#### **EQUALS IN DEATH AS IN LIFE?**

#### MORTUARY AND ISOTOPIC VARIATION IN LATE CERAMIC AGE PUERTO RICO

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Recent research into the pre-Columbian societies of the Greater Antilles has begun to examine sociopolitical structures and change at a finer scale and with reference to a broader variety of social, economic, ideological, and political processes. However, most recent studies of the Late Ceramic Age societies of Puerto Rico have assumed, a priori, the existence of complex territorial polities with at least some degree of institutionalized social inequality. Based on an analysis of osteological, isotopic, and mortuary data garnered from the skeletal remains of 135 Late Ceramic Age individuals from the Puerto Rican sites of Paso del Indio and Punta Candelero, the present study finds no evidence to support such an assumption. The lack of clear differentiation in either mortuary treatment or diet for these individuals, who together represent a period of roughly the 5<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., calls into question the existence of institutionalized social inequality in this period. This leaves open crucial questions about the nature of the internal organization of societies of Late Ceramic Age Puerto Rico.

Les recherches récentes sur les sociétés précolombiennes des Grandes Antilles ont commencé à examiner les structures sociopolitiques et le changement à une échelle beaucoup plus fine et en référence à une large variété de processus sociaux, économiques, idéologiques et politiques. Toutefois, des études plus récentes de l'Age Céramique Avancée de Puerto Rico ont assumé, a priori, l'existence d' entités politiques territoriales complexes avec au moins un certain degré d' inégalité sociale institutionnalisée. Basée sur une analyse de données ostéologiques, isotopiques, et mortuaires recueillies à partir des restes squelettiques de 135 personnes provenant de l'âge céramique avancée des sites portoricains de Paso del Indio et de Punta Candelero, la présente étude n'a pu trouver aucune preuve pour appuyer une telle hypothèse. L'absence de distinction claire, soit dans le traitement de la morgue ou le régime alimentaire de ces personnes, qui, ensembles, représentent une période allant du V allant au XIV siècles AD, remet en question l' existence de l'inégalité sociale institutionnalisée dans cette période. Cela laisse des questions cruciales ouvertes, comme celles liées à la nature de l'organisation interne des sociétés de l'Age Céramique Avancée de Puerto Rico.

Investigaciones recientes sobre las sociedades precolombinas de las Antillas Mayores ha comenzado a examinar las estructuras y cambias sociopolíticas a una escala más fina y con referencia a una variedad más amplia de los procesos sociales, económicos, ideológicos y políticos. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los estudios más recientes de las sociedades de la Edad Cerámica Tardía en Puerto Rico han asumido la existencia de complejos entidades políticas territoriales con al menos cierto grado de desigualdad social. A partir del análisis de los datos osteológicos, isotópicos y funerarios obtenido de los restos óseos de 135 personas de la Edad Cerámica Tardía de los sitios puertorriqueños del Paso del Indio y Punta Candelero, este estudio no encuentra ninguna evidencia que apoye esta suposición. La falta de diferenciación clara en ninguno de los tratamientos mortuorios o la dieta de estas personas, quienes en conjunto representan los siglos quinto-decimocuarta AD, pone en duda la existencia de la desigualdad social en este período. Esto deja abiertas cuestiones cruciales sobre la naturaleza de la organización interna de las sociedades puertorriqueñas en la Edad Cerámica Tardía.

"...if you can argue whether a society is a state or isn't, then it isn't" (Yoffee 1993:69).

# "Egalitarianism in the archaeological record is demonstrated by negative evidence—the absence of evidence for inequality," (Ames 2010:26).

#### Introduction

As noted by Joshua Torres in his recent doctoral dissertation, "our current perception of sociopolitical organization in ancient Puerto Rico derives from ethnohistoric documents depicting a series of complex, territorial polities (*cacicazgos*) on the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico upon European contact," (Torres 2012:37-38). As the political "end state" of the aboriginal societies of the Greater Antilles is known (within the limits of ethnohistoric certainty), a great deal of archaeological work in the archipelago has focused on identifying and explaining the evolutionary stages and processes that resulted in hierarchically organized societies of the contact period. In some respects, one of the principal tasks for Caribbean archaeologists concerned with sociopolitical hierarchy has been to determine the antiquity of such institutions. Recent research into the pre-Columbian societies of the Greater Antilles has begun to examine sociopolitical structures and change at a finer scale and with reference to a broader variety of social. economic. ideological, and political processes.

