

**CROSSING THE GALLEONS' PASSAGE:  
AMERINDIAN INTERACTION AND CULTURAL (DIS)UNITY BETWEEN  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

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**Abstract**

*The islands of Trinidad and Tobago formed separate sociopolitical, economic, and cultural entities throughout most of their colonial history. This situation was prefigured by the two islands' prehistoric past following the Saladoid epoch of pan-Caribbean cultural unity. The Saladoid convergence disintegrated rapidly after the establishment of the Arauquinoid series in Trinidad by about AD 700/800 as simultaneously Tobago appears to have been drawn into the Troumassoid interaction sphere of the Windward Islands and Barbados. This paper discusses the patterns of Amerindian interaction and communication across the Galleons' Passage between Trinidad and Tobago during Ceramic times and attempts to appreciate the post-Saladoid cultural realignment of the two islands and its consequences.*

**Résumé**

*Durant la majeure partie de leur histoire coloniale, les îles de la Trinité et de Tobago ont formé des entités sociopolitiques, économiques et culturelles séparées. Le passé préhistorique de ces deux îles, après la période d'unité culturelle saladoïde de l'espace caribéen, préfigurait déjà cette distinction. L'unité culturelle saladoïde s'est rapidement désagrégée après l'émergence de la série arauquinoïde à la Trinité vers 700-800 ap. J.-C., au moment même où Tobago semble avoir été tirée dans la sphère d'interaction troumassoïde des Îles du Vent et de la Barbade. Cet article traite des modes d'interaction et de communication amérindiens à travers le Passage des Galions, entre la Trinité et Tobago, durant l'époque céramique et tente de prendre la mesure du réalignement culturel des deux îles à l'époque post-saladoïde et de ses conséquences.*

**Resumen**

*Las islas de Trinidad y Tobago formaron entidades separadas, sociopolíticas, económicas y culturales, a través de la mayor parte de su historia colonial. Esta situación fue prefigurada por el pasado prehistórico de las dos islas después de la época Saladoide de unidad cultural pan-caribe. La convergencia Saladoide desintegró rápidamente después del establecimiento de la serie Arauquinoide en Trinidad acerca de 700/800 d.C. como simultáneamente Tobago parece haber sido absorbida en la esfera de interacción Troumassoide de las Islas de Barlovento y Barbados. Este artículo discute los modelos de interacción y comunicación amerindios a través del Pasaje de los Galeones entre Trinidad y Tobago durante la época*

*Cerámica e intenta apreciar el realineamiento cultural post-Saladoide de las dos islas y sus consecuencias.*

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### ***Intersecting the Galleons' Passage***

While ethnohistoric accounts suggest that formerly the Caribbean islands were integrated in complex webs of intersocietal contacts, archaeologically the interaction patterns between neighbouring communities on different islands underlying these networks have received little attention. In spite of Rouse's early recognition that prehistoric Amerindian groups occupying parts of islands that faced each other across water gaps (passages) in the Greater Antilles appeared more closely related culturally than those on opposite ends of the same island, suggesting dense interaction and travelling by canoe (Rouse 1951), especially in the Lesser Antilles most students of West Indian archaeology have modelled the identifiable local cultural complexes to the various levels of Rouse's hierarchic taxonomic phylogeny, taking the island as the distinguishing geographical unit. Although there is no necessity here to underline that island societies should be studied within their maritime cultural framework (Boomert and Bright 2007), implying that single islands cannot be the ideal spatial units for analysing insular community patterns, few archaeological analyses have been made focusing on the bi-insular interaction networks of prehistoric groups (e.g., Bérard 2007; Bright 2007). Indeed, most archaeologists have implicitly followed the misguided premise that due to their supposedly bounded and circumscribed environment, islands are appropriate units for the study of human behavior, thereby ignoring that insular and littoral societies should be considered as interacting human nodes in their respective seascapes. Besides, as Samson (2006) explains, seascapes are

knowable places as people move in structured ways on the sea which is divided, populated and mythologized just like the land.

This paper discusses the patterns of prehistoric interaction and communication between Trinidad and Tobago, i.e., the southernmost islands of the West Indian archipelago (Figure 1). As continental islands which were severed from the South American mainland due to the post-Pleistocene sea level rise, both Trinidad and Tobago appear to represent physical and biotical extensions of the adjacent parts of the continent. While amalgamated as early as 1889 and now forming a unitary republic, the two islands formed separate sociopolitical, economic and cultural entities throughout most of their colonial history. Disunited as well as unified by the 32-km wide sea strait which since Spanish times is known as the Galleons' Passage, formerly communication between Trinidad and Tobago was largely determined by the prevailing Northeast trade winds and the system of oceanic circulation of the region. Trinidad's northern littoral is open to the Caribbean Sea and fairly exposed to the trade winds. It is a high-wave energy environment though less susceptible to erosion than the island's other coasts as it is made up of fairly resistant low-grade metamorphic rocks (Institute of Marine Affairs 2004:13). The north coast is difficult of access as the shore is rocky and its easternmost portion is fringed with coral reefs. Sand beaches are rare. Besides, due to the trade winds the surf is often so furious that landing is almost impossible. As the foothills of Trinidad's Northern Range, the highest mountain chain of the island, rise steeply from

the sea floor, a coastal plain is lacking here. The northern part of Trinidad's east coast shows small sand beaches, alternating with rocky cliffs and points where the Northern Range reaches the shore. All along the sea is rough due to the trade winds and its beaches are constantly pounded by the Atlantic rollers. The portion of Tobago closest to Trinidad consists of an elongated coral limestone platform which adjoins the foothills of the central dorsal ridge of highland which forms the backbone of the island to the southwest. This 'Low Side' of the island shows a heavily indented shoreline showing an alteration of rocky cliffs and promontories, lagoonal swamps and sandy bays. It is characterised by extensive fringing reef complexes.

