

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Abstracts of recently awarded Ph.D. Theses

A. Antczak: *Late Prehistoric economy and society of the islands off the coast of Venezuela: a contextual interpretation of the non-ceramic evidence.*

Archaeologists have portrayed north-central Venezuela as the seat of the Valencioid 'chiefdom' (a.d. 900-1500) and assumed socio-cultural continuity between the Valencioid culture and the historic *Caraca* Indians. These assumptions have neither been constructed nor tested on socially meaningful archaeological contexts.

My research formulates and tests the cognitive value of the non-ceramic evidence recovered from socially meaningful archaeological contexts on the islands of the Central Coast of Venezuela as sources for understanding the developmental trajectory of the Valencioid polity(ies).

The data come from archaeological surveys and excavations on 55 offshore islands and at 47 sites. Through horizontal excavation, off-site control units and statistical control over sample size it is established that the economic purpose for the occupation of a large Valencioid campsite at Dos Mosquises Island (a.d. 1400-1500) was primarily to exploit Conch Shell (*Strombus gigas*) for food and raw material. Other local resources, such as fishes, lobsters, turtles and birds, were complementary. The conceptual polarity food/artefact, often applied to the archaeofaunal analyses, is replaced by contextual discrimination between food, non-food remains and natural objects, which leads to inferences on social group composition, labour division, specialisation, differential access to food and the exportation of shell raw material outside the islands.

The results of the contextual analyses of allochthonous mammal and special purpose artefacts indicate the presence of prominent members of the society (chief shaman and/or warriors) and the ceremonial character of the core locus at the Dos Mosquises site. It is suggested that the organisation of the insular enterprise is most likely controlled from this core locus.

From a macro-regional perspective, the resulting analyses challenge the notion of a 600 year-long unilinear evolution toward social complexity of the Valencioid polity. The previous view of a straightforward, hegemonic character of this polity is replaced by perspective of recurrent long and short-term changes in the nature and intensity of regional interactions between several polities. These interactions were based on a changing multilateral negotiations of power through trade, co-operative ventures, resource exploitation, intermarriage, ceremonial assistance, warfare and peace. The purported continuity between the insular Valencioids and the *Caraca* Indians is not supported by the archaeological data.

A. Reynolds: *Anglo-Saxon law in the landscape: an archaeological study of the Old English judicial system*

This thesis presents an analysis of the archaeological and historical evidence for the origins and development of the judicial system in Anglo-Saxon England from the 5th century to the 11th century. The source materials comprise excavated execution cemeteries, contemporary poetic and prose texts and other evidence including illuminated manuscripts. The characteristics of unusual burials are set out in detail for the first time in order to enable more confident identification of execution cemeteries in the archaeological record. The recording of execution sites in Old English charter boundary clauses is examined in detail and the results are related to the excavated evidence for execution. The spatial relationships between places of imprisonment, judgement, ordeal and execution are explored and an attempt is made to set the findings of the research into a contemporary ideological context.

E. Swift: *Regionality in the late Roman west through the study of crossbow brooches, bracelets, beads and belt sets.*

A close examination of spatial variability in the specified objects in an area between the Rhine/Danube and the Loire, stretching as far as Britannia in the west and Pannonia in the East. Initially a theoretical framework is set out in the context of the archaeological background. Each object type is then analysed in terms of form and decorative style and the occurrence of specific features is shown on distribution maps. Possible production areas can be suggested for different decorative styles. The distribution maps and studies of the range of variability in each category also provide information concerning the scale of manufacture and mechanisms of dispersal; in turn these relate to the level of demand and the changing function of the object.

Patterns occurring are then compared to one another and interpreted in terms of their gender and status associations and their overall economic, social, political and cultural significance for the late Roman Western Empire. Links are established between different regions and it is possible to trace the movements of those travelling with the army. Many sites can be shown to have a significant foreign element, with clusters of associated objects which can be sourced to another area. Concentrations of finds along the frontier and in linear distributions in other areas give an indication of contemporary activity at adjacent sites, and shifts in the spatial patterning of objects during the fourth to fifth century transition period provides a fresh insight into the late Roman west and beyond.

(Forthcoming as Swift, E. 1999. *Regionality in Dress Accessories in the Late Roman West*. Monographies Instrumentum no. 11).

Titles of other Ph.D. theses awarded:

R. Dods: *Prehistoric exploitation of wetland habitats in North American boreal forests.*

- B. Gallorini:** *Incised marks on pottery and other objects from Kahun: systems of communication in Egypt during the late Middle Kingdom.*
- K. Gregory:** *An archaeology of group dynamics.*
- A. Tsheboeng:** *The archaeology of Majande and its environs.*
- P. Usick:** *William John Bankes' collection of drawings and manuscripts relating to ancient Nubia.*