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Preliminary Report On Archaeological Investigations At Great Courland Bay, Tobago
Abstract
This paper summarizes the results of archaeological excavations carried out by the Karrek Ven Training Group at the extended Suazan Troumassoid site of Great Courland Bay on the leeward coast of Tobago in 1998. The site stretches over a distance of some 375 m along the beach of this bay, in between the mouths of two freshwater streams. After digging in all 28 testpits, a 53-m-long trench was excavated in the site’s area which, according to the results of the testpits, produced most archaeological finds. The archaeological deposit, which appeared to stretch to a depth of at most 220 cm below the present surface, yielded numerous ceramic fragments, almost all belonging to the Plymouth complex of the Suazan Troumassoid subseries, next to artifacts of stone, bone, shell and fossil coral as well as food remains. Besides, two human burials were encountered next to the soil marks of three posts, possibly forming part of a circular house plan. The calibrated results of three radiocarbon dates place the Plymouth complex habitation at Great Courland Bay in the fourteenth century of our era.

Resumen
Este artículo resume los resultados de excavaciones arqueológicas realizadas por el Karrek Ven Training Group en el sitio extenso de Suazan Troumassoide de Great Courland Bay en la costa sotavento de Tobago en 1998. El sitio se extiende en una distancia de unas 375 m a lo largo de la playa de esta bahía, entre las bocas de dos corrientes de agua dulce. Después de cavar en total 28 pozos de prueba, se excavó una trinchera de 53 m de longitud en el área del sitio que, según los resultados de los pozos de prueba, produjo la mayoría de los hallazgos arqueológicos. Los restos arqueológicos, que aparecieron extenderse a una máxima profundidad de 220 cm debajo de la superficie actual, se encontró numerosos fragmentos cerámicos, casi todos pertenecientes al complejo de Plymouth del subserie de Suazan Troumassoide, juntamente con artefactos de piedra, de hueso, de concha, coral fosilizado así como restos de alimento. Además, dos entierros humanos fueron encontrados así como marcas en la tierra de tres postes, tal vez formando parte de una casa circular. Según los resultados calibrados de tres fechas de radiocarbón la habitación de Plymouth en Great Courland Bay data del siglo XIV de nuestra era.

Résumé
Cet article résume les résultats des excavations archéologiques effectuées par le Groupe Ecole du ‘Karrek Ven’ au site Suazan Troumassoide de Great Courland Bay sur la côte sous le vent de Tobago en 1998. Le site s'étend sur quelque 375 m le long de la plage de cette baie, entre les embouchures de deux cours d'eau. Au vu des résultats les plus prometteurs d'une série de 28 sondages, une tranchée de 53 m de longueur a été ouverte à travers le site, fournissant la plupart du matériel archéologique. Le dépôt, qui s'étend jusque'à une profondeur de 220 cm au dessous de la surface actuelle, a produit de nombreux tessons de céramique, presque tout affiliés au complexe Plymouth de la subsérie Suazan Troumassoide, avec objets de pierre, os, coquillage et corail fossilisé, ainsi que des restes de nourriture. De plus, deux sépultures humaines ont été rencontrées, de même que les traces, dans le sol de trois poteaux, peut-être faisant partie d'une maison circulaire. Les résultats calibrés de trois datations au radiocarbone situerait l’occupation du complexe Plymouth de Great Courland Bay au XIVe siècle de notre ère.

Contents
From March to October 1998 archaeological excavations were carried out by the KarrekVenTraining Group, Gibraltar, led by the second author, at an extended Suazan Troumassoid settlement site to be found on and just behind the beach of Great Courland Bay on the leeward coast of Southwest Tobago. The research took place under the auspices of the Tobago Museum, Scarborough, the Tobago House of Assembly and the National Archaeological Committee of Trinidad and Tobago. Permission for excavating the site, which is threatened by hotel construction, was kindly granted by the owners
of property, the Leeward Development Company Ltd. The area of the Great Courland Bay site has been known to produce archaeological remains for a long time. Illegal sand quarrying operations started at its southern end in 1978, revealing numerous pottery fragments next to bone, stone and shell artifacts as well as prehistoric food remains. The attention of the first author, then attached to the Department of History of The University of the West Indies (UWI), Trinidad, was drawn to the site by Mr. Edward Hernandez, curator of the Tobago Museum, as a result of which limited salvaging operations took place in April and August 1982, August 1983 and June 1985. The finds collected at the time are kept in the UWI collection (Boomert, 1996:63-64). Further rescuing work took place by the Karrek Ven Training Group under Jonathan Merlin and the second author in November/December 1992 (Merlin, 1993). The materials recovered in 1992 and during the systematic excavations reported here are curated in the Tobago Museum. Analysis of these finds by the first author is currently in progress.

