

AMERINDIAN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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This is an attempt to marry anthropology and archeology, and to see its effect on the prehistory of Trinidad and Tobago. It is fortunate that a set of relevant Amerindian lifeways and value-systems survive in present-day Amazonia. Their general parameters help to put our archeological remains into an Amerindian perspective. In addition several specific activities and beliefs can reasonably be associated with archeological artifacts.

AMAZONIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

So far I have only looked at the ethnography of the WARAO, PANARE, YECUANA, YANOMAMO, GOAJIRO, the Tucanoan group and the tribes of Guyana (Fig. 1). There seem to be six major parameters: Spirit-world, Village, Food and other resources, Men, Women, and Institutions wider than the village.

Spirit-World

People live simultaneously in three worlds, all equally real. Sky-world is populated by positive Spirits, symbolized by the sun, bright colours and certain birds, etc. Under-world is peopled by destructive Spirits, represented by the moon, dark murky waters and reptilians, etc. In the middle is This-world, populated by Indians, and manifestations of Sky- and Under-world Spirits.

All activities are governed by Spirit-world. Success in hunting, for instance, is due to correct ritual satisfaction of the "Master of Animals", not to personal skill. Spirit-associated resources, artifacts and activities are restricted to men, and are forbidden to women: e.g., fish and arrow poisons, ritual drugs, ritual dress, musical instruments, chanting, etc.

Festivals maintain the approval of the "First Spirits". These re-enact important aspects of tribal mythology: e.g., major foods, death, initiation, fertility, etc. All Spirits are dangerous, good or bad; and mediation is the province of the SHAMAN. Shamanic artifacts include: special stool, rattle, sacred quartz crystals, cigar-holder, club, jaguar, and harpy-eagle manifestations, etc.

Different tribes use different materials to communicate with the Spirits: tobacco water (Guyana tribes), cigars and tobacco smoke (WARAO), EPENA snuff (YANOMAMO), coca-snuff and YAJE drink (Tucanoan group), etc. There may be a west-east difference in communication media: e.g., coca-YOPO-type snuff tobacco. Present-day snuff artifacts are all made from "wild" items: e.g., hardwood, bone, reed-tube, etc. The YANOMAMO grind snuff with an old stone axe.

The main drink artifact is a "wild" calabash cup. However, the Tucanoan tribes also have a special pot: with a tall (13 cm) cylindrical base, painted designs in wild swirling colours (red, yellow, white) representing the YAJE vision, often with male and female symbols indicating spiritual rebirth, and suspension holes for hanging outside the house under the northeast eave (Schultes, pers.comm.). The pot is freshly repainted for each festival, by the men.

Burial customs often include the interment of "personal" artifacts: e.g., blowpipe, bow and arrows, coca pouch, etc. WARAO burials are usually two-stage: primary in a canoe, then secondary in a hollowed-log box.

Although beer is made specially for festivals, it does not appear to be Spirit-related. It is made variously from manioc, sugarcane, maize; and is always made by women. The beer canoe, however, is always made by the men, and is often painted. The PANARE make a fresh one for each festival.

Village and Family

Family and village are the major social institutions, and are almost synonymous. Village layouts vary: one multi-family house with central space for ritual activity; a plaza surrounded by adjoining houses; central men's hut in a plaza with surrounding houses. Community members vary from 30 to 300. House layout is often highly regulated, and with the Tucanoan tribes and the YECUANA it reproduces the structure of the universe. There are always well defined entrances and approach paths. Gardens are usually close by. They last 2-3 years for root crops and 5-10 years for tree crops. Villages move every 5-10 years. Usually the settlement is abandoned on the death of its Headman. Most community members are kin. The Headman is the senior family male. Possibly 300 is the maximum community membership that can be held together by kinship authority alone.

The Tucanoan BARASANA seem to have a marriage scale:

- for an eldest son, kinship (i.e., cross-cousin) marriage,
- for middle sons, wife-raiding of distant settlements, if there are insufficient kinship brides,
- for the youngest son, endogamous marriage, or even a member of the servant-status MAKU tribe.

Endogamy (marriage within the community) and uxorilocality (husband joins his father-in-law's household) seem to be the norm among the less structured societies of the east, whereas the more structured Tucanoan tribes in the west are exogamous and virilocal.