While debates persist over both the timing of, and specific means by which the transition to institutionalized status and social inequality<sup>1</sup> occurred, it is generally agreed

that by some time after A.D. 600 (a period that is termed variously as the Late Ceramic Age, Period III, or the Ostionoid series), such a transition was at least underway, if not developed. more fully Suggested archaeological correlates of this transition include: shifts in settlement patterns (Siegel 1991, 1999, 2010; Torres 2012), an increase in ceremonial objects (Curet 1996; Oliver 2009; Siegel 1996), the monumentalization of public spaces (Siegel 1991, 1999, 2010), changes in mortuary practices (Curet and Oliver 1998), and shifts in domestic architecture (Curet 1992). What is missing, however, is more-or-less direct evidence of the existence of an elite class or elite individuals; after more than 100 years of archaeological work in Puerto Rico, not a single chiefly residence or burial has been discovered.

In their analysis of 51 ethnographically documented New World prestate sedentary studies, Feinman and Neitzel (1984) identified nine common markers of chiefly status. While necessarily not a complete list of the possible markers of social difference, and while the lack of such markers cannot be taken as evidence of the lack of social stratification (Feinman and Neitzel 1984:76), such a list does at least provide a means by which archaeological inquiries into the presence of such status differentiation might proceed. Of these nine identified trappings of high status, six (multiple wives, special dress, obeisance, services. servants/slaves. and special

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Status and social inequality being defined here following Price and Feinman (2010:2), "Social inequality, the organizing principle of hierarchical structure in human society, (which) is manifested in unequal access to goods, information, decision making, and power. Status is the determinant of social *Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013* 

position, and status differentiation is the foundation of inequality."

invisible language) would be to archaeologists working in the Greater Antilles, either because they leave no material trace or because of the rigors of organic preservation in the Caribbean neotropics. Of the remaining three status markers (special houses, special burials, special foods), special houses have received the most attention, which is appropriate given that 45% of the societies that Feinman and Neitzel studied signaled status difference by such means. While ethnohistoric accounts (Oviedo y Valdez 1959) include reference to distinct rectangular homes for the *cacique*, no evidence of the existence of special chiefly housing in the pre-Contact period has yet been found. Curet (1992) found a general shift in Puerto Rican domestic architecture from larger communal structure in the Saladoid to smaller houses capable of sheltering a nuclear family in the later Ostionoid, but made no suggestion of the existence of special or elite housing. Similarly. Samson's (2010) review of domestic architecture across the northern Antilles found no traces of chiefly homes in Caribbean prehistory.

Special burial treatment and special food are the two remaining archaeologically visible means by which ancient Caribbean elites may have differentiated themselves or been differentiated. While these markers were only found in 31% and 12%, respectively, of the societies analyzed by Feinman and Neitzel (1984), they remain as potentially valuable, archaeologically visible, sources of data on the existence and nature of institutionalized status difference in the pre-Columbian societies of Puerto Rico.

While an imperfect lens (Smith and Lee 2008), differences in mortuary treatment have long been appreciated as a means of reconstructing variation in social status (Binford 1971; Brown 1971; Saxe 1970; *Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013* 

Schulting 1995; Tainter 1978). Drennan and colleagues (2010:46) have recently described burial treatment as, "the archetypal if source archaeological controversial of information about social ranking". Put succinctly, "the deceased is given a set of representations of his or her various social identities or roles when alive so that their status or social position may be given material form after death," (Parker Pearson 1982:99). Indeed, in a Caribbean context, differences in mortuary treatments have been argued to attest to the existence of institutionalized inequality at the late precontact/early contact period site of Chorro de Maita in Cuba (Valcárcel Rojas and Rodríguez Arce 2003).

More than a century of anthropological research has also shown that dietary difference can pattern with the internal status differences of a society, and that, "variation in what people eat reflects substantive variation in status and power and characterizes societies that are internally stratified into rich and poor, sick and healthy, developed and underdeveloped, overfed and undernourished," (Ross 1987:8). Or, as Appadurai (1981:507) observed, food can, "serve to regulate rank, reify roles, and signify privileges." While there is no doubt that stratified societies can exist without an internally differentiated cuisines (Goody 1982; Mintz 1996), most/many stratified societies possess some do form of differentiated cuisine. Furthermore. the development thereof often is coeval with the onset of stratification, "food remains reflect social distinctions in prehistoric societies, particularly among...middle- range societies, chiefdoms," (Jackson and Scott 2003:552).

