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Archaeological investigations between Cayenne Island and the Maroni river : a cultural sequence of western coastal French Guiana from 5000 BP to present

Bel, M.M. van den

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Guiana from 5000 BP to present

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To Mo and our children

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List of Abbreviations

A.	Arawakan
Br.	Brazilian Portuguese
D.	Dutch
C.	Cariban
E.	English
Fr.	French
G.	German
P.	Portuguese
Sp.	Spanish
Sr.	Sranantongo
T.	Tupian
BPS	Barrage de Petit-Saut
CPP	Cimetière paysager de Poncel
CSL	Chemin Saint-Louis
LPB	La Pointe de Balaté
PDM	Plateau des Mines
SBE	Sable Blanc Est
AFAN	Association de fouilles archéologiques nationales
AGAE	Association guyanaise d'archéologie et d'ethnographie
BRGM	Bureau de recherches géologiques et minières
CIRA	Commissions interrégionales de la recherche archéologique
CNRS	Centre national de recherche scientifique
DOM	Départements d'outre mer (now DROM)
DAC	Direction des affaires culturelles (formerly DRAC)
IEPA	Instituto de esquisas científicas e tecnológicas do Estado do Amapá
INRA	Institut national de recherches agronomiques
INRAP	Institut national de recherches archéologiques preventives (formerly AFAN)
IRD	Institut de recherche pour le développement (formerly ORSTOM)
ONF	Office National des Forêts
ORSTOM	Office de la recherche scientifique en technique outre-mer
SA	Service d'archéologie (formerly SRA)
VAT	Volontaire à l'aide technique

AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> (or CE, Common Era)
ADE	Amazonian Dark Earths
BC	Before Christ (or BCE, Before the Common Era)
BP	Before Present
ECA	Early Ceramic Age
HSAI	Handbook of South American Indians
HSAA	Handbook of South American Archaeology
LCA	Late Ceramic Age
MSL	Mean Sea Level

Preface

This study entitled *Archeological Investigation between Cayenne Island and the Maroni River* is not a history of Amerindian life in French Guiana from *c.*5000 BP to the present-day. Rather, it presents us with an anthology of archaeological materials with which this history has to contend, extracting from them and reconstructing with them not only a hypothetical view of the Amerindian prehistory but also a history of French Guiana. This study is primarily based on a large number of archaeological data, gathered from excavations in the western coastal zone of French Guiana. The outcome hereof served to construct a cultural chronology for this region in an attempt to insert this information into the already existing chronology, as is usually the case in archaeology.

In the Guianas, the cultural chronology has been firmly settled for many decades. Moreover archaeologists apply this framework as a tool in order to describe any change or development in human culture. However, this framework in the Guianas is not as elaborate as in the Andes or the Caribbean. In fact, during the last quarter of the 20th century, it was adopted from the synthesis of archaeological research on the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers (where archaeological research was more advanced) and applied to the Guianas (Rouse et al. 1984). This *topdown* approach allowed little space for the existence or emergence of local cultures because a regional distinction was considered an adaptation or diffusion of previous migrations. Furthermore, the debate on the presence of chiefdoms in the Americas during the 1990s obscured local and regional diversity as it did in other regions such as the Greater Antilles (Curet and Stringer 2010:5; Torres 2013). Pre-Colombian society during the Late Ceramic Age (LCA) tends to be more variably composed and segmented. It is not a single encompassing complex society of chiefdoms as proposed by Rostain (2008b).