Interaction between Trinidad and Tobago is facilitated by the circumstance that

the southern portion of the latter island is practically always within view from North-east Trinidad and vice versa. The crossing by pirogue from Trinidad to Tobago is tough and requires quite some effort and navigating. Sailors have to buck both wind and current as on reaching Galera Point, the northeastern cape of Trinidad, one finds a current of at least two knots sweeping westward (Doyle and Fisher 1996:46). This is a branch of the South Equatorial Current which, coming from the south, bisects on reaching the Galleons' Passage, partly flowing west into the Caribbean Sea in order to continue moving along Trinidad's north coast. However, most of the current first passes around Tobago. Such is its velocity that formerly sailing-ships were easily driven from the east coast of Tobago to Grenada (Young 1812:89-90). Besides, in

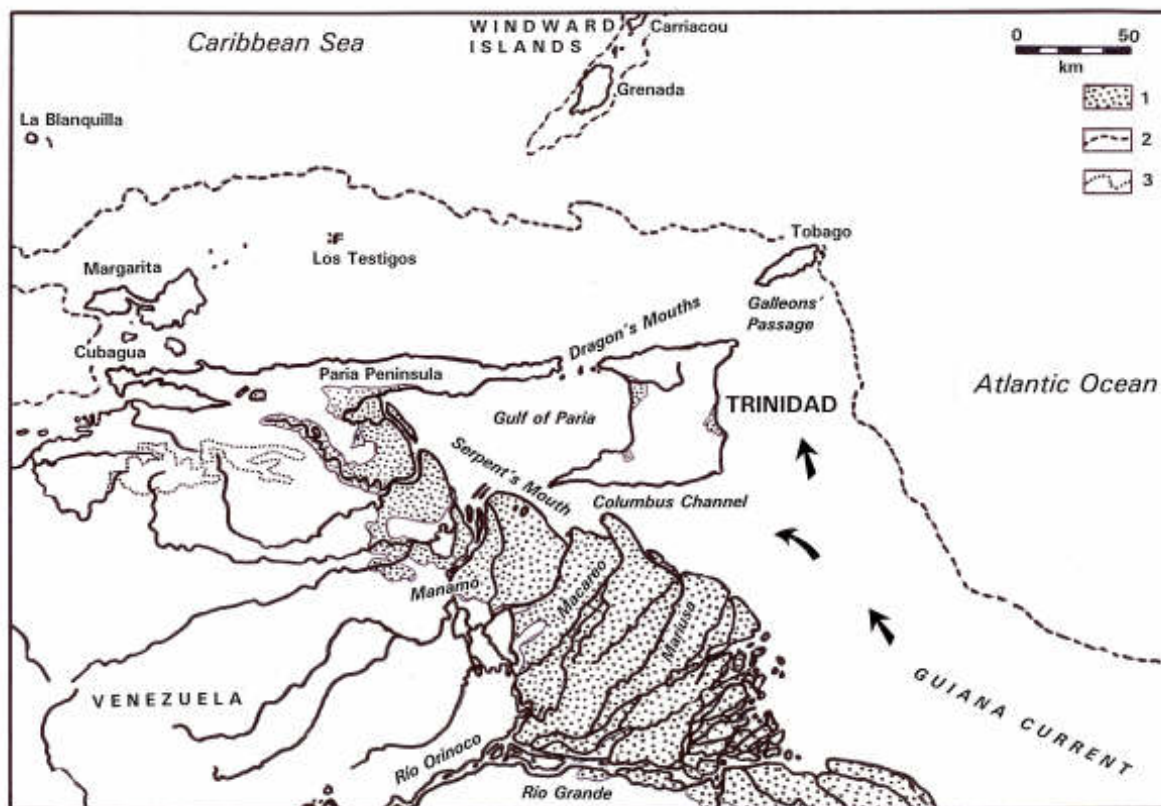


Figure 1. Geographical situation of Trinidad and Tobago. Legend: (1) swamps and marshes; (2) edge of continental shelf (200 m below MSL); (3) 1000-m contour line.

the wet season the sheer amount of fresh water discharged by the Orinoco River of Venezuela reinforces the velocity of the northerly directed stream along Trinidad's east coast and around Tobago, even inducing a slight drop in salinity offshore the southwest end of the latter island (Agard and Gobin 2000). If all went well, the crossing by canoe from Trinidad to Tobago took a day and a night to accomplish (Dauxion-Lavaysse 1820:364-365; Escobar, TTHSP 84, 1637). In Amerindian times the route most frequently taken by dugouts apparently led from the Matura Bay, Balandra Bay, Cumana Bay and Salybia Bay areas of Northeast Trinidad to La Guira and Canoe Bay in Southwest Tobago. Some of these toponyms, dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are significant in this respect (Boomert 2000:19-20). As a result of the wet-season outflow of the Orinoco, the crossing from Trinidad to Tobago is easiest in this part of the year.

