A FIRST RECONNAISSANCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

13-07-2004 to 27-07-2004

Corinne L. Hofman
Menno L.P. Hoogland & José Oliver
Faculty of Archaeology & Institute of Archaeology
Leiden University & University College London
The Netherlands & England
INTRODUCTION

In July 2004, the Museo del Hombre Dominicano invited José Oliver from the Institute of Archaeology (University college London, England), and Corinne Hofman and Menno Hoogland from the Faculty of Archaeology (Leiden University in the Netherlands) to explore the possibilities to jointly undertake archaeological investigations in the Dominican Republic. These investigations would take under the umbrella of the pan-European project ‘Living and dying in a Taíno community’. The interplay of quotidian and ritual behaviours in the pre-Columbian Dominican Republic’, conducted by an international team of researchers from the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University (co-directors Dr. M.L.P. Hoogland and Dr. C.L. Hofman); the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (co-director Dr. J.R. Oliver); and the CNRS (Centre National de Recherche Scientifique)/UMR des Amériques, Université de Paris X-Nanterre (Dr. S. Rostain) in cooperation with the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, and the Fundación García Arévalo, all in Santo Domingo. Excavations would take place in the context of a fieldschool joining students from England, the Netherlands and Santo Domingo.

The main purpose of this first reconnaissance was to familiarize the investigators with the archaeology of the Dominican Republic. Known sites around the island were visited. The 2004 campaign took place from the 13th till the 27th of July and focused on the north (16th-17th July) and east (19th-21st of July) coasts of the island. However, a fieldtrip was also made in western direction to the site of Barrera Mordán. The project was highly successful. Information was collected on all of the sites and coordinates were recorded. In nearly all sites pottery samples were taken for technological analysis to be conducted in cooperation with the Ceramic Laboratory at Leiden University. Two appendices are added to this report containing information on the provenance of these samples, survey collections and other site data.

Besides the site prospections, several major artifact collections were also visited and photographed. In this respect visits were made to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, the Sala de Arte Pre-Hispánico of the Fundación García Arévalo, Inc., and the collection of the Museum of Altos de Chavón as well as the small collection of Amerindian artifacts at the Museo Nacional de Historia y Geografía.
THE NORTH

Laguna Gri-Gri
The site is located near the village of Rio San Juan in the district of Espaillat. The site lies around a lagoon. Nowadays the site is destroyed and there are not many remains left dating to pre-Columbian times. Some ceramic body fragments were collected, but their context and origin are not very clear.

Loma el Tablon
The site is situated on a hill near Rio San Juan district Maria Trinidad Sanchez. A local farmer named Fabian Lucón is currently using the land where the site is situated. He has a small house with farmland around it, whose cultivation consists mainly of fruit trees. Surveying the terrain was very difficult, because the surface was covered with leaves. The archaeological material was probably thrown away near the slope, washed away and afterwards covered with soil. The slopeside was hard to survey because it was not very accessible. Some ceramic fragments were found and collected for further research. The farmer himself had found several anthropomorphic adornos, which were photographed. The collection shown by Fabian Lucón was clearly Chican Ostionoid.
Overview Loma el Tablon

Chican Ostionoid pottery from the collection of Fabian Lucón
La Caribe
This site is located near the village of Santa Emilia in the district of Maria Trinidad Sanchez. The site is located on top of the hill. The hill is very steep on the riverside, but slopes slowly down towards the ocean. The top of the hill is almost flat and therefore an excellent place to live. The nearby ocean, is an important food source for fish and seashells. The nearby river would provide fresh water.

View of La Caribe

Overview of La Caribe

The surface is overgrown with grass and plants, which hampered a good visibility during the survey. A few ceramic fragments were found at sandy spots near trees. But because surveying did not answer all the questions, two auger tests were made in order to determine the presence of material remains. The first auger was made on top of the hill, near the edge of the plateau towards the river. It was drilled some 35 cm
deep. The clayey soil contained some limestone and small shell fragments, increasing in number to a depth of 25 cm, after which nothing was found. The second auger test was made down the slope parallel to sea and river. This auger yielded large shell fragments and some ceramics, down to a depth of 25 cm. The soil was a little less clayey and contained larger chunks of limestone. Additional material was collected by some local boys approximately three metres further down slope from this second test. The hole they had made was rich in ceramics and contained some shell too. All the materials though - landsnail, seashell and ceramic fragments - were from the first 30 cm under the surface. The pottery collected from the augers is clearly Chican Ostionoid.

**Playa Grande**
The site is located in the district Maria Trinidad Sanchez. This site lies just behind the beach about 40 meters from the coast and stretches about 500 meters along the coast. The surrounding area is now covered with trees and plants, but some evidence of former occupation is still visible, like a large shell midden. Some ceramics were also collected from this midden. There are several small mounds (montículo) in the site area. These mounds are probably not natural and may contain archaeological material. The site is dated between late Saladoid and early Ostionoid.