The results of the excavations forwarded here indicates that this existing framework, as defined by Stéphen Rostain (1994a) as to French Guiana, as well as its general approach, is obsolete and needs to be revised from the bottom up. First and foremost, not all stages of development are present in Rostain's framework, (e.g. the Archaic and the Early Ceramic Age), are non-existent or hardly discussed. Secondly, the data base of the existing framework is ridiculously small when compared with the data bases of current (compliance) archaeological research. This bias posed two major problems when comparing both data sets: (a) the modes or techniques of collecting archaeological materials differ and are thus difficult to compare and (b) the quantities of the material and site contexts are also different. Eventually, in order to revise the framework, scientific resistance (rather than debate) is met from members of the ruling archaeologist elite, or *caciques*, which have dominated the Guianas for many decades. Similar scientific situations have been acknowledged in the Caribbean (Bright 2011). Therefore, the confrontation between pioneering archaeology and modern (compliance) archaeology is referred to as "scant archaeology" (cf. Section 12.2.2).

In this regard, the introduction of compliancy archaeology in French Guiana has clearly brought a massive body of information to the table concerning Amerindian prehistory. Again, the present publication does not include a history

of the mutual relationships between Amerindians, but it provides ideas on the Amerindians, embodied by the way of Western research and ideology. It is therefore a study dealing with Western perceptions on Amerindian cultural processes and development. Although the artefacts found during our excavations were produced by Amerindians, and do not speak directly to us as modern Amerindian objects can do, they represent not only useful information but can also share indications on their way of life from which we are able to create a synthesis (analogies).¹

Initially, a synthesis implying a people culturally dissimilar to my own appeared to me as a wager. Indeed, the prehistory of the Amerindians who still inhabit the western coastal zone of French Guiana certainly deserves more than 1000 pages, and not the mere 500 pages that are presented here. How is it possible to capture the hardly known prehistory of this region and combine it with the overall history of the Guianas? As we shall see, this research evidences numerous elements, (e.g. Archaic earthovens, early ceramics, the appearance of black earths, the new ceramic series, a necropole). All this can be related to the archaeological results from neighbouring countries or even Greater Amazonia.

Two solutions are present: (a) the encompassing and sometimes tedious description of the excavations the INRAP teams compiled by means of a “Final excavation report,” or *Rapport final d’opération de fouille* (RFO), which is openly available at the desk of the Ministry of Culture or at the INRAP library (www.dolia.fr) and (b) one can attempt to analyse the results of a number of sites which have been selected because together they constitute a regional chronology or cultural sequence from 5000 BP to present as indicated in the subtitle. The latter option is chosen here while focusing on the sites located between the Cayenne Island (Fr., *Île de Cayenne*) and the Lower Maroni River excavated by the INRAP under the responsibility of the present author. This ensemble of sites not only provides us with a diachronic development of this particular area, but also represents a current state of affairs on the prehistory of French Guiana.

Therefore, notwithstanding the lengthy time span between the first excavations in 2005 and the completion of the present study as well as the fruits of ongoing field research, the presentation of the various archaeological projects or sites have been placed in chronological order. The earliest sites will be thus discussed first in Chapter 4, whereas the most recent examples will be dealt with in Chapter 11, despite the fact that they were found at the same site. In this manner we can also compare the material culture originating from a pre-Columbian context with the material ascribed to the Amerindians of the Historic Age in order to gain an insight in the continuity or the lack hereof during this era.

The title firstly includes a *clin d’oeil* to our predecessors Clifford Evans and Betty J. Meggers who started structural archaeological research or “investigations” as they called it, in former British Guiana and Territory of Amapá. Without their contributions, the present study could not have been carried out or would have been different. Secondly, the term investigations may best be applied to the present-day compliance archaeology when compared with programmed archaeology. Both types of archaeology pretend to conduct scientific research but have clearly

1 More recently, the anthropological concept of ‘Amerindian perspectivism’ (Viveiros de Castro 1996, 1998, 2002; Stolze Lima 1996, 2006) or Amerindian ontologies is gaining significance in Brazilian archaeology in which pan-Amazonian concepts of regarding (modern) Amerindian religion, cosmology, warfare and politics play an important role in archaeological interpretation (Gomes 2007).