Site and excavations
The Great Courland Bay site is known in the literature as TOB-23. It is situated about halfway between the villages of Black Rock and Plymouth on the shore of Great Courland Bay, at 11°12'28" N Lat and 60°46'48" W Long (Kameneff, 1999:4). The site actually stretches over a distance of some 375 m along the beach, in between the mouths of two nameless, permanent freshwater streams, both debouching into the bay just west of the Grafton Road. Most of the year the southern stream, which originates in the Amity Hope area, is blocked off from the sea, creating a large inundated area behind the beach. The lower reaches of the northern stream, which originates in the Mary's Hill region, separates the site from the present Turtle Beach Hotel development. The eastern boundary of the site is not precisely known although the prehistoric settlement certainly reached as far inland as Grafton Road, behind which the land rapidly rises. This suggests that the area of the site can be estimated at about 375x50 m. Originally the surroundings of the site may have been covered with littoral woodland, towards the interior grading into deciduous seasonal forest. The entire region was under coconut cultivation until Hurricane Flora of 1963 blew down most of the coconut palms and the site's area became grown with low bush. Interestingly, many plant species known to have been used for medicinal or otherwise curative purposes by the Island Caribs in the Windward Islands during the contact period have been identified to grow in the area of the site (Kameneff, 1999:6-7). Pedologically it is characterized by beach sands, towards the stream mouths flanked by alluvial and colluvial clayey loams (inceptisols) as well as alfisols.

The first stage of the 1998 investigation involved the digging of in all twenty-eight 60x40-cm testpits, most of which yielded Amerindian pottery, between the mouths of both freshwater streams (Kameneff, 1998, 1999:8-10). No archaeological materials were encountered in a zone yielding clayey mud in the southwestern portion of the site, adjoining the region of the sand quarrying operations. This area may represent an abandoned mouth of the southernmost freshwater stream, which was still active at the time of the Amerindian occupation. Afterwards a 53-m-long and 1.6-m-wide trench (Trench I) was dug in the site's area which, according to the results of the testpits, produced most archaeological finds. While north-south bearing at the seaside, after 30 m this trench was continued in a northwest-southeast direction towards the road. Finds were collected according to artificial levels which were kept parallel to the surface of the ground. While the thickness of the first two levels was determined at 10 cm, that of all following levels was held at 5 cm. The first trench was dug to the sterile subsoil over a length of totally 36 m. The archaeological deposit appeared to stretch to a depth of at most 220 cm below the present surface. Subsequently, the trench was extended with a 10-m-long second trench of similar width, dug parallel to it (Trench II). The finds from this trench were collected according to natural stratification. Finally, in order to obtain samples for soil analysis and radiocarbon as well as thermoluminescence (TL) dating, the second trench was extended by a 5-m-long third one of equal width (Trench III). In all 82 square metres of the site's area were excavated to the bottom of the deposit.
According to horizontal stratification, the site can be divided into two parts, i.e., a ‘midden’ area and a ‘residential’ area. The former stretches along the seaside and extends from the westernmost portion of the excavation (‘zone’ 1 of all three trenches) for approximately 19 m to the interior (‘zone’ 19 of Trench I). It is characterized by many potsherds, stone flakes, shells and other food remains as well as charcoal, next to broken pieces of shell, stone and fossil coral artifacts. In addition, two human burials were encountered close to each other in the midden area (‘zones’ 9/10 of Trenches I and II). At the seaside the midden area shows a vertical distribution of four to six layers (A-F), separated by sand and humus, to a depth of 220 cm below the present surface. They blend into one stratum towards the centre of the refuse deposit. The top layer (A), stretching to a depth of 40 cm below the present surface, yielded historic materials partially dating back to the seventeenth century (Kameneff, 1999:48). Clearly, the Amerindians discarded their food remains and broken utensils and pottery on the beach to the leeward of their habitation, i.e. in an area which gently slopes from the ‘residential’ portion of the site to the sea. The present stratification of the midden may have originated from the occasional heaping of thin layers of soil on top of the debris. The ‘residential’ area of the site is known exclusively from Trench I and extends between ‘zones’ 20 and 53, i.e. from the refuse deposit to the eastern end of the excavation near Grafton Road. It is characterized by less potsherds and the absence of food remains, but yielded typically a series of complete stone artifacts and specialized ceramic utensils. Here the archaeological deposit consists of a continuous refuse layer of 20 to 40 cm thickness at a depth of generally 40 to 80/90 cm below the present surface. The soil marks of three posts in ‘zones’ 35, 31 and 29 of Trench I, forming a slightly semi-circular configuration, may be interpreted as the remnants of a possibly circular house plan. The diameter of these posts varies from 50 and 45 to 20 cm. Further excavation of especially this portion of the site is anticipated.