Given their propensity for reflecting aspects of internal status variation, these two markers form the focus of the present inquiry into the existence of internal social stratification in the pre-Columbian polities of Puerto Rico.



Figure 1. Map of Puerto Rico with locations of sites mentioned in text noted.

#### Methods and Materials

To test, in an admittedly imperfect manner, largely untested assumption that the institutionalized social inequality existed in the Late Ceramic Age societies of Puerto Rico, the present study makes use of two of the largest and best-studied skeletal samples from the island (Figure 1). The site of Paso del Indio, in the north-central municipio of Vega Baja yielded the remains of some 129 individuals (Walker 2005), 85 of whom are included in the present study, whereas 106 individuals (50 of whom are included in the present work) were recovered from the site of Punta Candelero, in southeastern Humacao (Rodríguez López 1991). Median probability calibrated AMS dates for the Paso del Indio individuals range from 642-1356 cal A.D. whereas the individuals from Punta Candelero span the period from 483-1097 cal A.D. (Pestle 2010b). Both of these skeletal samples have been analyzed osteologically by Edwin Crespo Torres (Crespo Torres Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013

1991, 1994, 2000), and have been the subject of several previous and forthcoming studies by the present author and colleagues (Pestle 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Pestle and Colvard 2012; Pestle, et al. 2008; Pestle, et al. 2013).

From the previously conducted archaeological and osteological analysis of these individuals and their graves, we possess individual data on age-at-death (although no subadult individuals were recovered at Punta Candelero), sex, burial orientation (cardinal direction of head), body position, and accompanying grave goods. Radiometric analysis of bone collagen provided individual AMS dates for all individuals under study whereas stable isotope analysis of bone collagen and hydroxyapatite yielded four isotopic measures of individual-level diet (Pestle 2010b).<sup>2</sup> These are:  $\delta^{13}C_{co}$  and  $\delta^{15}N_{co}$ ,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For details on the methods of radiometric and stable isotopic analysis, readers are invited to consult Pestle 2010b.

which, based on experimental data, reflect dietary protein,  $\delta^{13}C_{ap}$ , which provides data on dietary carbohydrates, and  $\Delta^{13}C_{ap-co}$ , which yields data on the chemical differences between the protein and carbohydrates in a consumer's diet (Ambrose and Norr 1993). Broken into three categories (mortuary, demographic, and isotopic), the interrelationships of these data can be visualized as presented in Figure 2. The present study examined mortuary data for evidence of status-related variation in burial treatment, while the isotopic data were analyzed to investigate the possibility of socially driven dietary variation, that is lived food intake differences in between individuals of differing social status. The inclusion in this analysis of demographic data allows for the control of potentially confounding social (age, gender) and temporal factors that might otherwise impede analysis of the type presented here.



Figure 2. Visual representation of data categories (mortuary, demographic, and isotopic) and interrelationships analyzed in the present work.

With these data in hand, a variety of statistical analyses (Fisher exact tests, t-tests, ANOVA, and Chi-squared) were employed in order to discern whether differences in death (special burial) patterned in a significant manner with differences in life (special food) or vice-versa. All statistical analyses were conducted on an intra-site basis, as it is on an intra-societal scale that institutionalized social inequality would be manifested. Through these analyses, it was hoped that categorical statements might be made about whether individuals treated differently in death might have had access to different foods in life, or if those that ate differently in life were treated differently once they were deceased. A finding that some individuals were clearly differentiated along both vectors would be presumed to be evidence for some sort of meaningful status variation, whereas the lack of any such differentiation, while by definition not conclusive, would raise interesting questions.

#### Results

The results and discussion that follow have been divided into two parallel streams. The first (Death to Life) begins with analysis of variation in mortuary treatments and examines the isotopic data for any correlates, whereas the second (Life to Death) begins by examining the isotopic data for outliers and then analyzing the mortuary data to see if those individuals with aberrant isotopic signatures were also treated differently in death. Analysis of variation in mortuary treatment was hampered somewhat by issues of sample size. While there are isotopic and radiometric data for all 135 individuals in the study sample, significant lacuna were present in the mortuary and osteological data. The shifts in sample size caused by these holes in the data are represented in the individual nvalues presented in each table.