dissimilar approaches. Compliance archaeology is guided by public law which creates a demand to be fulfilled within a certain period of time and a fixed budget (cf. Section 1.3). The result of this archaeological operation, or investigation, is an administrative report, hence my preference for investigations. This continuous process, often evolving far too hastily for the project leaders, results in the stock-piling of numerous reports consisting of a multitude of scientific studies which, at the end of the line, eventually receive little attention as to further hypothesis and integration into the larger picture, albeit that efforts are certainly made. Therefore, this dissertation is also a general synthesis or an attempt to provide an overview of my research in French Guiana. It has clearly a bottom-to-top approach which stands out as an important difference with programmed archaeology which is guided by a scientific demand and limited by time and money. Compliance archaeology cannot choose its subject of research, hence the term investigation (again). Programmed archaeology determines its sites in an attempt to answer questions. Most often it chooses the sites or areas in which a positive answer to the questions raised is most likely to be found, resulting in a topdown approach and eventually representing a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Compliance archaeology in Amazonia also results in a large amount of data. However, this frequently occurs in void archaeological areas, which are at first hand difficult to assess due to the absence of a chrono-cultural context. Indeed, the results of these investigations must be further examined in order to provide a suitable source of information for further research, as will be pointed out. I will reach out to previous and actual research questions in order to provide a helpful contribution and even propose modifications to the existing archaeological body of evidence in French Guiana. Needless to say, the heart of this anthology consists of administrative reports originally written in French of which the contents have been evaluated and translated in order to propose a regional chronology. The reason for this is that the majority of those engaged in research in the Guianas are well-versed in it. This book reflects my views on the results of these excavations; any errors and flaws are therefore mine.

Acknowledgements

Conducting archaeological fieldwork demands many enthusiastic people: archaeologists, both professional as well as avocational. The introduction of compliance archaeology in French Guiana conducted since 2002 enabled multiple archaeological surveys and numerous important excavations. I officiated as project leader (Fr., *responsable d'opération*) of an INRAP team working on several of these projects, having previously carried out archaeological research at sites in French Guiana and the French Lesser Antilles, notably Guadeloupe (FWI). This not only enhanced my knowledge of the prehistory of French Guiana (Department 973) but also allowed me to appreciate various projects located at e.g. Malmanoury, Kaw, Nancibo, Cayenne, Iracoubo, Saint-Georges de l'Oyapock, Régina, Maripasoula, Sparouine, Macouria, Saint-Laurent du Maroni, Mana. Each site or project introduced me to a specific environment adding further experience to my understanding and teaching me about regional differences to be recognised in the field. My finest memories are most certainly related to excavations, for example at Eva 2, Crique Sparouine and Chemin Saint-Louis, but also to those carried out at Pont de l'Oyapock and Yaou where I was employed as a field

technician. Furthermore, much time was spent at the INRAP Archaeological Center in Cayenne, studying the excavated material and taking care of samples to be analysed. I am indebted to all my co-workers during these projects.

My thesis relies heavily upon the information and ideas of earlier researchers. Even though the hypotheses and conclusions presented here are the result of original analysis, they could not have been rendered without any previous research. Therefore, I am deeply grateful to my predecessors, all the colleagues in French Guiana as well as my fellow archaeologists in the Netherlands, Brazil, French Guiana and elsewhere. The degree of cooperation the archaeological projects received during the preparation of fieldwork, the excavations and the recording of features in the field, the washing and bagging of the excavated material for further study has impressed me greatly. Otherwise any further studies would have been impossible. A large number of colleagues and other (external) researchers eventually contributed to the final administrative excavation reports and eventually this (syn)thesis. Having translated, abridged and edited these texts, I accept the full and sole responsibility for any misrepresentations and distortions herein are mine. Moreover, I hereby wish to acknowledge the work of those colleagues and express my sincere gratitude (cf. Annexe 1 for the original reports):

Eva 2, Malmanoury, Municipality of Sinnamary (May-July 2005)

Topography: Pierre Texier and Axel Daussy (INRAP);

Fieldwork: Sandra Kayamaré, Sandrine Delpech, Clara Samuelian, Christian Vallet (INRAP) and Monique Ruig;

Studies: FUGRO Guyane, geomorphology; Christian Vallet (INRAP), European material; Sandrine Delpech (INRAP) lithic material; Matthieu Hildebrand (INRAP) ceramic material and archives; Christine Fouilloud and Sandra Kayamaré for their drawings.