Overview Playa Grande

**Cabo Frances**
The site is located in the district of Maria Trinidad Sanchez. The site lies on a rocky headland that juts out into the ocean. The archaeological research we did here was very limited, but some surface collecting was done. Some of the ceramic fragments are locally called *ceramica salmon* or salmon coloured. Earlier archaeological research attributed the site to the Ostionan Ostionoid period.

Overview Cabo Frances
La Llanada
The site is located in the district of Maria Trinidad Sanchez. This large archaeological site lies in the garden and agricultural plot owned by Snr. Osvaldo Esteves. During the archaeological research that was done there, some human skeletons were found. The surface was littered with ceramic fragments and also anthropomorphic adornos. A small collection of adornos and other ceramic fragments previously collected by the owners were photographed. The site was dated to the Boca Chica period (Chican Ostionoid series) by previous researchers.

Overview La Llanada

Chican Ostionoid pottery from La Llanada
**Playa Diamante**
The site is located in the district of Maria Trinidad Sanchez. The site lies practically on the beach. It is just alongside the beach on slightly higher ground. A shell midden is clearly visible as well as some ceramic fragments. Previous archaeological research was conducted at this site by Gabriel Atiles. He and his team excavated a testpit to a depth of 80 cms. The site is dated to the late-Saladoid (known locally as “ceramica roja”) and Ostionoid

**Overview Playa Diamante**

---

**El Dudu**
This spot is a lagoon surrounded by high walls of rock. There are numerous caves in the vicinity of the lagoon that had yielded pre-Columbian artefacts. The lake could also have been an important spot for the indigenous peoples of Hispaniola.

**Pozo Hondo**
The site is located in the district of Maria Trinidad Sanchez. The present landowner is Snr. Lalo Bello. The site is situated in a present-day hamlet. The pottery that had been collected here belongs to the Ostionoid series.

**Cueva de los Murciélagos**
This cave also lies on the property of Snr. Bello. Unfortunately no petroglyphs were visible, if there were any at all. A few ceramic fragments were collected at this cave.
Boba
The site is located in the district Maria Trinidad Sanchez. The site is situated 20 m from the sea, but separated from the beach by a road. The site is currently covered with palm trees. Ceramics of the Ostionoid series were collected.

THE EAST

On the way to the east short stops or explanations were given on the following sites:

La Caleta
The site is located in the Distrito National on the south coast. The site is only about twenty meters from the coast. Nowadays, a small museum shelters the site, where a number of pre-Columbian burials that were found during an excavation are shown in situ. The researchers think it was only a burial site, because they did not find any evidence for any habitation structures. The burials are partially excavated and partially covered up. One interesting detail is that there is one dog burial. The site has been published by Veloz Maggio in 1972.

La Cucama
The site lies about 150 meters from the sea. The site is probably a Taino site. Alistair photographed the area from the car and the photos can be found as 212-1234 for the oceanside and 212-1235 for the landside.
El Caimito
The site is likely to be at least partially destroyed. Some information about this site has already been published.

Las Sardinas
is also a known site that has probably been destroyed. A tourist resort now uses the terrain where the site was found.

La Cueva de Cyclone
This cave is located near the ocean, about 500 meters from the coast. It is said that this cave contains at least one petroglyph.

The following sites have been prospected on the east coast:

La Cangrahera
The site is situated in the district of Altagracia. The former name of this site is Laguna Bayahibe. The site lies just behind a small dune. Currently the dune is in use by small beach cottages where local people sell goods to tourists from the resorts. The area of the site is very overgrown by vegetation and used by the local salesmen as a toilet and garbage dump.

Overview La Cangrahera

The Museo del Hombre Dominicano has conducted preliminary archaeological research on the site. A couple of testpits were dug and it was concluded that the site was very rich and had multiple burials. There are even indications that there had been plazas in the area. Large stone slabs may indicate the presence of a batey or ballcourt. The investigators dated the site to the Boca Chica or the Ostiones and Chicoid Ostionoid period. Unfortunately no publication about the site came out. The area of the site is currently owned by Mr. Dwayne Fuller, who wants to develop the area, probably to build a resort.

Cueva de Berna
The cave is located in the district of Altagracia. The cave is overloaded with petroglyphs and some rockpaintings. The petroglyphs mainly depict anthropomorphic faces. The rockpaintings are more abstract in shape.
Deeper in the cave there is evidence of food refuse, mainly consisting of crab and seashell. Ostionoid pottery had been previously collected at the cave. Previous archaeological research that was done here was published Veloz Maggiolo, Ortega, Luna Calderón and Sanoja in 1977.

Anamuyita
The site is situated in the district of Altagracía. The site is located in a pasture. A large stone slab covered with petroglyphs forms its major interest at this moment. Most of the petroglyphs have a rather abstract shape. One petroglyph has a similar shape to the rock painting in the Cueva de Berna. On the other side of the river a partially collapsed cave is located, which contains petroglyphs and also some small rock paintings. The petroglyphs here again represent anthropomorphic creatures. The site itself has never been dated. The site shows up in a publication by Veloz Maggiolo in 1972.