Food, Ecozones and Other Natural Resources

Subsistence festivals indicate a wide range of important foods: moriche palm sago, manioc, pijiguao fruit, inga fruit, meat, fish. In general a proper meal must have both meat (obtained by the men) and a vegetable staple (obtained by the women). For the BARASANA in the west, the poorest meal is "pepper-pot", i.e., boiled-down manioc juice plus a few odds and ends.

Several ecozones are covered by the sample: riverine (WARAO, Tucanoan peoples, YECUANA); forest (YANOMAMO, PANARE, to some extent YECUANA); and desert (GOAJIRO).

Men's Activities

Men and women's activities are normally separate, but complementary. The only undifferentiated activity seems to be body-painting.

In general men operate within the "wild" worlds of the forest, the rivers and the Spirits. They produce meat from hunting and fishing, and make all the associated artifacts: bow and arrow, blowpipe and darts, quivers, game-bags, etc. Both hunters and dogs take snuff to assist them.

Men convert the forest into gardens, and trees into houses, canoes and woodwork. Drumming assists YECUANA house-construction and garden-clearing. Tobacco smoke and chanting assist the WARAO canoe-master.

Men plant, collect, prepare, make and use all Spirit-related plants and artifacts: e.g., tobacco, CAPI vine, coca, fish- and arrow-poisons, ritual featherwork, teeth necklaces, bird-skin cloaks, musical instruments, wooden stools, snuff-trays, etc. They are also the principal actors in festivals: masquerading as spirits, playing musical instruments, chanting, dancing, etc. Through festivals they ensure the spiritual continuity of their community.

Women's Activities

In general, women operate in the "controlled" areas of settlement and gardens. They weed and crop the garden, prepare the daily food (which includes cooking the meat), collect and carry the daily firewood.

They prepare the beer for festivals. They make the pottery (with the exception of the YECUANA). They weave (however, hammocks are usually made by the men). They make and wear bead necklaces, and in some instances bead aprons.

Through making children, they ensure the physical continuity of their own or a kin-related community.

Supra-Village Institutions

Kinship is the major extra-village institution. It is maintained in several ways:

- marriage, and in particular the custom of "sister" exchange, festivals,
- exogamy with kin-related families, and
- in limited circumstances, wife-raiding: e.g., when it is desirable to forge an alliance with the "distant" community from which the wife was taken, and in which she still has kin.

In the less structured societies all persons from outside the community are viewed with distrust, even kin. It is interesting to note the hostile

scene acted out by a PANARE host and his invitees from a neighbouring community, before they are admitted to a festival.

Trade is another major institution. This can be intra-people: as when the YANOMAMO seal inter-community alliances, with the agreement that a certain commodity can only be supplied by one community: e.g., pottery, arrow-grass, snuff, dogs, etc. Or it can be inter-people: e.g., blowpipes (YECUANA to PANARE); canoes for tobacco (16th century WARAO and Trinidad); canoes, dogs, curare, etc. (19th century Guyana). Interestingly, no trade in "primitive valuables" (e.g., green stone frogs) seems to exist today.

Two other unusual institutions exist in the sample covered. When PANARE boys are initiated, men from another community are responsible for guiding, dressing and testing them. The GOAJIRO "casta" is a highly structured form of kinship, which includes several communities. An individual offence against a member of another "casta" is settled with a "cobro" (fine), payable by the "casta" of the offender. The differences between low and high degree of structuring should be borne in mind when we look at the archeological data.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ARCHEOLOGY

Please now look at the Archeological Timeframe (Fig. 2). You will see that:

six different archeological series are present between the two islands: Preceramic, Saladoid, Barrancoid, Arauquinoid, Suazoid, Mayoid, these series combine differently in each island, and the difference increases over time, the Amerindian period continues well into post-Columbian time in both islands. Also no assemblage has yet been identified for the final 300 years in Tobago.

Each series will be considered in turn, in the light of the six ethnographic parameters reported above.

Preceramic

These are mostly a canoe-people, with settlements located near a swamp. Subsistence is based on shellfish and hunting. The latter gives way to fishing around B.C. 5000. The tool-kit includes the present-day bone fishing-arrow point, and a flat "fish-hook" (Boomert, pers. comm.) still used by the 19th century WARAO. The place of manioc is presumably taken by another daily vegetable staple. Settlement habitat makes moriche palm sago a likely candidate, but the abundant handstone-and-slab artifacts do not seem related to the processing of this food.

Unlike present-day settlements, sites show considerable continuity. Banwari has seven stratigraphic layers covering 2500 years. Final abandonment seems to have occurred after several deaths.