**Pottery**

Practically all of the ceramics recovered from the Great Courland Bay site, in all some 28,000 potsherds, belong to the local archaeological tradition in Tobago which the first author has termed the Plymouth complex. This forms the final major ceramic assemblage of the island and can be placed chronologically between AD 1150 and 1400/1450 (Boomert, 1996:24-25). Plymouth complex earthenware has been found at 12 sites distributed all over Tobago, including e.g. Lovers’ Retreat (TOB-69), Speyside 2 (TOB-56), King Peter’s Bay (TOB-64), King’s Bay (TOB-51), and Mount Irvine 5 (TOB-21). Lovers’ Retreat (Section C) and Great Courland Bay represent the best-known settlement sites of the Plymouth complex in Tobago to date. The distribution of the Plymouth complex is similar to that of the precursory Troumassoid pottery assemblage in Tobago, the Golden Grove complex, which can be dated between AD 850 and 1150. Interestingly, a small quantity of potsherds, encountered seemingly in association with the Plymouth complex pottery at the Great Courland Bay site, can be assigned to the Friendship complex of the Saladoid series, dating from approximately AD 300/350-850. All of these pottery fragments represent strongly sculptural modelled-incised head lugs (e.g. Kameneff, 1999:26,37,58-59). This suggests that these Friendship complex pieces were deliberately picked up as curios by the Plymouth people, possibly for their apparently strong spiritual power, from the surface of one of the Saladoid sites in the neighbourhood of Great Courland Bay, probably Lovers’ Retreat (Section A), situated at a distance of less than 1.5 km as the crow flies. Because of their stratigraphic position throughout the entire vertical cross section of the site and their select character, it is less likely that these potsherds represent the remains of a small surface scatter of potsherds forming the remnant of a camp or bivouac site, predating the main occupation of the Amerindian settlement.

A technological study of the pottery characterizing the Great Courland Bay site and the other sites of the Plymouth complex is currently in progress at the Department of Pottery Technology of Leiden University. The Netherlands. These ceramics are most interesting as they show a division into basically two distinct wares with specialized functions and, consequently, different occupational and gender
associations in prehistoric Amerindian society. The most outstanding of these two wares is represented by sand-tempered high-quality pottery of two subcategories, i.e., firstly, reddish-brown, burnished, fine, compact-textured ceramics showing even, matte to glossy surfaces, and, secondly, somewhat less delicate, yellowish-orange, burnished to smoothed, slightly less compact-textured, medium-fine pottery showing even, matte surfaces. A average wall thickness of both these pottery subclasses is 5-7 mm and surface hardness ca. 3.0 on the scale of Mohs. Possibly special hematite-rich clays were used for the manufacture of the high-quality ware. The second major ware includes sand-tempered low-quality pottery showing badly smoothed, yellowish grey to grey, uneven to bumpy surfaces and a gritty, poorly kneaded paste. All thickness is 6-14 mm and surface hardness ca. 2.5. This coarse ware typically has heavily scratched surfaces resulting from treating the vessel with a bundle of grass or twigs while the clay was still leather dry. Potsherds with all-over scratched surfaces showing multi-directional groups of deep, parallel scratches predominate. A small minority has plain surfaces while a few pieces show single, seemingly unintentional marks, produced due to careless surface treatment, i.e. smoothing without obliterating either coil boundaries or thin, light scratches occasioned by sticking-out temper grains. A sample of 1611 potsherds, collected by the first author at the Great Courland Bay site in 1982-1985, yielded 813 (50.4%) and 798 (49.6%) pieces, weighing in all 14,950 g (38.5%) and 23,920 g (61.5%), of the high-quality and coarse ware categories, respectively. The possibility that the Plymouth complex ceramics show a development through time at the site is currently under consideration.

