological in nature and provides new data solely on a particular case-study that is exhaustive in itself, but not divergent in a direct manner. The major focus here lays on the reassessment of distribution patterns of Late Ceramic Age Greater and Lesser Antillean material culture by the extensive use of gift theory. The solid theoretical framework of gift-giving, consisting of a large corpus of scholarly works, will be combined with new theoretical concepts and conceptual methodologies. By taking this approach it is my hope that this will be a multi-disciplinary research that could best be styled as "archaeological anthropology", which by sometimes ranging on the philosophical provides "food for thought" more than anything else.

By concentrating on reciprocal exchange I already favour certain premises, while others are left out. To this I plead guilty: the research presented here is indeed designed to look more closely at a model in which these distribution patterns are the result of controlled exchange – i.e. purposeful exchange as opposed to subconscious or accidental stylistic transmission, diffusion, etc.

This exchange is to be conceptualized as a socio-economic system relying on gift exchange as opposed to monetary economies, barter or socially antagonistic actions.[2] Furthermore, within a socio-economic system that relies for a great part on gift exchange there will always be a set of certain objects that are favoured as gifts above all other goods. These "ideal gifts" are exceptionally apt for circulation in highly complex exchange situations, and therefore these objects that make up the gift are seen as "socially valuable".

"Socially valued goods" (Spielmann 2002) or "social valuables" are often finely manufactured items that in some cases take months to create, nevertheless they are valued even more than their production costs.[3] These valuables can be material in nature, but also function on the level of what is nowadays termed "intellectual property", for instance knowledge of a certain ritual, a dance, how to cure a certain disease, etc. In addition to their production cost these items derive their value from a distinct uniqueness: a personal character. When a social valuable is exchanged it is not only the item that is exchanged, but also the narrative around it: its life trajectory (Weiner 1983).[4] This narrative can be constructed using various methods: by acquiring items over long distances (Helms 1988); making an item with exceptionally exquisite craftsmanship (Helms 1993); associating an item with the ancestors (Helms 1998); and/or other means.[5] Logically a social valuable is not social in nature when it is not part of a social setting and as a rule a social relation is hardly ever valued without social valuables being part of this connecting relation. However, this social connection is always played out with great care and the use of social valuables in practice entails a careful interplay of inclusion

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[2] In Boomert's (2000: 422) words I will indeed explore "weak interaction", i.e. the reciprocal movement of human goods by peaceful human agency, rather than "strong interaction", i.e. violence, although it is acknowledged that the Caribbean must have also been characterized by chronic and endemic fighting. Conversely, as will be shown, reciprocal human agency is not always peaceful.

[3] "Social valuables" as a concept encapsulates concepts such as "le don/the gift" (Mauss 1950; 1990), "primitive valuable" (Earle 1981), "prestige goods" (e.g. Clark and Blake 1994), "exotics" and "crafted goods" (Helms 1988, 1993).

[4] For more information on how things gain their life history see Appadurai (1986).

[5] Examples of these methods are not only archaic or exotic in nature. One could think about modern practices and notions of bringing home souvenirs, the added value of handcrafted versus industrially manufactured products, or the handing over from generation to generation of family heirlooms, as modern analogies of this sort of methods.

or exclusion of certain social valuables from certain social exchanges at certain times.[6]

The major issue in the first part will be to arrive at an organic, integrative theory of the exchange of social valuables that can be of use to the archaeology of the Caribbean. With an "organic theory" a theory is meant that is accessible and attractive to multiple scientific paradigms and the disciplines associated with it. Due to its universal and pervasive nature it has to be recognized that exchange theory is one of the most promising research areas in which scientists from the natural as well as the social sciences can find a shared platform of discussion, which will stimulate production and exchange of knowledge from both paradigms (Corbey 2006a). To achieve this, the model will not be a haphazard induction of what exchange is according to the author's own subjective view of human sociality. This framework will develop itself as key scholars of exchange theory and the concepts that they employed are extensively discussed in chronological order. It will start of with thinking of exchange from before the time of the sociologist Marcel Mauss (1950), all the way up to recent insights on gift giving developed by Godelier (1999). These theories will be illustrated by a conceptual and methodological analogy taken from ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in the Trobriands, with the famous kula exchange system, for the first time described by the even more famous Malinowski (1922), as the *pièce de résistance* of the analogy. The theories of gift-giving mostly adopted from the French school of sociology and anthropology will be complemented with some theories that take not a social but a biological stance on the subject of human sociality. The equation of these paradigmatic approaches and the focus on the interplay of inalienable and alienable qualities of material culture will finally lead to a framework that deals in a novel way with the theoretical characterization of exchange.

Still, this is only the stage of the play, the actual "play" itself concerns the application of this theoretical framework to the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean and will be discussed in part II. The first chapter of this part is meant to introduce the social universe of the Late Ceramic Age, by presenting a short overview of the socio-cultural situation of that period. In the second chapter a case-study will be presented that revolves around enigmatic shell faces, a Late Ceramic Age social valuable found all the way from Eastern Cuba to the Grenadines. Questions that will be central here are: how can we

[6] For more information on how social bonds are maintained by the use of social valuables in modern times, see Komter (2005).

characterize these shell faces as social valuables; how do these specific social valuables act within social relationships; how do they constitute social universes, communities, and personhood; what do they say about socio-cultural identity; does the shell-face-as-social-valuable allow for an organic interpretation of the archaeological record?

These chapters will be used to begin to address large enquiries concerning Late Ceramic Age society, such as: are there sets of objects that were particularly valued in exchange relationships during the Late Ceramic Age in the Caribbean; how can these be identified; how can their distribution and context attest to the nature and mechanisms of interaction and social relationships during this period? It should not be supposed that these matters will be answered here. These questions cannot be answered by the brief introduction of the Late Ceramic Age social universe and one case-study alone. Moreover, the above are questions that cannot be answered by one person, but must be abstracted over the years from the combined research of a scholarly community. First and foremost it is the question, whether the framework of the social valuable is a viable method for the archaeological research of interaction patterns in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean that shall need to be answered.

# Part I:
# Revaluing valuables

If men have suffered evil, they seek to return it; if not, if they cannot requite an injury, we count their condition slavish. And again, if men have received good, they seek to repay it: for otherwise there is no exchange of services; but it is by this exchange that we are bound together in society.

**- Aristotle**

# 2| Maussian Exchange

## 2.1 A short history of exchange studies A.M (*Ante* Mauss)

It has become the tradition in monographs and edited volumes about gift-giving to name Marcel Mauss as the one who "gave" the scholarly research of gift-giving to the social sciences (Lévi-Strauss 1997; Sykes 2005). Nevertheless, although Mauss certainly has been, and will remain for some time to come, the most influential scholar on this subject – seeing as no study on this subject can be complete without at least making note of his seminal *Essai sur le don* – this is a flawed reduction of a line of inquiry that has been part of Western science going back to the Greek classical period and possibly even further.

The motto of this part, taken from Aristotle's Ethics (2004), reflects that already in ages "A.M." even one of the greatest thinkers of the Classical World was puzzled by how the mechanics of human sociality and solidarity rely on exchange of ideas, acts, services and goods.[7] This is a sign of the antiquity of the *European* inquiry into gift giving and the fact that the explanations of the mechanisms that make *European* society function are centred on exchange. So, it is necessary to highlight the way that exchange, and the study of it, is rooted in an ancient Western view of the world and, consequently, very much focused on what Western norms have considered to be the normal, moral and ethical way of conducting exchanges. It would not be so hard to imagine that there are ways of looking at exchange that, not only in their word use but also in their mechanics, have a very different view of what "exchange" is.[8] With this I do not want to contest the fact that exchange is all around us – a universal practice, inherent to sociality –, nor do I feel myself up to the task of dispelling this paradigm. This is simply a caveat to keep in mind, while this theoretical

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[7] Another field in which the puzzling and ancient nature of gift-giving is clearly visible is comparative linguistics, for instance in the German and Dutch *Gift/gift,* which has roots in ancient Germanic language and can mean either "present" or "poison" (Benveniste 1997).

[8] It could be, though I do not presume myself to be an expert on this subject, that a different frame of mind, for instance that of a Native American, would concentrate more on exchange as being connected, being responsible, instead of giving, receiving and giving again. A good starting point for such a study would be to compare Western and Native American origin narratives, since it is in these that the norms of human sociality are often most overtly expressed.

framework is constructed, that the intricacies – or maybe even some of the "universalities" – of the anthropological, sociological or archaeological discussion of exchange and all related aspects is very much Euro-centred.

It is therefore not truly surprising that, as the European world evolved, so did critical thinking of gift-giving. For a person in the early Middle-Ages the greatest and most important exchange relation one had was with God, which was used as a model for all other exchanges (Bazelmans 1999). However, with the return of ethical agency and social responsibility to the individual as a result of the philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment –e.g. Kant's ethics in *Kritik der Reine Vernunft* (Kant 2005) – and the transfer of control of sociality from God to secular forces such as the state (Hobbes 1929 [1651]; Rousseau 1966), the social scientific studies into human sociality and *de facto* exchange made their entry.

I am convinced that the advent of processes such as Industrialism and Capitalism have had a shaping influence on gift-giving studies that was even more significant than philosophical insights. This might seem strange since most anthropologists, economists and sociologists are so adamant in separating modern and pre-modern forms of exchange. Yet, I would view Industrialism and Commercialization as the driving factors that *obscure*, but not necessarily erase, the bond between people and the objects that they make, use and exchange. Additionally, the friction and subsequent tearing apart of value into "economical value" and "social value", which had been underway for a long time, was also semi-finalized during this period. Similar to prehistoric rock paintings, which in a "Before-Time" must have had a clear meaning, the gift of a social valuable became a "thing of wonder", something that was confusing and in need of ethnographic research or a great deal of introspection before becoming understandable once more. It is in the confused language of gift-giving theory that the last of a chaotic mix of these "two" value systems can be recognized.

It is striking that the very first essay that is purely about gift giving – Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Gifts* of 1844 – begins by stating that: "It is said that the world is in a state of *bankruptcy*, that the world owes the world more than the world can *pay*" (Emerson 1997: 25, *my italics*). With this Emerson not only pointed to the focus on the individual that was up and coming in his times, but he also framed the lack of gift-giving in the paradigm of economics – using the word for the failure of an economic enterprise! Furthermore, he goes on to relate the negative aspects of gift-giving, also framing these in terms that have become crucial to free market economy: "Some violence, I think, is done,

some degradation borne, when I rejoice or grieve at a gift. I am sorry when my *independence* is invaded, […] and if the gift pleases me overmuch, then I should be ashamed that the donor should read my heart, and that I love his *commodity*, and not him." (Emerson 1997: 26, *my italics*). Still, in this small essay is enclosed another very important notion that runs through the social scientific research on gift-giving: gift-giving as being radically different from economical and egoistical incentives, something morally superior: "For the rest I like to see that we cannot be bought and sold", but that "[t]he only gift is a portion of thyself" (*ibid:* 26).

The battle over what a gift is and should be – fought in the tension field between the *Homo oeconomicus* and the *Homo reciprocans* – is crucial to the understanding of the human being and the anthropological discipline from an epistemological viewpoint. Nevertheless, I shall largely leave this aside for fears of tangling up this research in an endless discussion of the anthropological condition. What I shall concentrate on and try to elucidate here is a related, but slightly different, discussion: the paradoxical notions of *alienability* –most overtly expressed in the ultra flexibility of free market economics – and *inalienability*, i.e. the conservation of a portion of "thyself". These are, as shall be shown, the two paradoxical polarities that pull the strings of any exchange. This mechanism can ultimately find its way as a recognizable marker in a materialized, social valuable, making these concepts suitable subjects of research for those interested in material culture.

## 2.2 Give, receive and reciprocate… *That's* the obligation

So, although Mauss certainly was building from a subjective legacy, both in gift-giving studies and as a sociology student of Émile Durkheim, his *Essai sur le don* was nonetheless unique and innovative for its time and it continues to be a seminal work, which can be recognized in the way that it sparks debate in a wide variety of disciplines. One of the other reasons why it is such a sound scholarly work is that it is so clear in its outset. Mauss wonders (1950: 4, *his italics*) "[q]*uelle est la règle de droit et d'intérêt qui, dans les sociétés de type arriéré ou archaïque, fait que le present reçu est obligatoirement rendu? Quelle force y a-t-il dans la chose qu'on donne qui fait que le donataire la rend?"* Strangely enough it is not the answer to the question "what power resides in an object that causes it to be reciprocated" that has stood the test of time. There are many subtleties on which different readers could concentrate when reading the *Essai sur le don*, but

when one is asked to summarize it in one sentence one would have to answer that Mauss has laid bare the fact that in human social life there is the "total social fact" of the obligation to give, the obligation to receive and the obligation to give back (*ibid:* 12). Let us not pass lightly over this summary, but look at it in deeper detail.

First of all there is the important notion that gift-giving is a "total social fact". The "social fact" is a term coined by Durkheim that can either be a way of acting that exerts control over an individual that is external to him or her and social in nature or that which is general in a society that has an independent existence of its own (Durkheim 1982: 59). Although it is now not any longer held that there are things outside the individual that have an existence of their own (Rapport & Overing 2000a) this very important notion for early sociology was operated to lay down a scientific and researchable basis under what would otherwise have been erratic individual behaviour or behaviour induced by biology.

Mauss also accepted the social fact as a given, but added another critical notion to it, the fact that some social facts are "total" (Mauss 1950: 9). This means that there are some ways of acting that are social in nature, or that there are some generalities with an independent existence that pervade all layers of society: political, religious and economical.[9] Since I interpret gift-giving as the exchange of social valuables, this notion is very important for the larger argument here, since this leads to the social as a primary realm that transcends sub-realms such as politics, economics and belief systems. Although one may argue about the truth of this, since the hierarchies of cultural mechanics are probably not that easy to abstract, I, following Mauss, take this situation as a premise and will concentrate mainly on the social nature and mechanics of exchange.

Secondly, the fact that there is such a thing as the *obligation* to give, receive and give back is the other important insight in *Essai sur le don* (*ibid.*: 50-55). Mauss wonders how it can be that "societies of a backward type" engage in exchanges in the first place – especially when they seem illogical like the Kwakiutl *potlatch* in which sides compete in exchanges that destroy all their possessions. The answer that Mauss gives to his own question is twofold. First

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[9] That Mauss stated that the gift is a "total social fact" is sometimes erroneously interpreted as gift-giving being a universal practice. Mauss never suggested this and it remains to be seen whether he would agree with this universality of gift-giving. Still, it is a fact that giving a gift seems to have a near to universal recognition.

the reason to receive and give is that: "*Refuser de donner [..], comme refuser de prendre, équivaut à déclarer la guerre; c'est refuser l'alliance et la communion.*" (*ibid.*: 18).

The reason why people give back cannot be explained in the same manner. For this explanation Mauss turns to a spirit contained within the thing given with his infamous example of the Maori *hau* (*ibid:* 14). The *hau*, Mauss explains, is a magical force contained within the thing given that forces it to return to the owner: *"C'est […]* hau – *qui d'ailleurs est lui-même une sorte d'individu – qui s'attache à cette série d'usagers jusqu'à ce que ceux-ci rendent de leurs propres, […] de leurs propriétés ou bien de leur travail ou de leur commerce par leurs festins, fêtes et présents, un équivalent ou une valeur supérieure qui, à leur tour, donneront aux donateurs autorité et pouvoir sur le premier donateur devenu dernier donataire.*" This piece of the *Essai sur le don* has sparked the most critique of any of the works by Marcel Mauss. Mauss was either misled by native "ghosts and goblins" stories (Leví-Strauss 1997), or Mauss was erroneously presenting and pulling out of context the story of Tamati Ranapiri, a Maori elder, as recorded by Best (1909, see Sahlins 1972: 157). I believe that this critique is partly unjustified, since Mauss later comes back to this subject and places the obligation to reciprocate in something else than a mystical force (Mauss 1950: 66): "*Si on donne les choses et les rend, c'est parce qu'on se donne et se rend 'des respects' […]. Mais aussi c'est qu'on se donne en donnant, et, si on se donne, c'est qu'on se ' doit' - soi et son bien - aux autres.*" Now it is difficult to understand what Mauss really was trying to say with this, since he does not follow up on this argument. I take this to mean that Mauss was neither misled, nor basing his idea only on a statement by a Maori elder. This small sentence already holds the idea that exchange is done out of a necessity to be involved with the part of ones own personhood that is "external" – that which is visible to others – by giving and giving again. It implies connectedness, rather than a mystical or economical indebtedness.

Paradoxically, when reading Mauss it is difficult to read too much into it, since it is such a great scholarly work. Yet, however brilliant the Maussian invention of the obligation to give, receive and reciprocate might be, it is by no means the end of an inquiry. It is only the beginning, as Mauss fully understood himself: "*Au fond, ce sont plutôt des questions que nous posons aux historiens, aux ethnographes, ce sont des objets d'enquêtes que nous proposons plutôt que nous ne résolvons un problème et ne rendons une réponse définitive. Il nous suffit pour le moment d'être persuade que, dans cette direction, on trouvera de nombreux faits*" (*ibid.*: 102).

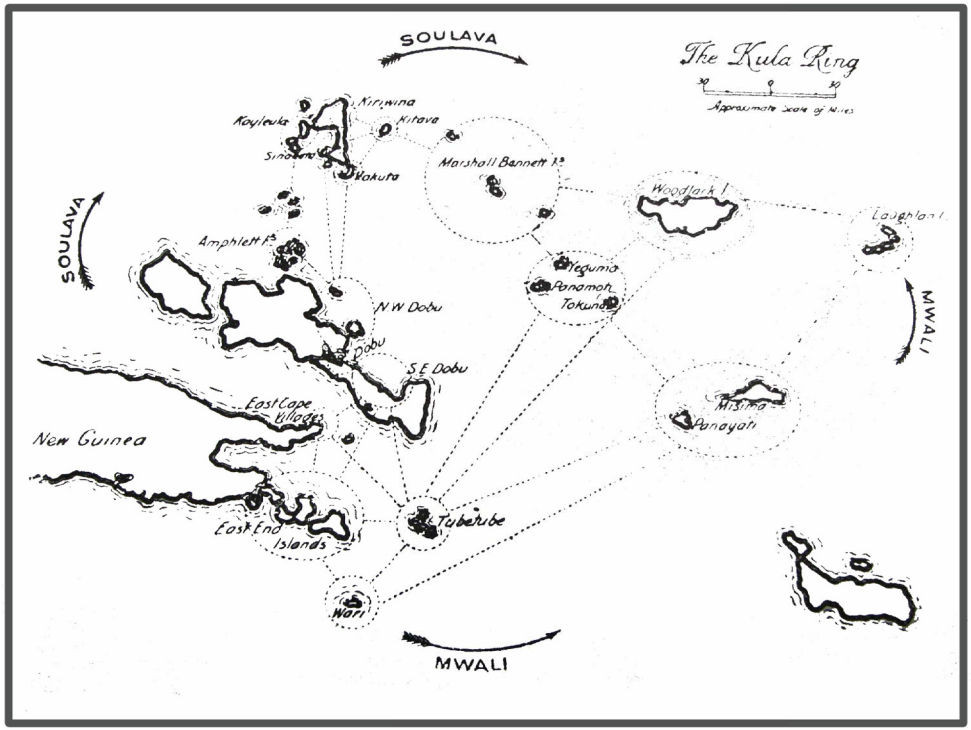
## 2.3 The kula: Giving, receiving and reciprocating in the Trobriands

The kula exchange system is probably the most referred to in the context of exchange studies, because it has been made famous by Bronisław Malinowski, the first anthropologist to develop a clear methodology of anthropological fieldwork by being a participant observer (Sykes 2005: 46).[10] In an attempt to describe Trobriand society as a whole, Malinowski is caught by the practice of kula exchange. In a similar way scholars attempting to study exchange systems have often been caught by the kula example that Malinowski describes – making Malinowski as obligatory a departure point as Mauss – often drawing analogies between their research and the kula. In a way I am also subscribing to the "kula obsession" here, by making this phenomenon the centre of my explanatory case-study, but this is not in order to draw analogies. Here, the kula features as a methodological case-study and a "mental canvas" on which I will try to give colour to this theoretical framework as it develops.

The Trobriand Islands trail off in an archipelago to the south and east of the main island of New Guinea (Map 1). It is on these islands that Malinowski conducted fieldwork from 1915 until 1918. After his fieldwork he produced many articles and books on the Trobrianders with the most famous of these being *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski 1922). In this work he describes in a most elaborate manner the practice of kula. The kula is an exchange in which *vaygu'a,* kula valuables – necklaces of red shell, called *soulava*, and white shell bracelets, called *mwali* – are exchanged for one another.[11] This exchange is highly ceremonial, involving magic spells and strict taboos, and differs greatly in nature from the practice of barter, or *gimwali.* The system is present in some 28 communities that stretch out over the Melanesian archipelago over an area that is known as the "kula ring" and so sea travel is the only way to get into contact with exchange partners in other regions, but intra-island exchange also occurs. Seeing as the inter-island travel is too dangerous and costly for a man to do on his own, kula expeditions are organized in which a group of men sets out to exchange kula valuables with

[10] This is not any different for Caribbean archaeologists who are quite fond of citing Melanesian examples (e.g. Boomert 1987; Knippenberg 2007; Watters 1982, 1997).

[11] It has to be noted that these ornaments are not strictly used as such. When they are used it is to adorn young girls with them, but mostly the necklaces and bracelets are too small to be worn (Malinowski 1922: 88).




*Map 1: The Kula Ring as depicted in* Argonauts of the Western Pacific *(adapted from Malinowski 1922)*

their trade partners on the nearest neighbouring island. Kula is essentially a male practice. (Leach 1983: 1-26; Malinowski 1922: 81-104).

A kula exchange begins when A gives to a desired exchange partner B a *vaga*, an opening gift. This is done with the idea in mind that when B gets his hand on either a desirable *soulava* or *mwali* A will receive this as a *yotile*, a return gift. If too much time passes between the *vaga* of A and the *yotile* of B, B is expected to give a *basi*, a smaller bracelet or necklace, as intermediary gift. This in turn obliges A to return the *basi*, with a *basi* of his own. In the case that B has multiple exchange partners and has a kula valuable that is a particularly fine specimen, which is desired by more than one exchange partner, these partners have the option to give *pokala* or *kaributu*, non-kula gifts – of which the stone axe *kaributu* is the most valued – that are meant to persuade the exchange partner into exchanging his kula valuable. When B finally presents the closing

gift to A that will balance the equation, this is called the *kudu* (Malinowski 1922*:* 98-99).

In this manner a *soulava* social valuable travels in a clockwise manner through the kula ring, while a *mwali* social valuable makes this journey in a counter clockwise motion. As a kula valuable travels in the kula ring it gains a life history, because special acts attributed to it are remembered and so are its owners. This history is part of the value of a kula valuable and thus "the incessantly circulating and ever exchangeable valuables, [owe] their value to this very circulation and its character" (*ibid:* 511).

The view that Malinowski had of this exchange practice was one of "tit for tat", in which prestige gathering males competed through the acquisition of wealth. Viewed in this way doing kula indeed seems very straightforward, but the exchange of kula valuables or gifts in general poses problems to understand from this viewpoint when looked at a little bit closer. This view of exchange sees things being talked about and treated as separate from humans and their relationships. Yet, giving is more than the transaction of a thing in order to get a profit. The difference between the transaction of wealth and the exchange of a social valuable is that the social valuable makes the social relationship a material fact. Giving and receiving gifts creates and changes human relationships and personhood (Fowler 2004; Sykes 2005: 59). This is the fundamental message that Mauss presented in his essay. A gift is never a pure gift, as *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* seems to suggest at some point, conducted as a purely material transaction (Malinowski 1922: 177). The giving of a social valuable always changes all persons concerned with that specific exchange.[12]

Put in an abstract manner: when A exchanges a *soulava* with B, he becomes $A^B$, conversely when $A^B$ reciprocates with a *basi* B becomes $B^A$. Archaeologists have to remember that this *change through exchange* does not only work in this manner for individuals, but also for communities. Exchange not only brings valuables, but carries with it "customs, songs, art motives and general cultural influences" (*ibid*.: 92), i.e. things of tangible, as well as intangible nature.

[12] Later Malinowski would admit that he had been wrong and conceded that Mauss was right in that there are no such things as pure gifts (Malinowski 1996: 15).

## 2.4 All about women…

There is confusion to whether the motive of the *Essai sur le don* was to establish a comparative base for study or if it was meant as a theory of human sociality (Sykes 2005: 59). Anyhow, it was the latter of the two that inspired most of the later researchers. One of the most influential of these was the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In addition to a structural way of looking at exchanges, Lévi-Strauss made two other major contributions concerning the study of gift exchange. As said before, he is one of the first to critique Mauss by stating that he had fallen for the *truc* of "indigenous semantics", or what Lévi-Strauss called "floating signifiers", when Mauss sees in the notion of *hau* the mechanism for reciprocity (Lévi-Strauss 1997).

He also uncovers the fact that "there is much more in the exchange itself than in the things exchanged" (Lévi-Strauss 1970: 59). A simultaneous state of conflict and peace is contained in the exchange, since the act of exchange implies a crossroads – a conscious decision to become cordial or hostile. Lévi-Strauss illustrates this with the French custom of offering to, and in turn accepting wine from a complete stranger who is your table companion in a crowded restaurant. This is done even when the same wine in the same amount is present in both bottles. Refusing would be a clear sign of disdain, while accepting would bring you at least a pleasant meal.

Yet, when thinking over the possibilities of a successful relationship, Lévi-Strauss goes much further than just a pleasant meal. According to him, the first step on the road of exchange leads to a totality of exchange, in which, next to objects and ideas, eventually "those most precious items" – women – are exchanged. This chain of exchanges is pointed out as the mechanism with which incest is kept under control in "archaic" society (Lévi-Strauss 1970: 60). The sheer number of ethnographic examples in which women are reciprocally exchanged between lineages or clans is an argument in favour of this view. Also, it is true that marriage, or a bond of a similar type, could indeed be seen as the pinnacle of social relationships. Additionally, this argument would be easy to back-up from a perspective that sees men as directed by biological motives.[13]

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[13] Although it has to be said that Lévi-Strauss himself would not have necessarily agreed to this view, since he abstains from a discussion of underlying motives for this phenomenon (Sykes 2005: 32).

Despite the arguments in favour, the idea of exchange as motivated by the acquisition of women is now very much outmoded. First of all it has to be pointed out that most of the ethnographic case-studies that show women being reciprocally exchanged are oversimplified and androcentric (Strathern 1992). Additionally, though a marriage or similar bond might be the best possible outcome of an exchange relationship, this cannot be the intended outcome for every single exchange, nor can it be held that it is the motive of the majority of exchanges at the outset. Secondly, it belies the agency of women in exchanges, something that cannot be really considered as a possibility – albeit that this agency is often expressed in a different, more subtle way (see for discussions of this: Cixous 1997; Irigaray 1997; Komter 1996a; Strathern 1992).

# 3| Hobbesian Models of Exchange

## 3.1 Warre! A final explanation of exchange?

So, according to Lévi-Strauss, it is not even the danger of the road, but the exchange itself that is the most dangerous occupation. Yet, if this is so, why engage in exchanges at all? Mauss already provided an answer to this when he stressed that refusing to give is tantamount to declaring war. But what war would this be? Following Thomas Hobbes, this would be the "warre of all against all".

Thomas Hobbes was the foremost British philosopher of the 17th century who tried to show that social life does not depend on altruism or an absolute moral system that is either innate or controlled by God. Since there is a great problem for a world that consists only of egoistic individuals, given that such a world would be continually at war, his original motive was to show that political control of the masses is needed and therefore justified. With this Hobbes does not necessarily mean to say that humans are innately evil. This condition is unfortunately so because the natural state of the world is such that there is an equality of need, a scarcity of resources, an essential equality of human power, i.e. a single human's capabilities, and an only limited capability to be altruistic – this must echo to the reader the mechanisms of free market exchange. This means that in order for humans to have a life that is not "nasty, brutish and short" this natural state has to be mediated somehow. Hobbes finds this mediation in the Social Contract: an agreement understood and lived up to by all those living in the community for which the contract is valid (Hobbes 1929 [1651]).

Ethical issues aside, it is clear that there are some flaws in the Hobbesian contract. The most obvious and most serious one is that there is not really such a thing as a Social Contract in a pre-state society.[14] Still, even today the Hobbesian Social Contract is still one of four major schools in moral philosophy – the others being Kantianism, Utilitarianism and Virtue Theory – and this is partly due to an ongoing quest to find the origins of the Social

[14] One could argue that there is a social contract in the form of a silent, traditionalized "code of conduct", but the response to this would be that the tradition of this conduct implies sociality to begin with.

Contract. This quest has also been taken up by the famous anthropologists Marshall Sahlins in his *Stone Age Economics* (1972).

In this monograph Sahlins, in an alternative way to Lévi-Strauss, first dispels the Maussian concept of *hau* as the mystical force that drives exchanges. He then proceeds by proclaiming that Mauss already filled the gap left by the now unmasked *hau* by substituting the Hobbesian war with "the exchange of everything by everybody". With this Sahlins thinks Mauss has found the Social Contract of pre-state communities, because "the gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State" (Sahlins 1972: 169). As a quick thinker might notice in a "gift-giving contract" the problems of the equality of need and the equality of human power are taken up, but there is no rule that legislates the distribution of the scarce resources and arranges the limited ability to be altruistic. Sahlins finds the solution of this in the combined concept of reciprocity and kinship distance. "The reasoning is nearly syllogistic. The several types of reciprocities from freely bestowed gift to chicanery amount to a spectrum of sociability, from sacrifice in favour of another to self-interested gain at the expense of another" (*ibid.*: 196; Figure 1).

This intricate argument has been further elaborated and taken to a more general epistemological level by Raymond Corbey (2006a). In his dualistic reasoning Corbey lays bare statements of altruistic human morality contained within the Maussian research paradigm and also puts in the spotlight a biological enquiry of reciprocity, stating that: "For the Maussians, altruism means the suppression of selfish instincts, for inclusive fitness theory, their articulation." With this Corbey hits the nerve of Maussian paradigmatic research into human sociality – a line of inquiry that has been very resilient, especially in French anthropology –[15] in which statements on the human disposition seem to be woven directly into the research. This is, seen from a scientific point of view, very dangerous, since it leads to the requital of arguments on a subjective moral basis, instead of an empirical or logical one. So what Corbey (2006b) proposes instead is a "triptych" consisting of the "Maussian gift", the "Hobbesian warre" and the "Darwinian struggle for life".

It has to be said that the mechanism of human evolution as first outlined in Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and further expanded upon by neo-evolutionists and biological anthropologists (e.g. Alvard 2003; Chagnon 1995;

[15] See for examples the editions of the Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales (M.A.U.S.S) –sic!

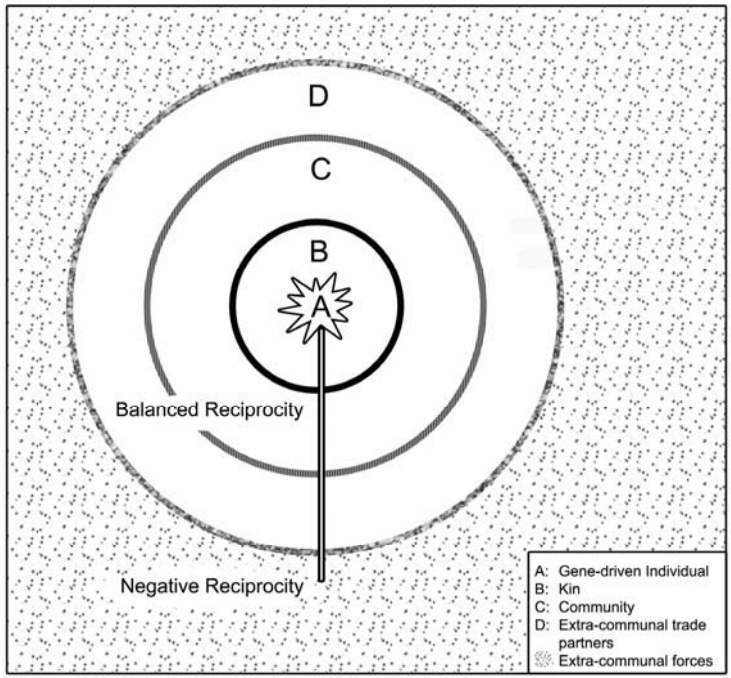


*Figure 1: The spectrum of sociability according to a Hobbesian view of the social universe (based on Sahlins 1972: figure 5.1).*

Darwin 1979; Fehr & Fischbacher 2003), seem to match exactly what is going on in a Hobbesian social universe. Organisms have the equal need to reproduce themselves and there is a scarcity of partners that are most successful in reproduction and a scarcity of possibilities for successful reproduction. On the surface there is an essential equality of genes and there is no reason for reciprocal behaviour when it endangers inclusive fitness. Similarly, the social individual can be said to not only have an equal need but also an equal *right* to resources, since essentially humans are equal. However since there is only a limited amount of resources, the possibility of altruism is lacking. It is only *natural* to provide first for oneself and then for others.

## 3.2 Dispelling the Warre

It is here that this framework displays incongruities. The theory on exchange as following the above tactic taken by the gene-driven, social individual is not

devoid of a subjective moral statement, since it leads to a moral position that is called "psychological egoism" or "ethical egoism", in which the only obligation for a social being is to look after him- or herself (Rachels 2002). Although moral philosophers, understandably, have their qualms with this ethical stance, it is not on moral grounds on which I wish to question the above argument. What has to be questioned is that this way of viewing sociality is a frame of mind that is too closely connected with free market libertarianism. I suspect that the undercurrent of this theory is following a line that is too highly focused on a Western type of social universe.

Other arguments can be brought to the fore why it is not this specific theory that should be taken up as a general framework of the exchange of social valuables. First and foremost the gift as a prevention of the Hobbesian war is an example of the "chicken and egg" conundrum. There has to be social exchange in order to allow for sociality, but to allow for social exchanges sociality has to exist. The best possible explanation for this is that the Hobbesian war is not a total fact on its own, but that it at least has to be complemented by another process. Secondly, this framework reduces the threefold obligation contained within the gift of a social valuable – to give, receive and reciprocate – to the obligation of egoism. This cannot be the theory of a *human-centred* explanation of exchange, not because humans are somehow elevated above other biological organisms, but because this is not the way that humans perceive the world. This does not imply that it cannot be the focus of a *biological* explanation of exchange, but it means that this is a line of inquiry that cannot be taken up by most social scientists without destroying what the philosopher Lakatos (1970) designates as the "core" of the discipline. This theoretical framework is simply not the unifying theory it sets out to be.

Even so, guarding a specific scientific discipline from destruction is insufficient reason not to subscribe to the gift-giving model outlined above from a broader scientific view. There is yet another reason for this. Most likely, exchange is not a gene driven, ego-centred tactic *only*, because such a tactic would fail in exchange. Furthermore, exchanges often transcend the individual in a way that cannot immediately be redirected to the individual's kinship group. It is partly because part of the individual and its direct community are sacrificed in a transaction that exchanges of social valuables can be successful and in this way allow for the successful reproduction of a relationship. In this manner the exchange is both a cause of social conflict and the way to resolve this conflict at the same time.

With this I do not mean to place the social *Homo reciprocans* on a pedestal, untouched by biology, or deny that the social is not completely entwined with the biological. To explain exchange from a common social *and* biological ground an *organic*, i.e. integrated, approach to exchange will be the most fruitful. This integrated approach can be found in "costly signalling" theory.

## 3.3 Addendum: Individual or Communal, genes versus society?

Scholars of neo-evolutionist disciplines have focused on the struggle of the individual, since they recognized that there was not such a thing as species struggling for survival. It is through an individual and his genes that a species also survives. This fact leaves the neo-evolutionist automatically almost no room for another stance than one of scientific refusal towards the work of the social scientist, who by the nature of his discipline focuses on the community, and vice versa. This has led many scholars to believe that the cores of both disciplines can never be successfully joined together and that the natural and social sciences are incomparable from an epistemological perspective (cf. Moser et al. 1998). On the other hand there are also some who insist that there are viable ways of looking at both culture and biology in an integrative manner.

Two scholars from the natural sciences, who have been quite successful in setting up a framework that allows us to see a small light at the end of the epistemological tunnel, are Peter Richardson and Robert Boyd (2005). In their book *Not by genes alone* they explain how and why humanity has developed the way it has, by exploring a framework of gene/culture co-evolution. They argue that genes and culture are very important in shaping the individual and this remains so during the course of his or her life. This is quite a normal way to combine the nature/culture schism on the individual level, to which most people who subscribe to evolutionism would agree. Still, this nature gene/culture works out on the individual level, since sane individuals rarely come into conflict with their internal gene/culture mechanism. When society is concerned, however, most people would see this as a strictly human enterprise. Although a number of people would concede that some animal species, such as monkeys or dolphins, have a type of society too, but on an unsophisticated, subhuman level. It is the norm to perceive societies, i.e. communities on a grand scale, as consisting of cultural and not of gene driven behaviour. Neo-

evolutionists do not agree with this and try to explain society from strictly biological models.

Richardson and Boyd do not openly subscribe to any side. Their solution is to see a place for gene/culture co-evolution on societal level too. Their arguments in favour of this view are too many to recount here, but the basic message is that humans could not have developed to their current level out of a purely individual struggle for existence, nor out of solely a collective existence. Richardson and Boyd show how human selective and adaptive mechanisms are interwoven with social behaviour, how mimicking and remembering behaviour, i.e. learning, is an efficient adaptive strategy, and how certain social traits of humans – such as for instance empathy – are responsible for certain aspects of the evolution of our physical bodies. Their solution for this gene/culture co-evolution is the existence of two sets of social instincts: a very ancient one that we share with our primate ancestors and one that has evolved more recently called "tribal instincts" that allow us to interact cooperatively with a larger, symbolically marked set of people (*ibid.*: 196). These are the sets of instincts that allow a human being to act for himself and relate these actions to his involvement with a greater group of people at the same time.

Although I would not agree totally to the tone set by Richardson and Boyd in the remainder of their book, where they leave gentle hypothesizing and try to force a slightly toned down neo-evolutionist view of human history and the future of science as a whole, the notion of gene/culture co-evolution is an elegant solution to explain the paradox of reciprocal altruism: individuals doing good to others whereby they themselves also become better. As will be shown, costly signalling through exchanges is a logical tactic with which these two types of instincts can connect with each other.