Some Spirit-world activities are clearly present. Several imported blue-green stone pestles and a serpentinite cup seem closest to the snuff-

and-drink ritual. Burials include one primary, with a possible personal possession in the form of a round stone; and one secondary, in a bundle as though placed in a perishable box.

The main "primitive valuable" is a conical greenstone pestle, and a widespread exchange network is indicated, covering the Lesser Antilles at least as far as Grenada, and parts of the Guiana Shield and/or the Coastal Cordillera of Venezuela. Banwarian sites occur on both sides of the Orinoco delta: El Conchero-type on the Gulf of Paria and Alaka-type on the Guyana coast.

Current WARAO residence in the delta, plus the myth of their culture-hero exiled to Trinidad's San Fernando Hill, plus 16th century reports of the exchange of WARAO canoes for Trinidad tobacco, plus their recently (1930s) prohibited annual visit to the San Fernando interior for purposes unknown, plus fish-crab-snail food resources make WARAO ancestors a strong ethno/cultural candidate for our Preceramic people. On the other hand, the handstone-and-slab artifacts do not fit with the present-day processing of moriche palm sago, and the pestle and cup seem closer to the snuff-and-drink ritual than to the 50-75 cm cigars used by present-day WARAO shamans to communicate with their Spirit-world.

In southeast Trinidad, a cluster of slightly different sites is found, Ortoiran. The main staple appears to be sandy-shore shellfish. Artifacts are rare, but include the flat "fish-hook", imported greenstone oblongoid pestles, and abundant red ochre. Dates are B.C. 800 ?A.D. 0.

In Tobago, one undated site has been found, without artifacts. Isolated "barrel-shaped" local-stone pestles have been found nearby and may be related.

Saladoid

This is clearly another canoe-people, who live off cassava bread and shellfish, plus some hunting and fishing. Settlements are mostly located on low forested ridges and slopes, close to the coast. They are more numerous than before, larger, and several span 600 years.

These people also have pottery, which is decorated with a multiplicity of heads, presumably reflecting a multi-Spirit belief system. Because of this probable spirit association, the heads are likely to have been made by the men: especially rattler-heads, which presumably belonged to a Shaman. Differences of temper and decoration mode suggest there were four distinct groups in Trinidad and a fifth in Tobago. The last substitutes fine-line incision (similar to Itacoatiara on the central Amazon) for red-and-white painting.

The snuff-and-drink ritual is clearly present. Snuff artifacts include:

- nostril-bowl with bird/turtle motif,
- crosshatch (later red-rimmed) effigy bowls with various Under-world motifs,

small oblongoid grinder, made from imported stone or an old celt.

Drink artifacts include:

red-and-white painted bottle, some with BARASANA-type male and female symbols,
cylindrical pot-stand,
two-handed oblongoid drinking bowl.

Most of these are made of "cooked" pottery instead of present-day "raw" or "wild" materials. Since Amerindians regard pottery as a "civilized" material, a greater degree of political structure is suggested than today.

Burial offerings vary from nil to a personal round-stone, to a celt and 1-2 bowls. The last is felt to indicate a small degree of hereditary status in the position of Headman. One burial, with a celt and four snuff-and-drink vessels, may represent strong Barranoid influence from the Orinoco delta (see next assemblage), where society has reportedly been at a higher level since A.D. 0. Primitive valuables have now changed to celts, beads and pendants, which Trinidad must import as it has no suitable stone.

This new culture derives archeologically from the central Orinoco. Many features seem generally similar to the present-day Tucanoan peoples of the Vaupes area, between the Rio Negro and the foothills of the Andes.

Barranoid

There is no change in lifeway. Settlements are fewer, larger and generally continue on the same site.

In Trinidad, influence from the Barranoid centre at the neck of the Orinoco delta has increased: until 50% of the pottery is now Saladoid paste in a Barranoid style, while the other 50% is delta Barranoid (temper, quality, style). Either over half the ritual pottery is now from the delta, or half the population consists of delta immigrants.

In Tobago, the small Saladoid population seems to have been swallowed up by immigrants. Whether they came from the delta or the Lesser Antilles is not yet clear. Local manufacture of valuables, chiefly greenstone celts and black-and-white beads, must have given Tobago considerable economic importance. Decorated vessels are larger than in Trinidad, and decoration is more sophisticated. A small number of imports seem to be present, both from the delta and the Lesser Antilles. In addition there is a clear distinction between the finish of ritual and utilitarian ware. The latter has a horizontally scraped appearance, which begins to change to horizontal scratching from ca A.D. 500-600 (Boomert, pers. comm.). Presumably the utilitarian pottery was made by women.