Two vessel shapes dominate the high-quality ware, i.e., firstly, small to medium-sized biconical bowls with annular bases (cazuelas), the upper exteriors of which are typically decorated with a single horizontal row of incised semi-circles (Fig. 1), and, secondly, equally annular-based open bowls with oval horizontal cross sections, often decorated with flat, sometimes horned, trapezoidal or triangular lugs showing predominantly incised, rarely modelled, zoomorphic features, the majority of which suggest bat heads and tails (Fig. 2). These oval bowls clearly represent animal effigies. They are occasionally provided with flattened rims showing incised freezes consisting of a number of rectilinear short incisions placed horizontally and vertically in alternating order, i.e. a motif which is found as early as the Golden Grove complex of Early Troumasoid times in Tobago (P. O'B. Harris, 1980). Annular-based restricted bowls decorated with multiple horizontal rows of incised semi-circles and undecorated, unrestricted, composite forms are rare. The latter include e.g. somewhat less delicately made necked jars showing modelled and modelled-incised anthropomorphic features such as prominent noses joined to straight or arching eyebrows, flaring pierced ears next to coffeebean eyes and mouths (Fig. 3). It can be taken that these high-quality vessels predominantly served purposes of ceremonial or at least non-domestic nature, e.g. the serving and keeping of cassava beer or food during individual meals or communal and inter-village gatherings. This implies that this ware was primarily associated with the male sphere of activities in the Plymouth communities. Two specific high-quality ware vessel shapes confirm this suggestion. One of these is formed by specimens of nostril or sniffing bowls, used for either inhaling hallucinogenic drugs or, more likely, the pouring of tobacco or pepper juice into the nose during shamanic ceremonies in order to reach an ecstatic-visionary trance allowing the shaman’s soul to contact the spirit world. A second high-quality vessel shape may similarly have had a religious function which, however, has yet to be determined. This extremely rare form is represented by a dish placed on top of a high, possibly solid, base which shows a large, asymmetrically positioned, hollowed part. The vessel’s upper portion is decorated with a single horizontal row of incised semi-circles and a small, frog-like, modelled adorn. Another rare pottery class is formed by a specimen of a cazuela showing a row of rather crude, broad, black-painted semi-circles, perhaps applied with the fingertips to the vessel surface which was previously covered with a glossy light-brown slip. In addition, a few high-quality ware potsherds, possibly deriving from a large bowl with restricted profile, show a similarly black-painted pattern consisting of crude parallel lines, applied on a comparably slipped surface. This, obviously, is a form of decoration which is foreign to the Plymouth ceramic tradition in Tobago, and may reflect
the influence of the Suazan Troumassoid communities in the Windward Islands and Barbados, among which high-quality cazuelas showing upper exteriors decorated with fine linear painting in black on red or buff, the so-called Caliviny Polychrome motif, are common. The Great Courland Bay specimens are unique for Tobago and probably represent local imitations of the carinated bowls with delicate Caliviny painted designs known from the Windwards.

The coarse ware vessel shapes are much less varied. This ware comprises mainly large, sometimes huge, jars or cauldrons with flat or somewhat rounded bases and open or restricted bowls with simple profiles and heavily scratched surfaces, often provided with D-shaped strap handles (Fig. 4). Decoration is rare; motifs include finger-indented rims and/or crude, flat, trapezoidal or triangular lugs, somewhat resembling those of the high-quality ware, next to small, modelled-incised zoomorphic head lugs, possibly frogs and birds. The low-quality ware obviously served exclusively in domestic contexts and, consequently, can be affiliated with the female sphere of activities in Suazan Troumassoid society. Most likely the coarse ware vessels were used for cooking next to food storage and as cassava brewing containers. Although clearly a cultural trait, dictated by a long-lived tradition of pottery making, surface scratching may have had a distinctly functional aspect. Deep, overall scratching enlarges the surface of a vessel and, consequently, it results in more rapidly heating of the vessel’s contents during cooking. Estimates of the capacity of the low-quality vessels suggest that the largest ones, obvious cassava beer brewing containers, may have been able to hold up to 30 liters of liquid (Kameneff, 1999:18). Interestingly, a plain coarse-ware vessel appears to have been used for the melting of tar. As is shown by several potsherds, this was used for the mending of broken pottery. Indeed, asphalt deriving from underwater seepages offshore Southeast Trinidad occasionally washes ashore on the southwest coast of Tobago; it was formerly used for medicinal purposes and burning in lamps as well as by fishermen for caulking their canoes (Boomert, 2000:31).