Alternatively, it can feature in an argument of the development of leadership strategies. The development of status differentiation, especially inherited status differentiation, has always been a difficult issue to explain from a biological, i.e. individual, or a cultural, i.e. communal, viewpoint. Why do the majority of the gene-driven individuals in a society in which power is inherited consent to a status in a social network that for them decreases fitness and leaves less opportunity for successful reproduction? Conversely it remains somewhat puzzling why communities, which are arguably best served by a reciprocal distribution of communal resources that is as equalized as possible, would allow a certain individual and his lineage to rise to power, thereby unbalancing the reciprocal system.

In a framework of gene/culture co-evolution the development of hierarchy can easily be explained using Complex Adaptive System – CAS – theory. Used at first by geneticists who employ it to model genetic control circuitry by computer, CAS has also successfully been used to model reciprocal relations in a model exchange network.[16] As long as networks are small and contained reciprocity as a mechanism works. When the network grows and comes into contact with other networks the mechanism of reciprocity fails. It appears that it is the only possible outcome of this particular statistical method that there is a certain point at which there are simply too many actors, i.e. nodes in the network, who attempt to partake in reciprocal relations, so that reciprocal action is obstructed (Kohler et al.: 2000). It is postulated that in order to avoid this situation people form communities that are able to enter into reciprocal relations as one actor by sending out one unified signal. Still, an especially adequate individual – i.e. the leader- of the group is selected as the "avatar" that will represent his or her community.[17] This is an excellent example of how gene/culture co-evolution works in a way that benefits both individuals and communities. Clearly, there is a place for a single aggrandizing individual or individual lineage which benefits from elevated status. On the other hand the community as a whole benefits too, since otherwise they would not be able to enter into reciprocal relations with other communities. In

16 This model relies on the modelling of an autonomous Boolean network –a form of discrete dynamical systems, governed by number of elements, number of connections between elements, state of the element, function of the connection, and time. It would take up too much space to explain in detail the workings of such a Boolean network and for the purposes of the argument at hand the conclusions gained from this method will suffice (, but see: Kaufmann 1993).

17 The use of CAS theory described by Kohler and his colleagues features around a case-study of Pueblo communities of the South West U.S.A. and argues for the development of central marketplaces as a logical development of a growing exchange system. It can be supposed that a similar process takes place in many different exchange systems, including the kula. For instance, on the smaller, less populated islands of the kula ring, like Gawa, every man participates in kula (Munn 1986), while on the largest, most densely populated island of the kula ring, Kiriwina, participation in kula is only engaged in by certain powerful men. This helps to keep the system of kula exchange "clean" from an overabundance of actors and could in turn be partly responsible for the emergence of heriditary chieftainship within elite lineages on Kiriwina, which is unique in the kula ring. How exactly network system size is related to the development of –heridetary– status differentation in the kula ring, but also other cultures, could be an interesting avenue for future research.

addition this *symbiotic* relation between individual and community only works because all individuals in the community are able, by virtue of their "tribal instinct", to cooperate with the goals of a symbolically marked set of people.

This example shows only one manner in which a framework of gene/culture co-evolution could be applied successfully, but it is to be hoped that this is just the first opening of a debate that can finally be characterized by a mutual scientific growth of the paradigms of the social and natural sciences, instead of continued verbal "bashing" on the grounds of a different perspective on human nature.

# 4| Exchange, CST and Alienability

## 4.1 Signalling dedication

Costly signalling theory, or CST for short, was first developed as an economic theory by Spence (1973) and continues to be used as such. The exact way in which it is employed varies, but essentially CST explains a tactic that makes certain qualities, which are otherwise difficult to observe, visible by expending in a seemingly superfluous manner. These costly signals are different from what Spence termed *indices*, observable and unalterable signals, in that they convey *manipulated* information about an individual's underlying qualities. These signals are manipulated in order to attain a certain goal. However, when the signal is not honest – a "freerider" signal – it can be exposed by another costly signaller that transmits an honest signal. For a costly signal to be effective it must be signalled in an optimum broadcast area, a public sphere. Spence showed how most would for instance signal a dedication to a specific job in the pre-contact phase by putting in much extra effort, but that it is necessary for employers to check whether this was an honest signal or not.

It was not long until this theory was picked up by biologists (e.g. Dawkins & Krebs 1978). It was an elegant model to explain certain "handicaps" not easily explainable as an adaptation, such as the beautiful, but conspicuous feathers of paradise birds or the manes of male lions, which are both costly signals that signal fitness (Zahavi 1975, 1977). It is from this discipline that it was picked up by biological anthropologists in recent years.

The classical example of CST in biological anthropology is the capture of large game (Bliege Bird et al 2001; Smith et al. 2003; Sosis 2000). It is quite dangerous to hunt large game for those involved in the hunt. It also appears that the caloric values gained from large game do not outweigh the calories gained from foraging and hunting small animals, so another reason needs to be found for large game hunting. Costly signalling may be that reason. Studies have shown that although sharing is rarely directly reciprocated, hunters often share their catch with those who did not partake in the hunt. With this they signal their competitive ability and possibly their commitment to a specific

relationship. It has also been shown that successful hunters have more mates and thus more reproductive success.[18]

I believe that the exchange of social valuables is a highly evolved form of CS. Understandably, to many it seems grossly inapt to equate the exchange of social valuables to a costly signal, but the refusal of the theory should not be on these grounds. It is vital to understand that CST does not necessarily have to be used in an argument of sexual reproduction – its origin in economics is a clear example of this – and I do not intend to apply it in this manner. Actually, CST in archaeology can by its nature hardly be employed as a theory of sexual reproduction, since cases in which the successful sexual reproduction rate of an individual can be known archaeologically are rare indeed. It is the mechanics that the tactic of CST employs that I think are applicable to how material social valuables are employed and observable by archaeologists.

Let me first paint a picture of an important exchange in Western life that contains all the notions of exchange as have already been exposed. It is dangerous and there is the obligation to give, receive and give back. Also, there is even more in the exchange itself than in the thing exchanged. This exchange is the marriage proposal.

John and Mary have been in love for some time now. They did not speak about it openly, but John knows for sure that Mary is the love of his life. Besides, his parents have been nagging him to settle down. So, John decides it is time to ask *the* question. Beforehand he goes to his childhood home for some parental advice. Since his parents are almost as much enamoured of Mary as he is, they are very enthusiastic. His mother even gives him the engagement ring that belonged to her, her mother before her, and her mother before her. The only defect is that the great big diamond that was the centrepiece of the ring was taken out and sold when John's father was out of a job. Naturally John goes to the jeweller to have a new diamond refitted for the ring, because, like his love for Mary, "diamonds are forever". Although the cost of the diamond and the repair of the ring mean he will have to eat stale bread for the rest of the month, he still decides to book a reservation in the place where they met: a very expensive restaurant, where Mary was working as a waitress. Besides, he doesn't want to look like his friend Peter, who never goes that

[18] Since then a small group of researches has been responsible for the branching out of costly signalling in the study of religion and ritual (e.g. Sosis et al. 2003, 2007). Additionally during the 2006 annual congress of the Society for American Archaeology a symposium was given in which CST was operated in various archaeological examples (SAA 2006: 98).

"extra mile" for the girl that he, supposedly, loves that much. He wouldn't want Mary telling her friends that he is a cheapskate. Finally it is the night of *the* question. All is as it should be, the ambiance of the restaurant is great, Mary looks bedazzling, he has the ring in his pocket, but still John is very nervous. He goes to his knees and asks *the* question.

Although this stereotypical story could have been plagiarized directly from a romance novel, it can be considered to be recognizable in at least some of its basic elements to many people. Although I would not want to dispel romance from the world, the example given above is also a clear example of costly signalling using a social, or in this case, "romantic" valuable. This becomes apparent when a closer look is taken at how the engagement ring is utilized in this example.

The engagement ring is a costly signal, because it is seemingly superfluously expended energy. Why not just ask *the* question without giving the ring? Shouldn't Mary respond favourably, since they love each other that much? No, in this case it is necessary that an exchange is made that comprises a carefully manipulated signal. John realizes this when he thinks of his "freeriding" friend Peter, who claims he loves his girlfriend, but does not back this up by an honest, costly signal. Also, John realizes that his asking of *the* question is sure to have broadcast efficiency, since Mary is going to talk about the event with her friends, who will probably also talk about it with their friends, et cetera. Simply put, the stakes are pretty high for John in this particular exchange. Luckily for him he has the means to signal a powerful costly signal to his love. His mother gives John her engagement ring that has been in the family for some generations, this should be a sure sign for Mary – and her relatives – that she will be very welcome in the family of John. The ring is, of course, made of gold, since this is the highest of the noble metals, symbolizing that their love is of an unequalled level. More importantly, thanks to a very successful promotional slogan coined in 1947 by the "de Beers" company, the diamond that is the centrepiece of the ring is the embodied signal of a love that will last forever. In short, this engagement ring will surely increase John's chances to be successful in this exchange.

At a first glance this seems like a very functionalistic account that has no bearing on why people act the way they act. Still, the *pointe* here is not that people are driven by material needs – John does not think that Mary is a "material girl", who will really be influenced by the ring –, nor is it that John and his parents are consciously or subconsciously trying to spread their genetic material. The reason why John employs a costly signal is that it is the best way

to signal his dedication to the relationship and to place Mary in a situation to reciprocate that makes certain alternatives less accessible and others easier to choose. It has to be noted that the motives for John wanting the relationship to go to this level in the first place are not explained by CST, only the tactic that John employs to get to this level. Still, it is not only for this unique type of exchange, which is indeed very Western in its metaphors, that CST can have an explanatory function, but in a wide variety of exchange situations, among these the kula.

## 4.2 CST in the Trobriands

The popular scientific documentary *Kula: Ring of Power* shows in a colourful way how the exchange of a kula valuable is actually undertaken.[19] A kula expedition is filmed visiting the village of an exchange partner. The head of the expedition walks with an air of discomposed aggressiveness towards the doorstep of the house and there he throws, with clear contempt, one of his precious *soulava* on the ground, while exclaiming: "You always give me rubbish, so now I give you rubbish in return." The accused comes out of his house and answers back in similar terms. Malinowski (1922: 353) also speaks of this, but reverses the situation:

> "Right through their ceremonial give and take, there runs the crude and fundamental human dissatisfaction with the value received. A native will always […] insist on the magnitude and value of the gift he gave, and minimise those of the equivalent accepted. […]. In the case of the donor, the histrionic anger with which he gives an object might be, in the first place, a direct expression of the natural human dislike of parting with a possession. Added, to this there is the attempt to enhance the value of the gift by showing what a wrench it is to give it away."

At first glance these seem like simple haggling techniques, yet, Malinowski was very adamant in separating the kula from barter and the haggling involved with that (Malinowski 1922: 96). Still, I do not agree with the explanation given by

[19] *Kula: Ring of Power*. NTSC, 2000. Produced by National Geographic Explorer USA, ZDF Germany, Finnish Broadcasting Corporation, and Sky Visuals.

Malinowski for the reason of such contempt. I would consider this not the signalling of unalterable qualities such as human dissatisfaction or of the natural human dislike of parting with a possession, but a craftily manipulated, costly signal.[20]

At this point it is insightful to look a bit closer at some of the ramifications of a kula-type exchange system. Kula is a very special exchange system in the way it dictates who can participate – only if you have access to either a *soulava* or *mwali* – and with whom you can participate, namely only the two players that are your neighbours in the kula relationship, or *keda* – "kula path" – as it is called in the literature. These *keda* are highly important for a kula player, since he can decide to divert a certain kula valuable from one path onto another. Hence, the more *keda* a man has, the greater his choices, and the greater his possibility of success (Leach 1983; Weiner 1988, 1990). This means that it is not the acquisition of hoards of kula valuables that is the only matter of importance when doing kula. It is equally, or even more important, to have a strategic position in paths that can produce kula valuables in a later stage. A man that has a lot of *soulava* and *mwali*, but no *keda* is not considered to be a successful kula player (Weiner 1992: 140). In a similar way as it can sometimes be better to hold stock options than stock shares in stock market trading, it is sometimes more important to hold an expectancy of a kula valuable through an active kula path than to posses a kula valuable in the game of kula.

A tactic in which *keda* can remain alive is by employing costly signals, such as signalling of discontent – dangerous, thus costly, because it can make a kula partner really angry – or by boasting – costly, because someone who boasts also has to deliver what he promises, or be unmasked as a "freerider". If these costly signals succeed, a kula player is successful in at least two ways. First, he will increase the activity in his *keda* – due to exchanges going on as compensation or solicitation – and secondly he also succeeds in signalling his dedication to his kula neighbour, because he prevents him from being either

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[20] Nancy Munn, who did her fieldwork on the small island community of Gawa, which is part of the kula network, sketches a comparable, but slightly different, reason for these insults. According to Munn (1986: 64) the insults made by the donor are made in order to remember the receiving party of the future entailment of the gift, inciting them to reciprocate quickly. Also, the donor verbally asserts the low value of the kula shell to point to his own control over the situation at a time when the kula valuable is actually in a liminal position. The control of the original owner over the object is at this time transformed in an uncertain control over the mind of the person and lineage on who he bestows the gift.

ashamed of his own gift – since the other also gives a "worthless" kula valuable – or makes him curious as to what sort of valuable his partner has to offer.

Additionally the kula valuables themselves are clearly materialized costly signals. Naturally, not every kula valuable has the same value. Some men can be kula players for their entire life without ever holding a kula valuable of the highest rank. The costliness of the exchange of a kula valuable can thus vary per object. Even so, the kula classification system, i.e. how to establish in which way the signal sent by the exchange of a kula valuable has been manipulated, is not easily explained. There are some guidelines that can be considered to represent unalterable, honest signals, like for instance the amount of shells used, shell colour and size of the shells of a *mwali* and colour and tactile qualities, such as smoothness of the ground shell strings of a *soulava* (Campbell 1983). Still, this only establishes a basic worth of a kula valuable. The kula valuables that are the most valued do not necessarily possess value as a crafted product, but are prized because of their personal name and personal history (Campbell 1983; Malinowski 1922; Munn 1986; Weiner 1988). This personal name and history is open to manipulation, but only to a certain amount, since very famous kula valuables are like famous works of art: they are recognized by everybody. Needless to say a kula valuable with a name and history is a very intricate and powerful costly signal when used in an exchange, the occasion of which is "broadcasted", i.e. rumoured, throughout the kula ring.

Normally a *soulava* or *mwali* can never be taken out of kula. However, there are certain shells, called *kitomu*, that are the property of their owners and not of the *keda* they are in (Weiner 1988: 149). Although this does not occur often, sometimes a *kitomu* is taken out of a kula path when the gift of a kula valuable is necessary to enter into some other exchange, like a marital or funerary exchange. Surprisingly this is also done by individuals who do not have more than one kula valuable. Sometimes this means that these individuals will never be able to enter into kula again. Therefore, if someone is willing to take a kula valuable out of kula exchange this is an incredibly costly signal. In the case of individuals who have more than one valuable this still means that this exchange is a very costly signal, since the loss of a kula valuable to external exchange in the worst instance means losing access to a *keda*. That is why *kitomu* can be exchanged for a multitude of "normal" social valuables, such as pigs, yams or stone axes (*ibid.*: 149). Vice versa this is also true for aspiring players who require a lot of other social valuables in order to acquire even a very low ranking kula valuable. This is another sign of the manipulated

costliness of a kula signal, since the exchange rate is not related to production cost in a balanced manner.

So, the preliminary conclusion is that CST is a tactic that is also utilized in the kula ring and that it can indeed be used as a way to infuse an example that is normally viewed from a more cultural stance with a way of phrasing that is also accessible to the broader scientific community, such as the economical and the biological sciences.[21] Yet, a more rigorous study is needed to establish the exact way in which costly signals are employed in this system, before anything definite can be said. Also, neither the motive behind the employment of the costly signal has become quite clear, nor has a model been presented that explains how this costliness is mediated, i.e. a costly signal is costly in relation to what? These are topics that will be explored next.

## 4.3 The paradox of permanence and loss

It has now been established that the prevention of the Hobbesian war cannot be the only driving force behind the exchange of social valuables. So, what can be the alternative motives that work in a framework of CST as complementary to the peace bringing gift? This cannot be found in a mystical *hau* or the Straussian concept of the exchange of women. Still, both these explanations are recognizable to us: they contain a hint of underlying concepts that seem universal. The prevention of the loss of identity and the prevention of incest are concepts that were also fundamental in certain works of Annette Weiner, whose field of study, not entirely coincidentally, was also the Trobriands.

Most people agree that, although exchange is present in all aspects of society, not every aspect of society is open for exchange. There are some

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[21] Who knows whether, if studied more thoroughly from a biological viewpoint, it can even be argued that successful kula players are also very successful in sexual reproduction in addition to social reproduction? For now, the data to substantiate this kind of claims are lacking – not only in this case, but in many of the cases in which a biological account of CST may or may not be justified. Overall, it has to be said that there is a lot of resistance from mainstream anthropologists and indigenous peoples when evolutionary biological models, which are, to some, reminiscent of racist notions of white man's superiority, are tested on non-western communities. I would advocate that one way to avoid this is by doing much more fieldwork and research on how costly signals are operated in western societies.

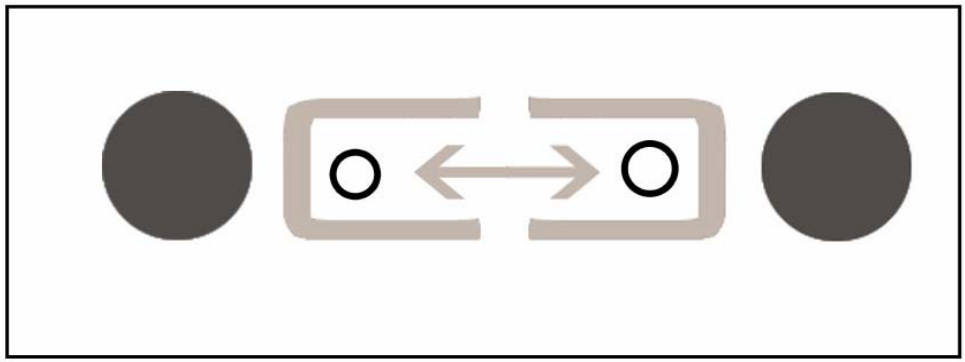

*Figure 2: Exchange according to Weiner (1992) in which inalienable objects are kept safe from exchange by the exchange of some other objects.*

objects that should never be given away, i.e. objects that are inalienable. Examples of these are often famous works of art like *The Nightwatch* in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, or Michelangelo's *Pieta* in the Vatican, but they can also be of a more personal nature, like the wedding ring. These sorts of objects are the centrepiece of Weiner's *Inalienable Possessions*, which was a feminist critique of exchange studies and also its next important breakthrough (1992). In this book Weiner did not attack the flawed mystical character of the Maussian reciprocal gift, but a notion that was taken for granted, namely the profitable character of the return gift as the driving force behind exchange (*ibid.*: 149).

Though *Inalienable Possessions* was first and foremost an attempt to cast off some of the most cherished precepts in social theory, such as the incest taboo, Weiner's most important gift of her own was the notion of a paradox contained within the gift of a social valuable: the paradox of *keeping-while-giving* (*ibid.*: 6). Instead of focusing on exchange as the shaping mechanism of individual and communal identity, Weiner concentrated on those things that were kept out of the exchange structure. She postulated that those things are of a nature so inalienable that to exchange or otherwise lose them would cause a change in society that would be extremely detrimental to individual and communal identity. The paradox here lies in the fact that, because these inalienable possessions are the most potent force in the effort to subvert change, they at the same time stand as the corpus of change. Herein lays, according to Weiner, the paradoxical function of the gift: to keep inalienable things out of exchange through the gift of some other object (Figure 2). She goes on to relate that inalienable objects are connected with the matrilineage

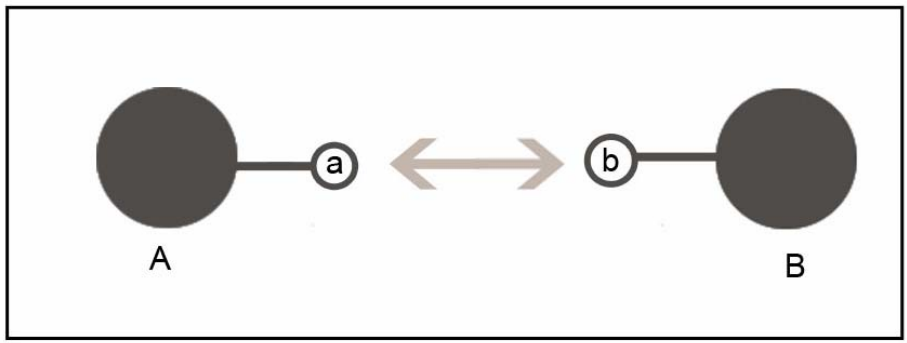


*Figure 3: Exchange according to Godelier (1999) in which inalienable objects A and B are kept safe from exchange by the exchange of related objects a and b and objects a and b can be exchanged, because A and B are kept.*

and femininity, while the exchange of less valued objects is the domain of males.

Maybe because Weiner also makes a gender-biased statement on gender roles and identities this makes her view on gift exchange too distracted to truly answer profound questions into the gift itself. It has to be acknowledged that through her ideas a correction was made for the imbalanced, male-oriented, functionalist view on the gift, but it is plain to see that gift exchange structures are more than "toys for boys" and that exchange functions as something more than a diversion ploy. Nevertheless Weiner has to be lauded for attacking the norm of reciprocity as a way of making profit.

## 4.4 Between two extremes

Additionally, what Weiner also did was to make the first steps into the outskirts of a field of tension between total inalienability and total alienability. This field marks the paradoxical effort to preserve and renew identity through one and the same medium: that of the social valuable.

Godelier (1999) concerns himself with this field in his challenging and inspiring *The Enigma of the Gift*. Without questioning Godelier's originality this work could be seen as a synthesis of the Maussian "total social fact" of gift exchange

and Weiner's concept of "inalienability".[22] On the one hand he critiques and reformulates Mauss when acknowledging the obligation to *reciprocate* gifts, while at the same time wondering what the primary reason for *giving* is (Godelier 1999: 95). On the other hand Godelier also reconceptualizes Weiner's paradox of *keeping-while-giving* into the twofold paradox of *keeping-for-giving* and *giving-for-keeping* (Godelier 1999: 36; Figure 3).

These paradoxes come close to the core of the structure of the exchange of social valuables. According to Godelier "sacra" – highly inalienable objects – have to be kept in order to imbue value and meaning to those things that are given and things have to be given in order to imbue value and meaning to those "sacra" that are being kept. This mechanism is the safeguard against two hyperbolic situations: (1) if everything was inalienable the social universe would be static: everything would be so thought over and meaningful that no change through interaction would be going on; (2) if everything was alienable the social universe would be volatile: everything would change haphazardly and abruptly due to the careless and meaningless nature of the interaction going on.

At this point it may be elucidating to frame these conceptual schemes in modern metaphors. The danger of inalienability can be recognized in the metaphor of an attic filled with stuff that has been gathering dust for years. At some time this "stuff" consisted of objects that were valued so much that these were kept in the attic instead of being discarded. Sadly, years of dust now cover both the objects as well as the memory of their personal stories. The danger of inalienability becomes apparent in the guarding and holding on to objects for such an extended period of time. Instead of preserving identity, they now represent the loss of identity. This is perhaps also an explanation for the exchange of persons to mediate the dangers of incest. In a turn of phrase it can be said that communities of which the individuals are inalienable are like an attic filled with stuff: they are not going anywhere. Additionally, it has to be clear that in order for an object to be valued it has to have the perceived quality to be alienable at some moment.

The metaphor that best explains the perceived dangers of alienability is a bit grander in its outset. It is a scary notion that, albeit at a high price, everything can be bought nowadays: not only commodities, but also health, love and even the most inalienable concept of our times: the individual. "*Vale, pero millones de veces más, la vida de un solo ser humano que todas las propiedades del*

[22] For case-studies of the research of valuables that have been inspired by the Godelier thesis of exchange see Werner & Bell (2004).

*hombre más rico de la tierra*." This text by the hand of the famous Ernesto "Che" Guevara that adorns the gates of the Medical University centre of Havana is not true. It is a way of thinking that is difficult for most of us to accept, but insurance companies and governments have efficiency models in which the value of an individual life is weighed against the cost to save this life. When thinking about this it seems appalling. This shows that, where the separated economical value and social or emotional values meet, the thought of an anticipated alienation of some highly cherished object, ideal, or individual is painful in itself.[23] Another less sentimental example from economics is the fact that economies that are performing exceptionally well – lots of profitable exchanges are going on –, will become overheated and thereby actually cause a stock market *Krach*, in which everything will diminish in value.[24] It is thus quite logical that in order for an object, as well as an exchange system, to be valued it needs to be actively and consciously manipulated to retain that value, i.e. be kept more or less inalienable.

Consequently, the danger in exchange that Lévi-Strauss (1970) pointed to is not only a danger because one road leads to conflict, while the other leads to peace. It is dangerous, because one road leads to the Hobbesian warre, while the other leads to the exchange of everything by everyone. This comes forth from the fact that "what is contained in any object, along with the personhood of the owner, is the entire imaginary of his or her own society" (Godelier 1999: 89). This means that it contains not just a part of the person but all of the imaginary duplicates of the human beings to whom have been attributed the powers to reproduce life or the opposite: to cause death. When an object is put into a structure of gift exchange it is these "powers" or qualities, begotten from culturally specific social and personal concepts, which enable it to mediate the aforesaid dangers of a static or volatile individual and communal identity.

This seems difficult to grasp, but in essence it comes down to the notion that the character of the social valuable follows costly signalling tactics, the outcome of which is influenced by the careful manipulation of the donor. The gift-as-peacekeeping-device should be seen in this light (cf. Corbey 2006a;

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[23] It is this concern that is actually the real subject of Mauss' *Essai sur le don* (1950). Overall, it can be said that the fear for the loss of values is something of all ages.

[24] Examples of these are the IT *Krach* of 2000, when young and booming internet companies went bankrupt on a grand scale, because the internet hype was exposed as the "dotcom bubble." An even more detrimental *Krach* was the one of 1929 after the years of prosperity in the "roaring twenties." This would lead to wide-scale poverty in a large number of countries and the rise of fascist regimes in some of them.

Sahlins 1972), though certainly not all gifts are meant to keep the peace. Exchanges can also be manipulated in such a manner that the gift of a social valuable is harmful, instead of beneficial, for the targeted social relations.[25] How successful individuals can become in these situations can then be translated to other concepts, such as prestige, networking skills, wealth, etc.

## 4.5 Inalienability in the kula

Even in a practice that has exchange as its core goal, there are some objects that are carefully guarded from alienation. These are the most famous kula valuables that have the longest history and the greatest renown attached to them.

Although the kula valuables themselves do not possess sacred qualities they are still highly important for the constitution of personal identity. A man's kula valuables are shown to him one last time before he dies and after he dies his body is decorated with them – although the kula valuables are removed before interment (Malinowski 1922: 512; Weiner 1992: 144). Kula is important as a practice that is intimately connected with human life, for example with seeking lovers, being married, and giving birth; kula paths are spoken about in a metaphoric manner as being able to die and be born (Weiner 1992: 144).

There is no magical sanction for not reciprocating in the kula, such as is the case with the Maori *hau*, Baruya *kwaimatnie*, or similar concepts (Godelier 1999: chapter 2). Still, it is difficult to keep a kula valuable out of the hands of its "suitors." This is because kula is a very competitive game that is played for the highest political stakes. Being a successful player means transcending one's kinship group and connecting oneself with an elite group of men (Munn 1986: 71). Not exchanging *soulava* or *mwali* means not being able to participate fully in the world of politics. In addition there is the tug of exchanges that are external to the kula. Promising a kula valuable to ones partner is a way of keeping it safe from being exchanged in a non-kula exchange. When one man has many *keda*

[25] In the Netherlands, for example, there is a now outmoded notion that the gift of a knife to a friend is a sign that the bond of friendship is considered to be broken. In Guyanese and Venezuelan indigenous communities *kanaìma*, ritual shamanic killers, give certain objects and poisoned food to their intended targets (Whitehead 2002). Also it should be remembered that the Germanic *Gift* means either "poison" or "present" (Benveniste 1997).

this also offers a way of forestalling the forever ongoing exchange by manipulating them in such a fashion that the choice of who is going to receive the kula valuable can be postponed and postponed again (Weiner 1992: 140).

In such a fashion some very successful kula players can put off exchanging the most esteemed *soulava* and *mwali* for the duration of a generation, up to twenty years. In this instance it is not the exchange of the valuable that is a costly signal, but holding on to it. The owner risks, instead of the threat of the loss of a valuable, the dangers of *keda* withering and harmful sorcery by covetous or jealous individuals. Still, for the truly successful individual the valuable can seem to become inalienable, but not for his kinship group, seeing that there has to come a time that it finally has to be yielded to an exchange partner. The exchange is always accompanied by a feeling of sorrow, even if it means exchanging it for another high-ranking kula valuable, since the specific social and political status and esteem that came with that specific kula valuable is lost. As Annette Weiner (1992: 143) so beautifully put it: "Winning, so easy to aspire to but so difficult to achieve, illustrates that although the essence of kula strategy assumes winning, the essence of kula manipulation means losing."

In this way doing kula is indeed an analogy of all exchanges and by nature a true costly signal. To exchange is aspiring to increase, but this increase necessitates loss. This is the "why" of the exchange of social valuables: to continually renew individual and group identity by the establishment of new relations, the validation of existing ones and the termination of those that are impossible to maintain by acquiring new social valuables, keeping acquired valuables inalienable, but finally exchanging those that cannot be inalienable anymore.

## 4.6 Exchangeable valuables, inalienable "sacra" and their relation with alienable commodities

The "how" and "why" of exchange is now formulated – at least for the purpose at hand –, but the question that interests scholars of material culture most, "what" exactly are considered to be ideal social valuables, i.e. optimum costly signals, has yet to be answered.

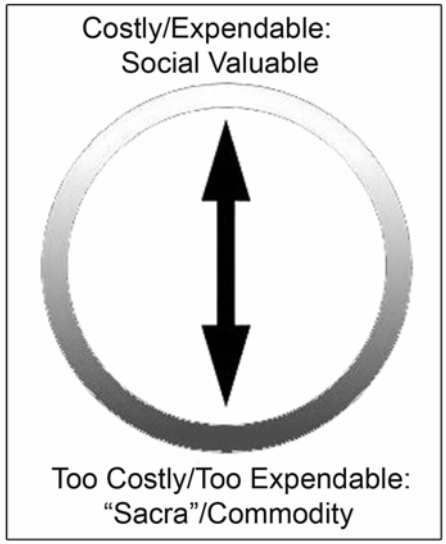


*Figure 4: Cyclical model of exchange. The greyscale symbolizes the inaptitude of a costly or "cheap" object in order for an exchange to be successful. Social valuables can be costly, but expendable by alluding to qualities of both* "sacra" *and commodities.*

Most scholars make a clear distinction between the exchange of commodities and the giving, receiving and giving back of social valuables in such a way that the two exist in separate social and economical universes (Appadurai 1986; e.g. Gosden 2004: 36). Still, as we have seen such a distinction is not made between inalienable "sacra" and exchangeable valuables. Indeed the concepts commodity, social valuable and "sacra" have certain unique characteristics, but, as I would like to argue, they operate in similar systems and are actually similar in their operation.

Bourdieu made the purpose of exchange studies so much broader and far-reaching when he introduced the concept of the "practice of exchange" (Bourdieu 1990, 1997). With this he argued, that all little exchanges were as invaluable, or even more so, for our understanding of the concept of exchange as rare, big exchange events. In a similar way, I would argue that our view of an exchange system is not complete without taking account of commodities. Just as "sacra" embody the most inalienable objects, commodities embody the things that are the most easily alienated. Only if "sacra", valuables and commodities are taken into account one gets the complete overview of all the exchanges going on in the social universe. How should the position of the social valuable within an exchange structure then be viewed?

Godelier (1999: 94) seems to suggest that the gift is caught between two principles, the inalienability of sacred objects and the alienability of commercial objects. Still, the social universe is at the same time brought into existence and sustained by the union and interdependence of these three principal concepts (Godelier 1999: 36). I envision this tension field contained within the gift as a non-hierarchical and interwoven, cyclical model of exchange (Figure 4). In this model it is postulated that social valuables are the ideal objects to successfully mediate the dangers of exchange, because they are

neither too costly, nor too "cheap" to be given in exchange. Quite logically, the core element of CST is the notion that a signal must be costly. Still, not too much value can be lost by its transmission, in order for it to be an efficient signal. Thus, the right costly signal is valuable and expendable at the same time, just like a social valuable. The costliness of the signal of the exchange of the ideal social valuable is exactly right, since it has a little bit of both worlds.

This is because it is valued due to an intrinsic relation with a certain highly inalienable "sacra" – tangible or intangible – and expendable due to an intrinsic relation with alienable commodities – material or immaterial. Therefore its function in the structure of exchange is that it keeps some things from being exchanged and enables others to be traded and acquired. The elegant paradox of keeping-while-giving has grown to the somewhat ungainly, quadruple axiom of *keeping-for-giving*, *giving-for-keeping*, *giving-for-acquiring* and *acquiring-for-giving*. Admittedly, when it is put down so abstractly this axiom can be difficult to wrap the mind around. Some modern metaphors will be needed to clarify this.

First of all one can think of the exchange of a social valuable in the meaning of the gift in the way that most people view it today, as a present for special occasions. Everyone has had the experience that, when a special someone celebrates a certain occasion, it was a *tour de force* to come up with a suitable present. It should not be considered too pricey, nor should it be considered as something cheap. Additionally, it has to fit the person who is hosting this occasion and how we feel about that person. We make it so difficult for ourselves that we perceive it as near to impossible to give the perfect present (Cheal 1986; Komter 1996b). Those with a tendency to be either lazy or very insecure even consider themselves to be better off by not giving anything, since that would only hurt their own standing, than embarrassing or disappointing with an unsuitable gift, which would hurt their standing and the feelings of the one receiving. This is all mediated with the manipulation of signals that material culture can transmit. The gift of a bag of crisps as a birthday gift would leave the receiver puzzled and, very likely, cantankerous, and have the signaller look like a miser and socially inept. On the other hand if a signaller gave his or her grandfather's gold watch, a precious heirloom that has been in the family for ages, or something else that is considered too expensive, like a new car, to someone, no matter on how good a standing they are, that person would be puzzled and embarrassed. He or she would never be able to send a similar signal back to his or her donor, which would leave the signaller looking like an extravagant boaster and socially inept.

Examples in which there is a direct link between material "sacra", valuables and commodities are also abundant. The FIFA World Cup, for instance, awarded to the victorious soccer team of the world championships for national teams that is held every four years, is a colourful illustration of this. The trophy itself is an inalienable object: there is only one trophy in existence, it consists of 5 kg of solid gold, has been in use since 1974, and has room for inscribing the names of consecutive world champions until 2038. The inalienability of its value is safeguarded by only allowing a nation to claim permanent ownership of this trophy when it has won the world cup three times. The diminishment of its value would be significant if a new trophy was made for every World Cup tournament. It would also be unthinkable on the other hand if a nation that had won the World Cup would have nothing to show for its achievement. In order to mediate the social dangers that are associated with such a coveted object, the FIFA has decided that every world champion is presented with a gold plated copy. In addition, commoditized replicas are available to every citizen of a winning nation, in the form of T-shirts, mugs, actual small replicas, bath towels, etc., to commemorate an event worthy of eternal remembrance. This commoditization only increases the popularity of the sacred object, while it also allows access to its symbolism by its wide distribution pattern.

The English Crown jewels are another good case in point. They are displayed 365 days a year in the Tower of London where they attract vast crowds of tourists. It is a public secret that these are not the real crown jewels, but replicas. This is a logical precaution, since it would mean a symbolic destruction of the English Empire if the Crown jewels were lost somehow. Still, the crown jewels also have to be shown to the public to remind them of the might of the English Empire and to pocket the money from the sale of the tickets to tourists, of course. Naturally, there are also commodities that depict the Crown jewels and even little replicas. Still, the most prominent commodity that can be taken back as memory, and absolutely free to boot, is a photograph.[26]

In reality not every link between "sacra", valuable and commodity is always as clear as in the above examples. Many links that can be drawn do not even feature a direct link between sacred object relating to valuable object relating to

[26] This example was inspired by Annette Weiner's slightly different example, which she gives in *Inalienable Possessions* (1992: 36-37)

commoditized thing. For instance, this relation could be conceptualized as sacred idea relating to valuable object relating to commoditized thing.[27]

An example of this are the interlinked concepts of the absolution of the sins of Christians by the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross relating to the original Cross relating to all the crosses that are replicas of this original Cross. It becomes even more complicated if one of the replica crosses becomes a "sacra". This could happen when some sort of miracle gets connected to it. In that case it would be very feasible that replicas of replicas will be made. It could even be hypothesized that the replica of the replica of the cross can in turn become of inalienable status for a specific group of people that connect it with a pilgrimage or with the remembrance of a person to which the replica of the replica of the cross was very dear.

This way of viewing social valuables may not lead to a model that is very easy to oversee, but it is insightful into the flexible nature of exchange. It is clear that objects and things very easily and quickly can go through various value transformations in different contexts and perspectives (Munn 1986). Consequently, what is considered a gift in one situation might be considered an inalienable object in other situations. Then again, in other situations it might just function as a commercial object and, to make matters even more confusing, in yet other situations all three qualities might be expressed almost simultaneously.[28] Additionally, seeing that things and objects are never either inalienable or alienable, one fixed concept of "sacra", valuables and commodities does not exist. Still, these concepts can serve as imaginary units of analysis or to *relate ideas, material culture and persons*, but not to delineate real, objective categories. Things are always alienable more or less to the degree that detaching a particular thing or object is giving a larger or smaller part of the Self and they are only successfully perceived as a costly signal when this adds a large, but not too large, part to the Self of the donor and the receiver. Hence,

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[27] Other combinations are possible. However, some seem unlikely; like sacred object relating to valuable idea relating to commoditized thing, or sacred object relating to valuable object relating to commoditized idea.

[28] Good examples of this are Buddha statuettes. Although they have lost much of their sacred value in Western capitalist exchange structures their popularity still stems from their sacred or, better said, "esoteric" character. However, one can find them as commercial products in many stores and on many fairs. Curiously enough they are still meant only to be acquired as a gift from someone or it is believed that they will bring the owner bad luck.