At the time of the European-Amerindian encounter Trinidad formed a complex multi-ethnic and multi-lingual conglomerate of Amerindian groups of possibly varying sociopolitical complexity. Intra-island interaction was limited. In fact, as late as the nineteenth century, thus well in the colonial period, communication typically took place by boat, skirting round the island (Boomert 2009). In all, six Amerindian ethnic groups are known to have inhabited the island during the contact period of which the most likely Cariban-speaking Carinepagoto, a branch of the Kalina ('Mainland Caribs'), occupied its northern third. Trinidad's central and southern parts were settled by Cariban-, Arawakan- and Waraoan-speaking Amerindian groups, including the Nepoio, Yaio, Shebaio, Arawak (Lokono), and Chaguanes. Simultaneously, Tobago was occupied exclusively by

groups of Kalina. The latter were on friendly terms with the Kalinago or Kalipuna ('Island Caribs'), the inhabitants of the Windward Islands, who considered themselves ethnically as belonging to the Carib people in spite of their basically Arawakan linguistic affiliation. Indeed, Tobago formed an indispensable link in the pattern of communication the Island Caribs kept up with their kinsmen on the mainland. The Spanish settlement of Trinidad and slave-raiding expeditions in both Trinidad and Tobago during the 1590s led to an increasingly hostile relationship between the colonizers and the local Amerindians. During the following decades Spanish pressure forced many Trinidad Indians to seek refuge in the Guiana coastal zone and Tobago (Boomert 2002). Throughout the seventeenth century the numerous Spanish, English, Dutch, and Courlander colonizing attempts of Tobago remained unsuccessful which was at least partially due to the persistent attacks by the local Kalina and Island Caribs of the Windwards, notably Grenada and St. Vincent, on the European settlements in the island.

Following short-lived attempts at English and Dutch settlement in East Trinidad in the first half of the seventeenth century, Spanish pressure on the Carinepagoto (Kalina) Indians of the northern part of Trinidad eased due to the weakness of the Spanish colonial government, the effective control of which was limited to the northwestern portion of the island. As a result, the Kalina flight to Tobago came to an end and was reversed. The documentary sources indicate that Amerindian movements between Trinidad and Tobago were frequent in these years (Poyntz, TTHSP 776, 1699; Stringer, TTHSP 778, 1704). In an attempt to pacify the remaining Amerindians, the Spanish now founded mission settlements in Trinidad's central and south-

ern parts. Tobago, which remained unoccupied by the European powers during the first half of the eighteenth century, and Trinidad's north coast, which was fully beyond Spanish control, became refuge areas for Nepoio, Chaima and Paria Indians who wished to escape the Spanish missions of Trinidad and those in Cumaná and the Paria Peninsula of East Venezuela as well as Island Caribs from St. Vincent fleeing for Black Carib pressure (Boomert 2002). When in 1763 the agricultural development of Tobago was vigorously undertaken after the cession of the island by the French to the British, the Toco area of Northeast Trinidad became also a sanctuary of black slaves who had escaped from the newly established plantations in Tobago. By this time the Spanish attempted to get some grip on the Amerindians of Northeast Trinidad through missionary activities, but an acute shortage of priests reduced the effectiveness of these measures. Simultaneously, the clearing of the forests for agriculture reduced the hunting grounds of the surviving Amerindians in Tobago who, being marginalised, increasingly migrated to the northeastern part of Trinidad. The last of the Tobagonian Indians finally disappeared from the island in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In fact, Trinidad's Toco region has remained a favourite settlement area for migrating (black) Tobagonians until the present (Herskovits and Herskovits 1947:25-26; Niddrie, 1961:38).

### ***Early Ceramic interaction***

While Trinidad was occasionally traversed by small groups of hunters/foragers as early as the end of the Pleistocene, thus well before its separation from the mainland, the island became fully occupied by Archaic hunters, fishers and foragers belonging to the Ortoiroid series only by about 6000 cal BC. Seafaring and navigat-