**Artifacts of pottery, stone, bone, shell, and fossil coral**

A variety of pottery artifacts, usually of low-quality manufacture, can be distinguished. All are tempered with fine to medium-sized sand. Coarse, heavily scratched, ring-shaped vessel supports (“potstands”) and flat, circular griddles, used for baking cassava bread, are most numerous. Footed griddles have not been identified at Great Courland Bay, but a few scratched specimens, originally showing three or less triangular legs, are known from the contemporaneous Lovers’ Retreat (Section C) site (e.g. M.H.G. Harris, 1988). Other pottery artifacts include spindle whorls, used for the spinning of cotton, next to beads and pendants, including one in the form of a bird of unidentified species, and a possible ear plug. Finally, they include pottery items which are described in the literature as pestles or loomweights, occasionally showing crudely modelled or modelled-incised anthropomorphic faces, and a female figurine with modelled-incised features. Both these types of pottery objects may have belonged to the local shaman’s religious/ceremonial paraphernalia. The stone, bone, shell and fossil coral artifacts used for utilitarian purposes are varied. They comprise polished, trapezoidal and triangular axes next to grinding stones made of local Tobagonian volcanic rock, pitted stones (anvils) for the cracking of palm nuts, fossil coral grinding or sharpening stones, probably used for sharpening axes and bead manufacture, stone pestles, hammerstones, a bifacially flaked stone tool of unknown use, small polishing stones for smoothening vessel surfaces, an originally bipointed bone projectile point, most likely used for tipping a fish spear, and bivalve scrapers, possibly used for cleaning fish, next to adzes and small knives made of Strombus gigas conchs (Kameneff, 1999:44-51).

A special category of stone artifacts at Great Courland Bay is formed by diorite beads of local manufacture. A series of finished and unfinished cylindrical and barrel-shaped beads of diorite, ranging from 6 to 20 mm in diameter, as well as flakes and chips of diorite rock were encountered in the central part of the “residential” area, suggesting a small workshop. This is suggested also by the noted recovery of a grinding stone suitable for the polishing of beads at the site. It is noteworthy that the manufacture of beads from local diorite flourished on Tobago since (Modified) Saladoid times,
suggesting strong cultural continuity throughout the Friendship, Golden Grove and Plymouth complex sequence, i.e. from Early to Late Ceramic times. Possibly these diorite beads formed objects of ceremonial exchange with other Suazan Troumassoid settlements, notably those of the Windward Islands and Barbados (Boomert, 2000:410-412). In addition, the Great Courland Bay site yielded two biconical beads made of quartz crystal, a cylindrical bead made of local Tobagonian greenschist, a small turquoise pendant, and a fragmentary ear plug probably made of jet. Except for the greenschist bead, these ornaments most likely represent exchange items, obtained from the contemporaneous Amerindian communities of the region. Especially the jet ear plug and the turquoise pendant are interesting as they may derive from the mainland of South America, perhaps through Trinidad (Kameneff, 1999:42-43). Finally, a most interesting stone artifact is formed by a quite large and heavy local piece of volcanic rock showing a group of three cup-shaped cavities on one face. A fragmentary specimen of this same type of rock is provided with a series of five similar pits. A comparable piece of rock showing a group of ten such pits on one face and another group of two pits on another side from an unreported site in Tobago is kept in the Tobago Museum. The function of these small hollows is unknown although it is noteworthy that petroglyphs showing groups of small, cup-shaped cavities are well known from the South American mainland (Dubelaar, 1986:4-5).