# From Death to Life

#### Orientation

The distribution of burial orientation (cardinal direction of the deceased's head) for the two study sites is presented in Table 1. Orientation towards the eight points of the compass rose were represented at both sites, suggesting either a lack of hard-and-fast cultural rules governing the "proper" direction for placement of the deceased's head, that such a consideration was judged to be unimportant, or that this aspect of mortuary treatment was guided by norms unintelligible to us today. Orientation towards the South (31.7%) and East (25%) together accounted for over 50% of the burials at Paso del Indio, while orientation towards the North, East, and Southeast occurred most frequently (19.2% each) at Punta Candelero. When evaluated statistically (Table 2), orientation of the burials was not found to pattern in a statistically significant fashion with any of the demographic variables (AMS date, ageat-death, or sex) at either site. Similarly, there were no detectable statistically significant relationships between burial orientation and any of the four analyzed isotopic variables at either Paso del Indio or Punta Candelero.

	Paso del Indio (n=60)	Punta Candelero (n=26)
Ν	10.0%	19.2%
NE	6.7%	3.8%
Е	25.0%	19.2%
SE	6.7%	19.2%
S	31.7%	7.7%
SW	11.7%	3.8%
W	6.7%	11.5%
NW	1.7%	15.4%

# Table 1. Orientation of burials at Paso del Indio and Punta Candelero.

	Paso del Indio		Punta Candelero			
			Grave			Grave
	Orientation	Position	Goods	Orientation	Position	Goods
AMS date (ANOVA/T-test)	0.84	0.29	0.99	0.40	0.44	0.73
Age (Chi-squared/Fisher exact)	0.23	0.19	0.58	X	x	х
Sex (Chi-squared/Fisher exact)	0.74	0.41	0.01	0.25	0.37	0.40
$\delta^{13}C_{co}$ (ANOVA/T-test)	0.12	0.63	0.71	0.23	0.83	0.90
$\delta^{15}C_{co}$ (ANOVA/T-test)	0.93	0.09	0.60	0.24	0.75	0.48
$\delta^{13}C_{ap}$ (ANOVA/T-test)	0.33	0.90	0.68	0.45	0.60	0.51
$\Delta^{13}C_{ap-co}$ (ANOVA/T-test)	0.54	0.89	0.83	0.39	0.71	0.55

# Table 2. Results of statistical analysis of demographic, mortuary, and isotopic variables.

Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013

# Position

Details of burial position for the two study samples are presented in Table 3. Flexed burial (fetal position, knees drawn to chest) was the most frequent mode of burial by far, accounting for just over 87% of the burials at each site. While the majority of the flexed burials were placed on their back (dorsal), individuals were also placed on their ventral, right, and left sides, in decreasing order. Secondary burials made up the majority of the remaining interments. The sole individual buried in an extended position at either site was a child from Paso del Indio. Analysis of both the demographic and isotopic variables failed to reveal any statistically significant relationships with burial position (Table 2).

	Paso del Indio (n=70)	Punta Candelero (n=31)
Dorsal flexed	55.7%	45.2%
Left flexed	7.1%	6.5%
Right flexed	8.6%	12.9%
Ventral flexed	15.7%	22.6%
Flexed total	87.1%	87.2%
Ventral extended	1.4%*	0.0%
Secondary	11.4%	12.9%

## Table 3. Position of burials at Paso del Indio and Punta Candelero.

## Grave Goods

As detailed in Table 4, nearly one-quarter (24.7%) of the burials at Paso del Indio and 14% of the burials at Punta Candelero included some type of grave good. Ceramics were the most commonly provided grave good at both sites (with a prevalence of 12.9% and 12.0%, respectively), with shell, stone, and beads occurring in lesser

Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013

quantities. The grave good assemblage present at Paso del Indio was intriguing for the presence, in 8.2% (7/85) of the graves, of additional human skeletal elements. Analysis found no statistically significant relationship between the presence/absence of grave goods and the four isotopic variables considered here. And, while comparison of presenceabsence of grave goods with AMS date, age, and four isotopic variables revealed no

Pestle

statistically significant patterning (Table 2), there was, at Paso del Indio at least. a significant difference in grave good provisioning according to sex (Fisher Exact test, p=0.01). Indeed, ten of eighteen females (55.6%) from that site were buried with goods as compared to only five of twentynine males (17.2%). However, when these differences were explored isotopically (Table

5), there were no significant differences between members of the same sex buried with or without grave goods (e.g. females with goods versus females without) nor were any differences found in comparing the isotopic values of individuals of opposite sexes who were or were not provided with grave accompaniments (e.g. females with goods versus males with goods).