*both* donor and receiver benefit from this symbiotic connection and are therefore often inclined to continue their exchange practices.

## 4.7 The endgame: Kula as a quadruple axiom in the Trobriand social universe

This theoretical framework was built up from a classical beginning with Mauss' triple obligation, but developed into something more complicated as other theoretical flavours were added. The same can be said for the analogy with the kula system that was explored here. Beginning as a classical, yet simple system described in Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, it has developed along with the theoretical argument to be a highly specialized and complex system of exchange, in which all the theoretical elements of the exchange of social valuables are still present. Finally, elements of the fourfold axiom of social valuable exchange can also be distinguished in this system.

As explored in the previous example kula valuables have a mutually dependent and intrinsic link with inalienable ideas and objects. Nonetheless, kula valuables are characterized by a mutually dependent and intrinsic link with alienability, in the form of, what in the West would be termed, commodities, as much as inalienability. This relation is best explored in an earlier work of Annette Weiner, which goes much more into detail on the social universe of the Trobriand woman, than on the male dominated kula exchange.

Women have their own sets of exchanges, which are different in motive, form and practice, but not less prestige driven than the kula. The mortuary distribution, or *sagali,* is one part of social life that features the exchange of women's valuables. This set of exchanges is very intricate in its workings and relies on the clan-based distinction of "owners" and "workers". When a man dies the members of his matrilineage become the owners of the dead person's things, who are known as *toliuli*. With this right to property however come strict taboos that prevent the owners from handling the corpse in any way. In fact, they are not even supposed to mourn. The work of the mourning, which involves all affairs of handling the body, but also shaving the hair, blackening the skin and wearing mourning clothes, is done by all those members of other matrilineages who were close to the deceased during his

life.[29] As a repayment for their services the owners redistribute all the deceased's possessions over the workers in special, ritualized exchanges, which include men's valuables – large clay pots, axes and *kitomu* kula valuables –, but also women's valuables – skirts and bundles of banana leaves.[30] This final gift at the end of his life by the man's clan is to close off of all the little exchanges that were responsible for the growth and development of his personhood and the identity of his matrilineage (Weiner 1988: chapter 3).

When he is born already an exchange takes place, since, although fatherhood is not officially recognized in the Trobriands, the matrilineage is in debt for the creation of the new person to another matrilineage. Consequently during his life a Trobriand person can only grow by exchanging: tobacco and bettle nuts are carried around everywhere and continually distributed freely (*ibid.*: 21); young lovers exchange small trinkets with each other (*ibid.*: 66); the matrilineage of an adolescent male ready to be married gives men's valuables to the matrilineage of the female, including canoes and kula valuables (Munn 1986; Weiner 1988: 86); in turn after some years of marriages the father and brother build a yam house and start harvesting yams for their daughter or sister (Weiner 1988: 91); yams – first gained from in-laws, but as the man gains more contacts, primarily by other affinal relations – are subsequently used as the exchange medium *par excellence* to acquire other social valuables or are left rotting in store as a signal of social status (*ibid.*: 93); social valuables have to be exchanged to gain access to secret magic spells that can then be used to influence a wild variety of things like yam growth, kula exchange, social dispositions, etc. (*ibid.*: 39); the knowledge of magic spells can then be used in exchange again for men's wealth, kula valuables and pigs (*ibid.*: 109); these items have to be exchanged for women's wealth for the distributions at the death of a person that sometimes require thousands of skirts and bundles of banana leaves (*ibid.*: 125-134), which mark the end of the string of exchanges that made up a person's life, but not that of the eternally renewing exchanges that safeguard the matrilineage.

This very confusing, but still oversimplified account of exchanges features several types of social valuables, which some would categorize as "sacra", commodities, or even currency, that differ in level of inalienability, but that can be employed as social costly signals using different strategies at

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[29] Note that the structure of the matrilineage is such that the workers are not only affines, but also the children of the deceased.

[30] *Sagali* literally means "payment for the cutting of the hair".

different moments. This also shows that kula exchange is a very minor, albeit essential, part of the totality of exchanges going on in the social universe of the Trobriands and other islands in the kula ring that cannot operate without the links to all of the other material and immaterial, inalienable and alienable social valuables.[31]

This is of vital importance for scholars trying to understand mechanisms of exchange, because it has to be recognized that a category of exchange valuables never stands on its own, neither as a category nor as a motive and tactic. To understand the exchange inside a single category, such as the kula *soulava* and *mwali*, it is necessary to keep in mind that in order for a successful costly signal to be transmitted it can neither only be seen as the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate, nor as the mediator of a dangerous situation as bringer of peace, nor as survival tool for the individual and his genes, nor as substitute in order for "sacra" to be kept. The kula has to be seen as part of one organic system: one social universe in which ideas, objects and people can be exchanged as costly signals in a continual renewal of personhood through making, validating and terminating relations, by the acquisition, the keeping and most importantly the exchange of social valuables.

## 4.8 Addendum: Fossilized costly signals and how to excavate them

Hardcore "dirt" archaeologists will probably find it hard to see the value of a study of such a flexible, ethereal, or even ephemeral concept as the exchange of social valuables viewed as costly signals. Still, I believe that this is a way of viewing material culture that can be of great value as a frame of mind *and* as a methodology.

First of all, although I did not focus on it for fear of compressing too much information in what already is a dense theoretical framework, it offers new and exciting ways to look at many social processes that are of importance to the archaeologist. Examples of these might be the comparison of allochtonous and autochthonous cultures – do we find different signals; could these be different social universes? –, intercultural contact – how do two

[31] In an alternative manner Munn (1986) does not speak of linked exchanges, but of value transformations. For instance, yams are in this way not *linked* to kula valuables, but yams are *transformed* into kula valuables.

different cultures successfully transmit messages in an intercultural social universe? –, political tactics – who is most successful in signalling; why? – gender tactics – what is the difference between the use of social valuables between different gender categories? –, etc. There are many ways in which one can go about researching these questions. For the question at hand here, I decided to opt for an approach that is multi-disciplinary and as inclusive as possible. With a range of sources at my disposal I shall look at concepts for and motives of alienation from a view of the artefacts themselves. The materiality of an artefact means that signals that were sent in exchanges in the past, can, with knowledge of the specific social universe under research, still be re-sent and picked up by the careful observer. This is what is meant by costly signals that are "fossilized" in the archaeological record. For the subject of this study it means that it is first necessary to reconstruct the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age social universe with the available information and then look at reasons why a specific artefact, in this case shell faces, have alienable and inalienable qualities. With this knowledge it will perhaps become apparent if this specific artefact can indeed be seen as an ideal social valuable.

In any social universe there are alienable or inalienable qualities that are very specific, but there are also some methods of manipulating the costliness of the signal that are quite universal and thus relatively easy to look for in the artefact. Such a tactic can be long-distance exchange. Attributing qualities of a mystical world that is beyond the horizon to artefacts is common practice. That which is exotic draws us like a moth to a flame, but not all of us are capable of dealing with the dangers that the exotic brings.[32] Persons or communities who do "harness the exotic", i.e. acquire an exotic artefact, idea or relation through exchange or travelling, can send particularly costly signals by entering into exchanges with these objects (Helms 1988).

Another quality of a signal that can be looked for in material culture is exquisite craftsmanship. Not only does a high level of craftsmanship increase the aesthetic value of an object but capability of crafting can be exclusive to a certain person or group. People that have obtained this crafting skill – through years of training or transmission of knowledge, often coupled with a series of initiation rituals – can then manufacture objects that can hold tremendously powerful signals. Such a crafted social valuable does not have to be a material

[32] The exotic nature of artefacts is most visible in artefacts of materials that are not available locally, but objects made from local materials, such as ceramics, are often also acquired over long distances.

object or be recognizable as a crafted object due to its aesthetic nature. It can be a dance, a song, a story, or just a simple rock imbued with superhuman energy. Additionally, the crafting skill itself can also be used in knowledge transmission as a costly signal (Helms 1993).

That the exotic is not always far away geographically is attested by the paradoxical relations humans have with the ancestral or superhuman world. The knowledge to mediate with this world is a costly signal *an sich*, since the other world is every bit as dangerous and liminal as a faraway place. If the allusion to some amount of control is materialized in an object, these objects are very costly indeed. Often they grow to be valuables of the highest inalienable order (Helms 1998).

Tactics that focus more on alienable qualities are a bit harder to establish. Standardized designs, less expensive materials and high production rates are methods that could influence alienable qualities. Furthermore, the methods for reconstruction that focus on inalienable qualities, such as the above, can also be used as an inversion: if they are not utilized one can say that at least this did not raise their inalienability.

The three tactics outlined above complement each other in such a manner that, when combined, they signal very impressive underlying qualities indeed. Think of the sway that, for instance, ancient Egyptian artefacts – which are beautifully crafted, exotic and yet strangely familiar – have over us. Still, geographical distance, craftsmanship and an allusion to ancestral themes are just three of the ways in which signals can be manipulated and many more will probably have been utilized. It is a challenge for archaeologists to "excavate" these signals. Yet, even if they remain faint and for the most part comprised of static, these past signals will bring more life to an otherwise mostly inert social universe.

# Part II:
# The Face of Exchange

*Hallaron […] muchas cabezas en manera de caratona muy bien labrada.*
**- D. Cristóbal Colón,**
in the words of Bartolomé de las Casas.

# 5| The Caribbean Social Universe

## 5.1 Synopsis

In this chapter a background will be presented to situate the Late Ceramic Age in its social setting. First a very brief overview is given of the different peoples of the Late Ceramic Age that are recognized in the archaeological literature. This will be followed up by a general impression of some of the social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age and some thoughts on how they were used. Subsequently, a large part of this chapter is devoted to ethnohistoric descriptions of instances in which social valuables were exchanged. Additionally, a short addendum will be presented that focuses specifically on how exchange is conceptualized in an indigenous community of lowland South America. Overall, this chapter will provide a necessary cultural and social framework to the theoretical framework presented in part I that will be further and more specifically elaborated by the case-study in the following chapter.

## 5.2 Peoples of the Late Ceramic Age

Scholars of the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean operate large and inclusive cultural groups. These groups are often considered to be five in number, Lucayo, Taíno, Igneri, Island Carib, and Guanahatabey, but sometimes a sixth is distinguished with the addition of the enigmatic ethnic group of the Macorix in the peninsula of Samaná on the island of Hispaniola.

### *5.2.1 Archaeological nomenclature*

The way archaeological cultures are distributed is as much governed by the cultural and political boundaries created in the colonial era as they are reflections of ethnic territoriality. It is known from ethnohistoric sources that there were languages in one and the same island that were mutually unintelligible (e.g. Pané 1999 [1571]: 33; Granberry & Vescelius 2004). As it stands it could be that the Late-Ceramic Caribbean contained a multiplicity of ethnic groups than are officially recognized now. Furthermore the names archaeologists employ for archaeological assemblages should not be seen as ethnic auto-denominations. The auto-denomination for the Taíno, for instance, is unknown, – some suggesting that they named themselves after their *cacique*

(Rouse 1948). What is known is that Taíno means "noble" or "good" in several Arawakan languages and that the term first appears when crewmen of the second voyage of Colón heard it from the mouth of people who were presumable taken captive by Island-Caribs. Overall, it has to be understood that when the term "Taíno" is used here it denotes a widespread Antillean set of cultural practices and norms shared by several or more localized cultures in the Greater Antilles and beyond (Petersen et al. 2004).

*5.2.2 Lucayo*

The Lucayo, Arawakan speakers, take their name from the Taíno word for "islander" and are sometimes referred to as Lucayan Taíno (e.g. Petersen et al. 2004). Their area of occupation was the Bahamas. From the diaries of Colón it is known that these people were very different from those of the larger islands to the south. These people must have been relying on marine resources for the greater part of their subsistence, but some horticulture was also present. The Palmetto ware is most prevalent on the Bahamas during this period.

On an evolutionary scale the socio-political level is seen as having achieved the chiefdom level, but a critical evaluation is in order to characterize this and other Caribbean societies from a new socio-political perspective (Hofman and Hoogland 2004). Links between this area and the Greater Antilles have been the subject of research for some years now, but for the purposes of the case-study they are left out (Rouse 1992).

*5.2.3 Guanahatabey and Macorix*

The Guanahatabey – sometimes erroneously referred to as Ciboney or Guanahacabibis – of Central and Western Cuba are still an archaeological mystery. Although the area has seen quite some archaeological investigation, the sites found here are poor in material culture, with only lithic and shell artefacts and some ceramics of the Cayo Redondan style, but none of the highly crafted objects one can find more to the east. Socio-politically they are characterized as a band or tribal type of society and they have had a hunter/gatherer lifestyle. The contact this people must have had with other peoples, like the Taíno to the east or the Lucayo to the north, leaves an interesting window for a study of social valuables, but unfortunately too little is known at present, so the discussion of this has to be left for subsequent research (Valcarcél Rojas & Ulloa Hung 2002; Rouse 1992).

The Macorix represent supposedly, in a similar way as the Guanahatabey, a separate language family and culture from the Taíno, with

which they inhabited the island of Hispaniola. They are even more ambiguous as a cultural group, since they are known only from ethnohistoric sources, unrepresented by an archaeological assemblage (Wilson 1990).

*5.2.4 Island-Carib*

The Island-Caribs are the only indigenous people that were present in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean that are still occupying an indigenous community today, namely in the Carib territory on Dominica. They form an ethnic group together with the mainland Kalina. Their language is different from that of the other cultural groups, and subdivided in a male and female vocabulary. The female vocabulary consists only of Arawakan, while the male vocabulary consists of Arawakan with Carib loanwords (Granberry and Vescelius 2005).

Late arrivals in the Caribbean –they are said to have migrated from the mainland to the southern Lesser Antilles in the 14th century AD- the archaeological reflection of their material culture is not well researched yet. Although the Cayo pottery style is connected to these people (Boomert 1986). Ethnohistoric descriptions of these people are the cause of their portrayal as cannibalistic, brutal warrior tribes who were continually raiding the "peaceful" chiefdoms to the north. In the past this has led scholars to draw a cultural fault line between the northern and southern Lesser Antilles at the Virgin Islands (Rouse 1948; Figueredo 1978). Moreover, the northern Lesser Antilles were marginalized culturally and politically since this was essentially a conflict region. It is now understood that this view is incorrect (Allaire 1987; Boomert 1986). Yet, presuppositions concerning a perceived Taíno/Carib dichotomy still plague Caribbean archaeology today (Hofman and Bright 2008).

*5.2.5 Igneri*

Igneri is a term that was first used by Lovén (1935), but later becomes used in a number of different contexts. Nowadays Igneri are understood to be the inhabitants of the southern Lesser Antilles that are not Island-Caribs and the inhabitants of the northern Lesser Antilles. They are traditionally characterized as akin to the Taíno, probably also being Arawakan speakers, but lacking more "complex" traits of Taíno culture such as ball courts, a clearly defined chiefdom structure, settlements hierarchy, etc. Some scholars now suggest that this could well have been a construct from ethnohistoric sources and that the Igneri on the Lesser Antilles had a society that was quite equal in a lot of respects to that of the Greater Antilles, although these archaeological cultures are further divided by ceramic styles with the Elenenan Ostionoid in the

northern Lesser Antilles and the Suazoid in the southern Lesser Antilles, with intrusive elements of Chican Ostionoid pottery on some sites in the northern Lesser Antilles (Crock & Petersen 2004; Hofman and Hoogland 2004; Hoogland and Hofman 1993). The study of social valuables over a distribution area comprising the Greater and Lesser Antilles will give some more insights into this issue.

*5.2.6 Taíno*

The case-study presented further on will focus on shell faces, a certain artefact class of Greater Antillean origin, with iconographic elements that in most cases resembles Chican Ostionoid iconography. Consequently, this cultural group will be the main focus here. The Taíno occupied the largest part of the Greater Antilles from Eastern Cuba to Puerto Rico and are divided in different subgroups on the basis of material culture traits: Sub-Taíno in Cuba and Jamaica, Classical Taíno on the island of Hispaniola, and Eastern Taíno on Puerto Rico and, quite possibly, some of the northern Lesser Antilles. Linguistically the Taíno all belong to the same Arawakan language family that is spread all over the northern part of the Southern American tropical lowlands. To many the Classic Taíno represent the epiphany of indigenous culture in the Caribbean with their ball courts, highly intricate ceremonial life, large villages, elaborately crafted objects and the most clearly developed chiefdom structure (Rouse 1992).[33] Nevertheless, the importance of the Classic Taíno is often overstated, because of the ethnohistoric information that has been gathered on them by European chroniclers, such as Pané, Las Casas, Oviedo and Martyr. The ceramic style associated with the Classic Taíno is the Chican Ostionoid. The Meillacan Ostionoid is connected to the Sub-Taíno groups.

A sound understanding of the layout and workings of their socio-political system is of importance when considering the role of social valuables among the Taíno. Still, it has to be understood that much has been written about Taíno socio-political organization, but that its intricacies remain quite unclear. Following mainstream thought the Taíno were regionally divided in large "complex chiefdoms" governed by quite rigid class distinctions. The regional polities were headed by a paramount *cacique* – the chief –, who had

[33] Chiefdoms are understood here as regional polities made up of subordinate villages under the permanent control of a paramount chief in which the interest of the dependent population are balanced against those of an emerging aristocracy (cf. Keegan et al. 1998; Redmond 1998).

influence over a large amount of less powerful *caciques*.[34] According to some this class of lower elites is called *nitaínos* – "the good ones" –, but this is not a term that is used much nowadays. The class of the *naborías* – literally "the rest" – is considered to be the class of commoners (Keegan 1997). It is not clear whether there existed a separate class for slaves, who were perhaps long-term prisoners captured on raids, but this has been suggested (Moscoso 1977).

It is perceived that somewhere during the development towards these complex chiefdoms there was a transition from achieved to ascribed leadership strategies and, with that, a transition from non-hereditary to hereditary transference of political power (Curet 1996). Some have even suggested that this power structure was already so firmly in place by the beginning of the contact period that the more powerful Taíno *caciques* were even seen as semi-divine beings, who were treated with veneration and decorum (Keegan et al. 1998; Oliver 1997; Siegel 1997). Whether the role of *cacique* was indeed comparable to that of a "divine king" remains unclear, but the *cacique* did certainly have a special relation with the world of the superhuman beings and ancestors (Oliver 1997). They were the ones, with the help of *behiques* – "shamans" or ritual specialists –, who were able to communicate with these beings. This was done during the *cohoba* ritual in which they would purge themselves and inhale snuff drugs – of the powdered seeds of the *Anadenanthera peregrina*, mixed with chalk – through the nose or have them blown in the nose by someone else to achieve an altered state of consciousness. Also, *caciques* were the leaders of communal events, such as distribution ceremonies and ritual dances, known as *areytos*. Additional roles for the *behique* were that of curer and as a general specialist on all extra-normal affairs. This included the identification of the material and form "desired by" certain objects that have been suggested to possess agency, *zemis*, – who were most surely seen as socially valuable – by communicating with them and then passing on their wishes to those who would craft the object (Oliver, forthcoming).[35]

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[34] Note that "*cacique*" was most probably the title for the head of an extended family (Oliver, personal communication 2007). Even nowadays the term cacique is used in the Dominican Republic and is used for minor bosses who behave in a despotic way.

[35] "The ones of wood are made in this way: when someone is walking along and he says he sees a tree that is moving its roots, the man very fearfully stops and asks who it is. And it answers him: 'Summon me a *behique*, and he will tell you who I am!' [..] Then the tree or *zemi*, turned into an idol or devil, answers [the *behique*], telling him the manner in which he wants it to be done" (Pané 1999[1571]: 25-26).

From this sort of examples it is evident that the Taíno social universe was certainly animistic in nature. Furthermore, it has been put forward by some, through analogies with present-day indigenous South American mainland communities, that the Taíno universe was divided in three layers: one watery underworld, the land of the dead, the world as it would have been perceived normally, and the celestial spirit layer where the superhuman beings resided (Siegel 1997). On the other hand this vertical hierarchy of layers should not be seen to rigidly. Layers were probably perceived as being meshed together, since beings inhabiting certain layers could easily cross over to other layers, such as the deceased, who after their death went to a certain island, but could also come back to roam around in the world of the living (Pané 1999 [1571]: 17).

It has to be said that most of the suppositions, such as socio-political complexity and class roles, about the Taíno come from a fairly limited amount of ethnohistoric sources, which very often cannot be verified with available archaeological evidence. The same is true for Late Ceramic Age social valuables, which are often used in arguments where they serve as primitive valuables or prestige goods that from a *comparable theoretical* perspective should be indicators of socio-political complexity. The truth is that the intricacies of the use of social valuables have not yet been well researched from a *Caribbean* perspective.

## 5.3 A bird's eye view of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean

There is an enormous amount of elaborately crafted objects from the Late Ceramic Age that has been collected in museums and private collections in and outside of the Caribbean.[36] In the flexible framework that has been set up in part I it is possible to view all of these as social valuables. Nevertheless, when wanting to know what message these materialized costly signals were transmitting it is necessary to study them in an exhaustive manner. The scope of such research is too large to undertake here, so out of the entire choice of items I decided to pick out only one artefact category to be further elaborated on in a case-study. Still, it is worthwhile to paint in broad strokes the form and

[36] For some beautiful examples see: Bercht et al. (1997)

meaning of some of the more eye-catching objects that could be termed social valuables and the materials they are made of.

*5.3.1 Duhos*

A social valuable, of which the underlying idea – being seated in a higher position as a depiction of elevated social status – is almost universal, is the chiefly stool or *duho* (e.g. Figure 5a). The *duho*, which is made out of very hard wood, like *guayacán* or mahogany, or, less frequent, stone and of which more than 100 examples are known from private collections and museums, has an area of distribution and style of iconography that is mainly focused on the Greater Antilles, but finds of *duhos* have been reported from Lesser Antillean islands as far south as Trinidad as well (Boomert, personal communication 2007; Ostapkowicz 1998). Moreover the idea of a stool to be used by high-ranking individuals at certain important moments, such as welcoming ceremonies or shamanic rituals, is found back among many communities in the lowlands of South America. From ethnohistoric sources we know that these were offered in exchanges that must have been particularly powerful signals indeed.

*5.3.2 Shamanic paraphernalia*

Shamanic paraphernalia occur everywhere shamanism occurs. Still, the set of tools at the disposal of the *behique* is quite unique in form and iconography. From private collections and museums we know of some conspicuous examples of the tools used to inhale the snuff during *cohoba* ceremonies. Because they are quite large artefacts that are constructed out of one piece, they were often made out of manatee bone. The manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) is an animal that must have been one of the more difficult animals to hunt and together with the subsequent elaborate craftsmanship these artefacts must have emanated a very powerful signal indeed (e.g. Figure 5d). The plateau from which the drug was snorted could have been any clean flat surface, but special standards, consisting of a range of materials, were also employed to inhale the drugs from.

Vomiting spatulas, made of manatee bone or shell or wood, are other objects that could have been costly signals to commission. Objects like these with clear Taíno iconography have been found as far as Guadeloupe and

Dominica in the Lesser Antilles (Hofman, personal communication 2006).[37] Still, it is not known from ethnohistoric sources that these objects themselves were exchanged. It could be that the Spaniards were not interested in them, or that they represented items that were not open for exchange. Nevertheless, the meaning of these objects and other shamanic paraphernalia must have been widespread.

*5.3.3 Tools*

Additionally, tools of exceptional quality or of an exotic material can also be seen as social valuables, even if they are not immediately connectable with high status or other worlds of existence.[38] We know from studies in the Lesser Antilles that lithic material, such as Antigua flint or St. Martin greenstone, was transported over quite a large region (Knippenberg 2007). In other parts of the world it is not uncommon that these sorts of tools acquire a special place in an exchange system, so not to mention these sorts of items from a framework of social valuables in the Caribbean would be incorrect (Bradley & Edmonds 1993; Godelier 1999; Munn 1986; Wentink 2006). How exactly these items have to be typified as social valuable in the Caribbean is unclear at the moment. However, the benefit of perceiving these sorts of items as social valuables is that they lend themselves to be sampled and studied with archaeometric techniques for their provenance. Provenance is currently lacking for the more aesthetically pleasing social valuables in museums and private collections, but something that is badly needed to give the study of social valuable exchange a bit more backbone.

*5.3.4 Gold artefacts*

The most conspicuous of the social valuables and the fewest in number are the gold artefacts. According to ethnohistoric sources, there was a whole range of items made of this material that were used as bodily adornments, inlays, and as mirror-like sheets of gold of which small pieces were broken off in distribution (Navarete 1922: 107). Still, the few pieces that have been found back are not in

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[37] It is even rumoured that a Taíno vomiting spatula has been found in the Sacred Cenote at Chichen Itzá, but this information is unconfirmed (Bright, personal communication 2007).

[38] For instance in the kula ring, not only kula valuables are named and build up history, but in some cases stone axes –men's valuables– and cooking pots of exceptional quality –women's valuables– are also named and exchanged as part of affinal exchange networks (Munn 1986).

any of the above categories, but are small pieces or "amulets" of people and birds (e.g. Figure 5b). The iconography of these is very similar to the gold work of the mainland Tairona and has been used to suggest links between this area and the Greater Antilles. Still, it is also possible that these links are colonial, rather than Pre-Columbian.

The indigenous term for gold is *caona*, but there was also another variant called *guanín* – an alloy consisting of approximately 80% gold, 18-19% copper with minor inclusions of silver. This *guanín* is considered to be very important, since it features in the origin narrative of the culture hero Guahayona, who was also responsible for bringing women to the first men (Pané 1999 [1571]: 8). This has led to belief that *guanín* is intimately connected to procreation (Oliver 2000). Also it has to be understood that this meaning of gold was something that was distributed over a wide area, since origin narratives concerning this topic by the Guyanese Lokono are almost identical to that of the Taíno (Boomert 2000: 458).

*5.3.5 Value and manufacture costs*

It would be erroneous to place the highest value on gold artefacts, simply because they are valued so much in our society. The truth is that it is not known what sorts of material aspects were most valued by the indigenous people of the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean. Procurement and manufacture costs could give some insight in how costly a signal an object represents in exchange. One could, for instance, argue that an amulet of manatee bone or *guanín* is more costly than a clay amulet, since they signify such vastly different production costs.

It is possible to glimpse just how labour intensive the production of social valuables actually must have been in some cases with an example of Taíno beadwork, on which Elizabeth Carlson (1993) did a seminal study. There are two beaded artefacts from just before or just after the contact period, the beaded *zemi* from the Pigorini museum in Rome and the beaded belt from the Vienna *Museum für Völkerkunde*, that have been used for such an analysis by dr. Ostapkowicz of the Liverpool World Museum (Figure 7a,b and 8a). The bulk of the surface of the *zemi* is made up of over 20,000 indigenous shell beads, each, on average, about 4 mm in diameter. The sheer quantity and uniform size of the shell beads give insights into the high levels of craftsmanship and labour cost incorporated into this object. According to Elizabeth Carlson, beads of a diameter of 4 mm or smaller were the most difficult to manufacture, and as a result would have been exceptionally valuable (e.g. Figure 5c). Carlson

replicated the bead manufacturing process, and based on her results, suggested that a working group of 10 people could have produced 3000 beads in 2 months. Taking this to its logical conclusion, 20,000 beads would suggest the full-time work of 10 people for over 12 months, although it has to be acknowledged that indigenous production must have been faster than replication studies can suggest. Similarly, the belt features over 10,000 drilled conch and jewel box beads. If this is calculated using Carlson's estimates for bead production this belt could have meant over 6 months labour for 10 specialists. This is not taking into account the weaver who had to pick, process, spin and finally weave the cotton for the main body of the belt (Ostapkowicz 2007, personal communication).

This small example shows a number of things. First of all it shows the great value and the need for studies that try to replicate the manufacture of other Caribbean social valuables. Secondly, it shows how much energy was expended in the manufacture of one socially valuable object. Finally, it is a cautionary tale that some of the smallest crafted items found in archaeological assemblages constitute a significantly costlier signal than some of the most eye-catching objects in collections. It has to be acknowledged, that when studying social valuables as an archaeologists it is very dangerous to assume costliness on the basis of Western material and aesthetic qualities. Especially when taking into account that inconspicuous objects like single beads, or objects with a form that does not in any way betray their inalienable nature, are the things that are the least frequently collected. Furthermore, the archaeological invisibility of most organic materials from the Late Ceramic Age leaves a huge gap in what can be known of this specific social universe. This has to be conceptualized with other means.

Additionally it has to be recognized that it could be that object narratives are equally important when establishing value. In this way it is the idea behind a single artefact or a group of artefacts that is distributed and not the object itself that has the greatest value. It would not matter what the material or manufacture cost was, the costliness in exchange would simply be mediated by what these pieces represent. One way this can be seen is similarity in use and form, like with the snuff inhaler in the form of a fish from Saba made from manatee bone and a similar ceramic inhaler from the Dominican Republic. Another example are two exactly similar containers from manatee, or possibly human, bone from the Dominican Republic and a wooden container from the site of Los Buchillones in northern central Cuba that looks just like its bone counterparts (Figure 6a, b and c).

*5.3.6 Three-pointed stones*

A class of artefacts for which narratives surely were very important is that of the three-pointed stones (e.g. Figure 5e). The three-pointed stones are items that are unique to the Caribbean of which the Greater Antillean, large, eye-catching variants have a fairly small distribution, both geographically as chronologically. From Early Ceramic times on, three-pointed stones, shells and pieces of coral have been found in the Lesser Antilles and the Greater Antilles as far as western Hispaniola. They reach their highest level of iconographic development and size during the Late Ceramic Age in the Greater Antilles in Hispaniola. In Cuba hardly any three-pointed stones have been found. More to the east, in Puerto Rico, there are some very fine examples. As we reach the northern Lesser Antilles the iconography becomes less developed, generally the stones become smaller and smaller in size, and the material becomes softer and thus easier to work on. Further to the south the three-pointed stones are crafted out of harder stone than in the northern Lesser Antilles (Boomert, personal communication 2007).

The three-pointed stones are seen to be representations of similarly formed mountains that can be found on many islands of the Caribbean. The only use we know for them comes from ethnohistoric records, which indicate that they were buried in the fields to increase agricultural production, but most probably they have been used for many different ceremonial purposes. These stones are also called three-pointed *zemis*, but following Oliver (1998; 2000; forthcoming) they were certainly not the only items that were *zemi*.

*5.3.7 Zemiism*

Oliver interprets *zemi* as an immaterial force: a quality present in objects and persons. This force is linguistically traceable to the Lokono *seme*, what is connected to shamanism and means something like "sweetness". This immaterial force was supposedly present in objects which imbued them with agency, i.e. a mind of their own (Oliver, forthcoming). We know from Pané, who is our best source on Caribbean cosmovision, that *zemis* were indeed seen as living beings (Pané 1999 [1571]). *Zemi* objects were very powerful objects enabling the *cacique* to mediate the superhuman world, which were probably divided into object hierarchies (Ostapkowicz 1998).

It is necessary to back this up with a rigid archaeological context, but the archaeological and ethnohistoric information presented by Oliver has already led to an argument in which *zemi* is seen as a similar force as the Polynesian *mana* or the Maori *hau* in which part of the dividual personhood of

the person can be detached and sent with the object as a reminder of the donor (Oliver, personal communication 2007, forthcoming; cf. Strathern 1992). These developments are interesting, especially since they are able to bond with a broader archaeological movement that is captivated by the concept of agency and its use in archaeology (e.g. Fowler 2004). Especially the view that agency can also be vested in material culture (Gosden 2004, 2005; Oliver forthcoming), seems to be a topic that directly harks back to worldviews described by anthropologists in which animism also extends to material culture. I already discussed Lévi-Strauss' (1997) critique on the Maussian notion of *hau*, which could indeed be repeated for the Caribbean concept of *zemi*. From a post-Straussian, cultural anthropological viewpoint one might dismiss his critique of such indigenous *trucs* to explain for social phenomena as non-*emic*. Still, this defence cannot be used by archaeologists, because their work is non-*emic* by its very nature. Dismissing the Straussian argument as non-*emic* will therefore not be reasonable. The only solution for archaeological interpretations utilizing unseen forces as an argument is that they have to remain "as *emic* as possible". This makes this sort of interpretative research a very dangerous road to go down on, but, if due care is taken, it can bring valuable insights into past indigenous cosmovisions.

*5.3.8 The role of social valuables*

The concept of *zemi* is without a doubt very important for the understanding of the Late Ceramic Age social universe. In the vision of the indigenous people of this age and region it must have been very important to have a connection with the superhuman world. When seen from the view of "Amerindian perspectivism" (Viveiros de Castro 1998) it is the suggested ability to mediate the world that transcended humans, the world of the spirits and ancestors, that was contained in many of the Late Ceramic Age social valuables. Through the use of these items, which were media to communicate with forces normally outside human control, the *cacique*, with the help of the *behique*, was able to bring order and quiet to the totality of the social universe – i.e. the superhuman as well as the human world – (Oliver 1997), thus it was this quality that was probably most valued by his or her community, which was signalled by the acquirement, the keeping and the exchange of these social valuables. On the other hand, the use of social valuables as bringers of harmful sorcery possibly at the hands of the *cacique*, but more likely by the *behique*, meant that they could


*Figure 5: Some social valuables of the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age:*
*a:* duho from the Museo del Hombre domincano, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana; *b: Guanín* figurine from the Museo de Chorro de Maíta, Cuba; *c:* Necklace consisting of various beads of different stone material and a stone cylinder face from the Museo Indocubano Baní, Banes, Cuba.; *d:* Vomit spatula from the Museum of Nevis History, St. Kitts and Nevis (Hofman, personal communication 2005); *e:* A three-pointed stone from the Regional Museum of Archaeology Altos de Chavón, Republica Dominicana. Photography of a, b, c and e by Angus A. A. Mol.

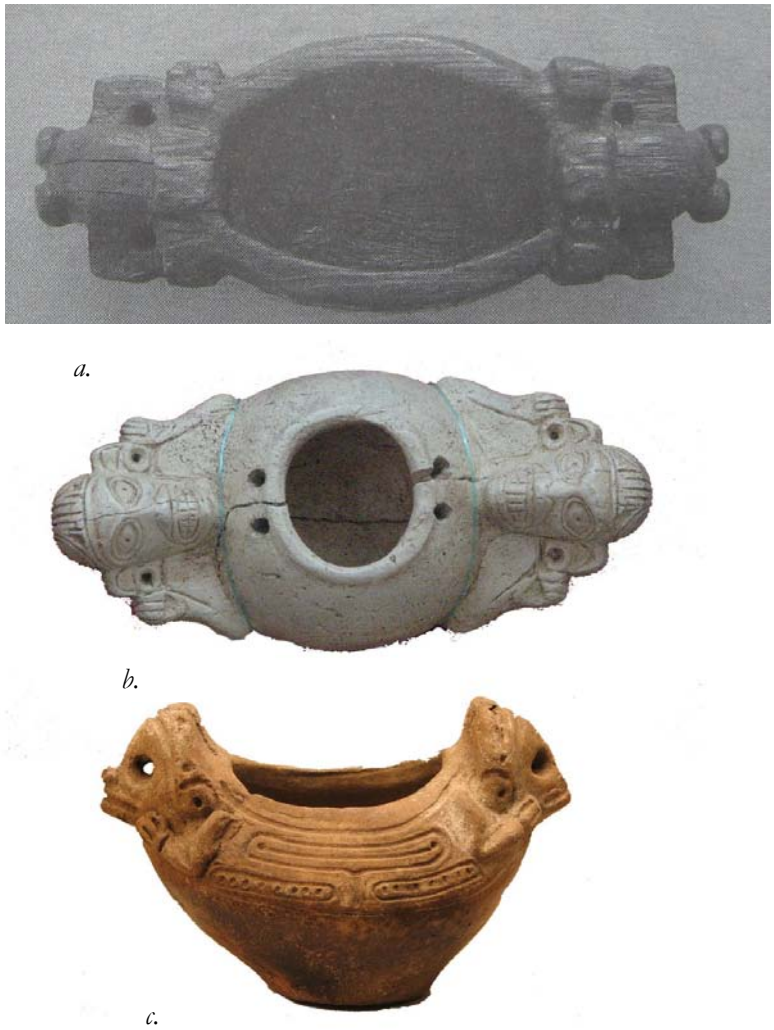


*Figure 6: Similarity in use and form over a large distribution area:*
*a:* Wooden container from the site of Los Buchillones, Cuba (taken from Carreras Rivery 2005); *b:* Manatee bone container from the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana; *c:* Ceramic container from the Regional Museum of Archaeology Altos de Chavón, Republica Dominicana. Photography of b and c by Angus A. A. Mol

*a.*

*b.*

*Figure 7: The two sides of the beaded* zemi *from the Pigorini museum, Rome (taken from Bercht et al. 1997: 60-61).*
*a:* front; *b:* back

*a.*

*b.*

*Figure 8: Taíno belts.*
*a:* Belt with face from the Vienna *Museum für Völkerkunde* (taken from Bercht et al. 1997: 159); *b: B*elt found near the municipal of Cucuma in the La Romana province, Republica Dominicana from the Fundación García Arévalo, Santo Domingo. Photography of b by Angus A. A. Mol

harness the dark side of the superhuman world, which could be used to imbalance the social universe of enemies of the individual or the community.

Following this line of reasoning, the matter of why humans without zoomorphic aspects are the most depicted iconographic elements on Late Ceramic Age social valuables becomes clear.[39] One of the most important forces to be reckoned with for Late Ceramic Age communities was, next to natural forces such as hurricanes and volcanoes, harmful human agency in the form of superhuman spirits controlled by sorcery, such as the *opía* (Pané 1999 [1571]).[40] I believe that one has to take the depictions on Late Ceramic Age cultural items quite literally as depicting control over what it depicted. In a similar line of reasoning one could say that the reason why animals were depicted on social valuables at times was to control the aspects of these animals. This could be the case in the snuff inhaler in the form of a fish from the Kelbey's Ridge community on Saba, for the inhabitants of which it must have been very important to have control over the rich resources of the Saba bank (Hoogland and Hofman 1999; Hofman, personal communication 2007; for a similar argument see Oliver 2007). It remains to be seen whether this line of reasoning would bring us further than the notion of dividual personhood, since probably not all things and objects were seen as media of control over superhuman or natural forces. Still, in the case that this control contained within an object can be established it means that the exchange of such a social valuable would entail that control over this source would be alienated too. This would make the exchange of such objects, in some cases, an even costlier signal.

