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Beyond the Blockade: New Currents in Cuban Archaeology.

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Beyond the Blockade: New Currents in Cuban Archaeology. Susan Kepecs, L. Antonio Curet & Gabino La Rosa Corzo (eds.). Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010. ix + 206 pp. (Paper US\$ 22.95)

This important volume is a testament to the tenacity of Cuban and U.S. scholars determined to dismantle the political and economic barriers that have impeded collaborative archaeological scholarship in Cuba. Despite economic challenges that have limited the pursuit of archaeological research in Cuba, political agendas that have rigidly dictated the direction of Cuban archaeological research, and a U.S. policy that has stifled the exchange of information between Cuban and U.S. scholars, the essays show that Cuban archaeology has made valuable contributions to our understanding of the cultural processes that have shaped life in the Caribbean in both prehispanic and historic periods and added significantly to our understanding of past Cuban peoples. The collection, one of only a few studies of Cuban archaeology published in English in the United States, includes essays by both Cuban and U.S. scholars which highlight current trends in Cuban archaeology. It recognizes the past pioneers of joint Cuban-U.S. archaeological projects and pays homage to those researchers, including Betty Meggers and Lourdes Dominguez, who sustained scholarly contact across the Florida Straits despite geopolitical roadblocks. The essays represent a good blend of site-specific archaeological studies and broad overviews addressing key themes in the history of joint Cuban and U.S. archaeological initiatives over the past century.

Archaeological research concerning the historic post-Columbian era has received a great deal of attention in Cuba. Kathleen Deagan's thoughtful essay on the trajectory of Cuban historical archaeology highlights the interconnected histories and shared concerns of archaeologists working in both Florida and Cuba. Deagan, who visited Cuba in 1983 and worked alongside Cuban scholars, argues that were it not for modern geopolitical barriers, Cuba and Florida would be studied archaeologically as a single unit of analysis due to the shared social, political, and economic exchanges that made them a coherent culture area. Deagan highlights the contributions of Cuban scholars, including Fernando Ortiz, whose ideas about transculturation and ethnogenesis have helped shape the direction of archaeological scholarship in the United States, especially in Florida. Iosvany Hernández Mora's creative interpretation of Cuban patrimony and the role of archaeology in

architectural restoration also reminds us of the value of interdisciplinary research. Other historic period sites addressed in this volume include a fascinating analysis by Roberto Valcárcel Rojas, Marcos Martín-Torres, Jago Cooper, and Thilo Rehren of the site of El Chorro de Maíta, an indigenous cemetery revealing the impact of Spanish influence on indigenous burial practices in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The researchers discuss evidence for changes in indigenous mortuary practices after Spanish colonization and the indigenous use and modification of Spanish goods in burial contexts, such as the incorporation of European-introduced brass into traditional indigenous body ornamentation. Gabino La Rosa Corzo, whose studies of Cuban Maroon sites have made important contributions to our understanding of marronage throughout the Americas, outlines the work on Maroon communities in Cuba and highlights the evidence for the continuity of African cultural traditions.

The archaeological study of prehispanic traditions in Cuba has also enhanced our understanding of pre-Columbian peoples throughout the Caribbean. Daniel Torres Etayo's excellent essay critically examines the way revolutionary ideology in Cuba after 1959 led to the emergence of a rigid historical materialist framework for Cuban archaeologists that negated the existence of social complexity and the hierarchical nature of prehispanic social groupings, and shows how this has obfuscated Cuba's place within broader archaeological debates surrounding the emergence of Caribbean chiefdoms. Using advanced archaeological techniques and drawing on architectural evidence from the site of Laguna de Limones on the eastern tip of Cuba, Torres Etayo shows that chiefdoms were established in eastern Cuba similar to those in other areas of the Greater Antilles. The site of Laguna de Limones contained a large plaza and ceremonial complex, and probably incorporated smaller surrounding villages into its sphere of influence. Vernon James Knight Jr. examines the history of collaborative archaeological work at the site of Loma del Convento, an early prehispanic site that seems to challenge popular theories about the displacement of hunting/gathering groups in Cuba by agricultural migrants from Hispaniola. According to Knight, simplistic displacement models fail to recognize the complex interactions and exchanges that occurred between agriculturalists and hunter/gatherers in the Greater Antilles. Moreover, while archaeologists have generally overlooked evidence for chiefdom level societies in Cuba, Knight argues that the site of Loma del Convento shows clear signs

of social complexity consistent with a small chiefdom. Lorenzo Morales Santos outlines recent discoveries in stone tool technology in Cuba, which may reveal fresh information about the chronology and development of lithic technology, as well as information about the earliest migrants to Cuba and their settlement patterns. Jago Cooper, Roberto Valcárcel Rojas, and Jorge Calvera explore coastal sites, such as Los Buchillones, to shed new light on the wooden structures, settlement patterns, diet, and woodworking activities of small wetland communities that made up a broad regional interaction sphere along the northern coast of Cuba.

Beyond the Blockade underscores the importance of collaborative archaeological work in the Caribbean and offers new hope of a bright future for Cuban and U.S. partnerships. It adds significantly to our understanding of the processes of transculturation, ethnogenesis, and interaction and exchange that have shaped the Caribbean region in both historic and prehispanic times and is a must read for all serious scholars of Caribbean archaeology.

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