Overview Anamuyita
Iglesia de Macao
This site is located 10 km from Punta Macao in the district of Altagracia. The site is located 5 km from Los Corosos and about 20 km from Anamuyita. At present the land is owned by Snr. Miguel Angel Cucho. Part of the site is used for agriculture. In the road cut a refuse midden was clearly visible containing ceramic fragments, landcrab, rodent and fish bones. About 50 meters to the east of this midden was a dry river where more midden refuse was visible at the surface. The picture that emerges from the spatial distribution of the various midden deposits is that the pre-Columbian occupation probably was located on a plateau next to the river and garbage would have been dumped on the slopes of this plateau. Archaeological research has been done at this site in the past by Gabriel Atiles, Impidio Ortega and Jorge Ullooa and has been published in 2003. Part of the site was radiocarbon dated (calibrated) between A.D. 200 and A.D. 400. Pottery has been collected belonging to the Late Salroid and Ostionoid series. However, there seems to be a Taino (Boca Chica style) component as well.

Overview Iglesia de Macao

Punta Macao
This site is one of the most important sites of the Dominican Republic. The bulk of the archaeological collections of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano and the Fundacion Garcia Arevalo find its origin at this site.
The future of this site is rather gloomy. Within a couple of months the site will be turned into a large golfcourse. Unfortunately, terrain levelling will destruct large parts of the site. The site appears in the publication by Veloz Maggiolo in 1972. Currently, excavations are conducted at this site by a team of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano. A large excavation unit containing a number of burials was still open. A number of feature, notably postholes were discovered which had been dug into the bedrock, a common practice also known from elsewhere in the region.

**Los Corosos**

The site is located in the district of Altagracía. This site is currently in use as a pasture and is owned by a Haitian. A local farmer named Ilito Montilla showed several spots in this pasture where ceramics were found. In a very short period of time a relatively large number of decorated ceramics were found. In addition, a number of human bones that were lying on the surface were found. This was probably because the grave was robbed. This area is known to be looted by local farmers who sell the artefacts. The site was dated to the Boca Chica or Chican Ostionoid period.

Overview Los Corosos
An archaeological reconnaissance of the site at Los Corosos. Bottom right: human bones exposed to the surface

**Punta Cana**

The site was almost on the beach, probably twenty meters from the coastline. The site is situated on the terrain of the Club Med hotel (Punta Cana Holding). It seemed very hard to survey the site, because there was a lot of dense vegetation. No archaeological remains were spotted. The Museo del Hombre Dominicano conducted previous research on the site. In the course of this research multiple testpits were excavated and the site was dated to the early Boca Chica or Chican Ostionoid period, which is about A.D. 800. However, other periods may be present as well. A meeting with Mr. Frank Rainieri of the Punta Cana Holding was held later on in Santo Domingo to explore the possibilities of excavating at this site in the near future.

**Overview Punta Cana**
The site is located in the present day village of Barrera Mordán in the district of Azua. The site mainly contains pre-ceramic flint, which are naturally present in the area. However, some Boca Chica ceramics were found, but the percentage is very small. A small collection of flint flakes and blades has been collected. A seashell was also collected for C14-dating. Previous archaeological research was carried out at this site in the past by various researchers, i.e. Gus Pantel. The site has been dated to approx. 4000 years ago and is considered to be the oldest in the region.
COLLECTING CLAYS FOR TECHNOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

From all the visited sites on the island approximately 10 sherds have been collected for technological analysis. In addition, a small number of clay samples have been collected from different sources on the island. These samples are taken to Leiden for technological analysis. The aim of this project is to establish a database in which clay sources can be linked to pre-Columbian pottery found at various sites on the Dominican Republic through archaeological and geo-chemical analysis. This project is part of a larger program on the provenance and exchange of pre-Columbian clay and lithic materials in the Caribbean. This project comprises a geological part involving geo-chemical analysis and an archaeological part involving the testing of the workability properties of the clays and fabric analysis.

Clay samples have been collected at La Vereda, Pozo Hondo and Los Corosos. An additional sample comes from Moca. The clay of La Vereda is probably not of very good quality, for it contains many small white inclusions. The clay sample from Pozo Hondo was of better quality than the first. It does not contain any inclusions. At the same spot a number of ceramic fragments were collected.

Collecting clays for provenance studies and technological analysis
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was a pleasure working with the Museo del Hombre Dominicano and their director Carlos Andujar Persinal and sub-director Glenis Tavarez Maria. We are extremely grateful to both of them for helping to arrange this project, and for all of their assistance in the field. Manolito García Arevalo is thanked for his advices regarding starting this project and for putting us into contact with Franks Rainieri, president of the Punta Cana holding.

We would also like to express out gratitude to Gabriël Atiles who guided us around the sites in both the north and the east part of the island.

This project would not have been possible without the motivated contributions of our students Alistair Bright and Willem Gijtenbeek. They also recorded the fieldnotes for this report. Alistair Bright took a lot of the photographs.

We are also grateful to Andres Ruiz for driving us around the archaeological sites. We would like to acknowledge Elvira, Marc, Andrea and Tristan Bautil and Avelino for their hospitality at the Casa Doña Elvira.