ing obviously formed an integral part of Trinidad's Archaic cultural heritage and the first movement of Amerindians into the Lesser Antilles apparently took place by Ortoiroid Indians from Trinidad and the East Venezuelan coastal zone perhaps a millennium afterwards. By 3000 cal BC the southwestern part of Tobago was occupied by settlers from Trinidad, as is shown by the close resemblance between the material assemblages of the contemporary Late Archaic groups from both islands (Boomert 2000:75-77). The last few centuries before the beginning of our era saw the gradual disappearance of the remaining Ortoiroid communities of Trinidad and their assimilation to the fully horticulturalist and pottery-making Indians of the Cedrosan Saladoid subseries, named after Trinidad's Cedros complex, who moved into the island from the East Venezuelan littoral. Perhaps pushed by the peoples of the Barranoid series, the probably Arawakan-speaking Saladoid Indians left the banks of the Lower Orinoco River by 800 cal BC in order to occupy the East Venezuelan littoral where they may have established a symbiotic subsistence pattern with the local Archaic Indians, learning from the latter about the existence of the southern Windward Islands and the necessary maritime technology and navigational requirements to reach these islands. Subsisting on a combination of rootcrop horticulture, hunting, fishing, and the gathering of edible animal and plant foods, the Cedrosan Saladoid colonists were able to adapt successfully to their local environment, ultimately building up sufficient demographic growth to allow dense occupation of the mainland littoral and Trinidad.

Perhaps attracted by the favourable settling conditions of the Antillean archipelago, adventurous young men in the East Venezuelan communities may have initi-

ated the Cedrosan Saladoid expansion into the Antillean archipelago (Boomert 2008a; Curet 2005:63-76). Apparently the primary movement was rapid, perhaps due to the fact that few local Archaic settlers were encountered in especially the Windward Islands. Such a fast initial spread in the Antilles is incompatible with one allowing for step-by-step colonization of each island due to demographic growth. In fact, a scenario has been envisaged of a multiple series of fast initial migrations forming a direct leap forward along the Lesser Antillean island chain to the Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, followed by various return movements. Be this as it may, during the first centuries of Antillean settlement Saladoid communication and interaction across the West Indian archipelago remained intensive, as is suggested by the widespread occurrence of exotic exchange objects, notably bodily ornaments made of semi-precious rock materials, part of which may have reached the West Indies from the South American mainland. Sustained interaction is shown also by the remarkable uniformity of the pottery typifying the earliest Saladoid communities throughout the region (Allaire 2003). Well-finished, small to medium-sized bowls and jars exhibiting a variety of especially bichrome and polychrome painted, incised and modelled designs are diagnostic. Close ceramic similarities are noted for the Cedrosan Saladoid communities from Trinidad and the East Venezuelan littoral to as far north as Puerto Rico. Interestingly, no evidence of the presence of the contemporaneous Huecoid series has been encountered in the Trinidad area or the Windward Islands to date.

Comparison between the Cedrosan Saladoid pottery complexes characterising North Trinidad and Tobago illustrates the close relationship between the communities

of both islands and the likelihood of dense interaction across the Galleons' Passage. In Trinidad the earliest Saladoid pottery is known only from the southwesternmost part of the island. This Cedros complex is typified by relatively thin, well made ceramics including predominantly round or oval flaring open bowls and dishes, restricted bowls or jars, inverted bell-like bowls, keeled bowls or jars, and bottles showing painted, incised and modelled decorative motifs, for instance comprising white-on-red and rarely white-and-black-on-red painted designs, zone-incised cross-hatched motifs and a variety of simple modelled lugs and pellets next to complex modelled-incised geometric and anthropo-zoomorphic head lugs, the latter adequately reflecting the animistic character of Saladoid religion and the profound Amerindian belief in human-animal transformations. These vessels, used for cooking, serving, ritual and storage, are supplemented by pottery artifacts such as cassava griddles and potstands. By the time of Christ Trinidad's Cedros ceramics developed into the Palo Seco complex which is found throughout the island. It is characterized by a much larger variety of vessel shapes, enlivened by an equally increased repertoire of decorative motifs. Open bowls showing typically concavo-convex flanged rims, 'hammock-shaped' ovoid bowls, and restricted biconical bowls or jars are predominant, next to necked jars, bisected dishes, bottles, and sizeable necked jars which were obviously used for the fermenting of cassava beer. Small 'nostril' or 'snuffing' bowls showing a pair of tube-like extensions were clearly used by shamans for pouring tobacco or pepper juice into the nose so as to induce an ecstatic-visionary trance. Pre-fired painting in red, white and black remains typical. In addition, painting in yellow and pink occurs.

Zone-incised crosshatching is much less frequent than during Cedros times, but simple and complex modelling combined with incision continues prolifically. Indeed, the variety of anthropozoomorphic head lugs is impressive (Boomert 2000:129-169; Boomert et al., in press).

The inception of Tobago's oldest Cedrosan Saladoid assemblage, the Courland complex, can be dated to the latter part of Cedros and the transition between Cedros and Early Palo Seco as it appears to be closely related to these ceramic complexes. Courland shows a typically Cedrosan Saladoid repertoire of vessel shapes decorated with a combination of predominantly white-on-red painted, incised and modelled designs. Courland pottery is known from three sites in Southwest Tobago and this location is suggestive of introduction of this complex to Tobago from Trinidad (Boomert 2000:169-171). As the pottery of the Cedrosan Saladoid subseries is highly uniform across the entire Lesser Antillean archipelago, no Courland ceramic traits can be identified illustrating specifically the links of interaction and communication between Trinidad and Tobago. This is quite different with respect to another Cedrosan Saladoid assemblage known from Tobago, i.e., the Mount Irvine complex which may have developed out of Courland. Its ceramics have been encountered at five sites in Tobago's southern portion. Mount Irvine is typified by thin, hard and well-made pottery showing typically Early Palo Seco vessel shapes, including flaring open bowls, often provided with concavo-convex flanged rims, biconical bowls, bell-shaped bowls or jars, and bottles. Painting is relatively insignificant and restricted to monochrome red or black designs. Fine-line incised motifs are characteristic, including highly distinctive patterns consisting of rectangles or combina-