The overall increase in quality of design and manufacture suggests that ritual pottery from the delta is made by specialist craftsmen, and that all ritual pottery is made by men. This increase in quality also implies an equivalent increase in political structure. Variety of heads is greatly

reduced, in favour of a creature with a long snout and a feather head-dress. I interpret the latter as a "Supreme Spirit" symbol; and the reduction in variety as an indication of increased religious structure. At the same time the number of snuff-and-drink vessels seems to increase. The long-snouted creature may variously represent deer, bat, jaguar or cayman. It is interesting that several present-day Amazonian Indians use different animals to identify kinship units such as sibs.

Burial offerings now include 1-4 vessels, mostly related to the snuff-and-drink ritual. In Tobago, 27 celts are found among 5 burials, and an effigy bowl is found with a juvenile. These seem to indicate an increase in hereditary status, probably related to the manufacture of exchange valuables.

The apparent increase in religious and political structure, and the probable expansion of exchange valuables to include large amounts of ritual pottery, imply the exercise of considerable religious and political power by the Barranroid centre at the neck of the delta. All this seems closely linked with the snuff-and-drink ritual. The Shamanic sector probably had more power than in any of the present-day groups studied, while the Headman may have had similar authority to the head of the GOAJIRO "casta". At the same time, personal relationships probably remain at the kinship level.

Arauquinoid

In Trinidad, there is generally a break in settlement location, and over 80% of the vessel repertoire changes. Main new vessel is the Buckpot, in which the "pepper-pot" stew of the Guianas is prepared. Percentage of decorated pottery falls from about 60% to less than 5%, design motifs change, and after a while U-line incision becomes V-line. The Saladoid temper/decoration pattern of four groups re-emerges: as coastal, inland, north, and southeast. A few CAUXI-tempered items are assumed to be imports from the Orinoco, and include the utilitarian griddle, now less than 2% of artifact repertoire. Several small shallow sites suggest the beginnings of present-day village mobility.

In short, Trinidad seems to have quickly absorbed a new lifeway, in which:

- "pepper-pot" is the main staple,
- women make the pottery,
- religion and power are comparatively unstructured,
- snuff-and-drink artifacts may mostly be made from perishable materials,
- the beer-canoe may become an important artifact,
- there is minimum cultural contact with the Arauquinoid successor to the Barranroid centre at the neck of the delta,
- the exchange-system is closer to present-day intra- and inter-people relations.

Probably these changes involved both immigration and cultural influence.

Araquinoid-Suazoid

In Tobago, the degree of continuity seems to be much greater. Fine-ware continues with the same polished ginger paste, U-line incision and flaring-ring base, suggesting that ritual pottery continues to be made by men. New wavy-line motifs and a drum-shaped bowl presumably reflect influence from the successor centre on the delta. Coarse-ware adds a new neckless olla shape, and now 50% of the sherds have vertical or blurred horizontal scratching.

Troumasso-Suazoid

The main fine-ware vessel is now a casuela shape with an incised double-hoop motif. This suggests a change of cultural influence from delta to southern Lesser Antilles. The vessel itself seems distantly related by both decoration and shape to the YAJE vessel of the BARASANA, and could have been specific to this function. The painted polychrome curves and spirals of the Lesser Antilles Caliviny style suggest this relationship more strongly.

The majority of coarse-ware (85%) is now covered in multi-directional scratching. Its absence from Trinidad suggests that the two islands have belonged to different interaction spheres since at least A.D. 500-600 when scratching first appears.

Mayoid

A new assemblage (new CARAIPE tempering, new vessel shapes with small flat bases, new decoration modes of two notched rim-pellets and fugitive black painting, and a new emphasis on forest hunting) arrives on top of an Araquinoid site in southeast Trinidad, where a deviant decoration mode existed in both Saladoid and Araquinoid times. Trade with contemporary Araquinoid sites is indicated by a minor presence in them of CARAIPE temper and the occasional decorated necked jar.

The new assemblage is also typical of three south Trinidad Mission sites, founded in A.D. 1687, the last of which ended in 1849. The presence of an imported greenstone snuff-grinder in one of these suggests the continuation of Spirit-world beliefs and practices in these Mission villages. There is some evidence to identify this assemblage with the NEPUYO nation, whom Raleigh found on the south bank of the Orinoco delta. Archeologically this assemblage is related to the Marajoaroid tradition (Boomert, pers. comm.). This includes Island Carib, and the present-day Carib-speaking WAYANA of the Brasil-Surinam-French Guyana border, who still make a necked jar in the Mayoid design (Petitjean Roget, pers. comm.).