*5.3.9 Other social valuables*

There is also a whole range of objects that are elaborately crafted of which the functional use cannot be directly established. These items are often unwieldy and made out of hard stone, like "stone heads", "elbow stones" and ceremonial "belts" that have been found mainly in Puerto Rico and Hispaniola, of which the production alone would have constituted a costly signal. How they were used in exchanges is not known. Then there is also the category of bodily ornaments and amulets that vary enormously in material, form and size and must have correspondingly also have constituted vastly different signals

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[39] This anthropomorphization is a general trend in Lowland South America (Boomert, personal communication 2007).

[40] See Whitehead (2002) for a comparison between *opía* and *kanaima*.

when used in exchanges. To establish the signal sent by one of these types of bodily ornaments will be the focus of the case-study presented further on.

## 5.4 A view from the Caribbean proto-historic social universe

In part I it has been argued that although the exchange of social valuables is a total social and nearly universal fact, the sensitivity of the context of this exchange presents a problem for this theory to be used in archaeology. Specific cultural knowledge of the social universe that is being researched with which to contextualize archaeological distributions is in very short supply. Here, the value of ethnohistoric accounts becomes apparent immediately. Nevertheless the prevalent idea is that the information on exchanges between the Spanish and the indigenous people of the Caribbean, which are described in ethnohistoric sources written in the early contact period, can be used directly to describe the Spanish social universe. However, because of the "darkly coloured ethnocentric spectacles" of Spanish chroniclers the sources can only be used to ephemerally describe the social universe of the indigenous people of the Caribbean. Even so the situation is much more complicated for the period of first contact.

### *5.4.1 Processes at work in the proto-historic social universe*

Social universes are flexible: there are no boundaries if there are no descriptive boundaries in the social universe itself. This means that whenever there is a difficulty in transmitting social signals from one social universe to another, this does not lead to a block of the signal. What happens instead is that the signals being sent from both sides produce a mishmash of meanings that is *almost* understood from both social paradigms, but not completely, thereby producing something entirely new.[41] In post-colonial literature theory this process is known as "hybridization". Although it is now asserted by anthropologists that this new hybrid system is not less "authentic" than the system before the signals became entangled, and therefore it is merited to do research on a hybrid social universe in its own right (Rapport and Overing 2000b) it is difficult for archaeologists to follow this line of reasoning, since archaeologists by the very nature of their discipline are looking for authenticity. As a result this theory might not seem very effective to use when wanting to contextualize post-

[41] For more information on signals and miscommunication read Rapport (2001).

contact within pre-contact situations. However I would like to argue that when attention is paid to the processes at work in a social universe that is becoming hybrid it is possible to partly disentangle the hybridized signals.

One of the processes at work in a contact situation that will serve as a tool to clarify some of the exchanges here is "mimicry". "[M]imicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 1994: 122) Mimicry is what happens when in the ambivalent contact situation signalling from one side to the other leads to one side – the dominated side – repeating the signal sent by the dominant side and not representing it in its own terms. When this process of copying signals continues for an extended period a situation will develop in which the dominated party becomes "the same, but not quite". What has to be understood is that the dominant party does not strive for exact sameness, since sameness implies equality.[42] What I shall attempt to show in the following example is that processes of mimicry were also at work in the proto-contact Caribbean – albeit maybe on a subconscious level – and that this is visible in the signals that are being sent by the exchange of social valuables from both sides. This will at the same time provide insights into how some of the social valuables that are mentioned in the ethnohistoric record were utilized in exchange tactics and stratagems by the Taíno.

### *5.4.2 The Colon Shipping List*

The Colón Shipping List (*Colleción de Documentos Inéditos, Relativos al Descrubimiento. Conquista y Colonización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de América y Oceanía.* Vol. X: pp. 5 to 9) describes and categorizes shipments of goods received through "barter", tribute and other income from the indigenous people of Hispaniola, the Taíno, by Colón at the Spanish settlement from the first quarter of 1495 to the second quarter of 1496 (Appendix A). It is a truly invaluable document since it not only lists quantities received, but also shortly describes and names many of the items. Nevertheless it is necessary to

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[42] A famous case-study of this process by the culture critic Homi Bhabha (1994) revolves around colonial oppression in India. Bhabha argues that the British, who were locally very few in numbers, were able to control this large region because the local elite, who were fascinated by the British appearance and customs, were enticed into mimicking British behaviour. This enabled the British to enter into a relationship with the local elite, in which they were the *same, but not quite*. The difference of course being that the British colonials still held the knowledge of "real" British culture and thus control over the local elite.

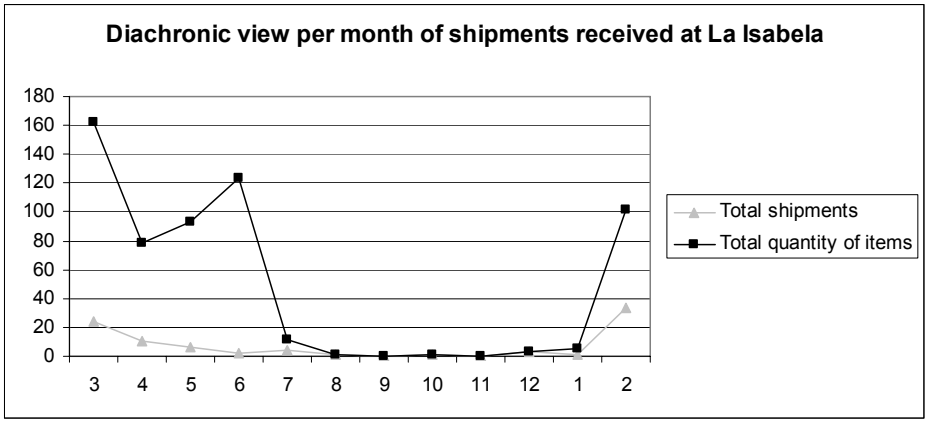


*Figure 9: Diachronic view per month of shipments received at La Isabela.*

treat this source with care, since it would be too crude to simply state that at such an early stage of contact it can only be argued that the objects that were given to Colón by the Taíno represent "authentic" signals in social exchanges being undertaken in a Taíno social universe. It would be more accurate to describe this stage of the contact as a period in which processes of hybridization, such as mimicry, were starting to play an important role.

For this analysis the different shipments in the shipping list were sorted according to the year and month in which the shipment was received and then further categorized according to the various types of material aspects. When plotted diachronically this gives an interesting view of how the contacts between the Taíno and Spanish developed. When an analysis is made of all types of items grouped together, we can see there is a peak of received goods, both in absolute quantities of items exchanged and in terms of shipments of items grouped together, in the beginning and end of the period that the list describes (Figure 9).[43] Interestingly enough these two peaks can be traced to two specific events that were very important for the relation between the Taíno and the Spanish. The beginning of this period, March 1495, corresponds to the first military campaign into the Vega Real. So, at this time Colón was amassing

[43] When shipments of items are grouped together this means that I consider all items of one type given on a single occasion as one shipment, so for instance on the 10th of March when *"tres carátulas con diez y nueve piezas de hoja de oro, é dos espejos, las lumbres de hoja de oro, é dos torteruelos de hoja de oro*" were received at La Isabela I treat these as three shipments.

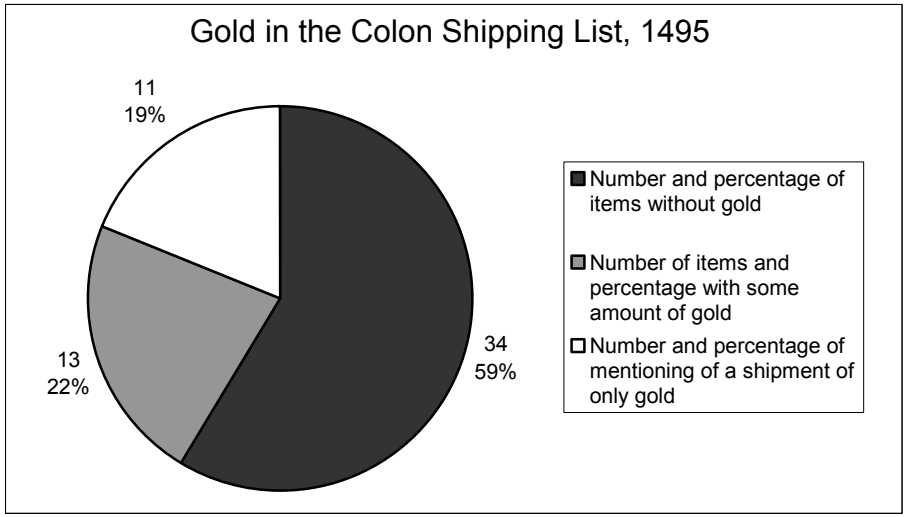


*Figure 10: Gold in the Colón Shipping List, 1495.*

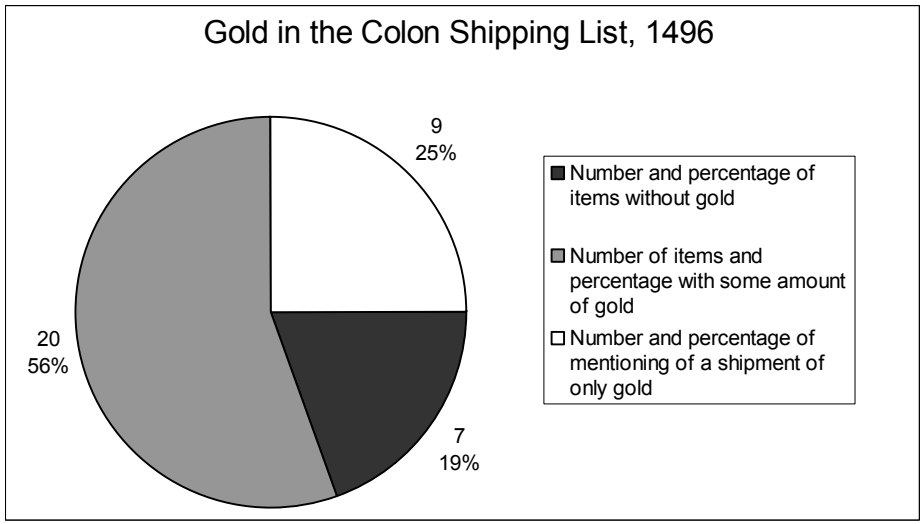


*Figure 11: Gold in the Colón Shipping List, 1496.*

a group of Spaniards and allied Taíno and was preparing for an armed conflict. It could be hypothesized that this would have led to an increase of the gifting of social valuables by some Taíno *caciques* that wanted to defuse the situation or strengthen their alliance with the Spaniards. The end of the period, March 1496, corresponds to Colón leaving Hispaniola with a large fleet and returning to Castilia. This increase in shipments received at Isabela could correspond to "going away presents" by the Taíno for Colón, the "*cacique*" of the Spaniards.

If more attention is paid to the contents of the shipments, other very interesting facts become visible (Figure 10 and 11). It is well known that the Spaniards had started their westward voyage of exploration for a very specific reason: to find access to the heaps of gold that were rumoured to be found everywhere in the Orient. Wilson (1990) states that when the novelty of some of the more exotic goods traded by the Taíno, such as parrots and hammocks, had worn off gold remained the number one good that the Spaniards were interested in. There was some amount of gold present on the Greater Antilles, but this of course nowhere near equalled the fabled riches of the Orient. Still, several gold shipments and numerous artefacts with gold inlays or ornaments attached to them were received by the Spaniards in La Isabela. If we plot these shipments chronologically a remarkable, but not unexpected, picture emerges.[44]

It is clearly visible that the beginnings of the exchange relations between Colón and the Taíno were marked by an unfamiliarity of the Taíno with the social universe of the Spaniards and vice versa. This led to many different kinds of social valuables being given to the Spaniards, which in the majority of the cases did not contain any gold; the social valuable the Spaniards desired. I would describe this first stage of the relationship as a period in which signals were sent and received by both parties, but understood in the context of the own "authentic" social universe. As predicted later on these signals gradually became more fully understood, but not completely, thereby producing a hybrid situation.

In this manner the initial contact situation led to a hybrid situation and not to a situation in which the Spaniards were totally dominant from the beginning. This is attested by the fact that the Taíno started to mimic – *almost the same*, *but not quite* – the signals sent by the Spaniards, in their focus on gold

[44] Here, it is chosen to plot the total number of shipments, instead of the total number of items received. This is done because the list also describes large amounts of objects received, such as 66 hammocks and 101 pieces of amber otherwise this would give a skewed image. Also the chronological distribution is already skewed, since the records of 1495 comprise 9 months and 1496 only 3 months.

as a suitable social valuable. It is postulated by Oliver (2000) – and I concur with this line of reasoning – that it was not the unprocessed gold that had the most value in the Taíno social universe, but that it was actually the carefully crafted composition of gold with other materials that was valued the most. This is also visible in the Colón shipping list in which the increase of items containing gold – from 22% in 1495 to 56% in 1496 – shows that signals of Spanish requests for gold were received by the Taíno and understood as the desire for items that contained gold fragments, inlays and attachments.

The shipments of unprocessed gold increased exponentially after the initial phase of hybridization was over. It is clear that this was also the point when the Taíno got a better grasp of what the Spaniards were actually after. Sadly, this was accompanied by the invasion and destruction of the Taíno and their social universe by military force and coerced labour. This is apparent from a much later shipping list – running from 1505 to 1508 – from Hispaniola which almost solely describes gold owed as tribute (Appendix B). The very few other items that are described in this list were meant for display in the royal court in Castilia, showing that a social universe dependent on gift giving had totally been replaced by the *encomienda* system essentially based on forced labour (Mira Caballos 2000: 48-141).[45]

*5.4.3 Historical descriptions of exchange situations*

Although of course the seeds for the violent period in the later contact situation were already present it can be concluded from the above analysis that the Colón Shipping List from 1495/1496 shows a hybrid social universe in which the Spaniards and Taíno were much more on a par. This is also visible when we study other ethnohistoric sources that might be less structured than the Colón Shipping List, but not less descriptive in nature, such as the diary of Colón's first expedition that was copied by Bartolomé de las Casas. This invaluable, but one-sided account of these intercultural contact situations gives an incredible insight into how signals from the Taíno social universe were given meaning by the Spaniards. This is even clearer in the description of the

[45] It could be argued that the increase of shipments of unprocessed gold and the decrease of shipments of crafted items that do not contain any gold do not reflect a process of mimicry, but simply that the Taíno were running out of the latter type of shipments. Although this might be true for the later contact period, this is certainly not the case in 1495 and 1496. This can be witnessed by the large store of "treasure" that was shown by Anacoana, the wife of the *cacique* Caonabo and the sister of the *cacique* Behechio, to Colón in 1496 (Martyr D'Anghera 1912: 124-125).

many exchange situations that Colón and the Taíno entered into. The following excerpt from the 18th of December 1492 taken from Colón's diary relates such an exchange situation. At this day the Spanish were celebrating the "Feast of the Annunciation" and an unknown Taíno *cacique* arrived at the beach with some 200 other Taíno and together with a small company was taken to the deck of the *Santa María* were Colón was already seated for dinner (Navarete 1922: 109):

> *El, así como entró en la nao, halló que estaba comiendo a la mesa debajo del castillo de popa, y él, a buen andar, se vino a sentar a par de mí y no me quiso dar lugar que yo me saliese a él ni me levantase de la mesa, salvo que yo comiese. Yo pensé que él tendría a bien comer de nuestras viandas; mandé luego traerle cosas que él comiese. Y, cuando entró debajo del castillo, hizo señas con la mano que todos los suyos quedasen fuera, y así lo hicieron con la mayor prisa y acatamiento del mundo, y se asentaron todos en la cubierta, salvo dos hombres de una edad madura, que yo estimé por sus consejeros y ayo, que vinieron y se asentaron a sus pies, y de las viandas que yo le puse delante tomaba de cada una tanto como se toma para hacer la salva, y después luego lo demás enviábalo a los suyos, y todos comían de ella; y así hizo en el beber, que solamente llegaba a la boca y después así lo daba a los otros, y todo con un estado maravilloso y muy pocas palabras, y aquellas que él decía, según yo podía entender, eran muy asentadas y de seso, y aquellos dos le miraban a la boca y hablaban por él y con él y con mucho acatamiento. Después de comido, un escudero traía un cinto, que es propio como los de Castilla en la hechura, salvo que es de otra obra, que él tomó y me lo dio, y dos pedazos de oro labrado que eran muy delgados, que creo que aquí alcanzan poco de él, puesto que tengo que están muy vecinos de donde nace y hay mucho. Yo vi que le agradaba un arambel que yo tenía sobre mi cama; yo se lo di y unas cuentas muy buenas de ámbar que yo traía al pescuezo y unos zapatos colorados y una almatraja de agua de azahar, de que quedó tan contento que fue maravilla; y él y su ayo y consejeros llevan grande pesar porque no me entendían ni yo a ellos. Con todo, le conocí que me dijo que si me cumpliese algo de aquí, que toda la isla estaba a mi mandar.*

Colón explicitly states here that the Taíno *cacique* and his advisors could not understand Colón and that this grieved them greatly. Still, this did not stop them from exchanging, and indeed sending costly signals in the form of the gift of social valuables. In this case a belt and pieces of gold were given by the

Taíno *cacique* to Colón and Colón reciprocated this gift from the Taíno *cacique* with a drapery, nine pieces of amber, and red shoes.

These exchanges might seem haphazard, but I would like to argue that these were carefully thought through signals that could be sent and received by the Taíno *cacique* and Colón. Both are accepting and actually mimicking what is perceived as strange behaviour from within their own social universe, thereby producing a shared platform of understanding. This is partly done by finding metaphors from the own social universe for the actions undertaken by the other party. Colón for example interprets the small bite and the subsequent distribution of food by the Taíno *cacique* as the actions of a food taster at a European court at home. This finding of metaphors by the Spaniards is eased by the fact that there are some aspects of Taíno ritualized exchanges which were probably very comparable to audiences and official occasions of European courts at home. From the above excerpt and others describing similar situations it can be hypothesized that a Taíno ritualized exchange occasion would have included at least the following elements in chronological order:

1. Entering/being seated (on a stool).
2. Food offering and "tasting".
3. Distribution of food.
4. Guest offers goods
5. Host offers goods

These inferences can be backed up by ethnographic information from the lowlands of South America. For instance, among some indigenous communities of Surinam it is normal that after entering the village no exchange is perpetrated without first being seated on a special stool and then having a long introductory ceremonial dialogue with your exchange partner (Koelewijn & Rivière 1988). After this it is indeed customary to have a large banquet in honour of the guests that is sponsored by the host community, just as in the above case of the exchange between the Taíno *cacique* and Colón. After this initial feast many small exchanges take place over a prolonged period of socializing and feasting. This is a practice that is quite usual in the South American lowlands in the seasons of low horticultural activity (e.g. Chagnon 1995: chapter 5). This is an important part of the exchange by which actually most of the existing social connections are reinvigorated. After this period, just before the guests leave the village, the main exchange ritual will take place in which the guests and the hosts offer goods and the quality of the goods is

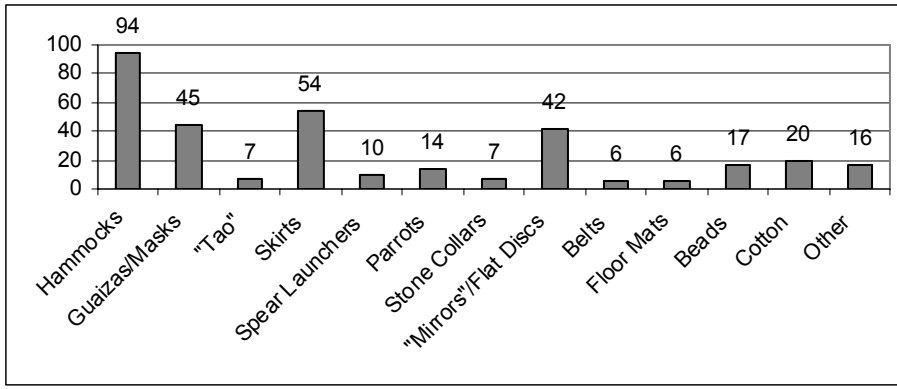


*Figure 12: Quantities of selected items in the Colón shipping list.*

discussed and critiqued.[46] Apparently the social valuables given by Colón were of an admirable quality when viewed from the Taíno social universe since Colón often remarks in his diary that the Taíno were overjoyed with the received gifts, just as in the excerpt above. At the end the exchange is often closed by making new arrangements for exchanges at a later date.

*5.4.4 Specific social valuables in proto-historic exchanges*

Alegría (1980) has already provided some of the mentioned items in the list and in other ethnohistoric sources with a cultural context. Still, it is intriguing to put the items in the framework of costly signalling with social valuables to see if it is possible at all to reconstruct some of the messages being sent by the gift of these specific social valuables (Figure 12).[47]

The seven mysterious "tao" cannot be identified, but perhaps they are similar to the sheets of gold and mirrors of which 42 are mentioned in this list, which I would link to large ear discs called *taguaguas*. These reflecting surfaces could have had a very important meaning in the Taíno social universe as social valuable for distribution, since these could be broken up and distributed by *caciques* as described by Colón in his entry for 17 December (Navarete 1922: 107).

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[46] As mentioned earlier it may be that the peak of exchanges that took place when Colón was preparing to leave the island is a reflection of what the Taíno perceived of a prolonged period of exchange occasions.

[47] The 45 *guaíza*s and the 6 belts that are part of the list will be focused on at a later stage and are therefore left out of this overview.

A remarkable social valuable mentioned in the list are 14 parrots. It is known from an entry in his diary on the 10th of December that Colón on his first expedition actively sought to acquire parrots to take back to the Royal Court in Spain. Wilson (1990) argues that this must also have been a significant signal in the Taíno social universe, since parrots were apparently seen as ideal social valuables to exchange between *caciques* among each other. In addition there is ample evidence from the Guianas that parrots are highly valued in exchanges (Vaughn Howard 2001).

The Taíno word for parrot is *guacamaya*, containing the prefix *gua-*. This prefix also returns in the indigenous words for certain other social valuables such as *guaíza*, *guanín* and in the indigenous word for the ritual exchange of names, *guaitiao*. Whether this means that this prefix indicates a certain class of social valuables cannot be known for certain.

That there are presumably different classes of exchange valuables can be inferred from the fact that objects were exchanged between Colón and other high ranking Spaniards and Taíno *caciques* that were not exchanged between crewmen who engaged in exchanges with the larger group of Taíno with less political stature. However, as far as one can tell from the sources, everything that was exchanged with the crewmen was exchanged between higher ranked Spaniards and Taíno. Some of these valuables are also part of the Colón Shipping List, such as 94 hammocks, 54 skirts, 10 spear launchers, 17 beads and 20 knots and yarns of cotton.

*5.4.5 Exchange systems and stratagems*

Overall, the evidence for the Colón Shipping List is too circumstantial to be able to define whether there were two different exchange systems – one for elites and one for non-elites –, that this is the result of nuances and personal choices within one exchange system, or that there was one shared exchange system of Taíno elites and non-elites and another that was meant for the exchange of elite items only. What can be deduced from the content and the amount of the exchanges taking place is that the Taíno were indeed sending costly signals to Colón and the other Spaniards. On the other hand it is also easily explainable why some of the Spanish trade goods would have been seen as elite social valuables, since they were exotic and were of a level of craftsmanship that would have corresponded to the costliest valuables that the Taíno elite could commission (cf. Helms 1988, 1993). Other sources can help with backing up this evidence and help to make clear if there is indeed such a thing as an elite exchange system in the Late Ceramic Age social universe.

Elite exchange as being separate from regular exchange relationships thus implies some hierarchy in the social valuables that were exchanged. Some must have been seen as adequate costly signals for certain highly important exchanges, while others were not. The importance of metal objects as highly valued and highly costly signals stands out among the rest of the exchanges and is echoed by the account of the capture of *cacique* Caonabo by Alonso de Hojeda (Las Casas 1875: 85-87). In this "exchange" de Hojeda manages to capture *cacique* Caonabo, who is held responsibly for the slaughter of the 38 men at La Navidad left behind by Colón on his first voyage, by tricking him in accepting and wearing highly polished manacles as a powerful *turey* object. After washing in the river de Hojeda and his company succeeded in abducting Caonabo and retreating on horseback. *Turey* objects are reportedly seen as objects "from heaven" by the Taíno, so it is in this light that Caonabo's reception of the object should be seen: as a gift of a high level valuable. This does not only give insight in how socio-political exchanges were undertaken among the Taíno elite, but also shows how Taíno costly signals were understood and manipulated by the Spanish (Wilson 1990: 87).

Additionally there are inferences that can be drawn from the ethnohistoric record that acquiring-for-giving – i.e. keeping large quantities of social valuables inalienable to be released at specific moments – has been another important tactic of sending costly signals. Arguments for this can be found in the well known story of Anacoana, the wife of the captured Caonabo and the sister of the *cacique* Behechio, who features in yet another interesting account of an exchange situation taking place during Colón's second voyage (Martyr D'Anghera 1912: 124-125):

> "The tribute of cotton sent by the *caciques* filled the Adelantado's hut, and, in addition, he accepted their promise to furnish him all the bread he needed. While waiting for the bread to be made in the different districts, and brought to the house of Beuchios Anacauchoa, King of Xaragua, he sent to Isabella directing that one of the caravels he had ordered to be built be brought to him, promising the colonists that he would send it back to them loaded with bread. The delighted sailors made the tour of the island with alacrity, and landed on the coast of Xaragua. As soon as that brilliant, prudent, and sensible woman called Anacaona, sister of Beuchios Anacauchoa, heard that our ship had reached the coast of her country, she persuaded her brother to accompany her to

> visit it. The distance from the royal residence to the coast was only six miles. They halted for the night at a village about halfway, were the queen kept her treasure; this treasure did not consist of gold, silver, or pearls, but of utensils necessary to the different requirements of life, such as seats, platters, basins, cauldrons, and plates made of black wood, brilliantly polished; they display great art in the manufacture of all these articles. […] It is to the manufacture of these articles that the islanders devote the best of their native ingenuity. In the island of Ganabara which, if you have a map, you will see lies at the western extremity of Hispaniola and which is subject to Anacauchoa, it is the women who are thus employed."[48]

I would interpret this account pretty straightforwardly as a clear case of showing off. The excerpt starts of with the mentioning of a tribute of cotton. This is clearly not a tribute following out of submission, since all sorts of other foodstuff were added to the tribute by individual *caciques* who probably saw it as an occasion to enter into a competitive exchange (Martyr D'Anghera 1912: 123). Furthermore it has to be noticed that this tribute was taken to Colón's hut. This hut was continually used as gathering place for tributes and gifts by the Spanish, as can also be seen in the Colón Shipping List. This hut would have been perceived by the Taíno as a hoard or cache of objects that they themselves also used for the storage and display of social valuables. It is unclear whether Anacaona, who already had her husband taking prisoner due to skulduggery by the Spaniards, showed her stash of social valuables in order to impress the Spanish with her ability to acquire and keep these social

[48] In addition to being another vital source for the exchange system of the Taíno, it is also an important excerpt for the issue of gender and power (Wilson 1990: 131). In this example Anacoana is clearly an equal partner in the exchange. From other accounts we also know that women played a critical part in exchanges as the ones presenting the social valuables (*ibid.*: 57). The valuables in the house of Anacoana could be seen as evidence of a women's valuable exchange system, such as the one present in the region of the kula ring. On the other hand, with the absence of evidence for similar male owned houses, one could also argue that ownership of social valuables was reserved for women, such as is the case in the matriarchal indigenous societies of North America. What seems most likely is that the exchange tactics of women were different, but that men and women held equal power and responsibility in exchange.

valuables or that she was trying to show what sort of valuables could be exchanged if the situation remained peaceful. It is known from Las Casas (1875: 148) that afterwards she presented Colón with *duhos*, *naguas*/skirts, and four huge balls of cotton. It is easy to see why Colón would be presented with *duhos*, since these were the seats of *caciques*. It is not known what place the *naguas* and balls of cotton took in the exchange system of the Taíno.

As has been established in part I, costly signals can be tangible and intangible in nature, in the way that the exchange of what we today would call "intellectual property" can sometimes take a more important place in an exchange system than the actual physical transference of objects. The knowledge of an *areyto*, a ritual dance, was also seen as something that could be held and exchanged and for which the receiver of the gift would be eternally grateful (Las Casas 1875: 171):

> "*Respondió Moyobanex, que no era razón entregarlo á sus enemigos, pues era bueno y á ninguno jamás hizo daño, y allende desto, él lo tenia y había sido siempre su amigo, y le era en mucho cargo, porque á él y á la Reina, su mujer, había enseñado el areyto de la Magua , que es á bailar los bailes de la Vega, que era el reino de Guarionex, que no se tenia ni estimaba en poco, mayormente habiéndose venido á socorrer dél y de su reino, y él haberle prometido defenderlo y guardarlo, y por tanto, que por ningún riesgo ni daño que le viniese, no lo había de desmamparar. Llamó luego á Guarionex y comienzan ambos á llorar; consuélalo Mayobanex y esfuérzalo á no temer á los cristianos, porque él lo defenderá aunque sepa perder su Estado con la vida.*"

This small excerpt talks about the fate of the *cacique* Guarionex, who fled from the Vega Real after a failed revolt in the summer of 1498, seeking asylum with *cacique* Mayobanex, with whom he probably did not have any affinal or blood relations. Colón and his men pursued him all the way to the Samaná peninsula, but because of the gifts that Guarionex had brought with him, among which an *areyto*, Mayobonex and his people refused to hand him over and had to be defeated with a ploy (Wilson 1990: 105-108). This example clearly shows that a social valuable that is not material in nature can still be very successfully employed as a costly signal in such a way that a relationship between unrelated groups of persons can be established and tempered to a strong bond in one single exchange. This means that the exchange of

knowledge is something that should be taken into account as a viable subject of exchange in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean.

*5.4.6 Concluding remarks on proto-historic exchange in the Caribbean*

From this short survey of ethnohistoric sources, specifically describing or listing the exchange of social valuables, it has become evident that the Taíno social universe was for a great part regulated by a socio-economic system reliant on the exchange of social valuables. Additionally, one could argue that the ease with which the Taíno from Hispaniola entered into exchanges with the Spaniards must have meant that they were used to the practice of intercultural exchange, albeit it not with such markedly different people, but with people they could not relate to linguistically.[49] The Taíno probably tried to continue this practice with the Spaniards in the proto-contact period by sending specific costly signals to signal the competitive ability of individual Taíno *caciques* but also to show the willingness to enter into a connecting social relationship with these newcomers. Most importantly the sources outline the scramble of the Taíno elite to gain undisputed access and control over these new and strange, powerful social valuables that entered their social universe.

Although the Spanish and Taíno social universes were vastly different, both parties tried to signal and understand messages from a shared platform. This led – at least in the beginning of the contact period – to a hybrid situation in which the Taíno gradually parted with their old social universe and value system. It is therefore indeed very difficult to reconstruct an "authentic" Taíno social universe solely from the perspective of the ethnohistoric sources. For this reason due care should be taken when applying what is known from contact situations to pre-contact situations. It is here that detailed knowledge of the archaeological context of social valuables can offer a view which is not distorted by Euro-Caribbean hybridization. What can be safely concluded is that the Taíno employed a highly complex exchange system in which social valuables were part of a congregated set of diverse material and immaterial concepts. These social valuables would have been particular to a specific political level in some cases, but in other cases were meant to be used in all sorts of exchanges. Costly signals were sent by giving and keeping at

[49] The presence of pidgin trade languages is recorded for many exchange systems in Lower South America and the existence of one in the Southern Caribbean has been postulated (Boomert 1987).

strategically chosen moments in social relationships, during carefully enacted exchange rituals.

As an important side note, what also becomes painfully obvious from the ethnohistoric sources is that the changes in the Taíno social universe in the initial contact period, due to processes such as mimicry, were subtle, but crucial. These processes led to rapid changes in the Taíno socio-economic system, subverting the Taíno social universe and their well-established patterns of power. This aided the Spanish when, after the initial, relatively peaceful period that was characterized by the gifting of social valuables, relations turned hostile and the Taíno were subjugated and subsequently almost completely wiped out. As in so many colonial situations hereafter, it is clear from this very first colonial collision of two social universes that being the *same but not quite* is no guarantee for survival.

## 5.6 Addendum: Waiwai, Argonauts of the Northern Amazon

The Waiwai are a Cariban language speaking people that number some 2200 individuals that live in four villages at the border of Guyana and Brazil (Koelewijn & Rivière 1988). This group is the centre of an extensive exchange network that spans the whole of the Northern Amazon. In this way the Waiwai are linked to several indigenous peoples, such as the Tarenö, Wapixana, and the Waimiri-Atroari, but also to maroons and Brazilians. Kathryn Vaughn Howard (2001) has researched this exchange network from the view of the Waiwai, which gives a glimpse of an indigenous conceptualization that, although no links existed in the past, is the best comparison to the Late Ceramic Age that is available. Similarly to the Arawaks of the early contact period and the indigenous peoples of the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean the Waiwai are experts at long distance voyages (Boomert 2000: 428; Vaughn Howard 2001; Watters 1997).

It is common for indigenous groups of the Amazon to artificially create wants and needs in an exchange network, i.e. one community will produce objects for exchange that could have been, but are not, produced in the community with which the object is exchanged (Lizot 1985). This is partly the same for the Waiwai, who produce manioc graters and rear dogs and parrots in order to exchange them with other indigenous groups. The Waiwai exchange goods can be produced or acquired through other means in other villages, but the Waiwai have come to be seen as master craftsmen of manioc graters and expert trainers of dogs and parrots. The goods that are received in return by

the Waiwai are not goods they could have produced or acquired through other means, since these are Western goods, such as plastic containers, guns, knives and iron axes. Glass beads are by far the most important of all the goods exchanged. These items are not only used by the Waiwai to adorn themselves, but also acquired to be given again to the "unseen tribes", who are perceived to be the fierce people that live in the forest. By giving these Western trade goods the Waiwai seek to pacify the fierce people, because according to the Waiwai and other Cariban groups of the area to live a peaceful life is to live a happy life (Rivière 2002; Vaughn Howard 2001).

Vaughn Howard framed her research in the paradigm of gift theory and it is very complementary with the framework of part I. She remarks, for instance, on the construction of the value of the Waiwai exchange goods, that the key to the Waiwai exchange system is that "[t]his entire system of exchange is oriented toward social reproduction, yet it is inherently contradictory and therefore unstable. Open to the outside it is incomplete within itself and must constantly expand to appropriate new resources" (Vaughn Howard 2001: 227). It is this contradiction and unstableness that was established to be inherent to the exchange of social valuables in part I.

There is a huge investment of time and resources made by a Waiwai family to train dogs to be good hunters and parrots to have a large vocabulary. This investment pays off in the end because these traits are one of the defining markers of the value of these animals in the exchange system. The one other major way of establishing the value of these animals is colour. Colour itself is of course an unalterable attribute, but the reason why certain colours are valued is subject to manipulation. For instance, it is said that the highest valued colour for dogs, black, can render the hunter and the dog invisible and that parrots with certain colour schemes can learn new words better than parrots with different colour schemes. Furthermore, value can be heightened by what Vaughn Howard terms the "life trajectory" of the pet and the owner: next to the stories told about certain pets the status of a certain trainer, i.e. whether or not he or she has produced good hunting dogs or talkative parrots in the past, is also exchanged with the dog.

Parrots are able to speak, while dogs behave socially and are kept in the house. Both parrots and dogs are raised and pampered like children by their owners. In a lot of respects their trainers behave towards them as if they were humanized beings. Therefore, when they are exchanged, dogs and parrots are seen as stand-ins for humans. This enables the Waiwai to exchange not

only ideas and objects, but also the control over "persons" with *pawana*, trading partners, who would otherwise remain socially distant (*ibid.*: 243).[50]

What is received by the Waiwai when they receive Western trade goods in return are "turbulent [Western] energies that can be seen as naturalized and subsocial, potent and suprahuman, dangerous and antisocial. Whatever aspect is highlighted, it is a charged mix that must be avoided or controlled" (*ibid.*: 259).[51] Yet, Western goods and beads especially are said to induce peaceful behaviour because they are so aesthetically pleasing. In a similar manner to the dogs and parrots, the beads are evaluated by criteria of tangible qualities that serve as sensory anchors for intangible criteria. This notion of control of forces that are potentially dangerous to the social universe, but that, when used in a positive manner, serve to enhance the social universe, is something that was already postulated as one of the driving mechanisms of the exchange of social valuables in the Caribbean. Moreover, the form of the objects is closely associated by the message they signal when employed in exchanges just as was postulated for the form of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean. In addition the signal is manipulated by alluding to alienable and inalienable qualities. The parrots and dogs are exchanged reciprocally as "persons" – who are inalienable – for beads and other objects, thereby transferring Western personhood in a symbolical manner. Still, the alienability of pets and dogs enables the Waiwai to acquire gifts that later can be given away again to the "unseen tribes" in order to pacify them and help the Waiwai social universe to grow. In this way the Waiwai exchange is a continuously controlled cycle of keeping, giving and acquiring that enables the social universe to be renewed in spite of the antisocial forces of the "unseen tribes" and the Western world.

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50 The term *pawana* describes any person with whom one enters in a trade relation, but that is not necessarily seen as a true friend or affine. It could be that this is the real meaning of the Taíno *guaitiao* (Boomert 2000: 425).

51 There are many reasons why Westerners and their goods, which are seen as their avatars, are perceived to be antisocial and dangerous, among which are the facts that they bring disease and their living places are paradoxically huge centers that are located at the edge of the Waiwai social geographic universe. Furthermore, they are prone to anger and they are stingy in exchanges, wanting to keep onto their possessions, thereby endangering the social bonds they are trying to establish (Vaughn Howard 2001: 259-283.)

# 6| The Distribution of Shell Faces and its Interpretation

## 6.1 Why shell faces?

This section will provide some flesh to the theoretical model outlined in the previous chapters by looking at the case of a specific Late Ceramic Age social valuable, namely shell faces (Appendix C). What these shell faces represent and what place they would have in the Caribbean interacting social universes will be answered over the next paragraphs. However the first question should be why this artefact category is deemed to be a proper case study when looking at social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean – is it even, a priori, a social valuable one might wonder? This question is especially important when putting the model outlined in the previous chapters into practice. There are several complementary answers that can be given.