tions of rectangles, stepped parallel lines, zigzags or embattled lines, horseshoes, triangles, spirals, circles, occasionally combined with double or single parentheses, semi-circles, and zone-incised cross-hatches. Broad-line incision is rare. Typically Saladoid 'incense burners' belong to the Mount Irvine ceramic repertoire as well (Boomert 2000:171-179,482-483).

The ceramics of Tobago's Mount Irvine complex are closely related to a major component of the Early Palo Seco assemblage known from the Blanchisseuse (Marianne River) site on the north coast of Trinidad (Boomert 2000:152-153; Steadman and Stokes, 2003), suggesting intensive interaction between the two islands in the first few centuries AD. Blanchisseuse yielded a ceramic repertoire which combines white-and-red painting and thin-line incised (engraved) designs including single or multiple parallel wavy lines and semi-circles, spirals, and stepped lines, closely resembling the Mount Irvine decorative motifs. Execution of these designs is sloppier, however. Although in all 35 Saladoid sites are known from Trinidad, apart from Blanchisseuse only two of them, i.e., Whitelands in the central portion of the island and St. Catherine's (I) in the southeast, have yielded individual specimens of Mount Irvine-like ceramics. Beyond Trinidad this characteristic type of fine-line incised pottery is known from the Río Guapo site in the Río Chico area of the central Venezuelan coast. This site resembles Mount Irvine in its lacking of white-on-red painted pottery, although its repertoire of incised and modelled ceramics is typically Saladoid in character. Besides, the fine-line incised Mount Irvine ceramics appear to be closely related to the Pearls Inner Rim Incised type of 'Insular' Saladoid pottery, identified by the Bullen's in the Windward Islands and Barbados. While the inception

of this type of fine-line incision dates back to Early Cedrosan times, it may have lasted into the 'Modified' Saladoid period (Bullen 1964:20-21,32-35; Bullen and Bullen 1972:132, 1976). The primarily insular and coastal distribution of the Mount Irvine-like decorative motifs indicates that in the Early Ceramic episode the Saladoid communities of Trinidad's north coast closely interacted with those of Tobago, the Windward Islands and the Venezuelan littoral, while their contacts with the Cedrosan settlements of Central and South Trinidad were much less intensive. Clearly, the latter parts of the island were focused on the South American mainland, notably the west coast of the Gulf of Paria, the Lower Orinoco and Delta, and the western littoral of the Guianas. All of this suggests that the Northern Range, the highest mountain chain of Trinidad, formed a major barrier in terms of interaction, effectively isolating the north coast from the rest of the island resulting in distinctive stylistic zones across its area (Boomert 2009).

The emphasis of the Tobagonian patterns of Cedrosan communication and interaction shifted gradually from Trinidad's north coast to the eastern littoral of the island during 'Modified' to 'Terminal' Saladoid times. This was due to the profound cultural influence radiating from Los Barrancos, the Barrancoid centre on the Lower Orinoco, towards the Saladoid communities of the eastern coastal zone of Venezuela, South and Central Trinidad and the middle reaches of the Orinoco, which started around the time of Christ. It is reflected in the gradual adoption of Barrancoid ceramic modes by the local Saladoid potters of this period, suggesting frequent contacts formalized by ceremonial exchanges in a localized interaction sphere (Boomert 2000:249-251,242-244). In South and Central Trinidad the onset of

Barrancoid stylistic influence is noticeable in the course of Palo Seco times and would finally result in the presence of substantial amounts of Barrancoid ceramics in the Saladoid villages of Trinidad's south coast, suggesting largely simultaneous manufacture and use of both wares in this portion of the island. This Erin complex may reflect the amalgamation of Barrancoid settlers with the area's local Saladoid inhabitants by about cal AD 500/600. Besides, typically Erin exchange wares are encountered in the Friendship complex, i.e., the local 'Modified' to 'Terminal' Saladoid assemblage of Tobago. These Barrancoid vessels, showing intricate forms and elaborately modelled-incised biomorphic head lugs, suggesting representation of spirit-related messages and strongly shamanic associations, are typically encountered as mortuary gifts in this island. This illustrates the high prestige these exotic and undoubtedly ceremonial vessels had among the local Tobagonian Saladoid population. Ultimately, the Barrancoid influence on Saladoid ceramics would reach the southern Windward Islands, but in spite of statements to the contrary it is unlikely that the realm of face-to-face contacts between the peoples of the Barrancoid and Saladoid series reached further north.