CONCLUSIONS

Different ethnographies appear to be present as well as different archeological assemblages. The Amerindian history of Trinidad and Tobago should be divided into three broad periods of time, each characterized by differences of: food, exchange items, religious and political structure, and cultural tradition.

Pre-ceramic (B.C. 6500 - A.D. 0). The vegetable staple is unknown. A pestle is the main exchange valuable. Settlements seem relatively continuous. Several features link this culture to that of the WARAO. However, the two most important artifacts, spirit-associated pestle and daily handstone-and-slab, are not compatible with present-day WARAO ethnography.

Snuff-and-Drink Ritual (B.C. 200 - A.D. 650). Cassava bread seems to be the staple. The exchange valuables comprise celts, beads, pendants, and from A.D. 350 probably ritual pottery. All of these, including ritual pottery, are likely to have been made by the men. Religious and political structure seem far higher than today, perhaps even than the GOAJIRO. Cultural links are to the west. Some features seem similar to the Tucanoan peoples, west of the Orinoco. This writer proposes to follow up in particular the ethnohistory of the CAQUETIO.

Relatively Unstructured Societies (A.D. 650 to date). Pepper-pot seems to be the staple. Other present-day features seem to be increasingly the norm: pottery made by women, utilitarian exchange items, the importance of beer, an apparent decline in social structure, and short-lived settlements. Cultural linkages lie increasingly to the east, with the Guyanas.

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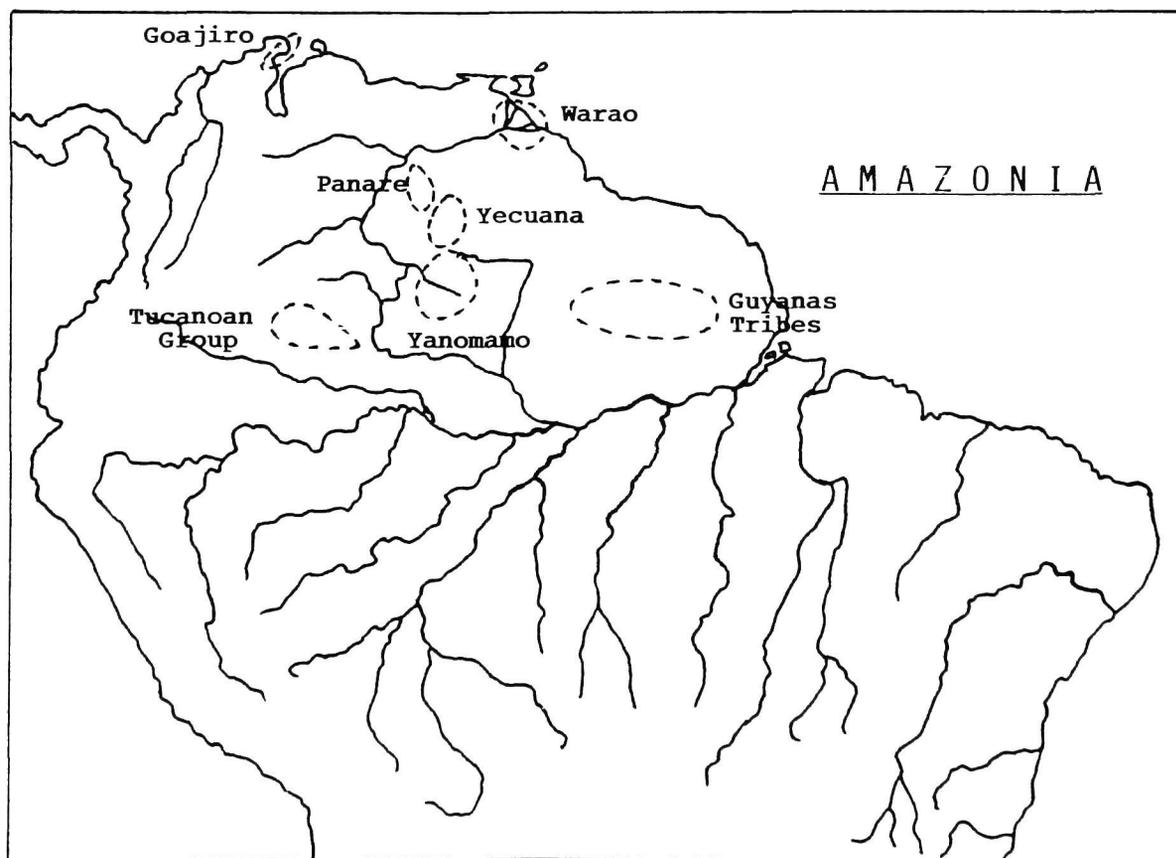


Figure 1. Ethnographics studied to date.