First of all it is known for certain that these shell faces were exchanged on a regular basis. The shipping list of Colón discussed in the previous chapter and some of the other ethnohistoric accounts described in the same chapter are examples of testimonies given by Colón and other early contact period historians of exchange situations in which these shell faces played a major role. Not only do the early sources acknowledge that they were indeed exchanged, but it is possible to begin to understand from these sources why they were exchanged or encounter in these sources other contextual information regarding these artefacts. These descriptions are extremely valuable when trying to piece together the Late Ceramic Age social universe and the role of the shell faces in it.

However ethnohistoric sources can only carry the argument so far as the Greater Antilles are concerned. And even then the only island for which these descriptions are directly applicable is Hispaniola, since no mentioning of shell faces has been found in ethnohistoric accounts dealing with other islands. Yet, these faces have a distribution area ranging from the eastern part of Cuba all the way south to the Grenadines. Nevertheless the lack of ethnohistoric data is a blessing in disguise. Looking at contextual information on these shell faces other than ethnohistoric descriptions rids us from what has been termed "the tyranny of the ethnohistoric record" (Machlachlan and Keegan 1990), which does indeed have a way of steering and thus limiting one's interpretations. It is thus very fortunate that there are indeed a number of cases

in which contextual information on shell faces can be found in the archaeological record, namely from sites such as Potrero de El Mango on Cuba (Rouse 1942), En Bas Saline in Haiti (Deagan 2004), El Cabo in the eastern tip of the Dominican Republic (Samson, personal communication 2007), Sandy Hill and Rendezvous-Bay on Anguilla (Crock 2000), the Lavoutte site on St. Lucia (Bullen & Bullen 1968) and la Desirade (De Waal 2006; Hofman 1995). Some of these archaeological contexts will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another reason that makes it worthwhile to look at these faces from a social valuable perspective is their bewildering variability. There are no two shell faces that are unique, however they share a set of general characteristics that can be compared and discussed from an iconographical angle. Next to this, as we will see, the shell face is a very enigmatic artefact with "many faces" – the social value being defined by aspects of personhood, communal power, links with the supernatural/ancestral, elements of long distance exchange, elements of shamanism, etc. – that can be used to explore various interpretations of the actual exchange of the artefact. This allows the employment of this same artefact class in a variety of situations, which allows comparison and weighing of various modes of exchange.

In addition the shell face is a well known artefact to scholars of Caribbean prehistory. However relatively little has been published on the socio-cultural context of them and in publications in which they feature their study was far from exhaustive or they were rather being used as an example to strengthen the main argument of the publication (e.g. Alegría 1980; Oliver 2000). This leaves room to deconstruct certain concepts linked to the faces and subsequently rebuild them within the research format as outlined in the introduction. This cannot be done as easily with other over-interpreted artefacts from the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean that could be termed social valuables, such as three-pointers and so-called "shamanic paraphernalia".

It would be wrong, however, to characterize the shell faces as the perfect case-study for this research. There are some hooks and eyes that can make it difficult to build a complete overview of the distribution pattern of them and thus limiting the chance to interpret this distribution pattern correctly. First of all the shell faces are very often curated in museums or – worse – private collections that are difficult to access. The situations of many of the Caribbean collections is such that there are no adequate record of where, when and whom which artefact was found. This means that quite often museum items add to the completeness of the distribution pattern and socio-cultural context of this

artefact category only in a very superficial way – i.e. the individual artefact gets labelled as being from "Hispaniola" with no further scaling of information. Unfortunately this is the case with all the examples coming from Hispaniola, save one (HIS19).[52] The fact that many of these artefacts can only be found in collections leaves the interested researcher with no other option than to search in various collections or to rely on published material. However, it is decidedly better to study the artefact on the spot since some of the shell faces contain three-dimensional information that cannot be captured by an en face photograph, such as number of perforations or non-frontal iconographical elements.

A huge disadvantage when studying shell artefacts in general is the fact that it is next to impossible to do an archaeometrical provenance research on them. This is due to the fact that the ocean or sea region, in which the organism producing the shell spent its entire life, has a signature that cannot be identified with present-day techniques. This in effect means that even though a quite extensive distribution pattern can be defined, it will for now, and the foreseeable future, be impossible to state that it is empirically visible that an individual shell artefact is exotic to the archaeological assemblage in which it is found. This makes it even more important to rely on other contextual evidence when discussing the distribution pattern of these particular shell artefacts. Another related disadvantage is the fact that there are no absolute dates available for individual faces since most conventional techniques require destruction of the shell to get an accurate $^{14}C$ reading. Therefore there is not an absolute or even relative chronology available for these artefacts. The above also makes it difficult to distinguish possible fake copies. At least one of the artefacts in the database is suspected of being a forgery (Valcarcél Rojas, personal communication 2007).

Finally one could argue that by looking at a single material category of a single artefact category I am disloyal to my own methodology which states that by looking at valuables the most important thing is to have a holistic viewpoint of related material culture and not only concentrate on the artefact category itself, i.e. suffering from the "kula syndrome". One riposte to this is that it would be impossible in the space and time given here to describe and discuss

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[52] When I refer to individual shell faces their identification number begins with an abbreviation of the name of the island on which they were found, followed by a number. The catalogue lists these in alphabetic order, followed by numerical order (Appendix C).

the complete view of related artefacts in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean, since there are possibly countless relations that can be drawn between the artefacts present in the Late Ceramic Age assemblage. The other reply to this is that the information derived from the archaeological and ethnohistoric record quite adequately and exhaustively – from an archaeological perspective – puts the shell faces in their context with other material culture.

In spite of the difficulties discussed above it can be argued that the shell faces could be quite effective in fulfilling the role of case-study in this study of social valuables in Late Ceramic Age Caribbean social universes, due to (1, 2) the availability of ethnohistoric descriptions of exchange situations and social meanings, (3) its large distribution area, (4) detailed information on archaeological contexts, (5) its iconography and (6) its multiple facets. However, before the argument of the shell face as social valuable can be operable, it is of prime importance to establish how these faces were probably envisioned and categorised from a Late Ceramic Age *emic* perspective.

## 6.2 Shell faces as *guaíza*

Shell faces are in appearance particular moveable and wearable discs or cones with an anthropomorphic or zoo-anthropomorphic face depicted on them with archaeological contexts of roughly 1000 AD until early contact times.[53] They have been called differently in many publications,[54] but all these names refer to basically the same type of artefact. Since anthropomorphic and zoo-anthropomorphic faces are the most prominently displayed naturalistic iconographic element of the Late Ceramic Age this definition is greatly needed to delineate what sort of face-depicting artefacts belong to the class of shell faces under discussion and which ones do not. Still this definition does not do

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53 There is one notable exception, namely ANT1 that has a context dated to AD 900-1100, but it remains unclear whether this is a shell face that is unconnected to the other shell faces.

54 "Amulet" (o.a. Bercht et al. 1997; Olsen 1980; Regional Museum of Archaeology Altos devChavón 1992), "face" (o.a. Bullen & Bullen 1968; Douglas 1992), "mask/*carátula*/*caratona*" (o.a. Crock & Petersen 2004; Faber Morse & Rouse 1999; Fewkes 1970 [1907]; Garciá Arévalo 1977; Hofman et al. 2004; Rouse 1948), "head/*cabeza*" (o.a. Bullen & Bullen 1968; Lovén 1935; Olsen 1980) and "*guaíza*" (o.a. Allaire 1990; Centro de Diseño de Sistemas Automatizados 1995; Oliver 2000; Regional Museum of Archaeology Altos de Chavón 1992).

anything to further the understanding of shell faces in a Late Ceramic Age social universe, i.e. the construction of an *emic* viewpoint. This type of understanding has to be looked for in the historical sources from the early contact period by which form *and* meaning of Late Ceramic Age artefacts can be connected.

There are no ethnohistoric records that speak of actual shell faces, but there are some that speak of shell *masks* (Las Casas 1875: 477): " [*Colón ]levó […] guaycas, que eran unas carátulas hechas de pedrería de huesos de pescado, a manera puesto de aljófar* [i.e. pearl, …] *con mucha cantidad y muestras de oro finisimo.*" This seems a rather strange statement that Las Casas makes, but this statement should not be taken as literally describing masks being made out of fishbone that looks like pearl. This excerpt points to a certain set of artefacts, known among the Taíno as *guaycas*, which are small faces crafted out of shell. This would correspond to the many little shell faces found on the Greater and Lesser Antilles.[55] Thus, as can be understood from ethnohistoric sources, *guayca*, or "*guaíza*", is a Taíno denomination of an archaeologically recognizable artefact, but how much further can this indigenous conceptualization be elaborated?[56]

*Guaíza* has been translated by Granberry & Vescelius (2004) as meaning "mask". This would relate it back directly to any type of artefact that was meant to cover the face and very probably to wooden masks of which at least one survived until the beginning of the 20th century (Fewkes 1970 [1907]). However there is an interesting statement by Fray Ramon Pané in his account on the "*goeíz*", which is in all probability an alternative spelling of *guaíza* (1999[1571]: 19):

> "When a person is alive, they call his spirit *goeíz*, and when he is dead, they call it *opía*. They say this *goeíz* appears to them often, in a man's shape as well as a woman's, and they say there have been

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55 That las Casas did not understand the material qualities of shell seems unlikely. It could be that this was a way of referring to shell that has become outmoded.

56 Although las Casas names the shell faces *guaycas*, the correct way of writing is "guaíza". Additionally it is very interesting to see that this particular indigenous concept persisted into quite late in the colonization process. Guaízas are not only mentioned in the earliest contact sources, but also in the shipping list from Hispaniola from 1506 (Mira Caballos 2000: 48-141). Apparently the concept of guaíza needed no explanation for those concerned with the categorization of the shipping list, since only the term and no additional information is given.

> men who have wanted to do battle with it, and when such a man would lay his hands on it, it would disappear, and the man would put his arms elsewhere into some trees, and he would end up hanging from those trees."

Viewed in this manner the shell face *guaíza* is a specific Taíno filling-in of a general South American worldview in which "spirit" and body are divisible, detachable and exchangeable (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Opposed to *opía*, this *guaíza* is said to be the spirit of a living human being, therefore linking it directly to "humanness". However, as the excerpt shows, it is also more powerful than an ordinary human being, so *guaíza* is decidedly "superhuman" in nature too. Unfortunately it will probably never be possible to fully connect this interesting concept to the social universe of the indigenous people of the Greater Antilles, nevertheless it does reveal the concept of the *guaíza* to be much more, or indeed something of a completely different category, than a mask.

If one takes a closer linguistic comparative look at the word *guaíza* it will become apparent that this is build up out of different elements. In *guaíza* can be found the prefix *wa-*, which is the 1+2 person possessive ("ours" in the meaning of "yours and mine") in Lokono (Carlin 2005, personal communication). The remaining element *-íza* is connected to *ísiba*, which is used in a number of functions as "protruding element"; in this case to be translated as "countenance" (Oliver, personal communication 2007). This would be best translated as "our countenance", "our face". In combination with the statement by Pané *guaíza* would be paraphrased as "face of the living" or "the way the spirits of the living look".

## 6.3 Materiality, appearance and utilization of the *guaíza*

Viewed as "face of the living" it is not necessary to connect to the phenomenon of *guaíza* a physical, archaeologically traceable, manifestation. However, I will argue that the *guaíza* phenomenon has had a material culture counterpart. This material *guaíza* had a characteristic materiality, form and utility, which can feature as arguments concerning *guaízas* as social valuables.

*6.3.1 Materiality and the "face of the living"*

The statement on *guaycas* above by Las Casas shows that, in addition to a superhuman phenomenon, *guaíza* is indeed also marked by a distinct materiality. This is reemphasized by one other excerpt from the works of Las Casas (1992: chapter 59) "… *estas carátulas o figuras, llamadas guayças, la letra y luenga.*" These very valuable statements are supplementary. One describes *guaízas* as shell "masks", while the other does not identify a material and adds figurines to the category of *guaíza*. It must be concluded from this that the phenomenon of *guaíza* must have had a material reflection as "masks" *and* figurines. This is a very broad category, but there are no other direct descriptions in the ethnohistoric record that would give any reason to restrict it. Indeed it is my conviction that the concepts of this category can be extended to faces and figurines of many different materials and possibly also other face-depicting or face-carrying artefacts from the Greater and Lesser Antilles. This reasoning is backed up by the available ethnohistoric information on *guaízas*.

The first except from the works of Las Casas (1975: 477) tells of *guaízas* as having "much quantity and pieces of fine gold". This corresponds closely to a number of other ethnohistoric descriptions of "masks" or mask-like objects, such as on the second voyage of Colón (Fernandez de Navarete: 229): "*Era uno dellos primo del Guacamarí, el cual los habia enviado otra vez. Despues que se habian tornado aquella tarde traian carátulas de oro, que Guacamarí enviaba en presente.*" A similar present was made to Colón on his first voyage by the same *cacique* on 26th of December (Fernández de Navarete: 129): "*Trujeron al Almirante una gran carátula, que tenia grandes pedazos de oro en las orejas y en los ojos en otras partes…*"

There is evidently a link between gold and shell *guaízas* and this has been the subject of most of the work done on these artefacts (Alegría 1995; Oliver 2000). References to *guaízas* in the above and other ethnohistoric accounts have led to the belief that *guaízas* of pure gold must also have been produced and employed as costly signals for particularly powerful *caciques*. Additionally, there are some artistic impressions of these artefacts that have added to this belief. However, there are no material remains that suggest the existence of these – for now imaginative – artefacts and it is quite possible that the ethnohistoric references to pure gold masks and *guaízas* are exaggerations. Nevertheless, the Spanish sources point to the fact that gold must have been an integral part of these artefacts. The Colón Shipping List and a later list from 1506 describe only *guaízas* that are plated with leaves of gold, have inlays of

gold or might possibly have pieces of gold attached to them (Appendices B and C).

In light of establishing the alienable quality of the *guaíza* it is important to stress this link between this artefact and gold; not only because gold is among sedentary people almost universally the costly signal *par excellence*, but because in the Greater Antillean social universe the use of gold takes a special place in origin narratives and other socio-cultural concepts (Vega 1980). It appears that two types of "gold" were employed for inlays and artefacts: *caona* – pure gold – and *guanín*. Especially the use of *guanín* is important in an argument that would merit the *guaíza* as social valuable, since if not only pure gold, but also *guanín* was indeed used as inlay for *guaízas* and other artefacts – as has been suggested by various authors (Alegría 1995; Oliver 2000; Vega 1980) – this would mean that the *guaíza* also makes use of signalling quality through the use of materials acquired through long distance exchange (cf. Helms 1988). Remember that unlike the softer pure gold that could be subtracted and hammered in a cold state, the alloy *guanín* requires capabilities and knowledge of smelting that were not present on the Antilles before the advent of European contact. Therefore it is generally assumed that the closest source for *guanín* must have been either the Tairona region or the Central Andes, nevertheless this material could only have been acquired through long-distance exchange (Boomert 2000).

However, if we follow this line of reasoning it does present us with a complicated argument. Let us suppose that *guanín* was indeed used – either for complete *guaízas* or as inlays for *guaízas* – this would mean that production centres in the Central Andes or Sierra Madre manufactured plates of *guanín* that were later manufactured into inlays or complete *guaíza*-like products or that complete inlays and *guaíza*-like objects were manufactured in that region that found easy access to the concept of the *guaíza* in the Antillean social universe, alternatively it could be reasoned that inlays or complete *guaízas* were actually manufactured on demand. Although these last two options cannot be excluded it is scientifically more elegant to reason that the raw material used as inlays for the *guaíza* must have been imported and later hammered into the desired form or that the inlays and *guaízas* must have been made of the locally available pure gold. Even if aspects of long-distance exchange cannot be attributed to the *guaíza* in all cases the use of shiny materials in general remains highly important for the alienable qualities of the *guaíza* in Greater Antillean social universe.

In the invaluable Colón Shipping List there are also two other materials named out of which a *guaíza* could be manufactured. The list points to *"una*

*carátula de algodón con nueve hojas de oro"* and also to "*catorce guaycas labradas de algodón e piedra, las tres con siete hojuelas de oro"*. Apparently *guaízas* manufactured from cotton and stone also existed. Cotton examples belong to the rich realm of perishable materials that unfortunately remains closed for archaeologists. Stone *guaízas* might still be in existence and could actually already have been found, but not recognized as such, like stone discs with heads depicted on them or the famous stone *cabezas* from Puerto Rico.

Nevertheless, since it is the purpose of this case-study to narrow down instead of divulge it will be the context and distribution pattern of shell faces as *guaízas* that will be examined by closer analysis. Additionally, whether manufactured out of cotton, stone or gold, shell examples of *guaízas* are those *guaízas* that have been recognized and found by archaeologists all over the Antilles. Consequently here, as in other archaeological publications, the term *guaíza* refers solely to the phenomenon of "the face of the living" materialized as shell discs or cones with an anthropomorphic or zoo-anthropomorphic face on them.

*6.3.2 Appearance of the guaíza*

For the analysis of the distribution of these *guaízas* a catalogue has been put together that contains general information about individual artefacts.[57] Aspects that have been collected, when possible, are descriptions of where the *guaízas* have been found, dimensions, bibliographical references, the synonyms that are used in the references, depositories where the artefacts are kept, additional notes and images of all the individual pieces. The choice has been made to keep these observations as objective as possible and not include any citations in the database that give a certain interpretation to a certain item.

Most of the *guaízas* have a face that is modelled on the lip or part of the body of the *Strombus gigas* species (48), which often gives the artefact a rounded to elongated oval form (36). There are also a number of *guaízas* which are modelled on a *Strombus costatus* or similar species. In these cases the *guaíza* is not modelled only *en face*, but in a more three-dimensional manner, more reminiscent of the actual form of a human face. It could very well be that the *guaíza* has a different use as an ornament when modelled like this, but I will

[57] The information found in this catalogue has been collected by literature research and by visiting museum and private collections in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. This has led to a catalogue that numbers 54 individual artefacts.

turn to this later. The most common form of these *guaízas* manufactured from a lip or part of the body of a large shell is an elongated oval showing a face with a rounded chin (13). Some other forms can also be distinguished, such as an almost rounded form (7), an elongated oval form with a blunt chin (9), an elongated oval with a pointed chin (7) and a square to rectangular form (6). Of six of the *guaízas* the form cannot be established because the artefact was too badly damaged.

Interestingly, some of the larger Cuban *guaízas* (CU6, CU14 and CU18) are created out of the body of the *Strombus gigas* in a particular manner (cf. Vargas Arena et al. 1993). This leads to the *guaíza* having the same form as certain shell artefacts that have been identified as *gubias*, gouges, and actually one of these (CU6) has the tip removed, or possibly broken off. Others have a tip with clear use wear, which would originate from the artefact being used as a gouge and later reworked into a decorative artefact. This similarity in form means that the production processes of these *guaízas* was very similar to the production processes of a shell gouge. Additionally this could lend weight to an argument in which a number of the shell artefacts identified as gouges are semi-finished *guaízas* or the alternative and more intriguing notion of a second use life of a shell tool as a *guaíza*.

The perforations found on *guaízas* are also very important in an analysis of their appearance. All of the *guaízas* analysed in collections and a large number of *guaízas* of which only a photograph was available have clearly visible perforations. When there are no perforations visible it is often due to the fact that the artefact is broken – possibly in the process of creating perforations – or that the photograph was taken from only one angle or is of such a quality that it is impossible to establish the number of perforations. The number of perforations ranges between zero and eight.[58] The range of the number of perforations for *guaízas* that have been depicted en face is larger – between zero and eight – than for those that have been depicted on a conically formed shell - between one and four-, but the average number of perforations of en face *guaízas* that actually have perforations is 3.5, so there is not much difference between the two.

The perforations of the *guaízas* that could be analysed appear to have been made by double-sided drilling; a further study of this could prove interesting for the future. The perforations of the *guaízas* that have been analyzed show some, but no excessive wear. Nevertheless it is evident that the

[58] Only the perforations that were actually visible have been counted.

*Figure 13: The Caguana* cacique *petroglyph. Photo courtesy of José Oliver.*

main function of these perforations was to serve as holes for attaching threads or strings to the *guaíza*. This is evidenced by a small gully that runs directly through some of the perforations (e.g. CU2, HIS6) which would have served to keep the thread or string better in place.

Another function for the perforations might have been to attach other ornaments, such as small discs or feathers, to the *guaíza*. Evidence for this can be found in a petroglyph from the Caguana ceremonial centre in Puerto Rico (Figure 13). According to Oliver (2000) the pendant that is the centrepiece of the string of beads around the head is a *guaíza*. At both sides of the *guaíza* large discs are clearly visible. To my mind these discs symbolize accoutrements worn by real persons, such as the large ear discs, called *taguaguas*. It seems that some of these decorations have been internalized in the carvings on some of the *guaízas*, such as clearly visible discs in the ears (e.g. HIS13, MON1 and PR4) or a pervasive headband design.

Also, the suggestion of a string of beads on the petroglyph from Caguana shows that the *guaíza* is most probably more than just a shell face; it is a carefully constructed signal consisting of a configuration of perishable and non-perishable material culture. Archaeologists only find the non-perishable material, the shell *guaíza* faces, which have been taken out of its configuration due to depositional processes or specific use in rituals. However as proposed by Oliver (ibid.) it could have been that the interplay of white shell with materials of other colours made the *guaíza* an aesthetically valued artefact in the Late Ceramic Age. Nevertheless, it has to be said that the white colour of archaeological shell material is often not its original colour. The original shell could have been very brightly coloured with various different hues and shines. As more time elapsed after the death of the shell organism these colours would have worn off. Speculatively, it could be that this visible aging process, which would have been marked by the shell object becoming whiter and whiter, could have been a means of establishing its antiquity. In order to substantiate this claim, research into this process would be needed. Additionally it has to be noted that the decorations that the shell *guaíza* was adorned with probably

echoed the adornments of the person that was supposed to wear it, making this configuration an actual copy of the wearer.

*6.3.3 Place of the guaíza on the body*

The Caguana petroglyph is not only very important to our understanding of *guaízas* for the reason given above. It also gives a direct representation of how a *guaíza* should be used: as a pendant. The perforations and the gully present on some of the artefacts point to exactly this way of wearing (CU1). Yet, there are also some alternatives to how the *guaíza* could have been worn.

For instance, it is possible that the *guaíza* was worn on the forehead, such as mentioned by Colón when he speaks of the gift that he was presented by the *cacique* Guacanagari (Navarete 1922: 229). Worn in this way the *guaíza* probably did not cover the entire face – so it is not literally a mask – but it was placed on top of the forehead, possibly in a configuration that made up a headband.

Alternatively, *guaízas* were part of a configuration that made up a belt. These belts are mentioned in the Colón Shipping List and a famous example, dated to the contact period, survives to this day in the Vienna *Museum für Völkerkunde* (Figure 8a). The perforations around some of the *guaízas* (e.g. CU13, HIS5 and HIS15) could very well indicate that the artefact was to be sewn on cotton or was part of multiple strings of beads. The position the *guaíza* has on the body when it is part of a belt is not a coincidence, given that it is then positioned near or even exactly on the navel. In general the navel is an element of the body that is very much stressed in Taíno iconography, but more pointedly the Taíno saw the navel as the mark that distinguished the living from the dead according to Pané (1999:1571: p.19). Consequently the place of the *guaíza* on or near the navel in this way deftly harks back to what the *guaíza* actually is: a representation of the face of spirits of the living.

Two different alternatives of using a *guaíza* should also be mentioned. Firstly, there is an old argument by Fewkes (1970 [1907]) that the little faces were used as protective amulets that were worn in the hand by warriors when they went into battle. Secondly there is an example given by Allaire (1990) in which little faces were put on poles. These two alternative ways of displaying a *guaíza* cannot be dismissed entirely, however they do neither account for the perforations, nor for the gullies. It is thus most likely that the *guaízas* were used as the centrepiece of an ornament that decorated the body.

When one couples this to the idea that the *guaíza* is the "face of the living" it already becomes clear that this is an artefact that is intimately

connected to the wearer's personhood. Nevertheless, its prominent place on the chest, head or navel region entails that it must have been very important for broadcasting certain qualities to a larger audience at the same time. Clearly, the *guaíza* was an artefact that was meant to be seen. One could even say that in this regard it is an emblematical ornament.

## 6.4 Iconography of the *guaíza*

Next to the place on the body *guaíza* iconography was also used in an intricate manner to further establish an effective broadcasting signal, recognizable to many in the social universe of the Antilles. Every *guaíza* is a unique piece; nonetheless there are certain elements of its iconography that can be traced back to many or several of the artefacts. The *guaíza* is a face, so by their nature all *guaízas* have elements that portray the facial features. Yet, not all features are similarly prominent in the way they are depicted and the features are not portrayed in the same manner on all the artefacts. Together with some other prevalent iconographic elements I have categorized these features in a database, in order to be able to make groupings of different styles of *guaízas*. This is necessary for the connection of groups of *guaízas* to a certain distribution pattern and it can also help to establish how *guaízas* were signalling specific messages through their appearance.

*6.4.1 Eyes*

The eyes are a very prominent feature of the artefact, which I have subdivided according to two criteria: form and level. The form of the eyes basically has two major variants: goggled and not goggled. This goggle takes the shape of an elevated rim around the eyes. On some of these artefacts the goggles around the eyes are extremely protruded (ANG2, ANT2 and IR2). This has led Mela Pons-Alegría (1980) to identify them literally as spectacles, to protect against the glare of the sea, similar to the spectacles used by the Inuit to protect them against snow blindness. This interpretation is farfetched, but, as of yet, no alternative interpretations have been presented. Of the analysed *guaízas* fourteen had an elevated or decorative rim that was more or less goggle-like. The shape of the eyes varies, but still falls within a limited set of possibilities:

round (13), oval (17) and almond-shaped (13). Another variant exists in which the eyes are individually indistinguishable, but are marked by a line (7).[59]

The level of the eyes is also taken into account. This is important to map the possibilities of inlays in a *guaíza*. The exact process of applying inlays to artefacts is unknown, but it is hypothesized that this was done by applying a small amount of resin or tar to the cavities especially carved for this purpose (Alegría 1995). In this analysis this was categorized by eyes being "level" (20), "sunken" (22), or "open" (8). When eyes are "open" this means that the material at the place of the eyes is completely carved away, so that in theory it would be possible to see through them. This might give the hint that these particular *guaízas* could indeed have been used as masks. Nevertheless if one will inspect the individual pieces it will appear that the *guaízas* that have their eyes "open" are either too small or are modelled around a cone-shaped shell thus preventing their use as mask. There are 21 *guaízas* that have "sunken" eyes, which are eyes that have a cavity, but no presence of inlays could be convincingly established. Still, guided by the ethnohistoric sources it stands to reason that at least a number of them must have been inlaid with gold.

The most prevalent eye form and level is a sunken oval without goggles (7). Other forms that are also prevalent are level, almond shaped ones without goggles (6), those of which the eyes consist of a line that is more or less sunken into the face (5) and goggled, oval shaped eyes that are more or less level to the rest of the face (5).

*6.4.2 Mouth*

Another important and pronounced facial element of the *guaíza* is its mouth. A *guaíza* is often said to be characterized by the fact that its mouth is opened wide and that it displays a fierce looking set of gritted teeth (Allaire 1990; Arrom 1975). However, although it is true that most of the analyzed *guaízas* have a wide opened mouth with a row of gritted teeth, (29), there are also some other variants that do not have this feature. Eighth of the *guaízas* have only an opened mouth without visible teeth, on the other hand there are also seven *guaízas* that have only teeth without any visible lips, while others (7) have a mouth that is shut tight. It could be that the ones without any teeth carved on the shell itself had another material inlayed that functioned to portray the teeth. However there seem to be no correlations between cavities in the eyes

[59] Some of the *guaíza*s could not be analyzed for eye form and level, due to the fact that the artifact was broken at the bottom half of the face.

and an opened mouth without any teeth, since only two of the seven *guaízas* that have an open mouth without teeth have sunken eyes. Still, it could be reasoned that the most pronounced features of the *guaíza* face, eyes and mouth, are probably also most often inlayed, since these are the elements that are most often inlayed in other artefacts. On the other hand, it is true that the teeth in other artefacts were often inlayed with shell, which we know from the many finds of single sets of teeth that were probably used for inlays in perishable materials (Alegría 1995). It is not hard to imagine that white was indeed the desired colour of the teeth, so that there was no need to portray them by inlays on a shell *guaíza*. Concerning the colour and reflectivity of the eyes one could furthermore argue that white shell was not necessarily the preferred material, thus that the desire to have inlays on these places of the *guaíza* was greater.

*6.4.3 Nose*

The nose is a facial element, which is not so pronounced, but that still should not be left out of this analysis. Although there are more individual differences in portraying the nose than in portraying the eyes and mouth, there are some categorizations to be made. First of all there are a small number of *guaízas* (4) that do not have a nose.[60] When a nose is displayed in an abstract manner it takes either the form of a triangle (9), a trapezium (7) or only nostrils (7). It is interesting that in a relatively high number (15) no nostrils are displayed. In the majority of the cases the nose is displayed in a more or less anthropomorphic manner (21) and in sixteen of these cases the nose was carved in a three-dimensional manner. This could mean that although the nose was not that pronounced a facial feature of the *guaíza*, it was an important element to give the *guaíza* a three-dimensional human character. This can also be concluded from the fact that in the case when the *guaíza* was supposed to have a more zoomorphic character the carving of the nose was left out (cf. ANT2 and ANT3) or the nose was decidedly zoomorphic in form, such as with the bat-nosed *guaízas* (cf. HIS1 and HIS3).

*6.4.4 Ears*

A facial element that was more often absent than present (32 vs. 16 and 6 that were unidentifiable due to breaks or a bad quality image) are the ears. In the

[60] For three shell faces the presence of a nose could not be established due to the fact that the artifact was broken.

case that the ears were absent it was a deliberate choice not to portray them, since on these artefacts no sign of breakage was found at the place of the ears. The reason why they were left out can only be guessed at. Maybe it had to do with the fact that the ears were not an important part of the face for the Late Ceramic Age people, but this cannot be established without an in-depth study of the iconography of the ear of other Late Ceramic Age artefacts. Alternatively one could argue that it was not understood how to put the correct perspective to the ears or how to sculpt them, but the fact that the ears are not depicted more often on conically shaped *guaízas* – with which it would have been easy to place them in the correct perspective –, nor the fact that they have been placed in perspective on a number of *guaízas* are counterarguments to this. Possibly many of the ears would not have been visible, since they would have been covered by attached ornaments anyway –such as in the Caguana petroglyph – or be unobservable due to the way that the *guaíza* would have been part of a pendant or belt. In two of the *guaízas* (HIS13 and MON1) such ear ornaments have been internalized in the carving. In the case of CU7 and CU8 the ears have cavities that could have been used to apply resin or tar in order to glue an ornament to the *guaíza*. In some other cases (CU5, HIS5 and PR4) there are perforations at the place where the ear should be, also usable to attach ornaments to.

*6.4.5 Headdress*

A headband or headdress has been identified on 40 of the 54 *guaízas* that are part of the database.[61] The headdress is not uniformly depicted on all the headdress-bearing *guaízas* and many of them give just a hint of a headband by a single or double line (15). Nonetheless, in more than half of the cases the headband can be easily identified, some of which can even be recognized as depicting feathers (ANG2, ANT2 and HIS2). The most pervasive is a design that looks wing-like or like folded bands coming together at the base of the forehead. These often have rounded depressions at the points where they joining (10). A special subset of these is the same iconographic motif with a large jewel at the base of the forehead (HIS1, HIS9, HIS10 and HIS17). The existence of this decoration is recounted by Bernaldéz in his recounting of an encounter with a Jamaican *cacique* off the coast of Jamaica (Bernaldéz, cited by Oliver 2000). Another design consists of multiple folded bands in a "turban"

[61] On eleven of the *guaíza*s it appears to be absent and on the remaining 3 it could not be established whether it is absent or not due to breakage of the artefact.

style (6). The rest of the headband motifs cannot be easily categorized as belonging to a certain category, but consist, for example, out of a punctuated motif (CU7 and DES2), an incised band (HIS3 and HIS13), a band with multiple jewels (PR1), a headdress-like motif in the form of a v-incision (HIS19), a headdress with three points sticking out of it (ANT3) or a plateau (HIS14) similar to the one worn by the beaded *zemi* from the Pigorini Museum (Figure 7a and b).

*6.4.6 The "tear"-motif*

Eighteen of the *guaízas* also have another interesting iconographic element that cannot be interpreted as personal adornment. This element in some cases consists of a single carved line or multiple carved lines running from the eyes to the lower cheeks, in the more elaborate examples they are actual bands rather than simple incisions. This specific element can be found on many more elaborately carved Taíno affiliated artefacts such as *cohoba* stands, wooden statues and carved stones, and also as part of petroglyphs. Arrom (1975) was the first to identify these patterns as "tears" running down the cheeks of these face depicting artefacts. To establish the extent and importance of this iconographic element is a difficult task, since it is easy to misinterpret some of the articulated cheekbones that are also an important element in many of the *guaízas* as these "tears". It could be that the articulation of the cheekbones stylistically flows from the depiction of tears, or vice versa. Arrom marks the tear-motif as very early, however much more information on iconography in dated contexts is needed to substantiate these claims.

*6.4.7 Zoomorphic elements*

Some zoomorphic motives are present on *guaízas*, such as impressive looking fangs (ANT2 and ANT3). A logical reasoning would be to connect this fearsome looking set of teeth to the dog, since this would be the only animal on the islands with similar denture, but some species of bats have similar fangs. On the other hand the other elements of the artefact do not look particularly doglike, leaving room for other interpretations, such as a jaguar or a fantastic creature. A bat's nose is also identifiable on some of the artefacts (HIS1, HIS3, HIS and MG1). In addition to this it has to be mentioned that there are *guaízas* that are very abstract in their depiction of the human face, such as (ANT1, CU14, CU11 and HIS14), but they are few in number.

## 6.5 Geographical patterns in the iconography of the *guaíza*

With the iconographical details outlined it becomes clear that, although every *guaíza* is unique, the people who created *guaízas* have drawn on a limited set of ideas of what elements constitute a *guaíza*. Nevertheless Allaire's (1990) characterization of the "average" *guaíza* having hollow eyes, a mouth full of teeth, a triangular nose, and articulated cheekbones already seems to be overstating the unity of the iconographic designs, since there are strictly spoken only a few *guaízas* that possess all these features. The prototypical *guaíza* does not exist, however the question remains whether it is possible to combine the limited set of iconographic motives in such a way that a meaningful geographic distribution pattern of iconographic motifs can be created.

### *6.5.1 Quantitative distribution and place of origin*

By and large most of the *guaízas* have been traced back to the Greater Antilles with nineteen in Cuba, eighteen in Hispaniola, four in Puerto Rico and one in Jamaica (Figure 14). This distribution pattern is a bit skewed, since the nature of the archaeology on these islands is very different. The nineteen in Cuba are a very good estimate of the total number of *guaízas* found on this island to date; there are no private collections and the amount of looting going on is relatively small. This is not the same for Hispaniola since probably many *guaízas* must have been lost to archaeology and the general public when they were dug up by looters and sold to private collectors. So it could be postulated that the number of *guaízas* in the database from Hispaniola is only a fraction of *guaízas* that have been unearthed. The Lesser Antilles seem to represent only a fraction of the *guaízas* (10), nevertheless only looking at the sheer difference in landmass and geographic distribution – the area of distribution as the crow flies from Cuba to Puerto Rico is about twice the distance of the area of distribution in the Lesser Antilles – between the Greater and Lesser Antilles this quantitative difference seems a lot smaller.

With reference to the origin of the *guaíza* it is difficult to say anything specific. Representations of faces have taken a central place in Caribbean iconography since early Saladoid times. Also it has to be noted that the earliest shell face in the Caribbean has been found in the Lesser Antilles, but it could be that this artefacts should not to be considered as having a connection with the other shell faces (ANT1). However the sheer number of *guaízas* found in

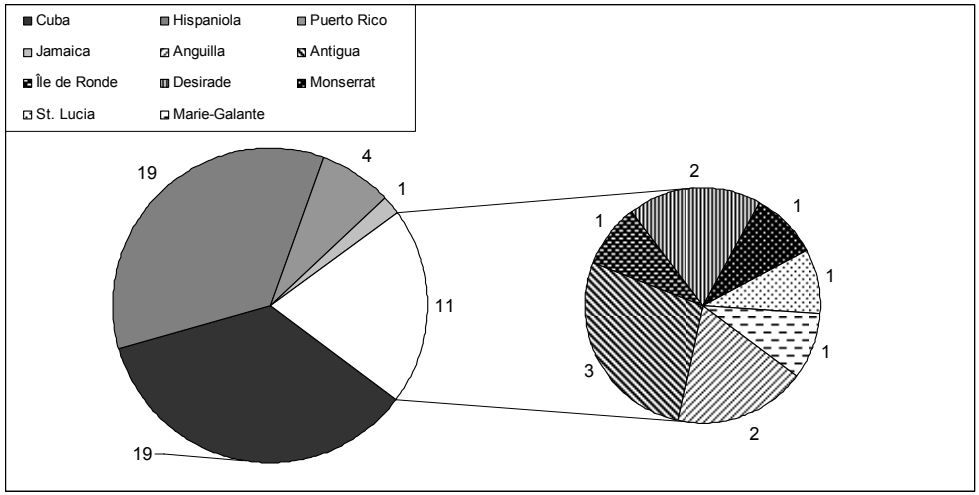



*Figure 14: Geographical distribution of* guaízas *in numbers.*

the Greater Antilles and their clear Taíno-style iconography would make an origin in the Greater Antilles the most logical. Still, this does not automatically have to be Hispaniola – the island that is identified as the core area of Taíno style artefacts and as the area where personal adornment is considered to be the most important in the context of its supposed higher political complexity (Curet 1996) –, since there is an unfortunate gap in our knowledge of Hispaniola *guaízas* in terms of controlled excavations. However, let us first take a look at iconographic motives on individual islands and island regions before drawing further conclusions about the origin and spread of the *guaíza*.

*6.5.2* Guaíza *iconography on Cuba*

The Cuban *guaízas* are quite uniform in form and iconographical motives. This is partly due to the fact that they have a very contained distribution pattern in Cuba itself: seven coming from the Holguín province, three from Guantanamo, one from Sancti Spiritus province and one from Altagracia province.[62] None of them is conically shaped and most of them are quite level in their perspective. There are some eye-catching examples of *guaízas* that have been worn as a pendant, such as CU2 that on close inspection has slight wear patterns at the location of the perforations where the string must have been tied through. There are also marked examples of *guaízas* that must have been

[62] These provinces are all located in the eastern part of Cuba.

part of a belt, such as CU5 that has six perforations, but none at the top side of the artefact. Eyes have different shapes, but are mostly not pitted There are also five *guaízas* that have goggles or rings around their eyes.