	Paso del Indio (n=85)	Punta Candelero (n=50)
Goods present	24.7%	14.0%
Ceramics	12.9%	12.0%
Human bone	8.2%	0.0%
Shell	2.4%	0.0%
Stone	2.4%	2.0%
Beads	0.0%	2.0%

# Table 4. Grave good provisioning at Paso del Indio and Punta Candelero.

	Females w/o goods vs. Males w/o goods	Females w/ goods vs. Males w/ goods	Females w/goods vs. Females w/o goods	Males w/goods vs. Males w/o goods
AMS date (T- test)	0.54	0.55	0.27	0.98
$\delta^{13}C_{co}$ (T-test)	0.76	0.93	0.25	0.54
$\delta^{15}C_{co}$ (T-test)	0.73	0.52	0.45	0.73
$\delta^{13}C_{ap}$ (T-test)	0.27	0.70	0.41	0.34
$\Delta^{13}C_{ap-co}$ (T-test)	0.26	0.74	0.24	0.52

Table 5. Results of statistical analysis (t-tests) of grave goods and sex against isotopic variables.

Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013

# From Life to Death

Statistical analysis of the isotopic data revealed ten individuals possessing outlying isotopic values, eight from Paso del Indio and two from Punta Candelero. Seven of these ten were only outliers in one isotopic system whereas three others, all from Paso del Indio, possessed outlying isotopic values in two isotopic variables. Dealing first with the two outliers from Punta Candelero, both of whom possessed aberrantly enriched  $\delta^{13}C_{ap}$  values (-4.7% and -5.4%, versus a site mean of -8.3‰), nothing could be said about attendant variation in mortuary treatment, as no such data was discernable from excavation records. At Paso del Indio, a similar lack of mortuary treatment information prevented any such analysis of one individual (6.0023) with an outlying  $\delta^{13}C_{co}$  value of -17.5‰ as compared to the site mean of -19.0%. Additionally, as both of the Paso del Indio individuals with outlying  $\delta^{13}C_{ap}$  values are infants, who by definition have diets distinct from adults in any given society, it would be unwise to attribute much social difference to such dietary distinctiveness.

At least some mortuary treatment data was available for the remaining five adult individuals from Paso del Indio, allowing for comparison of their diet in life and treatment after death. Such analysis failed to reveal evident patterns that would suggest that individuals with statistically distinct diets<sup>3</sup> were treated in a distinctive manner after death. For instance, while three individuals (6.0017, 6.0035, and 6.0076) possess significantly enriched  $\delta^{13}C_{co}$  values (between -17.8‰ and -17.4‰ compared to the site mean of -19.0%), and two of these also display significantly enriched  $\Delta^{13}C_{ap-co}$ values (6.8‰ and 6.6‰ versus the site average of 9.7‰), there is neither ascertainable consistency nor distinctiveness in their respective burial treatment. One is a secondary burial (like 11.4% of the site's burials) and two are flexed and in dorsal position (55.7% of the site's burials); one is oriented north (like 10% of the site's burials) and one south (like 31.7% of the site's burials), with the secondary burial lacking orientation data: one was buried with the bones of another individual (8.2% of the site's burials) and one with nothing (75.3%)of the site's burials). An additional individual with a significantly depleted  $\delta^{13}C_{co}$  signature (-20.5‰) was also in a dorsal flexed burial (like two of the individuals at the opposite end of the observed  $\delta^{13}C_{co}$  range, and nearly 56% of the individuals at the site), was not provided with any goods (75.3%), and was oriented towards the northeast (6.7%).

A similar lack of internal coherence or external distinctiveness of mortuary treatment was found for the other groupings of isotopically distinct individuals. Put more simply, those individuals with different diets in life do not appear to have been treated consistently differently in death from those individuals with a more "average" diet.

#### Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of the present work was to test the commonly held assumption that Late

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> It should be noted that while the values identified here are statistical outliers, the actual dietary difference from "average" to outlying diets that these values represent could, in all actuality, be rather subtle (see Discussion).

Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013

Ceramic Age societies of Puerto Rico possessed institutionalized systems of social inequality. A series of non-significant (not to be confused with insignificant) results, of the sort presented here, presents serious challenges when the time comes for explanation. The Yoffee and Ames quotations provided at the outset of this paper (Yoffee's Rule and what I term Ames' Dictum) illustrate perfectly the interpretive conundrum that such results engender. Does a lack of evidence tip the scales for or against a conclusion of the existence of inequality in the present case? In the few paragraphs that follow, I attempt to render several interpretations of the meaning of the results presented above for the continued validity of such an assumption.