**Food remains**
The Amerindians of Great Courland Bay practised horticulture next to seemingly unspecialized hunting, fishing and collecting. A nalysis of the various food remains encountered in the ‘midden’ area of the site, i.e. shells as well as animal and fish bones, is in progress at the Department of Zoology, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, and, consequently, only a short, preliminary listing can be presented here. Moderate amounts of shells were recovered, including marine species such as Queen conchs (Strombus gigas), West Indian top shells (Cittarium pica), Chip chip clams (Donax spp.), Flat tree oysters (Isognomon alatus), Thick lucinas (Phacoides pectinatus), next to chitons (Chitonida), and a single freshwater species, i.e. Apple snails (Pomacia urceus). The animal bones comprise e.g. mammals such as agoutis (Dasyprocta agouti), black-eared opossums (Didelphus marsupialis), probably collared peccaries (Tayassu tajacu) and red brocket deer (Mazama americana), next to reptiles as sea turtles (Chelonidae) and iguanas (Iguanidae). The mollusk, animal and fish species represented are comparable to those identified at the Suazan Troumassoid component of the Lovers’ Retreat site (Section C), reported by P.O.B. Harris (1980). Finally, palynological analysis of soil samples from the Great Courland Bay site, carried out by Petrotrin Geological Laboratory, Pointe-à-Pierre, Trinidad, did not yield any results as the amount of pollen recovered appeared to be very low due to the high acidity of the soil at the site location. This may have influenced in a negative sense the preservation of the food remains at Great Courland Bay as well.

**Human burials**
Two human inhumation burials were encountered at the margin of the ‘midden’ area, towards the ‘residential’ zone, ca. 1.5 m from each other, facing into different directions. The first skeleton (Trench I, ‘zone’ 10) represents a south-bearing, as yet unsexed young adult, perhaps 30-35 years old, in strongly flexed position. Two polished shark teeth were encountered in front of the chest of the deceased, suggesting part of a necklace. A ring of stones, perhaps the remnants of a hearth, were found on top of this skeleton. At present a complete reconstruction of this burial is on display in the Tobago Museum. The second burial (Trench II, ‘zones’ 9/10) represents a west-bearing, small child in flexed position. It may have died of bone disease as the bones were thin and fragile while the hands and feet had disintegrated in the soil long ago. The skull got smashed due to the weight of the earth on top of the head. Several teeth were rotten. Three stone beads were encountered near this child skeleton (Kameneff, 1999:52-55).
Dating

Four charcoal samples from the site, obtained by the second author in May/December 1998, were used for radiocarbon dating. They represent the only 14C measurements available to date for the Plymouth complex in Tobago, estimated to date from AD 1150-1400/1450. The results of three dates are quite consistent, indicating that the Great Courland Bay site was inhabited in the fourteenth century of our era: (1) Stratum F, 'zone' 6, 600±50 BP (Beta-129,265), i.e. cal AD 1299/1415; (2) Stratum E, 'zone' 4, 550±60 BP (Beta-129,264), i.e. cal AD 1307/1433; (3) Stratum A, 'zone' 5, 590±40 BP (Beta-129,262), i.e. cal AD 1305/1403. Unfortunately, the fourth sample appeared to be contaminated with recent materials: (4) Stratum A, 'zone' 4, Modern (Beta-129,261). All measurements had a 13C/12C ratio of -25.0 per mil.

Cultural affiliations

The ceramics of Tobago's Plymouth complex show significant similarities with the various Suazan Troumassoid ('Suazoid') complexes which characterized the southern Lesser Antilles in late-prehistoric times (e.g. Allaire, 1991, 2003; Boomert, 1987; Bullen & Bulle, 1976; Rouse, 1992:129-130). According to pottery repertoire, three major local (groups of) complexes belonging to this subseries can be distinguished, i.e. those of the W inward Islands, Barbados and Tobago. The Suazan Troumassoid of the W inwards forms the most widespread and tightly knit cultural assemblage, encompassing the Suazy complex of Grenada and the Grenadines (Bullen 1964:48-52,60-62; Bullen & Bulle, 1968a; Cody,1998:14-15,74-113), Fitz-Hughes of St Vincent (Bullen & Bulle, 1968b, 1970; Bullen et al., 1973; PO 'B. Harris, 2001, n.d.; McKusick, 1960:116-119,149-151), Macabou of Martinique (Allaire, 1977:317-327, 1981; Vidal et al., n.d.), and Soufrière of Dominica (Petitejean Roget, 1978). Beyond the latter island, Les Saintes and La Désirade, offshore Guadeloupe, have yielded the northernmost Suazan Troumassoid settlement sites (Hofman, 1995). The geographical positions of Barbados and Tobago, being marginal to the W inwards, are obvious from the somewhat aberrant stylistic features of these islands' local Suazan Troumassoid pottery assemblages, the Peak Bay (M.H.G. Harris, 1991, 2000) and Plymouth complexes, respectively. With respect to Tobago, this situation resembles that of the preceding episode, i.e. that characterized by the Troumassan Troumassoid series in the southern Lesser Antilles, ca. AD 700/850-1150. The contemporaneous Golden Grove complex of Tobago shows similarities as well as important differences with the Troumassan assemblages of the W inwards and Barbados, illustrating the geographically marginal position of the island. Nevertheless, the ceramic evidence suggests that throughout the post-Saladoid epoch the Amerindian communities of Tobago were culturally closer to the Lesser Antilles than to Trinidad, which after AD 700/850 was dominated by the Arauquinoid series. Of course, this contrasts strongly with the situation in Saladoid/Barrancoid times (Boomert, 1996:24).