These five *guaízas* all have, together with six non-goggled *guaízas*, a very clear tear-motif running along their cheeks. Overall these Cuban tear-eyed *guaízas* are the most standardized in form and iconography, only differing in the level of craftsmanship (e.g. compare CU1, CU8 and CU9). Ears are present on only two of the *guaízas*. Headbands are far from absent – eleven in all –, but they are not very uniform in form including a punctuated headband (CU7), a single large curved band that might be a jewel on the forehead (CU12), simple bands or gullies (CU5 and CU15), while the two wing-like or folded bands joining at the base of the forehead with rounded depressions are absent. Zoomorphic motives are absent altogether.

*6.5.3* Guaíza *iconography on Hispaniola*

Unfortunately relatively little is known about the distribution of the *guaízas* on the island of Hispaniola. *Guaízas* from Hispaniola have only been documented in Dominican collections, so it could be expected that they are all from the Dominican Republic, yet, we cannot be sure of this. *Guaízas* from the Dominican Republic are commonly elongated ovals showing pronounced chins. Some of the examples are quite small in size – around 3 centimetres – such as HIS11 and HIS12, but. Ten of the *guaízas* are modelled in a highly three-dimensional fashion, making these *guaízas* the most expressive looking human faces with a characteristic individuality (e.g. HIS9 and HIS10). The Hispaniolan *guaízas* tend to have one, two or three perforations at the topside of the artefact, making most of them eligible candidates for use as *pendant*s. However we know from a belt found near the municipal of Cucuma in the Romana province that belts containing a *guaíza* as centrepiece were very likely also manufactured (Figure 8b).

Eyes are mostly oval in shape, with two examples of goggles (HIS1 and HIS2), which are also the only conically shaped *guaízas* found in the Greater Antilles. Thirteen of the *guaízas* have eyes that are sunken or even deeply pitted, making it very probable that the highest number of inlayed *guaízas* could be found here. The majority of the *guaízas* have the very typically opened lips with gritted teeth and it is probably from this location that the classical image of the *guaíza* derives. With two not very clear examples the tear-motif, which is so characteristic for the Cuban *guaízas*, is almost absent on Hispaniola. Conversely, it is on Hispaniola that the headband is most prevalent and

uniform in its depiction. Only HIS11 does not have a clear recognizable headband or headdress. There are six specimens in which the headband is only a simple band or incision, but on the other hand we have five clear examples of the wing-like band of which four have a great jewel or disc located on the forehead. There are three examples of the turban style headdresses and three have unique headdresses, like HIS14 that has a platter-like headdress that is very similar to the beaded *zemi* from the Pigorini Museum (Figure 7a and b).

*6.5.4* Guaíza *iconography on Puerto Rico*

For Puerto Rico only four examples were found of which one (PR3) comes from an internet source and is suspected of being a fake or reproduction. Why there are not that many *guaízas* found on Puerto Rico is an interesting question in itself. Especially, since this island is home to the only depiction of a *guaíza* being worn by the Caguana *cacique*. Also, there are a number of stone disk faces with very similar iconography found on Puerto Rico. These could actually be *guaízas* and could have somehow replaced the shell examples. It has to be noted, however, that they could not have functioned as bodily ornaments. Still, one could think of an argument according to which these stone disks were ritualized versions of *guaízas* that could have been worn as ornaments, in a similar way as elbow stones and stone belts might have been ritualized versions of perishable elbow protectors and belts.

With so few examples there is not a lot that can be said about shell *guaízas* on Puerto Rico. The examples in the database seem to follow a similar set of iconographic motives as on Hispaniola, but with some local differences, such as a headband with three jewels instead of one (PR1) and an interesting face with a headband that has many incisions carved into it, which I would interpret as wrinkles. Whether this means that this *guaíza* is a depiction of an old person or that the wrinkles are there for another reason remains a mystery. Another quaint trait is that PR4 has ears with perforated earrings in them.

*6.5.5* Guaíza *iconography on Jamaica*

There is one *guaíza* from Jamaica represented in the database (JAM1). Nevertheless it is worth mentioning, since although it is very crudely carved it still combines almost all aspects of the known iconographic motifs– with spectacled eyes with tears running down its cheek and a single incision that could depict a headband. The reason why there are not more examples known from Jamaica could have more to do with the preference of Pre-Columbian archaeologists from the island, who –similarly to Puerto Rico, focus more on

petroglyphs and ritual sites, than with differences of distribution in the past. Either way a closer inspection of the social valuables of Late Ceramic Age Jamaica is in order before it is possible to say anything else about this understudied region of the Antilles.

*6.5.6* Guaíza *iconography on the northern and southern Lesser Antilles*

From the northern Lesser Antilles six *guaízas* are known: two from Anguilla, three from Antigua and one from Monserrat. Three of the five *guaízas* from the southern Lesser Antilles are surprisingly contained to the Guadeloupe archipelago: two from Désirade and one from Marie-Galante. There are two outliers in St. Lucia and Île de Ronde in the Grenadines. As said above, the *guaízas* from the Lesser Antilles are varied in form ranging from conically shaped *guaízas* to elongated oval forms. The way in which the *guaízas* are given perspective also has the greatest range compared to the other regions in the Antilles. Overall it is quite difficult to say what the Lesser Antillean *guaízas* were used as, but for DES1 and MON1 it is quite obvious that the artefact is meant to be used as a pendant.

Four of the *guaízas* have enormous goggles on their eyes. Interestingly three of these four goggle-eyed *guaízas* show other similarities in iconographic motives, such as a conical headdress and unpronounced teeth. Still these three have a very wide area of distribution that spans the Lesser Antilles from Anguilla to the island of Île de Ronde in the Grenadines. Overall, the eyes are never sunk deep into the face, which would give the suggestion that inlays were not very important in these *guaízas*. For these *guaízas* it is not common to have the prototypical wide opened lips with gritted teeth, since six of them do not display any teeth at all and two only display teeth and no lips.

A large proportion of *guaízas* from the Lesser Antilles has headbands or headdresses, with nine out of eleven showing a clear sign of a headdress. Five of these *guaízas* have a headband design which is very close to the headband design with the large jewel or disk from the Greater Antilles, but without the central ornament. Others showing a headband depicted by a simple incision or band and in one case by a punctuated headband. The tear-motif is all but absent in the Lesser Antilles, with only one, not necessarily convincing, example from Montserrat. Zoomorphic motifs feature on some of the Lesser Antillean *guaízas*. ANT2 and ANT3 display a zoomorphic motif – the canine teeth discussed before – and MG1 displays a bat's nose.

*6.5.7 Tendencies in the distribution of guaíza iconography*

There are some important inferences about the signals a *guaíza* could have sent that can already be concluded from this iconographic distribution. First of all it is striking that we are speaking about a huge area of distribution that ranges much further than what has in the past been seen as the division between Taíno and non-Taíno "territory" (cf. Rouse 1992), which also has a huge diversity of local styles. This is of interest, because *guaízas* do not follow local style conventions in every region they are found. Additionally, the *guaízas* vary in individual appearance in one region, while they remain relatively consistent in style over all the regions they can be found. For example, although it would truly stand out among the crowd, DES1 with its pronounced headband, almond shaped eyes and peculiar nose, could also convincingly be in the category of Cuban *guaízas* if it had been found there instead of on La Désirade.

When looking closely at individual form and iconographic elements some interesting patterns emerge. For instance, when considering form it is interesting to see that the *guaízas* that have been modelled around a *Strombus costatus* shell seem to have been found primarily in the Lesser Antilles with only two examples coming from the Greater Antilles (HIS1 and HIS2). The reason for this is that, in contrast to the Lesser Antilles, one can find in the Greater Antilles next to the *guaíza* another face-depicting shell artefact. This is a face depicted on the bell-shaped shells of the *Oliva* spp. just called "*colgante*" or "hanger".

*Figure 15: Colgante from the Gabinete de Arqueología, Havana, Cuba. Photo by Angus A. A. Mol*

These *colgantes* are much simpler in their execution than the *guaíza*, with similar sorts of eyes, noses and mouths, but with no trace of headbands, tear-motifs and with only a single perforation at the top of the *Oliva* shell.[63] *Oliva* shells are very often worked to be hangers and are found in great quantity, however the

[63] For an example of how *Oliva* shells are prepared for use as a hanger see: Vargas Arena et al. 1993

majority does not depict a face (Figure 15).[64] It has been chosen not to include face-depicting *colgantes* in the database as *guaízas*, since only a good overview of the Cuban *colgantes* was available from collection studies in the area, so this would lead them to be overrepresented. Nevertheless eighteen could already be found in different collections in Cuba and twelve in Hispaniola, but this is a far from exhaustive survey. Although generally not interpreted by Caribbean archaeologists as being similar to the *guaíza* I suspect that *colgantes* could have had a similar connotation, but that in an object hierarchy they were valued less. This is because a lot less craftsmanship is needed both qualitatively and quantitatively to prepare *Oliva* shells for use as a *colgante* than it is to cut and carve a shell from the *Strombus* spp.. Also, in contrast to "real" *guaízas*, *colgantes* show no sign of cavities or deeply carved areas in which they could be inlaid with other materials.

It has to be noted that the conically shaped *guaízas* from the Lesser Antilles are more similar in form to the *colgantes* than to the flat *guaízas* of the Greater Antilles, but that considering iconography they are far more elaborately carved than *colgantes*. In addition, they are also not made of the same shell species; the conical *guaízas* are carved on a *Strombus costatus* instead of *Oliva spp.*. An interesting argument could be developed in which there is a more or less defined notion of difference between the conically shaped *colgantes* and the flat *guaízas* in the Greater Antilles. This difference dissolves for the *guaízas* of the Lesser Antilles. This would mean that the concept of what form a *guaíza* should have is not nearly as important on the Lesser Antilles as on the Greater Antilles.

This argument also holds water when looking at the number of perforations on the *guaíza*. There is, for example, a relatively large group (12) of *guaízas* that has two perforations located at the top of the artefact. Of these eleven are depicted in an en face manner on a flat piece of shell. It is likely that this is the group that has definitely been worn as a pendant, without any added ornaments such as feathers, but possibly with inlays – this is not to say that the other *guaízas* in the database are not worn as a pendant. The geographical focus is categorically on the Greater Antilles; with five from Cuba and five from Hispaniola and only one from the Lesser Antilles, namely Anguilla. Also when looking at mouth, nose and eye forms the *guaízas* from the Lesser Antilles seem to be more varied than their Greater Antillean counterparts. We could already

64 Valcarcél Rojas (1999) reports more than one hundred of these artifacts from the Banes region in Holguín, Cuba, alone.

speak of a marked difference between Greater and Lesser Antillean *guaízas* in variability.

Nevertheless there are also differences to be found in the iconography of Greater Antillean *guaízas*. The small numbers of the Puerto Rico and Jamaican assemblages do not lend themselves for comparison, but if *guaízas* from Hispaniola and Cuba are compared it becomes apparent that there are major differences in iconography.

First of all it is very important to notice that a convincing example of the tear-motif that is so prevalent on Cuba cannot be found in the more easterly located Caribbean. This is strange since the tear-motif itself is not contained to Cuba alone when looking at other social valuables from the Greater Antilles. Still, the theme of the tear-eyed face seems not to have been utilized on a great scale in Hispaniola with one of the few examples a petroglyph from Chacuey showing a sign of teary eyes. Further east any convincing examples seem to be absent. The absence of this motif is even more remarkable when taking into account that faces or figures with this motif are normally connected to *Boinayel*, the son of the "god" of heavy rains, of which a narrative was recorded by Fray Ramon Pané when he was living with the native population (Arrom 1975, 1997; Pané 1999 [1571]: 17). As said before it is difficult to trace characteristics of individuals from the narratives collected by Pané on Hispaniola in artefacts from other regions. Still heavy rain is present seasonally every year in all of the Caribbean, so it would be logical to conclude that at least the meaning behind the motif should have been understood over a large region –albeit probably not connected to the superhuman individual *Boinayel*. So why does this motif, connected to a superhuman being that has control over rain, not find its way into the Eastern Caribbean? An intriguing question I will return to later.

Another very marked difference between the regions is in headband or headdress motifs. While headband designs from Cuba seem to be not very manifestly present, the headbands from Hispaniola or quite uniform in their depiction. Interestingly enough a similar sort of headband design, missing the central ornament, can be retraced in several cases in the Lesser Antilles to as far south as Île de Ronde. Unfortunately we do not have much information about the headgear worn by the indigenous people of the Caribbean, so it is impossible to know whether the absence of headbands or the difference of designs between regions mean that different headdresses were worn in different regions. However, when viewing the variety of headgear in the lowlands of South America it is very probable that this was the case.

Nevertheless, for establishing the signal sent by specific *guaízas* it is important to understand more of the meaning behind the headdress. For example, it stands to reason that individuals with different functions were entitled to different headdresses or were perhaps not even supposed to wear headgear.

When one takes a look at the overall iconography it is interesting to see that, with the notable exception of ANT1 and STL1, *guaízas* from the Lesser Antilles are all highly crafted with many incisions, displaying some of the most intricate designs found on *guaízas*. In general it can be said that the further towards the west one looks the simpler the designs displayed on the *guaízas* become. This is not to say that the level of craftsmanship is less (e.g. CU9 and CU12), but that the *guaízas* are not completely filled in and have a less distinct character. This could either point to the fact that the Cuban specimens are just simpler, however I suggest that this means that in the case of the *guaízas* from Cuba and, to a lesser extent, from Hispaniola it was far more important to use other materials through attaching or inlaying these. The internalization of decorative motifs, number of perforations and the number of cavities of Greater Antillean *guaízas* in comparison with Lesser Antillean *guaízas* support this notion. So there is a small but crucial difference inferring that *guaízas* from the Lesser Antilles were probably already valued as stand alone objects, without them necessarily being part of an elaborate configuration with other materials.

### *6.5.8 Guaíza iconography as* aide-memoire

It has become evident that there were indeed regional differences in iconography. Although absence or presence may seem a trivial matter, the importance of this for an argument in which *guaízas* could feature as social valuables should not be underestimated. Iconographic motifs and their underlying semiotics are elements that partly construct the narrative of the artefact. Yet, opposed to intangible aspects of artefacts – such as personal biographies – the appearance of the artefact remains a signal that continues to broadcast on a symbolic level even when the direct social contact that leads to the acquisition is partly or completely forgotten. In this sense iconography and form of an artefact serve as an *aide-memoire* of the original idea, concept and narrative contained within the original exchange.

This is also the light in which the iconography on the *guaízas* should be seen. The fact that the tear-motif is so prevalent on Cuba leads to an interpretation in which exactly this tear-motif is so important for the social value of the *guaíza* in Cuba, while on other islands this is less important. The

same argument could be given for the headband with the centrally placed jewel or disc that can be found on Hispaniola. Conversely the fact that unity in form and configuration of the *guaíza* were less pronounced in the Lesser Antilles leads me to think that it was not a unified form or configuration that made the *guaíza* an important artefact, but that it was the notion – the idea – of a *guaíza* that was enough to give it such a wide distribution area. I realize that this seems a tentative reasoning following only out of iconographic motives of some 50 odd artefacts. That is why a closer look is needed at some of the archaeological contexts in which *guaízas* are found to substantiate these claims.

## 6.6 Addendum: *Guaíza* iconography outside the Antillean interaction sphere?

Before turning to archaeological contexts within the Caribbean islands I feel that in light of recent investigations that highlight possible relations of yet undetermined nature between the Caribbean islands and the areas skirting the Caribbean Sea (Harlow et al. 2007; Keegan and Rodríguez Ramos 2004, Rodríguez Ramos 2007) it is necessary to address the possibility to investigate these relations by looking at a possible mainland distribution of *guaízas* or *guaíza*-like artefacts or iconographic motifs.

First of all it would be an interesting development when the Caribbean islands could loose their status as a "dead end street" of interaction and regain a more central position within a "Caribbean-Mediterranean interaction sphere". However, wishful thinking does not lead to scientific arguments. When proof for this claim is looked for following the line of the *guaízas* it is evident that on the Caribbean mainland there are lots of artefacts of very high social value that could be compared to the *guaíza*. For instance, in the Maya area one can find certain face-carrying artefacts, called *bib'* heads. These small heads of precious jade, which is a highly valued material that had to be acquired through long distance exchange (Quilter and Hoopes 2003), were one of the regalia of Maya elites – as seen on a stele from Palenque (Martin and Grube 2000: 161). Interestingly, Lovén, when talking about masks in the Greater Antilles, already connects these to masks and headdresses worn by the Maya elite (Lovén 1935). In addition, gold faces with wide opened eyes and mouth showing canine teeth found in the Sacred Cenote in Chichen Itzá look a lot like *guaízas*. Actually *guaíza* style faces, although most of the time as part of a figurine, are found all across the Central American area. Alternatively, even in present-day indigenous

communities of the South American mainland face-depicting objects can be found that remind very much of *guaíza* iconography.

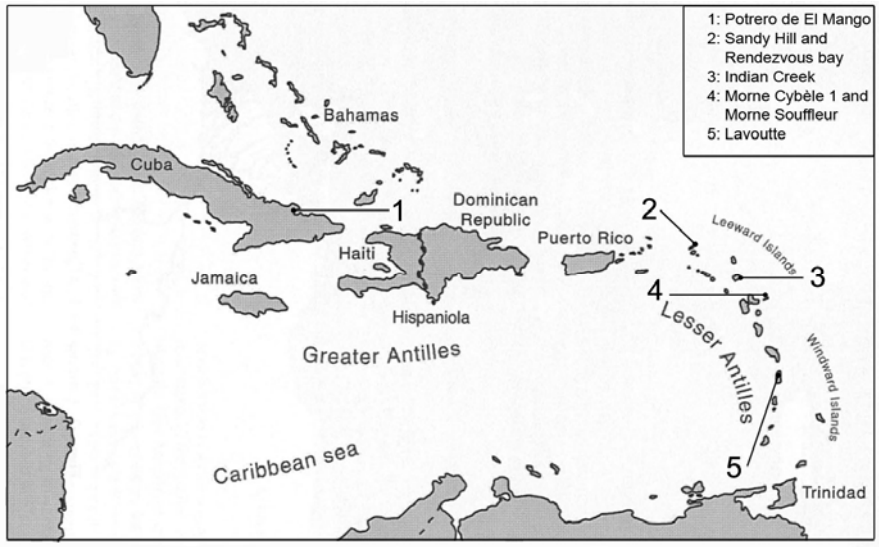
Nonetheless, the prevalence of these motifs actually confirms nothing at all. Sensibly speaking the depiction of the human face on amulets or similar items is such a universal practice that, even when one would find a face that has a similarly looking form and iconography, this does not substantiate any claims of relationship. It is only in the case of such a large corpus of artefacts as is the case with the *guaízas* on the Caribbean islands that any inferences can be drawn. This is not to say that looking at the iconography of similar face-depicting artefacts on the mainland will remain fruitless no matter what future developments might bring, since there are a lot of possibilities that are marred at this moment. Shell does not preserve as well on the mainland as on the islands and shell on the mainland is also an understudied material. Still, we need many more lines of evidence than *guaíza* iconography if we are to argue for mainland relations or influences.

## 6.7 Archaeological contexts of the *guaíza*

The majority of the guaízas in the catalogue are part of museum collections and in a lot of these cases there is no knowledge of the archaeological region or site they were connected to originally. This has led to only eighteen of the 52 guaízas in the catalogue to be traceable to an archaeological context. Additionally it has to be conceded before discussing these contexts that in a majority of these 18 cases the find circumstances are unknown. Still, I feel that it is important to discuss a number of these cases, because this supplies this case study with crucial archaeological data in a way that cannot be reached even by doing an in depth iconographical and semiotic study or by extrapolating references from Spanish ethnohistoric documents to a wider area.

### *6.7.1 Potrero de El Mango, Holguín province, Cuba*

Potrero de El Mango is an important "Sub-taíno" site located in the rich archaeological region of the Maniabón Hills near the modern town of Las Mulas in the Holguín province (map 2: 1). The site – extending over 400 by 50 metres – lies in the centre of the Loma de las Mulas on a ridge that istretches out over 1.5 km next to the Río Mulas and is also close to a freshwater spring (Rouse 1942: 66). The site is situated at quite some distance from the sea – 8 kilometres to the north and 7 kilometres to the east –, still the river would have




*Map 2: Some* guaíza *site contexts and their distribution in the Caribbean.*

allowed for relatively easy access to this resource. Additionally the area around Potrero de El Mango is fertile land for agriculture, all in all making it an excellent location for a successful settlement (Valcarcél Rojas 2002).

The site was discovered and investigated by an Italian by the name of Baisi-Facci in 1933. From then on unorganized excavations took place by the local population that unearthed many amazing artefacts. It was not until 1941 that the site was first excavated under controlled circumstances under the auspices of Irving Rouse (Rouse 1942). Recently, in 1999, a few test pits were also excavated by people from the Departamiento Centro–Oriental de Arqueología, CISAT, of which unfortunately no excavation report is available (but see: Valcarcél Rojas 2002).

The amount and variability of the ceramic, stone, bone and shell artefacts found at this site is truly astounding, leading Rouse (1942:68) to state that: "With few exceptions, nothing of any importance can be found elsewhere in the Maniabón hills that cannot be duplicated here." This has led locally to scholarly works that emphasize the importance of the site in a regional network, with some even going as far as to speculate that this site might be the hub of a chiefdom that encompassed the complete Banes region (Castañeda 1941 as a reference in Valcarcél Rojas 2002). The occupation history of Potrero de El Mango is quite extensive with evidence of occupation from the 11th

century until the 16th century.[65] However, the occupation seems to have been centred in different places during three different periods resulting in three separate middens with different material (Valcarcél Rojas 2002). No postholes or house structures have been reported, but human burials with grave gifts have been found.

There is evidence for intensive agricultural production at the site. Rouse reported previous investigators finding thick depositions of ash and, in a personal communiqué to Valcarcél Rojas, José Guarch reports finding evidence for hillside agriculture (Valcarcél Rojas 1999). In addition the number of ceramic griddle fragments found at the site led Rouse to believe that agriculture must have been the most prioritized means of food distribution at the site (Rouse 1942: 70).

The other ceramics from this site and the region as a whole clearly belong to the Meillacan Ostionoid subseries, but are influenced by the Boca Chica style (Ulloa, personal communication 2007), with some specimens that can be found in the Museo Baní, which look Chican in origin indeed. Rouse reports finding several complete vessels and numerous vessel fragments on site and in collections that would in all account for 344 unique vessels, of which 317 are bowls, 23 are platters, 3 "toy bowls" and one is a "toy platter". The bowls vary greatly in shape and design (Rouse 1942: 68). In collections from the Museo Montané and the Gabinete de Arqueologiá in Havana and Museo Baní in Banes there are various other artefacts displayed that have been found at the site, such as a large coral head, a stone head, cylindrical stone beads, some heads of vomit spatulas made of manatee bone and several shell artefacts such as gouges, tips of the conch, *colgantes*, teeth inlays and, last but not least, 5 *guaízas*.

Unfortunately the *guaízas* were not reported *in situ*, but they have probably been excavated in the period between the discovery of the site in 1933 and Rouse's excavation in 1941. Additionally the falsification of artefacts that have been reported as belonging to Potrero de El Mango regrettably also affected the *guaízas*. In all probability CU18 is an example of this practice (Valcarcél Rojas, personal communication 2007). Still, CU1, CU2, CU6 and CU13 are without a doubt genuine *guaízas*. Interestingly enough three of the *guaízas* from this site feature the tear-motif, but otherwise they are very dissimilar in both form and style. However with four *guaízas* Potrero de El

[65] Only one C14 date is available (AD 1070 Cal. +/-70) but Spanish ceramics and cow bones are also found on this site (Valcarcél Rojas 1999).

Mango is the only site to date from which more than one guaíza is reported. It would be tentative to reason that this would mean that Potrero de El Mango would at least have been of major socio-political significance on a local level. However, before one skips to conclusions it is worthwhile to look at other materials that have been found at this site and other sites in the vicinity (adapted from Valcarcél Rojas 1999; figure 16, 17 and 18).
Here it is possible to see that Potrero de El Mango does not only have a large number of guaízas, but the site also consistently scores high in a comparison of the quantity of ceremonial objects and ornaments among sites in the Banes region; ranking first in amount of bone artefacts, second in number of shell artefacts and third in number of stone artefacts. The only site that ranks higher in this region is Chorro de Maíta, which is a burial site that is contemporaneous to Potrero de El Mango with an assemblage that features a large amount of burial gifts.[66] Another important notion for this region as a whole is that it is in

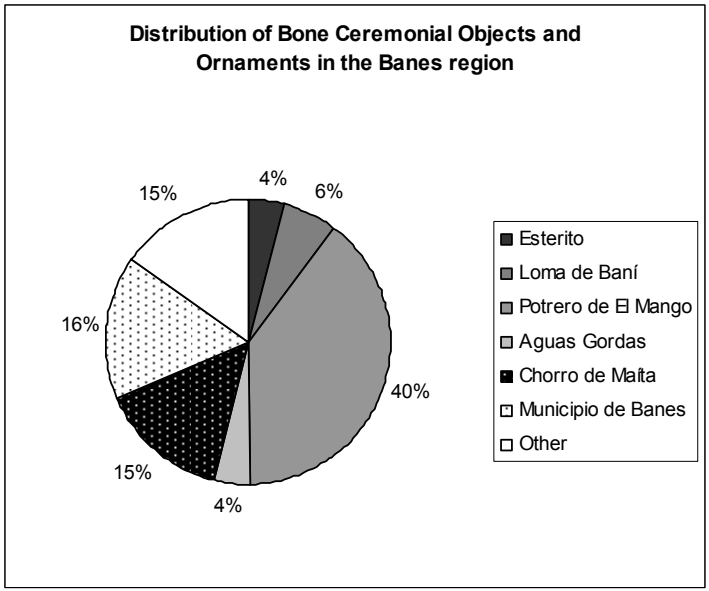



*Figure 16: Distribution of bone ceremonial objects and ornaments in the Banes region.*

[66] In Chorro de Maíta no guaízas are found as burial gifts. Actually, nowhere in the Caribbean have guaízas been reported as belonging to a burial assemblage, which is telling in its own right.

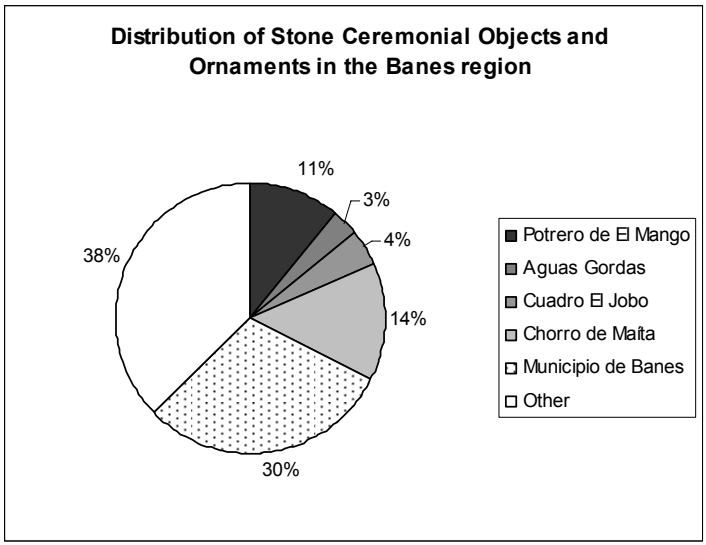



*Figure 17: Distribution of stone ceremonial objects and ornaments in the Banes region.*

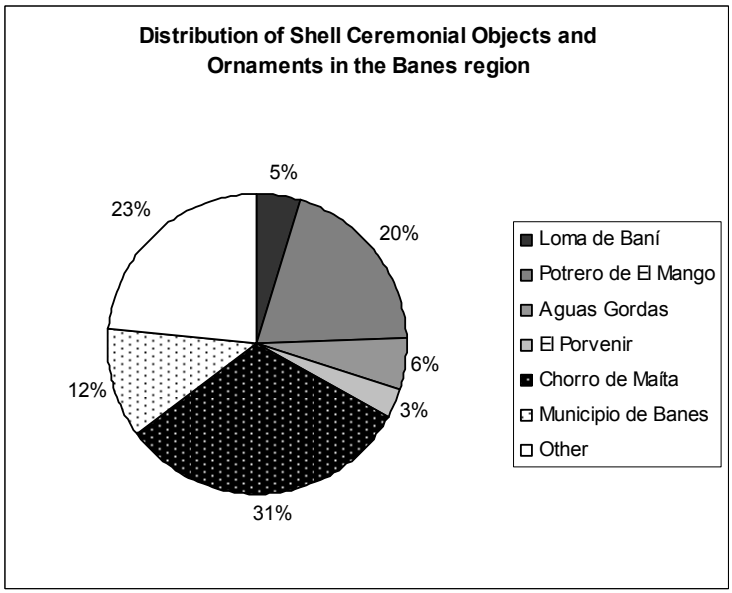



*Figure 18: Distribution of shell ceremonial objects and ornaments in the Banes region.*

this region that we find the highest influence of the Boca Chica style in the whole of Cuba (Ulloa, personal communication 2007) and that all the other regions, in which guaízas are found, are characterized by having so-called "Classic Taíno" influences.

*6.7.2 Anguilla: Sandy Hill and Rendezvous-bay*

Anguilla is a small and low limestone island at the east end of the Anegada passage, that divides the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Although the island is very dry, it offers rich marine resources due to its location on the Anguilla Bank, and various sources for lithic material (Map 2: 2). Consequently, and unsurprisingly, it is relatively densely populated in the Late-Ceramic period with 14 substantial habitation sites (Crock & Petersen 2004: 139).

One of these sites is the coastal occupation site of Sandy Hill that spreads out for approximately 4 hectares on the slopes of the highest point of the island. It was first identified in 1979 during a survey of the Island Resource Foundation of St. Thomas and since then the Anguilla Archaeological and Historical Society has conducted survey collection and salvage archaeology. It was during one of these salvage operations that a *guaíza* was found in context with red slipped ceramics, two fragments of other "shell masks" – most probably *guaízas* – and charcoal that was dated to AD 1070 +/- 90, making this the only securely dated *guaíza* in the catalogue. A second *guaíza* has been found on this island, in "slightly" less controlled circumstances, by a tourist at the Rendezvous-bay site in the south of the island (Crock 2000; Crock & Petersen 2004).

During excavations by Crock $^{14}C$ dates were obtained for the occupation of Sandy Hill ranging from approximately AD 1000 +/- 70 to a late date of AD 1440 +/- 80 (Crock 2000: 123). During this fieldwork 3500 pieces of ceramics were recovered that were mostly undecorated, but the 0,3% that showed ornamentation could be ascribed to the Late Ceramic Age period (ibid.:105). Lithic artefacts numbered 515 with St. Martin greenstone (71%) and Antigua chert (12%) making up the largest portion of this. The high percentage of these exotic lithics should be emphasized, since they featured over a wide exchange network in the northern Lesser Antilles (Knippenberg 2004). Shell found at the site was mostly tied to subsistence activities. This is unsurprising, since this must have been a community that relied heavily on marine resources, with agricultural activities at a lower priority, although as yet

unidentified floral remains and griddle fragments have been reported (Crock 2000:117).

Noteworthy artefacts from this site include a number of three-pointers made of stone – some of which were quite elaborate with zoomorphic designs – and coral. Additionally some stone beads, perforated *Oliva* shells and an eye inlay were found. In a similar fashion as Rouse did for the site of Potrero de El Mango, Crock (2000:124) also stresses that: "it remains a fact that after years of surface collection across the island, no other site has produced similar objects."

In this case it are actually not the site contexts that are the most interesting, but it is the way that *guaízas*, among other artefacts, have been used to construct an argument in which Anguilla features as a so-called "port of trade" of a hierarchical inter-island chiefdom network – a notion first proposed by Haviser (1991), but elaborated on by Crock (2000:328). This chiefdom would have been a "classical chiefdom" in the sense that Carneiro (1981:45) defined it as "an autonomous political unit comprising a number of villages under the permanent control of a paramount chief", with the chief in this case, residing in Anguilla. This is argued for mainly on the basis of the control of exchange activities, more pointedly because much evidence has been found for the processing of lithic material that would have been exported again as finished products (Crock 2000; Crock and Petersen 2004). It is overstating the available evidence when Anguilla is viewed as "port of trade" of an inter-insular chiefdom in the sense that Polanyi (1957) has defined the term. Interestingly, the *guaízas* also take a prominent place in this argument, since: "[they], argued to have adorned only the highest status individuals, have no known analogy among the small islands nearby, despite some 15-20 years of systematic archaeology on these islands and decades of amateur collecting prior to that" (Crock 2000:328; Crock and Petersen 2004:144). Needless to say the *guaíza* used as an indicator of socio-political complexity is an interesting notion that will be returned to later.

### *6.7.3 Indian Creek, Antigua*

The site of Indian Creek, covering more than 8 hectares on the south-eastern side of Antigua is most famous for being the earliest Saladoid complex on Antigua, nevertheless the site also has later components (Map 2: 3). Archaeological investigation of this site has been underway for a very long time with the first excavations taking place in 1969, but it continued more rigorously later under the supervision of Irving Rouse (Rouse & Faber Morse 1999).

This site, which is located next to a now dry creek, is a habitation site ringed by a series of middens. It is from one of the trenches dug by Rouse that the shell face (ANT1) has been recovered in association with some ceramics that belong to the Mamora-Bay complex (AD 900-1100) of the site. Mamora-Bay is sometimes placed in the Terminal Saladoid, but Mamoran Troumassoid is the more familiar nomenclature (*ibid.*: 39). From this same period some other artefacts have been recovered such as griddles, a stone celt and conch celts and ornaments from the *Oliva* spp.. However, it is not the artefacts that are the most interesting in this case, but the zoological remains. Of these relatively large quantities including domesticated or managed species have been found and in this assemblage especially the guinea pigs number quite high. Domesticated guinea pigs in the Antilles are only reported from sites on the Greater Antilles, so it could be that this reflects ties between this area and Antigua (*ibid.*: 66).

The reason why this shell face is interesting is the fact that it is very early, but still located relatively very far to the south of the *guaíza* distribution area. Additionally the fact that it has been found in a site with such a long occupation history – from the first until the 11th century AD – is also noteworthy. Particularly because the depiction of human faces on *adornos* and clay masks also has such a long history here (*ibid.*: figure 11 and 17). Additionally there is the fact that the shell face from this site is not particularly Greater Antillean in style, having a very simple design, while still sharing all the pronunciations of the facial features of the *guaíza* and also an incision that I interpret as a rudimentary headband. From this one could make the inference that the idea of shell faces was already known, which could have eased the entry of – the idea of – a *guaíza* into this community. This could well have been the case for more Late Ceramic Age Lesser Antillean communities with links to a Saladoid past. An alternative that should be hesitantly taken into consideration is that *guaízas* are not of Greater Antillean descent at all, but have theirA origins in the Lesser Antilles, which has other early shell faces. Nevertheless, this theory will be unbalanced as long as there are not more datable contexts available for the Greater Antilles, in particular the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Finally, it could very well be that this shell face is a reflection of a local phenomenon that is unconnected to the phenomenon of the *guaíza* in general. The shell faces that are definitely *guaízas* found on this island (ANT2 and ANT3) are intriguing specimens, but unfortunately they are solitary finds, so little can be said of their affiliation with ANT1.

*6.7.4 Désirade: Morne Cybèle 1 and Morne Souffleur*

The islet of La Désirade is located in what is nowadays the Guadeloupe administration area, but it is very probable that in Pre-Columbian times there were close connections between La Désirade and its larger neighbour to the west (Map 2: 4). Information on the archaeological sites of this island has only recently become available with a small excavation at Morne Cybèle by Hofman and Hoogland (Hofman 1995; Hofman et al. 2007) and a micro-regional survey by De Waal (2006). Earlier finds were already picked up from the surface and it is in this manner that DES1 was found (Bodu 1985, as a reference in De Waal 2006:252). DES2 was recovered during an excavation by De Waal (2006: 310).

Hofman (1995) characterizes the Late Ceramic Age site of Morne Cybèle 1, which extends over 700 $m^2$ on the flat plateau of La Désirade, as a habitation site located at a strategic point that has a great view over the surrounding area.[67] This is in line with Late Ceramic Age settlement patterns of other sites in "non-optimum" settings, such as Kelbey's Ridge 2 on Saba, in which the focus might have been more on a strategic location than on the availability of resources in the direct vicinity. Some lithic artefacts were recovered from the site, as well as shell food remains. The ceramics are noteworthy since they seem to be of a largely different style than the Cayo complex that is most prevalent at this time and in this area, which has led Hofman and Hoogland (2004) to categorize it as a separate complex that has some relations with the Suazan Troumassoid subseries.

This same complex has been retraced to the site of Morne Souffleur, were the other *guaíza* has been found. Morne Souffleur is also very similar to Morne Cybèle 1 in other aspects than its ceramics (De Waal 2006: Table 5.1). It is a Late Ceramic Age habitation site and has a commanding view over the plateau, but it extends over a slightly larger area, namely 2800$m^2$. Lithics, shell food remains and coral were also found at the site. Some ceramic *adornos* were also found, of which one shows the same punctated decorations as DES2. I would consider this an argument in favour of local manufacture of DES2. DES1 is very different in form and iconography from DES2 and more clearly shows what one may call "Taíno-style" iconography – nevertheless this does not automatically make it exotic in nature. De Waal (2006:98) puts forward some theories on how the *guaízas* could have been deposited here: (1) loss, which according to her seems unlikely due to the special significance and

[67] A C14 date is available for this site with a calibrated date of AD 1440-1480 (Hofman 1995).

labour investments related to the artefacts; (2) a situation in which the artefacts were hidden for some reason, but subsequently never collected; (3) a ritual offering of a *guaíza*; (4) the loss of special significance of the shell face over time. For unexplained reasons she deems the last two reasons the most likely. I find the fourth option to be unlikely, since the antiquity of a social valuable in any normal situation would only add to its inalienability. For the rest of the alternatives it is not possible to establish whether one is more likely than the other.