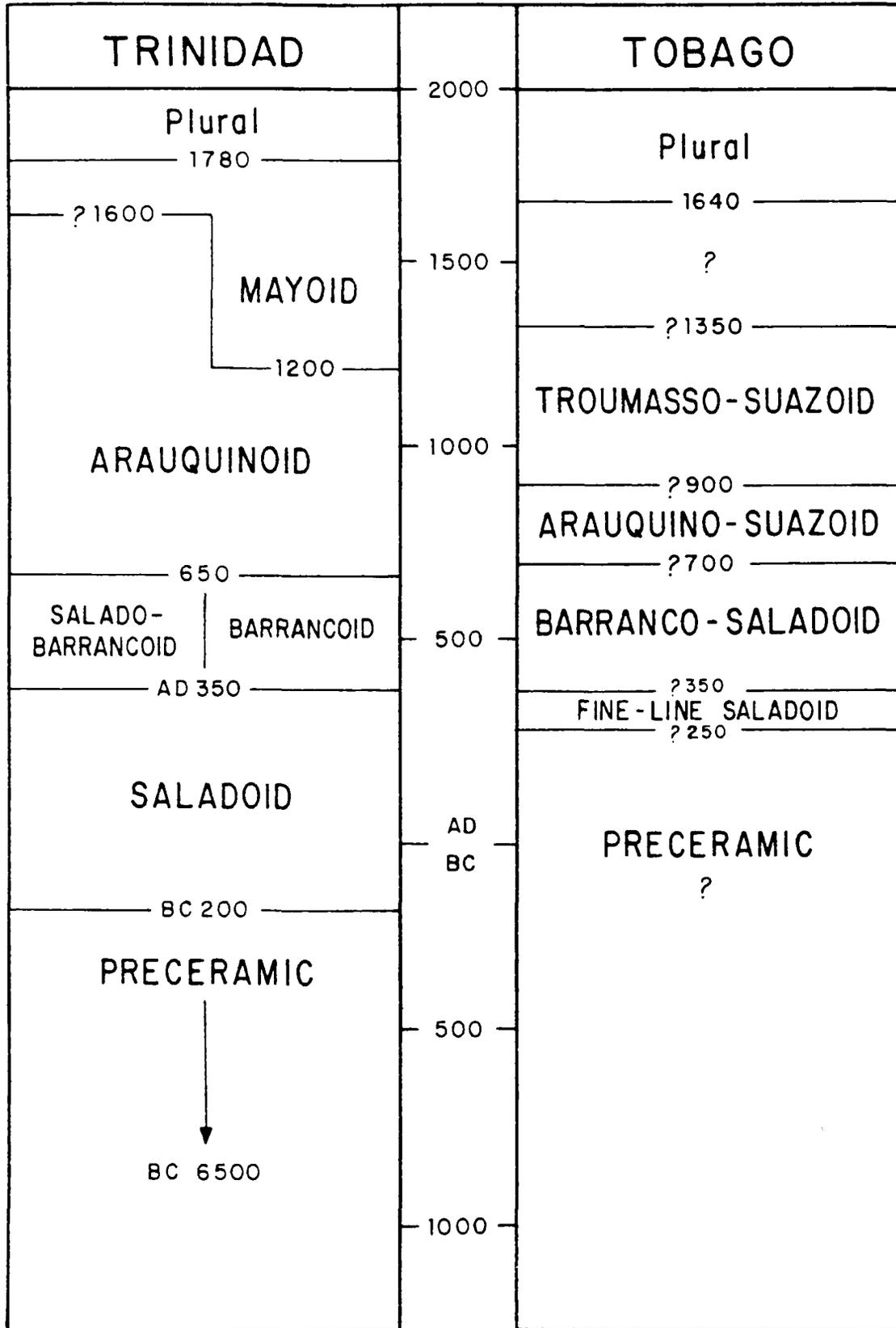


Figure 2. Tentative timeframe of archeological assemblages.