The Cedrosan and Barrancoid patterns of inter-island and mainland-island communication would have included the reciprocal exchange of material items as well as that of information and non-material goods in the form of myths, tales, songs, dances, and knowledge, leading to the formation and maintenance of political alliances based on kinship and ritual services between the villages involved. Identification of material objects other than pottery reflecting Saladoid and Saladoid/Barrancoid interaction and travel across the Galleons' Passage is difficult as many of the items ex-



changed may have been manufactured of organic materials and decayed in the soil. Typically exotic-looking, highly valued and rare objects, predominantly bodily ornaments made of semi-precious stone materials, are known to have been exchanged ceremonially in large numbers in Saladoid times throughout the West Indies (Hofman et al. 2007). Such products, made by highly expert village artisans and semi-specialists who may have combined this craftsmanship with shamanic activities, are known from both Trinidad and Tobago. Besides, as Trinidad lacks the specific rock sources suitable to the manufacture of cutting tools, its prehistoric Amerindians were forced to import these raw materials from elsewhere. Indeed, many of the Saladoid stone axe heads, found in Trinidad, are made of greenschist or schistose diabase and apparently derive from Tobago. Slabs of fossil coral and shell celts can possibly be added to the utilitarian trade goods exchanged across the Galleons' Passage. Coral grinding, rasping and polishing tools are known sparingly from the Saladoid sites of South Trinidad, but live coral is to be found only on the island's northeast coast and around Tobago. The same applies to Queen conchs (*Strombus gigas*), the wings of which formed the raw material for the manufacture of the shell celts that are occasionally encountered at sites in the central and southern parts of Trinidad (Boomert 2000:435-437).

Ceremonial exchange concentrating on the movement of social ('primitive') valuables between the contemporary Amerindian communities on the South American mainland and the Lesser Antillean archipelago and those of Trinidad is reflected by the recovery of Saladoid-associated stone beads and other personal accoutrements made of semi-precious rocks and minerals such as lignite, tourmaline, quartz, tur-

quoise, chlorite, amethyst, and serpentine in the latter island. They include beads and frog-, turtle- and king vulture-shaped pendants. In Late Cedrosan times and afterwards Tobago formed a centre of bead manufacturing and distribution using diorite, a black-and-white mottled rock material which is naturally found in a wide zone across the island. Mother-of-pearl pendants made of perforated or unmodified valves of nacreous freshwater mussels, which are encountered in Saladoid context in South Trinidad, represented another category of social valuables. They were distributed throughout the West Indies apparently by down-the-line-exchange as far north as the Leeward and Virgin Islands (Serrand 2001). One of these ornaments was recovered from the Late Cedrosan deposits of Tobago's Golden Grove site, reflecting interaction with the Saladoid Indians of South Trinidad. Reversedly, a greenschist pendant found at Erin on Trinidad's southwest coast most likely reached this site from Tobago. Also, Tobago may have been the place of origin of the only threepointer thus far found in Trinidad. This specimen of the most ubiquitous shamanic paraphernalia known from Saladoid context in the Lesser Antilles, made of grey metamorphic stone, was found at Blue River in the central-western part of the island (Boomert 2000:408-412). A most interesting stone find, illustrating the direct access of the Tobagonian Amerindians to the Antillean exchange networks, is represented by a threepointer encountered at the Mount Irvine 3 site of the island. It is made of calcirudite, a conglomerate which was especially collected on the west coast of St. Martin for threepointer manufacture in this island and Anguilla. Such calcirudite threepointers ultimately spread throughout the Lesser Antilles and Puerto Rico. Their value to the Amerindians of the Caribbean

derived from their spiritual connotations which may be directly related to the source and/or character of the rock material. Clearly, while throughout Early Ceramic times Amerindian interaction across the Galleons' Passage connected especially the Saladoid communities of Trinidad's north and east coasts with those of Tobago, the latter island also kept up busy lines of communication with the southern Windwards and Barbados. In contrast, the exchange and communication relationships of South and Central Trinidad were typically focused on the South American mainland.

#### ***Late Ceramic cultural realignment***

The period from cal AD 500 to 800 is one of exceptional dynamism both in the Orinoco Valley on the mainland and in the Caribbean archipelago. Major cultural, sociopolitical and ritual reformulations took place in both areas during these few centuries, the character and consequences of which are still poorly understood. Coincidentally or not, this era of cultural watershed was an episode of climatic change during which centuries of relatively abundant precipitation were replaced by an era characterized by dry conditions culminating in prolonged droughts and increased hurricane frequency (Beets et al. 2006; Bertran et al. 2004). In this period the pan-Antillean Saladoid interaction sphere disintegrated rapidly. This phenomenon is generally ascribed to the waning of regional communication and exchange, most likely induced by the filling up of the archipelago due to population increase, leading to the development of different zones of stylistic expression in the Eastern Caribbean (Hofman et al. 2007). In its southern margin the extant cultural relationships, political alliances and social networks connecting the Amerindian communities of Trinidad and Tobago were reformulated essen-

tially. Tobago was now drawn into the portion of the Troumassoid interaction sphere which crystallized in the Windward Islands and Barbados (Boomert 2005). In contrast, simultaneously the inhabitants of Trinidad became increasingly affiliated with the peoples of the Arauquinoid series which, after establishing themselves on the Lower Orinoco and the Central Venezuelan littoral, spread to the coastal plain of the Guianas and both sides of the Gulf of Paria, giving rise to the Guayabitan subseries in East Venezuela and Trinidad. By about cal AD 800 the Bontour complex, a local Guayabitan assemblage, would replace the Late Palo Seco and Erin complexes throughout the island, reflecting the mingling of groups of Arauquinoid immigrants by intermarriage with its local inhabitants (Boomert 1985; Boomert et al. in press).