In need of some highlighting here is a *guaíza* (MG1) with similarly punctated design as DES2 that is found at the site of Anse du Coq on Marie Galante, which is only some 37 kilometres away from Désirade. All things considered the occurrence of two *guaízas* on such a small island – and three in such a small region – in the same timeframe at two different habitation sites is a source for hesitant hypothesizing. Could it be that we have multiple communities competing through the acquisition of a *guaíza* here? Are these *guaízas* traces of a far wider exchange structure that features multiple islands? Why are *guaízas* unknown from Guadeloupe to date; but occurring on the smaller islands surrounding the island?

Similar to both Rouse (1942) and Crock & Petersen (2004) the *guaízas* of Morne Cybèle 1 and Morne Souffleur are also used as special markers in the archaeological record. De Waal (2006:98) argues for "special significance" of the sites, since they are located at such a special place, have a special set of ceramics *and* because of the presence of the *guaízas*. Additionally the dispersion of *guaízas*, along with other social valuables, in the Lesser Antilles is seen as emblematic for the exchange between the Greater Antilles and the mainland (Hofman et al. 2007). In a more extensive interpretation, the *guaízas* of the Lesser Antilles embody one of the markers of Taíno chiefly organization in the society and ideology of the Lesser Antilles (Hoogland and Hofman 1999: 108).

*6.7.5 Lavoutte, St. Lucia*

The most southern *guaíza* for which an archaeological context could be established is STL1 from the Lavoutte site on St. Lucia (Map 2: 5). The Lavoutte site is to be found at the north side of Anse Lavoutte and has been subjected to archaeological investigation by Bullen & Bullen in 1968 (Bullen & Bullen 1968). It is located next to a natural stream and is encapsulated by difficult terrain and high ground on all sides. Making a trip by canoe was the only easy access to this site.

This habitation site features some ceramics of which the majority belongs to the Suazan Troumassoid series and also some to the Troumassan Troumassoid subseries (Bullen & Bullen 1969). There are some interesting artefacts found at this site, such as a nearly complete ceramic figurine,[68] some more fragments of other figurines, shell celts, ceramic griddles, a stone amulet and a very interesting clay head. This head is very similar in all aspects to a *guaíza* with the exception that it is made of clay and has a hole at its base. Bullen & Bullen interpret it as a ceremonial loomweight, but it is more probable that it is actually a ceramic copy of a *guaíza* as Allaire (1990) has suggested. A possibility I will return to later.

Interesting about this specific broken and burned *guaíza*, which was picked up as a surface find before Bullen & Bullen had investigated the site, is the fact that it is located far away from its supposed Greater Antillean stylistic heartland in, what has been for a long time considered to be, Island-Carib territory (cf. Rouse 1948; Figueredo 1978). Nowadays it is known that the stylistic complex that is attributed to this site is too early to be connected to Island-Carib occupation. Additionally, this *guaíza* is positively Greater Antillean in style, together with a hooded adorno and a shard from an incised *cazuela*. This is a fact that is also noticed by Bullen and Bullen (1969) who comment that "they do not, of course, prove that Carib Indians living at Lavoutte raided Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands but they are the type of 'trade' objects which might be expected to have been brought back as one result of such raids." Notwithstanding the erroneous cultural interpretation that Bullen and Bullen had attributed to the site, it remains evident that this guaíza is an obvious argument for connections with the Greater Antilles, whether it is the result of direct relations or down-the-line exchange cannot be answered with the available data.

### *6.7.6 Tendencies in guaíza site contexts*

Admittedly there is some unevenness in this overview of archaeological contexts of the *guaíza*: only twelve of the 54 *guaízas* can be placed in the context and only five are from sites in the Greater Antilles, leaving the area

[68] Interestingly this figurine, and another head appliqué, sport two deeply incised lines running from the eyes down the cheeks. Bullen & Bullen interpreted these as representing paint or tattoos (Bullen & Bullen 1969: 70, but could it also be that this is a southern variant of the tear-motif so prevalent on Cuba? This would be an interesting alternative that would further blur the line between Lesser and Greater Antillean iconography.

with the highest quantity of *guaízas* the most underrepresented. Still, it is better to use the contexts we have to try and edge out some general context patterns than to rely only on non-archaeological sources.

First of all the *guaízas* have all been found in the context of a habitation site, either as a surface find or *in situ*. In Cuba this site was located in an area that was very suited to horticultural production, while in the Lesser Antilles they have been found on sites that were often strategically placed. It is important to stress this, since it shows that in order for an artefact to be a social valuable in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean it is not necessary that its final deposition is in a ritualized context, such as a cache or burial.

Additionally, the dates of the contexts are also quite interesting. There are some very early and precise dates in the Lesser Antilles in Antigua (AD 900-1100) and Anguilla (AD 1070 +/- 90; Crock 2000), but also some very late dates for the sites on La Désirade. This shows that the *guaíza* is not a late arrival in the Lesser Antilles, while it still is Greater Antillean in stylistic origin. When speaking of style it is important to highlight that the *guaízas* have almost always been found among ceramics and other artefacts that are local in style, but that the *guaíza* looks out of the ordinary, i.e. exotic. Still, the *guaíza* is not the only artefact that is exotic in appearance; there are other elements in the assemblage that also betray exchange of, for instance, raw materials – greenstone in Anguilla – or other exotic artefacts – the hooded adorno in Lavoutte – or, more generally, transmission of ideas – Boca Chica elements in Potrero de El Mango, Suazan Troumassoid in Morne Souffleur and Morne Cybèle 1, and domestication of guinea pigs on Antigua. This would suggest that it is not by accident that we find an exotic artefact in these sites, but that the acquisition of exotic materials or style – from over quite a long distance – must have been a habitual practice. These exchange practices, which have already extensively been under investigation from other angles (Boomert 1987, Knippenberg 2007, Rodríguez Ramos 2007), but not yet from this angle. This would explain why there is relatively little "drift" in *guaíza* form and iconography over such an extended region.

The other artefacts in the assemblages of the sites are also quite telling. Most of the sites have a rounded out assemblage of subsistence remains and ceramic, lithic and shell artefacts. An argument that draws on a link between subsistence patterns and *guaízas* must be very provisional in nature, seeing as it is impossible to establish archaeologically. At any rate the relatively easy access to food resources seems to suggest that the inhabitants of the sites were not so busy providing for basic necessities that they did not have the time to build up

an extensive social network. Additionally in some cases, such as in the case of Anguilla, with its rich marine resources, or Potrero de El Mango, with its rich soil, this easy access to resources may have been one of the incentives for which the exchange of social valuables began in the first place.

The most important result from this overview is that *guaízas* are all found at sites that are deemed special in some way or another. In the case of Potrero de El Mango and the sites on Anguilla this special character is related directly back to an elevated socio-political status in site or island hierarchies. In other cases this is phrased in somewhat more careful terminology, such as "ceremonial centre" –Lavoutte –, or "special character" as with Morne Souffleur and Morne Cybèle 1.

If one is not careful the view of *guaízas* as markers of special significance sometimes takes an ostensible character. In archaeological literature the extraordinary character of the *guaíza* adds to the extraordinary character of the site or even whole island. Also, extraordinary site contexts contribute an extraordinary character to the *guaízas*. However constructed in this way these arguments run into a problem that is very common for special archaeological finds: the arguments are cyclical in their interpretation. Archaeologists find sites with *guaízas* in their assemblage and interpret these as special, *because* there is a *guaíza* in the assemblage. Conversely a *guaíza* is found in a site that is special, *because* a *guaíza* is found in it, making the *guaíza* a special artefact.

Yet, there is a way around this cyclical argument, saving us from framing the context of the *guaíza* in an only epistemological, post-modern framework. It is here that the reason for and the true strength of a multidisciplinary approach is manifest. We know from ethnohistoric sources that a *guaíza* is probably a very important artefact, both for social and political spheres. In addition, the individual iconography of the *guaízas* that still retains a general trait across the entire Antilles shows that there is some manner of connectedness that joins the individual artefacts together in a single conceptual scheme. Finally the archaeological evidence continues and ameliorates our understanding of the *guaíza*. The importance and connectedness of the *guaízas* is echoed in the archaeological contexts discussed above. Additionally a vital understanding that can only be gotten from the archaeological record is that it is clear that the *guaíza* is an artefact that is centred on human communal life – as part of a habitation site –and not sacrificially exchanged away to superhuman agents in caches or to the ancestors in burials.

## 6.8 The *guaíza* in its socio-cultural context

Although all archaeologists know that any version of the past they give will always be an interpretation (cf. Hodder 1986), the interpretation presented here is one that at least is underpinned by a complete study of all available sources. With this in mind it is due time to place the *guaíza* in its socio-cultural context, or, in other words, how was a *guaíza* perceived by the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean in the Late Ceramic Age? In a similar fashion as Petitjean-Roget (1997: 102) has argued for the semiotic study of ceramic iconography it is possible to study the *guaíza* as a complete artefact, but also by its separate elements. This helps to answer the related questions of why a *guaíza* is depicted in its characteristic manner and what these depictions symbolize.

*6.8.1 Semiotic function of the* guaíza *face elements*

The most pronounced parts of the *guaíza* face are the eyes and the mouth. These two must have been very important facial elements during shamanic practices. For instance, in many Amerindian languages of Guyana the word for "face" consists of the morphemes "place" and "eyes", so that the face is a contraction that means "place of the eyes" (Carlin, personal communication 2005). Furthermore, the Piaroa of Venezuela believe in a "master of thoughts" that lives in the eyes, who makes it possible for shamans to view the superhuman world (Overing 1990). Even now in Trinidad a shaman is known as a "look-man" (Boomert, personal communication 2005). Similar ideas could also have been present among the Taíno, who of course in their use of snuff, during the very socio-politically important *cohoba* ceremonies, must have been intimately familiar with the reinforcement of visual stimuli that often occurs when taking this drugs. The goggles reinforce the importance of the eyes. Additionally, the eyes are often similarly portrayed on other faces that are connected with shamanic paraphernalia.

Arrom (1975) explains the prominence of the mouth full of gritted teeth as a sign of aggression. However, some alternative explanations for this characteristic trait do present themselves. Firstly, It could be that this is also to be seen in the light of shamanistic activities. Perhaps, it is so important since this is the body orifice that was used for vomiting in order to purge oneself previous to inhaling the snuff drugs. A more likely alternative explanation is that the teeth are clenched together because of a spasm of the face, caused by hallucinogens. Another possibility is that the open mouth with the shining teeth is meant to give the *guaíza* a skull-like appearance.

It is often when people see a *guaíza* for the first time it indeed reminds them of a skull and it is this emphasis on skeletal-like aspects that can be found back in many artefacts of especially Taíno origin (Arrom 1975; Roe 1998). Especially the *guaízas* with the nose of the bat (HIS1, HIS3, HIS and MG1) are interesting in this regard since the bat is often connected to death (García Arévalo 1998). This seems like an antithesis when the *guaíza* is also seen as "the face of the living", but one must consider that the strict dichotomy between life and death is a very Western view of seeing things: in our perspective a lifeless body is also a soulless body. Among the Taíno the division of life and death is not so clearly defined. This perceptual dualism is very important in the Taíno cosmos. Bones and skeletal features play a very important part in this: *behiques* starved themselves to ease the transgression between worlds (Garcia Arévalo 1997, 2001), bodies were kept in a state of decomposition for a long time or were reburied later (Hoogland and Hofman 1999), skulls were part of cotton *zemis* (Siegel 1997) and according to a narrative collected by Pané (1999 [1571]) all life in the sea was spawned by a gourd made fertile by bones.

The skull-like iconography of the *guaíza* can best be explained from this paradoxical dualism and not by connecting this artefact directly to death, since the archaeological context points to a central position of the *guaíza* in communal life. What a *guaíza* could represent however is that the "face of the living" is already there, but normally present under a layer of flesh.[69] It is not until the liminal phase of decomposition sets in that the "real face of the living" is laid bare. What the iconography of some of the *guaízas* depicts is exactly this process of decomposition. The essence of the *guaíza* is thus liminal and dualistic in nature.[70] Additionally it is not only the iconography, but also the material of the *guaíza* is made of, such as the shell, which could have been very reminiscent of bone. This argument is strengthened by the fact that *guanín* – which is a liminal material itself (Oliver 2000) – inlays would have been present at exactly the liminal places of the face, namely the mouth and eyes.

### *6.8.2* Guaíza *symbolism*

When one looks at the decorative elements of *guaízas* it is possible to begin to understand what type of artefact the *guaíza* is, but what this "face of the living"

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[69] N.B. the fact that the *guaíza*s are not either very masculine of feminine looking, might mean that gender is not important for this depiction of the "face of the living".

[70] A clear example of this can be found in the *zemi* from the Pigorini Museum. This *zemi* has a human face on the front side, but at the backside we find a face with features that are very reminiscent of the guaízas (Figure 7a and b).

actually represents is still open. There are multiple answers that can be given. First of all the great variety of *guaízas* suggests that we have to do with a very personal artefact. This would make it likely that the *guaíza* is a depiction of the "face" of the person who owns the *guaíza*. This would present an interesting problem for an exchange situation, since this would make the artefact less likely to be alienated or be subject to desire. Wearing a *guaíza* depicting the "face" of another person would be comparable to displaying a portrait of someone in your house who is not living there.

On the other hand, one could also interpret *guaízas* as depicting a repeated and specific set of superhuman entities – a Taíno "pantheon" –, as they have been interpreted in the past. *Guaízas* have already been discussed that depicted the tear-motif of *Boinayel*, but there are others (Arrom 1975). HIS1, for instance, is thought to represent *Maquetaurie Guayaba*, the lord of the land of the dead (García Arévalo 1998). Also, it is commonly held that ANT2 is a depiction of *Opiyelguabirán*, a dog-like spirit who guides the deceased to the land of the dead (Arrom 1975). Also the benign supreme being of the Taíno, *Yócahu Bagua Maórocoti*, which supplied the Taíno with the first manioc, fish and birds is supposed to be personified by some *guaízas* (MON1: Olsen 1980; HIS 4: Regional Museum of Archaeology Altos de Chavón 1992).

Personally, I am very sceptical of these kinds of interpretations. Practically the only source on the belief system of the Late Ceramic Age comes from Ramon Pané's account. It would be unwise to assume that this tells us everything we need to know. Moreover, it is too often that the belief systems of cultures are modelled on a scheme of a clearly defined and small pantheon from European Classical Antiquity that was not even present in Classical Antiquity itself. Nevertheless there is some truth in these interpretations. It is likely that *guaízas* do not represent a certain superhuman being, but that these same concepts contained within that superhuman being are contained in the *guaíza*. For example it might well be that the dog-faced ANT2 reflects similar qualities in the wearer of the *guaíza* as a trickster like *Opiyelguabirán* was ascribed, such as a strong will or a certain knack for escaping dangerous situations (see Pané 1999 [1571]: 28). Another example may be that wearing a tear-eyed *guaíza* was a sign for the community that the wearer had some special power that allowed him to interact with forces that control the rain. This would throw the occurrence of *guaízas* connected to rain in a community relying on horticulture such as Potrero de El Mango in a new light, since interaction with the rain forces would have been of vital important for such a sedentary community.

To me, the above mentioned interaction with superhuman forces is the key to the meaning of the *guaíza*. In this way both answers – as depiction of the own "face" and as a depiction of a superhuman being – to what a *guaíza* means can be equally true, even more so when coupled with the pronounced dualistic and liminal character of the *guaíza*.[71] Remember that *caciques* were, according to some scholars, seen as "semi-divine" – a better word might be "semi-superhuman" – persons (Keegan et al. 1998; Oliver 1997; Siegel 1998). In this way the *guaíza* could have been the depiction of the superhuman "face" of the *cacique*. To push this argument even further it might be that this superhuman world that the "face" of the *cacique* reminded of was the world of the Taíno superhuman ancestors, which would further explain the *guaízas* skeletal features. This would lead to an argument in which the *guaíza* as "conceptual heirloom" – the face reminding of the concept of an ancestor that is more or less idealized – takes a very important place in this interpretation. In this way the *guaíza* symbolized to every one who looked upon its wearer that he or she had the ability to interact with these ancestral and superhuman forces, which must have been a very important socio-political signal. If one allows even further speculation the *guaíza* could not only have been symbolic for the intermediation between the wearer and the superhuman world, but also have been actually used to intermediate with or help to intermediate with this superhuman world.

Interaction and mediation as key symbolisms for the *guaíza* typify it as an ornament that would have signalled its wearer to be a highly adept social actor. In accordance with this the *guaíza* should be first and foremost seen as a *social tool* that could have been worn on a day to day basis or reserved for special occasions, but not by everyone. *Guaízas* were maybe not rare, but certainly exclusive artefacts, since not everybody would have been able to craft or commission one. In social life the symbolism of the *guaíza* would have reaffirmed the status of its wearer. This leads the *guaíza* to be automatically connected to political power, which is backed up by the historical sources and is in line with some archaeological and anthropological discussions of political hierarchy that think about ornaments as *aide-memoires* of who holds power (Clarke & Edmonds 1994; Curet 1996; Earle 1981, 1997). This politicization of

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[71] In an alternative, non-Western frame of mind one might even go as far to postulate that *guaíza*s – and indeed a whole range of Caribbean artifacts – are not only depictions of the "face of the living" and superhuman beings, but that they actually *are* the face of the living and superhuman beings.

the *guaíza* would also have lead to a hierarchy of *guaízas* where one is more powerful than the other, as has been similarly argued for *duhos* (Ostapkowicz 1998).

## 6.9 Addendum: the exchange of *guaízas* as a political tool

As suggested above this sort of research could be fitted quite easily into existing ideas and models of socio-political evolution in general and that of the Caribbean, but I decided not to overtly frame it in these terms on purpose. The notion of social valuables as prestige goods is a too limited view of what they set out to do. If anything *guaízas* point out that the Late Ceramic Age exchange system was not in the hands of a few aggrandizing individuals anymore than the kula exchange system is. A *guaíza* could not be acquired, held, and exchanged without the individual having the full support of his or her community. In addition to this *guaízas* are individually so different that it would not be right to equate the presence of a *guaíza* directly to a chiefdom level society and it should not be used in arguments of this kind. The *guaíza* can also not be seen as belonging to a leadership model in which the acquirement, keeping and exchanging of a *guaíza* belongs to either an ascribed or achieved leadership model of political power. One could hypothesize that a leadership in which political power is achieved would be most fitting for the prestigious exchange of such a social valuable. On the other hand it would be as important for an elite lineage to which leadership is ascribed to acquire, keep and exchange *guaízas*, as to an individual relying on acquired power, since this would have been an invaluable social valuable to guard the preservation of a lineage.

As a result, a *guaíza* itself cannot be a strong marker to hypothesize socio-political complexity on the chiefdom level at a given site or archaeological region. This has to be established by the overarching social context and numerous other small factors, of which the *guaíza* is just one. Nevertheless, the *guaíza* is not of small use as a tool to model leadership types and leadership strategies. The key to the political situation of the *guaíza* is to see it in the context of corporate and network strategies of power. The leadership model that at the time of its creation was geared especially to middle-range societies of Middle America has already been applied as an alternative model of leadership development in other regions among which the Caribbean (Blanton et al. 1996; Mills 2000; Siegel 2004). Corporate strategies to acquire power focus on the local community and individual prestige is deemphasized.

Communal energy investment focus on intra-communal affairs, such as immobile material culture, and lineage organization is the most important source of labour. Knowledge is an important source of power and membership of corporate organizations is the best way to acquire status. Network strategies derive power from individual networks of leaders. Social valuables should be portable and displayable in order to build alliances when dealing with those not belonging to the community. Authority and control over labour resources is explained through rituals centred on common ancestors of a smaller descent group and is therefore more exclusive than the corporate strategy.

Blanton and his colleagues (1996: 2-3) emphasize that the different strategies are not mutually exclusive, but they acknowledge that certain middle-range societies will adhere to one strategy more than to the other. It should be obvious from the description that the *guaíza* and the theoretical framework of the exchange of social valuables as costly signals fit snugly in a leadership model that focuses on network strategies. This does not mean that *guaízas* cannot be used in a corporate model, but with its focus on the extra-communal, its use as an eye-catching ornament and its possible connection with elite network exchange it is more likely to be used as a network stratagem. Places in which a lot of *guaízas* and other mobile social valuables are to be found can be seen as giving priority to network strategies, but this does not mean that places in which a *guaíza*, or a similar object, is not found are not on a chiefdom level of socio-political complexity. It could be that these communities focus more on intra-communal, corporate strategies to regulate power. In itself this leads to an interesting argument, which is slightly different from standard theories on the political situation of the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean.

Although more research from the framework of corporate/network models of power is needed there are some preliminary conclusions that can be drawn for the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean. The "Classic Taíno" and "Sub-taíno" area, i.e. eastern Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands seems like a region in which network strategies were prevalent. Much more research needs to be done on the, "Igneri" and "Island-Carib" regions – i.e. the whole of the Lesser Antilles –, but it could be postulated that corporate network strategies were prioritized here.

This would explain why fewer crafted, mobile social valuables are found in these interaction spheres. Additionally this means that the network strategies that were utilized in this region must have had a special importance indeed, so the outside links pointed out by the *guaízas* in this region are

certainly not to be undervalued. For instance, in combination with the network model, the guaíza lends itself for the model of exchange and leadership that has been proposed by Allaire (1990) in which long-distance exchange takes place between the Greater and Lesser Antilles for esoteric purposes and on an esoteric level between ritual initiates. This ritual initiates would not necessarily have to be *behiques*, but they could also be individuals, whose function was not solely that of a ritual specialists, with enough knowledge to control the exchanged social valuables.

## 6.10 The *guaíza* as ideal social valuable

Yet, there is another side to the social symbolism of a *guaíza* as I shall attempt to explain. The question remains how a *guaíza* can be qualified as an ideal social valuable, with alienable and inalienable characteristics? It has been established that the *guaíza* was a liminal *aide-memoire* of a specific individual's personhood and social capability that could additionally have been used as mediatory device, but what sort of signal would have been sent when *guaízas* were presented in exchange? To speak in Spence's (1973) terms: is the gift of a *guaíza* a costly signal or an index? If it is a costly signal, then for what sort of situation would it have been suitable to be presented as gift? In order to say anything definite on this subject the reasons for keeping, giving and acquiring have to be framed in terms of inalienable and alienable elements of this specific artefact class.

*6.10.1 Inalienable?*

The *guaízas* inalienable features are the least difficult to establish, since they are explicit messages already contained in the concept of *guaíza*. The *guaíza* is probably the "face of the living person" who carries the artefact. Identity or personhood is the central notion of the *guaíza*. It is thus important as a depiction of an individual's identity, but at the same time the identity of the person is also influenced by the *guaíza*. The ability to hold on to a certain identity and the status coming with this identity is one of the reasons why a *guaíza* would rather be kept than given. Even looking over the lifespan of an individual, this notion can be extended to inalienability on communal level. First of all it has to be acknowledged that individual ownership is a very Western notion, so from a viewpoint of the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age it would be more probable that a *guaíza* would have been communally kept than

individually owned. The fact that all *guaízas* have been found near habitation sites and not in caches or burial sites is an argument in favour of this. Moreover, having an ornament that clearly signals a strong and recognizable identity of one of the members of the community is beneficial for the community, especially when this person is also the one who is responsible for extra-communal contacts.

Extra-communal contacts in this sense do not only entail other human communities, but could also represent contact with superhuman extra-communal forces. This is another quality that would have led the *guaíza* to be rather held inalienable. This was already postulated for some Late Ceramic Age social valuables that were used as media for communicating with, and thereby exerting some amount of control over, otherwise intangible actors of the social universe. It has also been recognized that to give away such an artefact signifies giving away this control over these superhuman beings. The skeletal features of many of the *guaízas* can be linked to the power to mediate with ancestors and the superhuman realm they inhabit. The allusion to this quality of a social valuable is quite universal indeed (Helms 1998). Consequently, to give away a *guaíza* that can be linked to a superhuman entity and the qualities it possesses would be to offer these qualities in exchange.

Next to allusions to qualities that can really only be postulated but not proven from a Western frame of mind, there is also the aspect of raw political power that comes with this artefact, since it supposedly was only worn by elites. Even so, the political system of the Late Ceramic Age is in need of some critical revaluation, since it builds on too many prepositions tested by ethnohistoric sources only, so I am hesitant to claim that the *guaíza* was indeed part of the regalia of a *cacique*. Still, its symbolism and the nature of the sites at which *guaízas* are found suggest that we are not dealing with an artefact that is just one of the many. If the *guaíza* was indeed an elite artefact it would be considered to be even more inalienable, since it would also have been part of an elite system of exchange that has been discussed in the previous chapter. Generally an elite system of exchange is something that is very commonly used in elite society to keep power inalienable (cf. Shore & Nugent 2002: Part 3). A *guaíza* would not only have functioned as a mediatory device for social purposes, but also as a mediatory device for entering into this circle of elites, as a "badge" stating that you belong to the "club." Relinquishing control of a *guaíza* through exchange would also meant losing one way of signalling that the wearer and his community were elite. This is comparable to the kula, in which successfully participating also entails political status.

The cost of acquiring a *guaíza* meant that it would probably was not likely to be alienated. First of all there is the cost of crafting the *guaíza*, which must have been quite high – especially when one takes into account that the *guaíza* must have been part of a configuration with other costly materials, like beads, specifically coloured feathers, cotton and also gold ornaments and inlays (cf. Helms 1993). The fact that it is likely that some of this material had to be acquired through exchanges makes it an even costlier artefact. If *guanín* was indeed part of this configuration the costs must have been enormous and would give extra status to the *guaíza* since it alluded also to the powers to harness the exotic (cf. Helms 1988). Last, but not least it has to be considered that every *guaíza* is unique in form, but also in the narrative that is an integral part of the artefact. As a result, when a specific *guaíza* was lost in exchange it was irreplaceable. This must have meant that, like losing a certain *soulava* or *mwali* in the kula, losing a *guaíza* in exchange must always have meant a loss to individual and communal identity, even if the reciprocated social valuable was more valued than the *guaíza* given away in exchange.

*6.10.2 Alienable?*

It is safe to conclude that a *guaíza* must have been costly and highly inalienable, but why offer it in exchange if it constitutes such an inalienable part of individual and community identity? In other words: what are some of the qualities of a *guaíza* that led it to be alienated?

First of all it is known from ethnohistoric sources that the *guaíza* was actually quite frequently alienated. The Colón Shipping List describes 45 *guaízas* and 6 belts – of which one contains 2 *guaízas* – making it next to hammocks and skirts the most frequently listed object. Moreover, it is remarkable that on the later shipping list one of the few objects that are named are 3 *guaízas* (Mira Caballos 2000: 99-100). This shows that the giving of *guaízas* continued for a very long time and that this item remained known under its indigenous name by the Spaniards (Appendix B). Overall, *guaízas* must have been relatively abundant in the Late Ceramic Age. A description, taken from the diary of Colón, of "*muchas cabezas en manera de caratona muy bien labradas*" – found together with many statuettes in a hut near to the coast on Cuba – hints at this (Navarete 1922: 50).

From the diary of the first voyage of Colón there is one quite detailed description by Colón in the words of Las Casas of Colón receiving a *guaíza* on the 26th of December, the day after the Santa María was shipwrecked (Navarete 1922: 129):

> "*Trajeron al Almirante una gran carátula que tenía grandes pedazos de oro en las orejas y en los ojos y en otras partes, la cual le dio con otras joyas de oro que el mismo rey había puesto al Almirante en la cabeza y al pescuezo; y a otros cristianos que con él estaban dio también muchas. El Almirante recibió mucho placer y consolación de estas cosas que veía, y se le templó la angustia y pena que había recibido y tenía de la pérdida de la nao, y conoció que Nuestro Señor había hecho encallar allí la nao porque hiciese allí asiento.*"

Colón was given this specific *guaíza* by the *cacique* Guacanagarí, with whom Colón developed an alliance that was to be unequalled by any of the other alliances between the Taíno and Spaniards (Wilson 1990: 71). It is suspected that Guacanagarí was a *cacique* that was of medium rank. He was under the control of the paramount *cacique* Caonabo, who was captured later with the use of the "turey of Biscay". It is not unlikely that Guacanagarí was carving out a future for himself when he solicited the help of Colón through his gifts, of which the *guaíza* was one of the most significant (*ibid.*: 75). On the second voyage Guacanagarí sent Colón two other *guaízas* as gifts showing his dedication to their social bond (Navarete 1922: 229).

The diary of the first voyage of Colón holds another critical reference from which can be deducted why a *guaíza* was given, for which the context is as important as the exchange described. The exchange takes place on the 14th of January. This is after Colón has founded the first Spanish settlement in the Americas, la Navidad. He leaves a group of men there together with trade goods and he embarks on the *Niña*. On the 13th of January when he is anchored in a bay somewhere on the Samaná peninsula, they meet a group of people who appear different from the Taíno and who spoke a different language or dialect than the people they had so far interacted with on Hispaniola. It is postulated that these were the Macorix people (Wilson 1990). Colón takes the same approach as he had done before by entering into exchange with these people, who were carrying bows and had faces blackened by ash, exchanging trade goods for the bows they were carrying.[72] According to Colón they had exchanged only two bows when the Spaniards were suddenly attacked and under pursuit by these people. The Spaniard drove their attackers

[72] It could be reasoned that this group of bow carrying men with their faces covered with ash were actually on their way to another village with hostile intentions (Oliver, personal communication 2007).

off and remained on guard the complete night, because they feared that these people were Caribs who wanted to eat them. At dawn the situation was totally different. A lot of people had gathered on the beach and made gestures that they were peaceful in nature. Colón allowed their leader to visit him on his ship:

> "*Este rey, con tres de los suyos, entraron en la barca y vinieron a la carabela. Mandóles el Almirante dar de comer bizcocho y miel y diole un bonete colorado y cuentas y un pedazo de paño colorado, y a otros también pedazos de paño, el cual dijo que traería mañana una carátula de oro, afirmando que allí había mucho, y en Carib y Matinino. Después los envió a tierra bien contentos.*"

*6.10.3* Guaízas *as tools of control*

This above excerpts seems like a schoolbook example of the peace-bringing gift, so it is possible that *guaízas* were employed strictly in this manner. Still, this event could also be interpreted in another, more antagonistic and more intricate, argument.

As was established in parts I and II by exchanging an object one is not only exchanging the object, but also something else that connects the two exchange partners. To exchange with someone is to bind him or her. This could be especially true for the *guaíza* that is filled with the identity of the individual and community that owns the *guaíza*. In this manner the *guaíza* will be sacrificed by the donor as a costly signal in order to alienate something much more important from the receiver. In this case exchanging the *guaíza* is *gaining control in order to pacify*, rather than *pleasing in order to pacify*.[73] Exchange of *guaízas* and other objects as sacrificing control over an object and its powers to gain control over a human agent is an alternative, viable view of Late Ceramic Age exchanges.

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[73] I acknowledge that the distinction between "control and pacify" and "please and pacify" is rather blurred, since the effects are often similar. Indeed, on the contrary to what has been suggested in other publications on gift giving (Vandevelde 2000), I would argue that a gift never really belongs to either a strategic/agonistic or an altruistic/expressive category. The *pointe* of seeing the gift as costly signal is that by sacrificing something to give others what they want, one can see to one's own need in an indirect, but more effective manner. A strategy that follows this will as a rule always tactically combine stratagems of appeasement *and* provocation.

If a *guaíza* was filled with inalienable qualities of communal and individual personhood, and if this was how the exchange of a *guaíza* was utilized as a costly signal, why was the *guaíza* so sought after as a social valuable? As said before wearing a *guaíza* that was filled with someone else's personhood is a bit like hanging the portrait of an unfamiliar person in one's own living room. Thus, more bluntly put, why was it acquired through exchange at all? Next to the fact that it was an ideal social valuable to posses and a costly signal to enter into a *guaíza*-exchange, there is something else to the exchange and ownership of a *guaíza*. A *guaíza* is a marker of the identity of another individual or community that would still be part of the *guaíza* after it had been alienated from the individual and his community, seeing as that it would have been part of the narrative that would still be an important part of the object. Still, this does not mean that the *guaíza* could have taken on only one identity. I would postulate that a *guaíza* would be filled with identity anew each time it would have been acquired by a different individual and his or her community, while still containing all its past identities. A *guaíza* would have been a costly signal, because it had such a narrative contained in the object, while at the same time it would have been a costly signal to show that one's own identity was able to control all the previous identities.

A crude modern analysis might be a high-score table of a computer game: it is nice when you are ranked number one, but even better if the numbers two to ten have been fearsome opponents. An heirloom is a similar sort of device. It contains the histories of all the individuals that have kept it before you, but at the same time it is part of your own identity. A more applicable analogy is that of the Waiwai exchange of Western goods to the "unseen tribes." The Waiwai are able to control the dangerous objects of the Western community by infusing the objects with their own social identity through exchange in order to control, i.e. pacify, the "unseen tribes", thereby expanding their own social universe. Similarly, a *guaíza* was costly to exchange and control, but not too costly, since the signal sent by its acquirement and possession would have outweighed the costs. The ability to control extra-communal Others, a quality that is difficult to transmit when not entering into open conflict, was signalled by the exchange of a *guaíza*.

*6.10.4* Guaízas *as commoditized idea and inalienable* "sacra"

Still, it could well be that this was a signal that most individuals and communities could not afford to transmit. In this case it would have been less costly – but not necessarily cheap – to acquire a *guaíza* by manufacturing it

*Figure 19: A ceramic* guaíza*? Cast from the CISAT in Holguín, Cuba. Photo by Angus A. A. Mol*

oneself. The fact that it cannot be established archaeometrically whether a *guaíza* is exotic or indigenous to a certain archaeological setting is a major threat for this interpretation. Still, it has to be considered that just as there is a physical object to be exchanged, there is also the concept of a *guaíza* that has to be kept inalienable, be alienated and acquired before a community or individual could create them. This is not only technical knowledge of how to craft a *guaíza*, but also what the concept of a *guaíza* was and how this concept could be materialized in a face-depicting shell. I have already shown by the example of the gift of an *areyto* that "intellectual property" was a viable social valuable to enter into exchanges with. Also, it is known from Pané that the crafting of *zemi* objects was a job for the *behique*, it would not be unreasonable to think that crafting a *guaíza* was also a specialist job for which special knowledge had to be acquired from someone or someplace else.

Another argument for this can be found in *guaíza*-like objects of different materials. Allaire (1990) has argued that a clay face with a hole in its bottom side found on the Macabou site in Martinique is a *guaíza* and that this must have been a Lesser Antillean clay hybrid of such a Taíno artefact. A comparable item, that is a reused bottom of a ceramic vessel, has been found in Cuba (Figure 19). Additionally there is an example of a coral face found in Anse á la Gourde (Hofman & Hoogland 2004). Other cases in point are round shells that only have eyes of which the material at the place of the eyes is simply and crudely cut away. It could be hypothesized that these objects would have been seen as *guaízas*, but that these *guaízas* would have transmitted a much weaker signal when kept, entered into exchanges, or acquired.

When the idea of a *guaíza* is seen as the key to the distribution of the *guaíza*, it might be that there is a "sacra" variant of the *guaíza* also: a "mothercopy" to which likeness all other *guaízas* were made (Godelier 1999).

Arrom (1975) sees this mothercopy of the *guaízas* with tears on their cheeks in one particular rock from Cuba. Mela Pons-Alegría (1980) traces the *guaízas* back to masks that must have been used in Taíno ceremonies. It is impossible to prove or disprove these claims, still it is not very likely that it will be possible now or in the future to trace the mothercopy back to a specific artefact or artefact class, since so much of the original material culture is missing. For now, it seems equally likely that the mothercopy must have been a concept, something that existed only as specialist knowledge and in narratives.

*6.10.5 Synthesis*

Synthesizing, a *guaíza* was a powerful social tool for mediation with extra-communal forces. This was also how it was used in exchange: to control the social universe through the distribution of *guaízas*. So, although a *guaíza* would also have had a distinct use outside an exchange cycle and it was therefore tempting to hold onto a *guaíza*, the qualities that would have made a *guaíza* inalienable also constitute a costly signal with an efficient broadcasting range when exchanged. Additionally, when seen in a functional way the exchange of such a social valuable would be such a costly signal that it would have enabled a myriad of other exchanges and occasions of social bonding. In this way the *guaíza* was the ideal social valuable to keep the exchanges in the social universe flowing and preserve the balance.

# 7 | Conclusions

## 7.1 Questions answered and questions unanswered

The purpose of the argument that has been developed here has been twofold: (1) to develop a framework of exchange for Caribbean archaeology that is able to function as a platform for the discussion between multiple scientific paradigms and their related disciplines and (2) to conceptualize the use of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean in this framework. Nevertheless, it would be arrogant and foolish to suppose that I managed to completely fulfil both conditions.

Naturally, the framework developed here is not the final truth about the exchange of social valuables. The nature and mechanics of exchange have been discussed for as long as people have been exchanging and it will be a source of debate for as long as people will be giving, receiving and reciprocating. What has been developed here is not so much a solution to exchange as a deconstruction and alternative reconstruction of concepts of exchange. Instead of seeing the nature of reciprocal altruism as a field of tension between altruism and egoism – and inherently a social scientific and biological view of human sociality – this paradox has been taken as a given and a unifying theory has been proposed by viewing exchange as a costly signal mediated by the tension field between inalienability and alienability.

Conversely, questions concerning the use of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean are also grand in scale and it has not been the aim to solve all matters related to social valuables in a definite manner either. What has been strived for here is a re-examination of social valuables in order to explore opportunities for this type of research in the future. The case-study that has been presented here tried to answer the following questions that were contained to the specific artefact class of the Late Ceramic Age shell faces: how can we characterize these shell faces as social valuables; how do these specific social valuables act within social relationships; how do they constitute social universes, communities, and personhood; what do they say about socio-cultural identity; does the shell-face-as-social-valuable allow for an organic interpretation of the archaeological record?

Some of these questions have been successfully answered and will be discussed below. The answer to others, like the question of socio-cultural identity, remains rather vague. This does not mean that these questions cannot

be successfully answered by the study of social valuables, but that the study of a different artefact class or an alternative approach would yield better results. The conclusions presented below take the form of a synthesis and recapitulation of statements already implicitly or explicitly present in the foregoing chapters.

## 7.2 Revaluated Valuables

Exchange is as interwoven with sociality as the Maussian "total social obligation" to give, receive and give back is interwoven with an anthropological study of exchange. In essence all subjects discussed here could be viewed as an amendment to the *Essai sur le don* (Mauss 1950). Still, similar to in-between gifts that in a cycle of exchanges can be even more important than a starting gift, it would not do justice to the theoretical framework that has been developed here to take no notice of the other insights that are critical to a better understanding of gift giving in general and in the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age.