The characteristic vessel shapes and decorative motifs of the Plymouth complex illustrate Tobago's special position within the Suazan realm. Biconical bowls (cazuelas), comparable to those which dominate Plymouth high-quality ware ceramics, are well known from the Troumassan and Suazan communities of the southern Lesser Antilles. However, in the W inward Islands and Barbados the typically Tobagonian ornamentation of these cazuelas, consisting of rows of incised semi-circles on the incurring upper parts, is replaced by Caliviny Polychrome black-painted linear designs on red- or buff-coloured burnished surfaces, typically consisting of scrolls or parallel wavy lines, rarely rows of semi-circles. The presence of a few potsherds at the Great Courland Bay site crudely imitating Caliviny painting suggests direct contacts with the W inwards and Barbados, but simultaneously, together with the Tobagonian replacement of painting by incision, a lack of local technical capabilities.

1. The latest revision of Rouse's cultural taxonomy of Caribbean prehistory is followed here (see Rouse et al., 1995). This distinguishes a Troumassoid series in the W inward Islands, divided into two chronologically subsequent subseries, i.e. Troumassan and Suazan, of which the latter replaces what was formerly classed as the Suazoid series.
to reproduce the fine-line painted Caliviny designs. Similarly, the high-quality ware oval-shaped effigy
bowls of Tobago are duplicated in the W inwards and Barbados, but exact counterparts of the bat-
shaped lugs attached to these vessels have not been identified in the latter islands yet. Flat, pointed
or ‘horned’ lugs showing round perforations or depressions, comparable to those on the Tobagonian
vessels, are known from the Troumassoid of the W inwards and Barbados, but similarly pierced
‘horned’ adornos have been encountered in the Arauquinoid Guayabitan subseries of Trinidad as
well (Boomert, 1985). Interestingly, the high-quality ware necked jars showing anthropomorphic face
designs, executed in typically Suazan fashion, have similarly close parallels in Guayabitan and the
simultaneous Arauquinoid complexes of the South American mainland. Such jars are virtually unknown
from the W inwards and Barbados, practically all Suazan anthropomorphic representations
forming part of rim lugs. An apparent trade piece from Tobago has been encountered at Silver Sands,
Barbados (M. H. G. Harris, 1991:63, Fig. 52:174).

The utilitarian low-quality ware of Tobago finds its counterparts throughout the Suazan settlement
area in the southern Lesser Antilles. It is noteworthy that the beginnings of the strong dichotomy
between high- versus low-quality earthenware in the Caribbean, as exemplified by e.g. the Plymouth
complex, can be traced back to as early as the transition between the Saladoid and Troumassoid
series. Evolving through the Troumassan subseries, it reached its most outspoken development in
the Suazan subseries (e.g. Allaire, 1978, 2003; Boomert, 1987). This applies also to the scratching
of vessel surfaces, which became increasingly frequent during Troumassoid times. While it represented
a common method of surface treatment in the W inwards and Tobago, scratching is much
less frequent in Barbados. It is not confined to the southern Lesser Antilles as scratched vessel
surfaces appear in the contemporaneous Mamoran Troumassoid pottery complexes of the Leeward
Islands as well, e.g. in Mill Reef and Mamora Bay of Antigua (Rouse & Morse, 1999:33-43). On the
other hand, fingermarked decorative motifs, including both fingertop and fingernail impressions,
are most frequent in Barbados. In addition, these designs, which are typically applied to the rims
and upper sections of the low-quality cauldrons and other purely domestic vessels in the Suazan subseries,
are often much more complex in Barbados than in Tobago and the W inwards. This clearly
illustrates the marginal position of Barbados to the Suazan Troumassoid centre in the W inwards.
On the other hand, footed (tripod) bowls and griddles are typical of both the Peak Bay complex
of Barbados and the Suazan sites in the W inwards, whereas, as noted above, they are almost
completely lacking from Tobago’s Plymouth complex. This, in turn, reflects the separate position
of the Suazan communities of Tobago with respect to the W inwards. Finally, ceramic pestles
or ‘loomweights’, showing anthropomorphic face designs in typically Suazan style, are shared equally
by Tobago, Barbados and the W inwards.