Trinidad's Bontour complex is typified by coarse open bowls and simple jars with inflected contours, the ornamentation of which is reduced to a minimum. Indeed, biomorphic head lugs, so obtrusive during Saladoid/Barrancoid times, have almost completely disappeared. This drastic decline in the quality of manufacture and decoration of the local Trinidadian pottery assemblage, which closely reflects the Arauquinoid ceramic development in the Lower Orinoco Valley and the East Venezuelan coastal zone, can be explained only by assuming that pottery had lost many of its ritual messages to other items of material culture. Perhaps ceramics were much less imbued by ceremonialism than during Saladoid/Barrancoid times and shamanic eschatological expression now manifested itself on artifacts made of perishable materials. All of this suggests that the transition from the Saladoid and Barrancoid to the Arauquinoid series in Trinidad and elsewhere meant a genuine cultural break. Of course, this does not mean that the original

population of the island was completely replaced by newcomers. To the contrary, the gradual succession of Late Palo Seco and Erin ceramics by the Bontour complex suggests a steady development and cultural transition involving primarily a locally seated population. It would explain, for instance, the apparent continuity of the local modes of Saladoid ceramic technology well into Arauquinoid times at the Manzanilla 1 site (Dorst 2004). This settlement site is exemplary for the many Saladoid and Saladoid-Barrancoid sites that continued to be inhabited during the Bontour complex. The excavations at Manzanilla 1 have shown that in the Bontour period villages were characterized by circular house structures surrounded by shell midden deposits into which inhumation burials were made (Dorst 2006:17). Growing population density throughout the island is suggested by the large increase of sites during Arauquinoid times, but there are no indications that this was connected with significant changes in the subsistence strategies employed (Harris 1991).

The simultaneous incorporation of Tobago's Amerindian communities into the Troumassoid interaction sphere of the Windward Islands and Barbados meant a major cultural realignment for the smaller island, comparable to the transition from Saladoid and Barrancoid to Arauquinoid in Trinidad. Whether the onset of the Arauquinoid series and its amalgamation with the Saladoid-Barrancoid communities in Trinidad forms a sequence of events which is associated with the contemporary development of Saladoid to Troumassoid in the Lesser Antilles, is utterly unclear. The latter is definitely not connected with major population displacements and the region-wide disappearance of white-on-red painted pottery as a unifying, indeed emblematic, marker of the Saladoid communi-

ties may just reflect the process of regionalisation noted above. From now onwards Trinidad and Tobago appear to have been incorporated into separate major interaction networks, characterized by pottery complexes which expressed different cultural and perhaps also ethnic loyalties. Clearly, communication and interaction between Trinidad and the mainland intensified during the Bontour episode as is shown by the presence of particular exchange objects from the Lower Orinoco, notably cassava griddles and ceramic roller stamps, both tempered with sponge spicules (*cauixi*), in Trinidad's Bontour settlements. In the Orinoco Basin such roller stamps, most likely used for body painting, formed prestigious items of ceremonial exchange throughout Arauquinoid times. In addition, typically Apostaderan keeled vessels originating in the coastal zone of Guyana reached as far as Trinidad's southwestern littoral. Intra-island interaction is suggested by the recovery of pottery tempered with river sand containing micaschist particles, typical of the Northern Range, at the Bontour sites of the southern part of the island.

The presence of individual ceramic resemblances between Bontour and the Troumassoid pottery complexes of Tobago, would suggest Arauquinoid influence on the post-Saladoid development of the Windward Islands (Boomert 1985, 2009). These ceramic similarities include oval bowls typically showing dimpled rims, scalloped, horned or rectangular lugs, and incised or gouged designs, which resemble some of the decorative motifs shown by the Arauquinoid pottery of the western portion of the Guiana coastal zone and the central Venezuelan littoral as well as that of Trinidad. The Arauquinoid communities of the mainland coastal zone are even more credibly the origin of the anthropomorphic imagery which from about cal AD 1150 on-