### *7.2.1 Lévi-Strauss' gift to exchange studies*

Lévi-Strauss' critique of Mauss his work and the work that he did on this subject himself is of high relevance since it reemphasizes that exchange is neither a pleasant social business, nor a secondary need, but an essential part of human life. In the same way as food procurement, which used to be a hazardous, but essential activity in a past forgotten by those who do their shopping in a supermarket, the exchange of social valuables was a perilous, but vital undertaking. The difference between exchanging in a capitalist and a non-capitalist social universe is the amount of exchanges that are undertaken in the former that allows us to spread the risk of giving, receiving and giving back over an infinitely greater amount of exchanges. It is only in rare circumstances or unfamiliar social environments – for instance on a birthday, or when on a first date – that people living in a capitalist society get tense and edgy when entering into an exchange. Yet, although it is often not realized nowadays, it has to be a primary insight for those who are interested in gift giving that there is always much more in the exchange itself than in the things exchanged (Lévi-Strauss 1970).

*7.2.2 Hobbesian views of exchange*

When exchange is viewed as equally important to other primary needs one is able to understand better where theories that connect exchange to a pre-societal state (Sahlins 1972), or even to a natural state (Corbey 2006a), are coming from. They paint a rather gloomy view on the human disposition to give as guided by instinctive, egoistic motives, but are able to partly explain some of the practices of the exchange of social valuables. Still, it does not do justice to a considerable portion of other motives, effects and variants of human giving. On the other hand a decidedly non-rational, altruist account of giving seems to perceive the human being as too innocently altruistic and naïvely trusting, which is a position that unfortunately cannot be defended for long. Following a framework of gene/culture co-evolution I have taken a stance on human gift giving that is not disinterested, i.e. not without returns, but still congruent with gift giving motives and not necessarily egoistic.

*7.2.3 Costly gifts*

I understand why people would be hesitant to take CST, which has been used in very calculated arguments, as the guiding principle of gift giving. Still, it is clear that the successful gift of a social valuable entails a costly sacrifice that is made willingly and often in a manipulated manner, whereby something desired is returned to the donor. This view on human sociality is neither pessimistic, nor optimistic, but frank. By exchanging social valuables following CST both donor and receiver can benefit. This is not to say that purely antagonistic costly signals, which are intended to do harm to the receiver, cannot be sent, nor does it mean that the exchange of a social valuable following CST always benefits the donor. CST revolves around how adept the signaller is in composing exactly the right cost and means of broadcasting to achieve his goal, which determines the successfulness of the exchange of the social valuable and also that of the individual. This is immensely difficult but vital for the acquirement and renewal of communal identity, which explains why those social agents who are successful at signalling through the exchange of social valuables rise to positions of responsibility.

*7.2.4 Inalienability/Alienability*

A process underlying exchange that is far from understood is the widespread need to keep in order to safeguard individual and communal identity, while at the same time there is a need to exchange in order to renew individual and communal identity. Whether formulated as the paradox of keeping-while-

giving, or keeping-for-giving and giving-for-keeping or the fourfold axiom of keeping-for-giving, giving-for-keeping, giving-for-acquiring and acquiring-for-giving, it is evident that keeping the harmony between fluid alienability and rigid inalienability is represented in the exchange of a social valuable (Godelier 1999; Weiner 1992). In order to achieve this, the exchange of a social valuable must include qualities that make it attractive to keep rather than to give and qualities that enable it to be given in order to acquire what is desired. If a mix of these qualities is not present in an object then it makes a poor social valuable and thus a poor costly signal when exchanged.

*7.2.5 Establishing cost*

The difficulty of establishing the cost of a signal is not only something that hinders an aspiring signaller, but also those who are interested in studying the signal itself. A study of costly signals sent in the past is an especially daunting task. Yet, as I tried to show, when it is possible to gather evidence that indicates that certain artefacts recovered by archaeologists can be interpreted as social valuables that were exchanged, it is possible to work with the materiality of these artefacts and interpret them as costly signals. It has to be granted that most of the content of these signals is culturally specific and will be lost in a situation where no cultural information is present, but it has to be stressed again that certain qualities seem to have a near universal value, like exoticness, craftsmanship and allusions to ancestors (Helms 1988, 1993, 1998).

*7.2.6 The relation between "sacra", commodities and social valuables*

Another quality of social valuables that can be perceived as a hindrance to their study is the fact that they change status very easily under different contexts. Highly inalienable objects, i.e. what Godelier (1999) terms "sacra", could have been perceived as common things at a certain time and in a certain context and vice versa. The same can be said for commodities, which are often not considered in studies of exchange systems. Therefore it is better to look at these categories in a more fluid manner and see objects and things as being inalienable or alienable to a degree that is congruent with certain moments and contexts. Out of this results the difficulty, however, that everything could potentially be a social valuable that was exceptionally suitable to be exchanged. As well as a cautionary tale, this is also a blessing in disguise, since it requires us to be open-minded. To counter this one needs to acquire a bird's eye view of as large a part of the exchange system as possible, which, paradoxically, is exceedingly difficult when fewer information is available. Still, the

conceptualization of what information is lacking can be nearly as telling as the information itself. In this manner this holistic stance on social valuables can also shed a dim light on the exchange of ideas, which will reverberate in material culture. Additionally, it is possible to draw conceptual lines between object categories that can otherwise not be connected. In the case-study of the shell faces this has been partly achieved by comparing iconography, coupled with the archaeological contexts. This is a method that is also accessible when no other sources, such as ethnography or ethnohistoric documents, are available. Furthermore this viewpoint is an eye-opener that shows that a category of exchange valuables never stands on its own and that objects of different categories and value are not so much *exchanged against* each other, but *linked through* exchanges with each other.

## 7.3 Kula as conceptual analogy

In the in-depth look I have taken at the kula ring of Melanesia the above theoretical framework shines through very clearly. The reason for adopting this ethnographic case-study was that, since Malinowski's did his first anthropological fieldwork on the Trobriand society from a view of kula exchange, the kula has an exemplary status as an exchange system in anthropological thought. It has therefore proven very fruitful to see whether kula exchange could be recapitulated in the theoretical framework outlined above.

### *7.3.1* Not *an ideal exchange system*

As a result of the popularity of Malinowski's study the kula valuables are ideally perceived as very neat exchanges in a circle of mighty men that is closed to all other genders, actors, exchanges and interests, since this is the tone set in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski 1922). Yet, a deeper analysis of this system showed that even the kula cannot hold up to its own idealized standards. The kula ring cannot function without a myriad of other exchanges, which, in turn, are often dependent for their functioning on kula exchange, and kula valuables cannot be acquired and held without access to other social valuables (Munn 1986; Weiner 1988). Also, kula is not the idealized system of elite exchange that it is perceived to be. Although it is the case that kula exchanges can indeed only be undertaken by men and that it is through kula that these men gain political importance, it is not true that these men are first

and foremost aggrandizing individuals. It is actually not even in kula that these men, who are for the major part dominated by the wants and needs of their matrilineage, have true independence, since their wife has a strong advisory role on when and with whom an exchange shall take place (Munn 1986). All things considered, the kula exchange system is so out of the ordinary that it would be a gross exaggeration to use it in any direct analogy that intends to be more than very superficial.

*7.3.2 Kula as cautionary tale for archaeologists*

Still, scholars of material culture, especially archaeologists, can learn much from a conceptualization of the kula system and its social universe. Most obvious is the lesson that what remains of an exchange system is only a minor part of the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Of the kula valuable itself, a relatively large part will be preserved under the right circumstances, since it consists largely of shell complemented with other materials that will also decay over a relatively long period, such as boar tusk. Yet, how probable is it that all the parts of the necklace or armband will remain in their configuration? For instance, particularly valued shells might be taken out and reused, while other parts may be discarded.

Other social valuables that are the driving force behind kula exchange will not or very rarely be retraceable. Canoes are arguably an essential part of kula exchange, not only because they serve as transportation, but also because they are metaphorically connected to kula exchange and they can at some instances be exchanged against one another (Munn 1986). Still, these vital parts of the kula exchange system would be relatively invisible in archaeological assemblages. More importantly the main motor behind the exchange system of the islands in the kula ring is food, in particular yams. Food remains and food production is something that, even though its presence is often recognized by archaeologists, is often not directly connectable to an exchange system, although it must take a central role in many exchange systems. Finally there are those things of an intangible nature, which can still be exchanged, but not retraced in material culture. Examples of these in the kula ring are magic spells that can be used for a large number of purposes – including influencing the chance of a successful exchange – and have a high social value indeed.

Another cautionary tale for archaeologists interested in exchange concerns objects and agency. In the wake of an extensive structure/agency debate it has also become fashionable to interpret objects as agents, especially when these objects are out of the ordinary (cf. Gosden 2005). These objects

are attributed with a social life force of their own that sees them as decision makers and as able to move on their own accord. What has to be recognized is that one should not confuse the metaphors that go along with the object exchanged as object agency, such as Mauss did with the Maori *hau* (Sahlins 1972). In the kula ring kula valuables have a name, a life history and are even talked about in metaphors of procreation (Weiner 1992). Nevertheless, kula valuables are *not* attributed with agency, i.e. a life of their own, but solely move around through human agency. With this I do not imply that there are no such things as worldviews that see objects as animate beings with agency, but it has to be understood that each case stands on its own and that object agency may or may not be a justifiable interpretation when sources are available to make a critical assessment of this possibility.

*7.3.3 Kula, CST and Melanesian anthropology*

Kula exchange is not only very valuable as a conceptual tool to deconstruct beliefs about exchange systems, but here it has primarily been used as an example, which allowed ethnographic details as the theoretical framework was constructed. There are a number of things to be said about the way I have done this. First of all I could be critiqued for painting a picture of kula exchange that could not be considered *emic* at all. I would have to agree that I am not an expert on Melanesian cultures and that I have never visited the region, let alone did fieldwork there. I relied on the data of others and refitted these within a framework of costly signalling through the exchange of social valuables. To be truthful the ease with which I was able to fit the data in the pattern astonished me.[74] I am convinced that when actual fieldwork is done on kula exchange from a viewpoint of CST – which could, but need not be biological anthropological in nature – costly signalling is a mechanism that lies beneath kula exchange. Additionally, it has to be said that the regional anthropological paradigm of Melanesia is exceptionally apt for refitting in a CST framework. This is because the major anthropologists doing fieldwork in the kula ring have never taken a decidedly cultural or biological point of view, but rather have a pragmatic and functional outlook on their subject data (e.g. Leach 1983; Malinowski 1922; Munn 1986; Weiner 1992).

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[74] This should not have come as a surprise to me, considering the very "CST-like" titles of some of the monographs on the region, like *Women of Value and Men of Renown* (Weiner 1982) and *The Fame of Gawa* (Munn 1986).

## 7.4 Caribbean Late Ceramic Age social valuables

After reviewing the information presented in chapter 5 the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age socio-economic system can only be characterized as that of a gift exchange economy. This outcome can hardly be said to be novel and original, but, additionally, some important particulars of exchange in the Caribbean have come to light.

*7.4.1 An initial characterization of social valuables in the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age*

A characterization of the use of social valuables in the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age has to be on provision, since much more research needs to be done and will be done on the subject. On the whole it can be said that social valuables were valued according to an advanced qualification system of which the intricacies will remain unknown. Still, it can be argued that social valuables take a central role in Late Ceramic Age social life, because they stand for the ability to mediate and partly control extra-communal, anti-social forces. In this aspect the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age is not unique – as evidenced by the example of the Waiwai exchange system that strives to control the anti-social forces of Westerners and the ferocity of the "unseen tribes". On the other hand it cannot be claimed that the desire to mediate and take control over extra-communal affairs is a universal trait of gift exchange. Exchange in the kula ring, for example, is much more geared towards harnessing intra-communal anti-sociality, i.e. egoism, by sharing through exchange (Munn 1986). Additionally, in western, modern types of gift exchange the purpose of pacifying extra-communal forces is not a major issue at all, since this pacification is already taken care of by the transformation through exchange of impersonal currency into personal possessions. Rather, gift exchange in our times is mostly undertaken to strengthen intra-communal relationships, although its internalization does not entail that CST does not come into play here (Cheal 1996, Komter 1996b).

In the Late Ceramic Age there probably were some types of social valuables, like perhaps shamanic paraphernalia, that were closely guarded from exchange. Yet, the focus on extra-communal aspects of Late Ceramic Age social valuables makes it apparent that a large part of the social valuables is related directly to exchange. In this way the exchange of social valuables fits network model strategies in a development of leadership in the Ceramic Age (Blanton et al. 1996; Curet 2004). Still, it has to be said that the Late Ceramic Age social valuables that have been described also have a distinct use out of

exchange situations and cannot be conceptualized as socially valuable without taking account of their symbolism in "daily" life. Actually it should be expected that their use outside of exchange mediates partly how, when, and why a social valuable is used in exchange, but more research on this particular topic needs to be done.

*7.4.2 Caribbean archaeology and the advantages of CST*

One of the important aims at the outset was to build an organic, theoretical model of exchange that can be of use to Caribbean archaeology. First of all, when compared from an epistemological perspective, it has to be said that the regional paradigm of Melanesian anthropology – for which CST works rather well – is comparable to the regional paradigm of Caribbean archaeology. Similar to Melanesian anthropologists, but even more so, Caribbean archaeologists are decidedly multi-cultural and have been influenced by various culturally related academic disciplines. This is an asset since it should enable the Caribbean archaeological research community to be opportunistic in their selection of theories and methods. Moreover, the study of the Late Ceramic Age of the Caribbean can draw on various sources of information, namely that gained from excavations and surveys, the iconographic study of objects in museums and private collections, ethnohistoric documents and ethnographic comparisons with the tropical lowlands of South America. Still, none of these sources on its own is sufficiently available to take on a dominant role – such as has been the case in other regional archaeologies –, but when combined they provide the Caribbean archaeologist with a powerful toolkit for the study of exchange in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean.

Overall, the set of theories and data Caribbean archaeologists have been working on are not decidedly cultural or biological anthropological, nevertheless they are unquestionably anthropological in nature. This is why CST is to my mind complementary with Caribbean archaeology. First of all it is inclusive and can be used to communicate with more culturally or biologically minded colleagues. Secondly, it taps into existing theories and is able to refine them – such as that of the development of political power, which cannot be seen from the perspective of aggrandizing big men solely. Related to this CST has the asset that it is also non-gender specific, while it still takes into account that there will be differences in the way specific genders signal their respective qualities. Furthermore the exchange of social valuables as a form of costly signalling does not idealize the Late Ceramic Age social universe as an overtly peaceful or overtly hostile environment. It recognizes the social and anti-social

actions that were part of the exchange of social valuables in a social universe that must have placed great emphasis on the individual's ability to interact with and have control over extra-communal forces (Oliver 1997). As an added benefit, relating ethnohistoric accounts of the exchange of social valuables to CST allows to adopt a viewpoint in which indigenous peoples can be viewed as active participants in the changing exchange systems of the early contact period instead of only as its passive victims.

### *7.4.3* Guaízas *as ideal social valuables*

The greatest attraction of the framework of the exchange of social valuables as a costly signal is that it has the uncanny ability to bridge time and space, thereby being a great platform for discussion. Just as John's engagement ring, the Waiwai use of Western trade goods, or the exchange of *soulava* and *mwali*, the *guaíza* fits the framework that has been developed in part I like a glove. Every amendment on the original idea of Mauss (1950) that has been discussed here can be neatly filled in by the characterization of *guaízas* as social valuables.

Ironically, it remains ever difficult to retrace the Maussian obligation to give, receive and reciprocate in the archaeological record and this is also true for the *guaíza* (Mauss 1950). Archaeologists unfortunately only find the result of the act of gifting, receiving and reciprocation, but not what exactly has been returned for what. Hence, the amending theories on *Essai sur le don* can be better operated by archaeologists than the *Essai sur le don* itself. For instance it can be inferred that, although it has a distinct function and role outside of exchange, there is even more in the exchange of a *guaíza* than in the symbolism of the object itself (Lévi-Strauss 1970). Furthermore, the exchange of a *guaíza* could indeed have been used to pacify Others, either by pleasing them or controlling them (Corbey 2006a; Sahlins 1972). Furthermore the *guaíza*'s direct connection to the "face of the living" of his wearer and its role and function at the centre of communal life gave it inalienable characteristics (Weiner 1992). On the other hand there are indications that it must have been an artefact that was often alienated, since according to ethnohistoric sources it was available in relatively large numbers and it is quite often named in exchanges. The broader concept of *guaíza* interpreted as "face of the living" makes it able to disconnect it from the shell faces alone and view it as something that could have had "sacred" significance as an idea, although probably not as an actual object (Godelier 1999). Furthermore the variation in the *guaízas* must have meant that they were alienable more or less to the degree that the exchange of a particular *guaíza* was a success for the continual renewal of individual and group identity

by the establishment of new relations and the validation of existing relations at specific moments and specific contexts.

It is impossible to give any details on the meaning and exchange of individual specimens, but it is evident that the shell faces in the catalogue must have been utilized as a costly signal at some part in their life trajectories. Their iconography, of which the semantics are now only constructible in a superficial manner, must have sent signals that were broadcasted and understood in all social universes that existed in the Late Ceramic Age, which is faintly echoed by their uniform style over a large distribution area. Their exchange, which can now only be experienced through the words of puzzled European discoverers and historians, must have been a clear costly signal of social power that lasted well into the early contact area. The acquirement and the holding onto of *guaízas* by communities and individuals can be glimpsed from the archaeological record, but how they constituted communal and individual identity exactly remains shrouded in hypotheses. The control of extra-communal forces has been deduced from the little socio-cultural context that can be distilled from scarce sources on Late Ceramic Age worldview and concepts of exchange of contemporaneous communities from the mainland of South America. Even so, the shell faces still signal clearly. It might be that they signal in a sign language that is not now and never will be fully understood, but they signal nonetheless. A *guaíza* signals its inherent qualities to mediate dangerous exchanges that would have crossed social and cultural boundaries. A *guaíza* signals promises of control of extra-communal forces and personal status. A *guaíza* signals that although its facial features are skeletal in nature it is indeed a "face of the living" in the way that it must have been one of the centres of communal life.

## 7.5 Opportunities for future research

Despite the promising results above, the theory of costly signalling through exchanges is so novel that this case-study is indeed its "maiden voyage." There are many weaknesses, opportunities and threats that need to be addressed before this theory will be able to have its full effect. First of all, a critical evaluation of this theory by various sources is needed to establish whether it is as integrative for different research paradigms as it sets out to be. Secondly, more archaeological contexts are needed to give a more fine-grained account of the methods of the distribution over multiple interaction spheres and to be

able to point to differences of use in various socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, this framework is in need of many more case-studies to prove its unifying nature as theoretical methodology. It would be logical if at least a number of these case-studies were to be targeted on the Late Ceramic Age social universe. The number of case-studies will increase our understanding of the mechanics and motives of social valuables exponentially, seeing that case-studies can be combined in one great framework of references. It would not even be directly necessary to write numerous articles or edited books on social valuables in order to improve this understanding. It will already be a great step forward if some form of interaction platform can be found that will enable scholars interested in Caribbean prehistory to supply, compare and discuss social valuables and their interpretation, distribution and site contexts in a structural manner.

Experimental research that tries to recreate the *chaîne opératoire* of the production of specific social valuables will be invaluable to understand more about costs and concepts involved with the acquirement through manufacture of social valuables. Most important of all, it will be critical to reinforce the soft underbelly of this framework, which is lacking in empiric, archaeometrical data. For instance, archaeometrical research on the provenance of specific social valuables would provide insights in whether concepts of objects are exchanged or the actual objects themselves. Last, but certainly not least it will be essential to enhance our understanding of Late Ceramic Age exchange when the part of the material culture that is lost to archaeological analyses – i.e. its largest part, perishable social valuables – can be complemented by the conceptualization of these sorts of objects and their exchange from the perspective of the most closely comparable indigenous communities, like those of the Guianas. When some or all of these research propositions will be employed, social valuables will broadcast their message in as clear a signal as possible.

## 7.6 Final remarks

Finally it has to be acknowledged once more that, just as parts of all the original owners and their social universes will form the constituents parts of the social valuable that has been handed over in exchange upon exchange, the constituent parts of this work are formed by multiple scientific paradigms and the work of their scholars. Similar to the ideal "*Guaíza*" and the ideal "Gift" it is impossible to get rid of their influences. Granted, from a modern point of

view it seems to be a breach of independence to be controlled for some part by lingering signals of objects, persons and ideas outside oneself and it would be judged as manipulative conduct to act on other persons in such a manner. Yet, in the end it is the ability to receive complicated signals, process them for as long a time as needed to give them a place in one's own identity, and then passing them on as an alienated inalienable object or idea that will truly make communities and individuals – like those in the Caribbean Late Ceramic Age, or those of the scholarly world, or that of any network of professionals, and perhaps even those relations of a more romantic nature – successful in their own social universes. In this way costly signals lead to durable relationships. The signal is clear: next time you find yourself giving, receiving or reciprocating in one of those dangerous exchange situations don't be too stingy. Remember, to give successfully, is to give costly!

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Lex Vaessen.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: The Colón Shipping List

*Relación del oro é joyas é otras cosas que el señor Almirante ha rescibido después que el receptor Sebastián de Olaño partió desta isla para Castilla desde 10 de marzo de 95 años*[75]

En el dicho día 10 de marzo, recibió tres carátulas con diez y nueve piezas de hoja de oro, é dos espejos, las lumbres de hoja de oro, é dos torteruelos de hoja de oro que trujo un hermano de Canoabo en el dicho día.

Más 11 de dicho mes una cara con diez hojas de oro que se hobo por resgates.

Más en dicho día quedaron en su cámara dos hamacas é dos naguas e once madejas de algodón que se hobo por resgates.

En 4 de abril quedaron en su cámara las cosas siguientes, que se hobieron por resgates que trujo la fusta: veinticinco naguas, quince hamacas, seis tiraderas, una macana, nueve hachuelas de indios, una bocina de palo, una ropa de plumas, seis esteras, catorce papagayos, tres arrobas veintiuna libra de algodón hilado.

En 6 de mayo quedaron en la dicha cámara a su camarero lo siguiente, que se hobo en el despojo de Canoabo: catorce guaycas labradas de algodón e piedra, las tres con siete hojuelas de oro, é una hamaca todo tejida é otras sesenta é seis hamacas viejas, é diez naguas é un cinto, é una ropa de plumas. Más se le carga, cinco onzas é tres ochavas é tres tomines de oro, que pesó la cadeneta que recibió ciento é cincuenta é dos piedras de colores que le llevó Juan Vizcaíno a la Concepción, que trujo la Fusta.

Más quedó en 9 de julio en poder del dicho su camarero: quatro guaycas, las dos con diez hojicas de oro é un cinto con una cara verde, que tiene dos hojicas de oro, é una hamaca, é tres pares de naguas que trajeron unos indios de Canoabo. Más le quedó en su poder – dicho su camarero una guayca con quatro hojas de oro en 6 de octubre.

Más le quedaron al dicho su camarero, nueve hamacas é ocho naguas, que so hobieron por resgates.

Más recibió siete onzas é una ochava de oro que recibió en la Concepción en 11 de agosto, para facer una funda de oro é un grano grueso de oro.

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[75] *Colección de Documentos Inéditos, Relativos al Descrubimiento. Conquista y Colonización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de América y Oceanía.* Vol. X: pp. 5 to 9 (taken from Alegría 1980).

Más recibió en 18 de diciembre dos marcos é tres onzas é siete ochavas é cinco tomines é nueve granos de oro, e un grana de oro fecho una rana, que podía pesar una onza é media, é un cinto con una cara con cuatro hojas de oro, que trujo un indio de Guacanari.

Más recibió dos marcos é seis onzas, é tres ochavas é seis granos de oro, que trajeron en la Concepción é en Santo Tomás ciertos caciques, del tributo.

Más recibió dos tomines de oro que trajeron unos peones, que fallaron en unos bohios.

Más recibió una onza é una ochava, é un tomin é nueve granos de oro que le enviaron unos caciques, é así mismo tres espejos de oro.

Más recibió cinco guaycas en 21 de enero con ocho hojas de oro. Más en 2 de febrero de 96, tres guaycas con once hojicas de oro que trajeron unos caciques á esta ciudad. Más se le face cargo de cierto oro que mostró en 2 de febrero en ciertos envoltorios que le quedó en su poder según primero estaba, que dijo que le habían dado en presente los caciques é indios, desta isla, que cuenta todo siete marcos é tres ochavas, é un tomín é cinco granos de oro, en que entra el grano de oro grueso que pesa dos marcos e tres onzas; é diez y seis espejos de oro, é diez hojas de oro, é dos cañutillos de oro, é una cara con tres hojas de oro. Más se le face cargo del oro que asimismo mostró, que dijo que le dieron algunos caciques é indios desta isla en tomiento (sic) del dicho tributo que son obligados a dar, que es un marco en una onza é seis ochavas é tres tomines de oro.

Más recibió en 16 de febrero, seis onzas é siete ochavas de oro, é cinco guaycas con quince hojuelas de oro, é una figura cubierta de hoja de oro, que trujo Cristóbal de Torres, su maestresala, que dijo le dio Befechio.

Más recibió, que le entregaron los tenientes del tesorero para llevar a sus altezas, en 19 de febrero, diez marcos é siete onzas é cinco granos de oro, é las joyas siguientes: Un cinto con una cara, que tiene quince hojuelas de oro é cinco arrobas de algodón con treinta é seis hojas de oro é seis torteruelos, los suelos de hoja de oro, é dos cemís con diez pintas de oro, é una tiradera con nueve pintas de oro, é una carátula de algodón con nueve hojas de oro, é tres espejos de algodón, las lumbres de hoja de oro, quatro quaycas con veinte e una hoja de oro, un tao é quatro tabletas cubiertas de hoja de oro, un bonete de algodón cubierto de hoja de oro, quatro perfumadores de narices con once pintas de oro, un tao de guany, é una media luna de guany, é otra media luna de madejita, é ciertos pedazuelos de latón atados en uno é un cinto sin oro, é dos torteruelos de ámbar, é cinco cañutos de ámbar, é cuatro pedazuelos de

madejita, é dos guaycas, que son carátulas, con nueve hojas de oro que susisieron; (sic) é pesó el oro dellas cuatro onzas é una ochava é cinco tomines é seis granos de oro.

Más recibió quatro ochavas é nueve granos de oro, que dió Fray Alonso, que le dieron en confisión: dieron los tenientes del tesorero por su mandado a P. de Salcedo de las cosas siguientes, que se tomaron a Cahonabo é á sus herederos cuando fueron presos para se las volver: cinco onzas de dos ochavas é dos tomines é nueve granos de oro, é una carátula con siete piezas de hojas de oro, é tres espejos de algodón, las lumbres de hoja de oro, é dos cañutos de hoja de oro, é dos arrobas de algodón con diez é siete hojuelas de oro, tres tiraderas, é una purgadera con veinte é nueve pintas de oro, é ciento é una sartas de ambar, é siete collares de piedra, é un espejo de cobre, cinco taos, é dos torteruelos de latón, é una cruz de piedra.

Más entregaron los dichos tenientes cuarenta é dos arrobas é tres libras de algodón, é tres naguas, é quatro pipas, é un tonel, lo cual recibió Luis de Mayorga por mandado del Almirante, é señaló las dichas pipas.

Recibió más el señor Almirante, de Molina, que le había dado un cacique por cierto rescate, un espejo grande de oro, más once granos de oro, los quales no se pesaron porque no quiso el señor Almirante, y serán de peso de diez pesos de oro y otras más y otros menos.

## Appendix B: Excerpts from shipping lists running from 1505 to 1508

*Relación de la cuenta que se hizo con Cristóbal de Santa Clara receptor de la hacienda del patrimonio real de esta isla Española de que se le hizo cargo desde 15 días del mes de noviembre de mil y quinientos y cinco años que se feneció la cuenta con el hasta 12 días del mes de abril de mil y quinientos y ocho años así de oro y ropa de algodón y esclavos y guanines como de otras cosas la cual dicha cuenta dio y se le tomó en la manera siguiente:*[76]

[...]

- Cárgansele más siete tomines y once granos de oro que pesaron dos ojos de oro de guayca que unos indios trajeron presentados al gobernador en cinco de diciembre de quinientos seis años los cuales recibió el dicho receptor.

[…]

[76] Taken from Mira Caballos (2000).

Clara al Rey y a la Reina nuestros Señores ochenta y seis mil y novecientos y sesenta y dos pesos y tres tomines y diez granos de oro fundido y más las cosas que de Yuso irán declaradas que son las siguientes

- Treinta y cinco hamacas de algodón que restan para cumplimiento de las que están cargadas.
- Noventa y siete naguas de algodón.
- Sesenta y cinco camisas de algodón.
- Ocho medias camisas de algodón.
- Sesenta ovillos de algodón hilado
- Dos redes de pescar para indios.
- Seis hizos de cabuyas.
- Veinte y siete arrobas y trece libras de algodón hilado
- Tres mazos de guanín que pesaba una onza y tres tomines y seis granos
- Una guaycas y un yaguey con un rostro de hueso
- Treinta y seis duhos de asentar de madera
- Treinta y seis bateas de madera
- Un marco y una onza u cuatro ochavas y tres tomines de çibas que se dicen niguey.
- Veinte y dos bracas de çibas y aries en doce sartas.
- Tres manojos de cabuyas.
- Veinte y cinco piezas de esclavos de los de la primera guerra de Higüey.
- Siete alpargates
- Un cemí de lenia con ojos y cataras de oro y una trenza de algodón al pescueza y otra poca de leña que peso todo veinte pesos y cuatro tomines y seis granos
- Un puñal viejo.

[…].

## Appendix C: Catalogue

*ANG1*

**Length**:
8,5
***Width:***
4,5
***Island:***
Anguilla
***Province:***
Unknown
***Municipality:***
Unknown
***Site:***
Rendezvous Bay
***Reference:***
Douglas 1992: 579
***Synonym:***
Shell Face
***Depository:***
Unknown

*ANG2*

**Length:**
9,8
***Width:***
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Sandy Hill
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Crock & Petersen 2004: 144
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Shell Mask
***Depository:***
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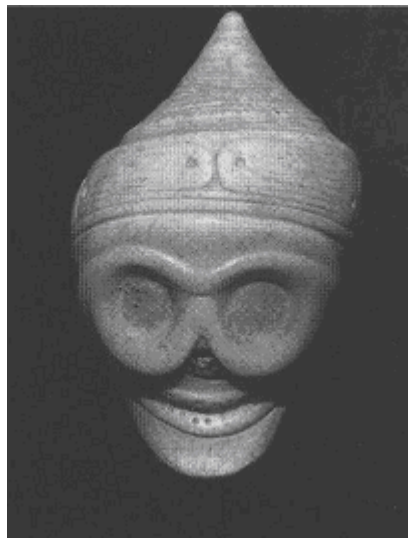

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Faber Morse & Rouse 1999: 198
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Shell Mask
***Depository:***
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Bercht et al. 1997: 99/cat. 102
***Synonym:***
Amulet
***Depository:***
J.I. Kislak Foundation

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N.N.
***Depository:***
J.I. Kislak Foundation

*CU1*

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Cuba
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Holguín
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Banes
***Site***
Potrero de El Mango
***Reference:***
Author's own collection
***Synonym:***
Caratona
***Depository:***
Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

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Cuba
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Holguín
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Banes
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***Reference:***
Author's own collection
***Synonym:***
Caratona
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Gabinete de Arqueología, Havana, Cuba

*CU3*

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Collection Reserch
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Caratona
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Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

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Author's own collection
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Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

*CU6*

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Cuba
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Holguín
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Banes
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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Museo Banes, Holguín

*CU7*

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Museo Indocuba Bani, Banes, Cuba

*CU8*

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Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

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Unknown
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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

*CU10*

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Cuba
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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Museo Indocubano Bani, Banes, Cuba

*CU11*

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Cuba
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Holguín
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Holguín
***Site:***
Loma de Ochile
***Reference:***
Author's own collection
***Synonym:***
Caratona
***Depository:***
Museo Provincial de Holguín, Holguín, Cuba

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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Museo Montané, Havana, Cuba

*CU13*

***Length:***
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Holguín
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Banes
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Potrero de El Mango
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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Cast: CISAT, Holguín, Cuba

*CU14*

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Santi Spiritus
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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Cast: CISAT, Holguín, Cuba

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Author's own collection
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Caratona
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Cast: CISAT, Holguín, Cuba

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Author's own collection
***Synonym:***
Pendiente
***Depository:***
Cast: CISAT, Holguín, Cuba

*CU17*

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5,8
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Holguín
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Banes
***Site:***
Esterito
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Author's own collection
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Caratona
***Depository:***
Cast: CISAT, Holguín, Cuba

*CU18*

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Holguín
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Banes
***Site:***
Potrero de El Mango
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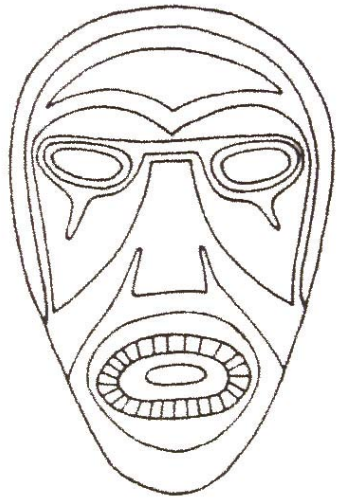
Author's own collection
***Synonym:***
Caratona
***Depository:***
Cast: CISAT, Holguín, Cuba

*CU19*



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Godo 2005:160
***Synonym:***
Guaiza
***Depository:***
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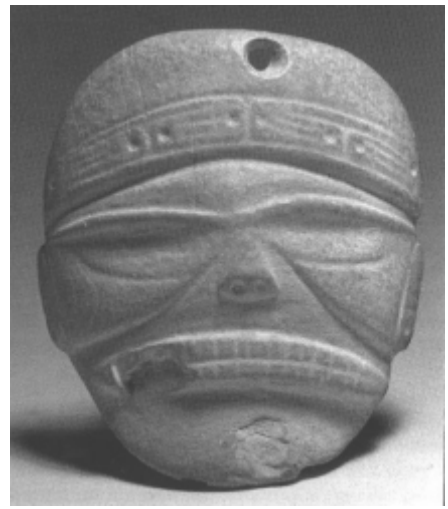
*DES1*



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Hofman et al. 2004:106
***Synonym:***
Shell Mask
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Morne Souffleur
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Hofman et al. 2004: 166
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Shell Mask
***Depository:***
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*HIS1*

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Author's own collection
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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

*HIS2*

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

*HIS3*

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

*HIS4*

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Author's own collection
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Guaiza
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Regional Museum of Altos de Chavón, Altos de Chavón, Republica Dominicana

*HIS5*

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Regional Museum of Altos de Chavón, Altos de Chavón, Republica Dominicana

*HIS6*

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Author's own collection
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Regional Museum of Altos de Chavón, Altos de Chavón, Republica Dominicana

*HIS7*

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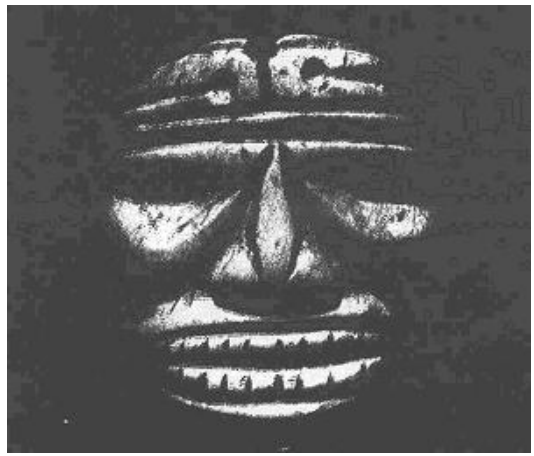

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

*HIS15*

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Fundacion García Arévalo, Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana

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Deagan, personal communication 2007
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Pectoral en cocquilage
***Depository:***
Ecomusée de Martinique, Martinique

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C.Q., 1968: Cover
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Shell Carving
***Depository:***
Unknown private collection

*MG1*

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Marie-Galante
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Anse du Coq
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prof. dr. C.L. Hofman, personal communication 2005
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*MON1*

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Olsen, 1980: 5
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Fewkes 1922: 232
***Synonym:***
Amulet
***Depository:***
Smithsonian Museum, New York, U.S.A.

*PR2*

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Fewkes, 1970 [1907]:
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Shell Disc with Face
***Depository:***
Smithsonian Museum, New York, U.S.A.

*PR3*

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***Reference:***
http://www.taino.net/
***Synonym:***
Guaiza
***Depository:***
Unknown

*PR4*

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Unknown
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Puerto Rico
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Unknown
***Reference:***
http://ca80.lehman.cuny.edu/
***Synonym:***
Amulet
***Depository:***
Unknown

*STL1*

***Length:***
Unknown
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St. LuciaPa
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Unknown
***Site:***
Lavoutte
***Reference:***
Bullen&Bullen, 1969: 72
***Synonym:***
Shell with human face
***Depository:***
St. Lucia Archaeological Society

An Archaeology of Exchange is primarily an archaeology of human sociality and anti-sociality. Nevertheless, archaeological studies of exchange are numerous and varied, and archaeologists do not always approach exchange as a social mechanism, concentrating rather on the cultural, economical or political implications of exchange. Even so, at times it is worth retracing the implicit theoretical steps that archaeologists have taken and look at human sociality through the eyes of exchange as something new.

This will be undertaken here by concentrating on the exchange of social valuables in the later part of the Late Ceramic Age of the Greater and Lesser Antilles (AD 1000/1100-1492). Questions concerning this exchange will be framed in a novel mix of theories – such as Costly Signalling Theory coupled with the paradox of keeping-while-giving and the notion of gene/culture co-evolution joined with Complex Adaptive System theory. Still, all these theories can be related back to the concept of exchange as put forward by the French sociologist Marcel Mauss in his famous *Essai sur le don* of 1950.

This theoretical framework will be put to the test by an extensive case-study of a specific category of Late Ceramic Age social valuables: shell faces, which have an area of distribution that ranges from central Cuba to Île de Ronde in the Grenadines. The study of these enigmatic artefacts will uncover novel insights on the nature and use of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age by communities and individuals.