The bat-shaped rim lugs of the high-quality ware oval effigy vessels, discussed above, form perhaps
the most interesting category of Plymouth complex ceramic features as they give us an insight into
the spiritual life of the Suazan Tobagonians. That bats are represented by these adornos cannot
be doubted: the incised lines at the margins of many of these lugs and, interrupted by short gashes,
on top of the often flattened rims adjacent to these lugs are easily identifiable as the folded-up wings
of the animal. Another decorative element now draws our attention: the perforation in the middle
of the lug, also indicated as an incised circle, an elongated punctuation or by some other iconographic
symbol. Interestingly, many Chicoid (Taino) vessels from Hispaniola and Puerto Rico are provided
with bat-shaped handles similarly showing centrally placed perforations (e.g. García Arévalo, 1997).
According to Pané (1999:18-19), the Taino believed that bats embodied the shades of the deceased
who came out at night to feast on guava fruits. For them, bats and owls typically formed nocturnal
images of death. They presumed that the deceased went to a remote island region ruled by a spirit
which was imagined as a creature showing compound bat-owl features (Stevens-Arroyo, 1988:149-
150,232,243). The Island Caribs held similar ideas (Boomert, 2000:448). Moreover, the Taino were
convinced that spirits in general lacked navels and that as such the souls of the dead can be easily
distinguished from the living. It was pointed out by García Arévalo that the circular perforations in the bat-shaped Chicoid vessel handles allude to the presumed lacking of navels by the shades of the deceased, embodied as bats (Arrom & García Arévalo, 1988). This, clearly, can be taken to be the meaning of the centrally placed holes or incised circles on the lugs of the Suazan bat effigy bowls as well.

The question remains whether the striking similarity between the symbolism shown by the bat-shaped pottery vessels of the Greater Antilles and the W indward Islands can be attributed to direct contacts or to parallel developments deriving from the joint Saladoid heritage of the late-prehistoric cultures in both areas. Arguments can be put forward to support both explanations. According to Petitjean Roget (1997), the dyad bat-frog formed the focus in Saladoid religion, symbolizing the complementary opposition between male and female. The fruit-eating bat would have had a primarily masculine connotation in Saladoid times. Consequently, its importance in prehistoric religion throughout the Caribbean dates back to Early Ceramic times (see Boomert, 2000:469-470). On the other hand, as Allaire (1990) has pointed out, exotic-looking artifacts of probably ceremonial character showing strongly Chicoid iconographic features have been encountered at various Suazan Troumassoid sites in the W indward Islands, suggesting interaction between the Taíno and Suazan peoples which primarily operated at religious or esoteric levels. In the southern Lesser Antilles such objects are known from e.g. Dominica, Martinique, St Lucia, and the Grenadines. Allaire believes that most of these artifacts form imitations or reduced models, i.e. were manufactured locally in the W indward Islands. On the other hand, it is quite possible that at least some of these objects represent actual exchange items which trickled down the Lesser Antillean archipelago to the south. At any rate, they distinctly reflect the syncretic assimilation of foreign elements into the Suazan stylistic world. In a similar way, it can be hypothesized that the iconographic symbol of bat spirits, lacking navels, was transmitted from the Taíno to the W indward Islands. Clearly, the discussion is still open. Further research into this fascinating aspect of the late-prehistoric religious beliefs of the Caribbean Amerindians may clarify this matter.

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Fig. 2. Open bowls with oval horizontal cross-sections, high-quality ware, showing bat-head rim lugs, next to one anthropomorphic head lug. Plymouth complex, Great Courland Bay site, Southwest Tobago.

Fig. 3. Halved vessel, high-quality ware, showing anthropomorphic face design. Plymouth complex, Great Courland Bay site, Southwest Tobago.

Fig. 4. Reconstructed bowl, low-quality ware, showing U-shaped handle and overall surface scarring. Plymouth complex, Great Courland Bay site, Southwest Tobago.