wards increasingly characterized Bontour and the Late (Suazan) Troumassoid ceramics of the Windward Islands, Tobago and Barbados. It is predominantly shown on pottery artifacts referred to as 'loom weights' (Bullen and Bullen 1976). Similar clay pestles, which may have been used for crushing hallucinogenic drugs, are known from Arauquinoid contexts on the mainland. Interestingly, the anthropomorphic face designs, ornamenting necked jars found in Bontour and the Suazan Plymouth complex of Tobago, most closely resemble mainland Arauquinoid examples (Boomert 2008b). In addition, the appearance of roller stamps at the Troumassoid sites of the Windward Islands may be due to interaction with the Arauquinoid peoples of the mainland and Trinidad. All of this raises the question of the sociopolitical character of the Troumassoid Amerindian communities of the southern Caribbean. The Arauquinoid societies of the western littoral of the Guianas and the Orinoco llanos are associated with impressive earth works such as large habitation mounds and extensive raised field complexes, suggesting community-managed human workforce potential and perhaps a sociopolitical organisation typified by rudimentary institutionalized inequality. However, such a simple or minimal chiefdom-type organisation is unlikely to have characterized the Guayabitan societies of the Lower Orinoco, East Venezuelan littoral and Trinidad. These most likely formed tribal communities in which, as during Saladoid times, due to successful raiding and trading activities so-called 'great men' were able to acquire temporarily prominent positions within their own villages. This may have been the level of sociopolitical integration typifying the Troumassoid communities of the Windward Islands and Barbados as well.

The Arauquinoid-Troumassoid continui-

ties suggest that contacts across the Galleons' Passage did not cease, as is shown also by the fact that examples of Trinidad's Bontour pottery reached Tobago as well as the islands of Los Testigos and Carriacou in the Grenadines. Besides, button- and barrel-shaped diorite beads, made in Tobago where workshops in which these personal accoutrements were manufactured continued to function throughout late-prehistoric times, were apparently exported to Trinidad. Such beads have been encountered in an inhumation burial at Marac on the island's south coast and at the Bontour site on Trinidad's southwestern littoral (Boomert et al. in press), while St. Catherine's (II) yielded a series of unfinished examples (Harris 1972). Nevertheless, the cultural resemblances between the post-Saladoid Tobagonian pottery assemblages and those of the Windward Islands and Barbados point to much more intensive interaction with the Troumassoid communities of the southern Caribbean than with the Arauquinoid villages of the mainland. This is suggested also by the presence of Caliviny exchange pottery or imitations from the Windwards in Tobago's Plymouth complex (Boomert 2008b). Otherwise, exotic-looking artifacts of clearly ceremonial character showing strongly Chicoid iconographic features, which apparently trickled down the Lesser Antillean archipelago by down-the-line-exchange to as far south as the Grenadines (Mol 2007), probably reflect extensive contacts between the Windwards and the Taíno realm along the Caribbean island chain. Allaire (1990) suggests that these ritualized exchange items point to interaction at primarily religious or esoteric levels, also giving rise to the manufacture of imitations or reduced models (also Hofman et al. 2008).

The final Amerindian ceramic tradition of Trinidad, the Mayoid series, is charac-

teristic of the Amerindian-European contact period. Apparently it was introduced from the Guiana coastal zone a few centuries before the European discovery of the island. At some sites sparse amounts of Mayoid pottery have been found associated with Bontour ceramics, suggesting a certain period of overlap between Mayoid and Guayabitan. Mayoid vessels, predominantly thin-walled bowls and necked jars showing a minimum of ornamentation, formed the domestic ceramics used by the Spanish settlers in St. Joseph, Trinidad's first Spanish capital (1592). Besides, it characterizes the Amerindian pottery found at the Capuchin missions in the island which were founded by the Spanish from 1687 onwards. This suggests that several of Trinidad's Amerindian ethnic groups manufactured and used Mayoid ceramics, including at least the Carinepagoto (Caribs), Nepoio, and Yaio. Mayoid pottery shows faint resemblances to the protohistoric Cayo ceramics of the Windward Islands which largely derive from the Koriabo complex of the Guianas, itself an offshoot of the Polychrome Tradition of Amazonia. Koriabo can be taken to represent the prehistoric precursor of the modern Kalina (Carib) pottery of the Guianas while Cayo apparently forms the ceramics of the historic Island Caribs of the Windward Islands (Boomert 1986, 2004). Cayo pottery is unknown from Tobago although a few sites have yielded fragments of possibly Cayo-influenced Suazan Troumassoid ceramics, suggesting amalgamation between both traditions. Generally speaking, the dominance of Mayoid pottery in Trinidad and the onset of Cayo-Koriabo ceramics in the Windward Islands during final-prehistoric times can be taken to be illustrative of the increasing density of Amerindian interaction between the Lesser Antilles and the coastal zone of the Guianas in

this episode, although clearly contacts across the Galleons' Passage among the indigenous communities of Trinidad and Tobago never ceased.

### Conclusions

Throughout Ceramic times the Amerindian communities of Trinidad and Tobago were involved in shifting region-wide exchange and communication networks apart from interacting with each other by crossing the Galleons' Passage. Clearly, after the Saladoid epoch during which Tobago focused on the northern coastal zone of the mainland and Trinidad, the Windward Islands as well as Barbados, the smaller island was drawn into the fully insular Troumassoid interaction sphere. To the contrary, South and Central Trinidad became increasingly affiliated with the Orinoco Valley and Delta, the western littoral of the Guianas and the coastal zone of East Venezuela. Although contacts across the Galleons' Passage never elapsed, in late-prehistoric and protohistoric times they became less significant in terms of the local communities' strategies of iconographic expression reflecting their policies of cultural and perhaps also ethnic identification.

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