One possibility is that the dataset employed herein is inappropriate, either by its very nature or due to its incompleteness, for the consideration of matters of social inequality. First, it is possible that social inequality existed in the prehistoric societies of the island of Puerto Rico, but that such status difference was not embodied or communicated through dietary difference or variations in mortuary treatment. Perhaps the signaling of status in the societies under study here was being done in domains other than the food consumed in life or the way in which the dead were treated at burial.

Second, for myriad reasons, the relationship between burial treatments and lived social status is complex and anisometric (O'Shea 1981, 1984; Parker Pearson 1982; Smith and Lee 2008); one need not follow the other, especially in ways that might be visible and comprehensible by modern archaeologists. Perhaps the signaling being sought here is, in fact, evidenced in the graves, but not in a way documented by these sites' excavators or discernable to us today. Additionally, the mortuary treatment dataset available to the present study was far from ideal, and possessed enough lacunae to make *Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013*  the derivation of hard-and-fast conclusions troublesome.

Likewise, in the arena of food, nothing compels even a fully stratified society to possess an internally differentiated cuisine (Goody 1982; Mintz 1996). While bona fide status variation could have indeed existed in the societies in question here, individuals of differing status may have been eating the same things. Furthermore, differences in dietary systems might be manifest not in the types of food being consumed by individuals of differing status but rather in amount (de Garine 1972; Helms 1992) or preparation technique (deFrance 2009; Leach 2003). Finally, chemically subtle, but socially weighty, dietary differences might be beyond our ability to discern using the means employed in the present work.

Setting such concerns aside, however, and assuming that the dataset and methods employed here are appropriate for the question being asked, one is presented with two somewhat antagonistic but, as I argue below, ultimately reconcilable, alternative interpretations.

If one takes a bastardized version of Yoffee's Rule, "if you can argue whether a society is a chiefdom or isn't, then it isn't," (Yoffee 1993:69), as a starting point, the results presented here would appear to cast doubt on the existence of institutionalized unequal status positions in the societies under study. While imperfect lenses into social structure, mortuary treatment and dietary variation are demonstrably cross-cultural means by which institutionalized social inequality can be/often is manifest. The lack of statistically significant evidence that individuals with different diets were being afforded distinct burials treatments or that those buried in different manners had different diets while, ipso facto, inconclusive, can be taken to undermine at the very least the assumption that institutionalized

inequality existed in the Late Ceramic Age societies of Puerto Rico. We can argue that it wasn't there, ergo it wasn't.

However, if one follows the irony of Ames' dictum that, "egalitarianism in the archaeological record is demonstrated by negative evidence—the absence of evidence for inequality," (Ames 2010:26), a different interpretation would seem to carry the day. For, if "a failure to demonstrate ranking is not the same as demonstrating egalitarianism and that without positive evidence, the case is unproven," (Ames 2010:26), then the present case must be deemed inconclusive, and thus the assumption of the existence of stratified and egalitarian structures must be taken to be unproven. Based on the data presented here, one cannot find categorical evidence that the societies represented by the assemblages at Paso del Indio or Punta Candelero were either egalitarian or ranked.

While perhaps an exercise in negative data, this finding nonetheless carries potentially important ramifications for those studying the Late Ceramic Age societies of Puerto Rico. Based largely on ethnohistoric knowledge of the socio-political "end state" of the societies of the Greater Antilles (the *cacicazgo*), most studies in the region have assumed the existence in these societies of institutionalized social inequality. This assumption leaves those who might possess doubts about the veracity of such an assumption in the untenable position of having to prove a negative (that such inequality *did not* exist). Invocation of Yoffee's Rule at least reminds us that this is not the case and that the burden of proof lies with those who would make such an assumption to demonstrate its validity. Somewhat conversely, Ames' Dictum serves to caution us against swinging too far in the opposite direction by claiming an absence of proof of inequality as the proof of inequality's absence.

The present study finds no evidence that individuals who ate differently in life were treated differently in death nor that those who were buried in any particular manner had distinct diets when they were alive. Anthropological and archaeological research has long shown diet and burial treatment to be sensitive indices of social inequality, so that the absence of any such finding can at least call into question any a priori assumption about the existence of such institutions in Late Ceramic Age Puerto Rico. However, this finding cannot be taken as de facto evidence for egalitarianism. While perhaps unsatisfactory, such a conclusion allows, or even compels, us to re-examine the archaeological record of the societies of Late Ceramic Age Puerto Rico with fresh eyes.

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Journal of Caribbean Archaeology 13, 2013

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