AM 41, Iracoubo Municipality of Iracoubo (February 2006)

Topography: Georges Lemaire (SRA) and Matthieu Hildebrand (INRAP);

Fieldwork: Mickaël Mestre (INRAP), Sandra Kayamaré (INRAP), Eric Gassies (SA), Nadir Boudheri, Cencia Campa, Elodie Etienne and Laurent Berson (volunteers).

Crique Sparouine, Municipality of Saint-Laurent du Maroni (December 2006)

Topography: Pierre Texier (INRAP);

Fieldwork: Sandrine Delpech, Marc Rimé (INRAP), Lydie Clerc and volunteer Deborah Deschamps (†).

Chemin Saint-Louis, Municipality of Saint-Laurent du Maroni (November-December 2008, January 2009)

Topography: Pierre Texier, Vincent Arrighi (INRAP), Cabinet Zaepfel (Mana);

Fieldwork: Nathalie Serrand, Jérôme Briand, Jean-Jacques Faillot (INRAP), Agnès Berthé, Stéphane “Charly” Brebant, Lydie Clerc, Daan Isendoorn, Lydie Joanny;

Study: Laurent Bruxelles (INRAP), geomorphology; Cecilia Cammas (INRAP, AgroParisTech) and Jeanne Brancier (University Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne), micromorphology; Jago Birk (University Bayreuth), multi-element mapping; Sebastiaan Knippenberg (ARCHOL BV, University of Leiden), lithic analysis; Pascal

Verdin (INRAP), phytolith analysis; Jaime Pagán Jiménez (EK Consultadores, University of Leiden), starch grain analysis; Nathalie Serrand (INRAP), drawings.

PK 11, Route des Plages, Municipality of Rémire-Montjoly (April 2010)

Topography: Cabinet Zaepfel (Mana);

Fieldwork: Sandrine Delpech (INRAP), Lydie Joanny and Emile Eustache;

Study: Dominique Todisco (INRAP/University of Orléans), geomorphology; Sandrine Delpech (INRAP), lithic analysis; Jaime Pagán Jiménez (EK Consultadores, University of Leiden), starch grain analysis; Gilles Fronteau (University of Reims), thin-sections.

Cimetière paysager Poncel, Municipality of Rémire-Montjoly (June-July 2010)

Topography: Axel Daussy (INRAP);

Fieldwork: Mickael Mestre, Sandrine Delpech, Sandrine Moules Mages, Sophie Capelle (INRAP), Lydie Clerc;

Study: Dominique Todisco (INRAP/University of Orléans), geomorphology; Sandrine Delpech (INRAP), lithic analysis; Jaime Pagán Jiménez (EK Consultadores, University of Leiden), starch grain analysis; Matthieu Le Bailly (University of Franche Comté), parasite analysis.

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A number of researchers kindly helped me to answer my questions on various matters in the last ten years which enhanced my understanding of the archaeological data and helped me during the progress of this work. I would like to thank Neil Lancelot Whitehead (†) for introducing me to the Guianas and furthermore, in random order, Gérard Collomb, Pierre Grenand, Sylvie Jérémie, Sandra Kayamaré, Jérôme Briand, Sandrine Delpech, Matthieu Hildebrand, Clara Samuelian, Christine Fouilloud, Mickaël Mestre, Dominique Todisco, Pierre Texier, Cécilia Cammas, Christophe Jorda, Laurent Bruxelles, Thomas Romon, Nathalie Serrand, André Delpuech, Christian Stouvenot, Benoit Bérard, Thierry L'Etang, Reginald Murphy, John Crock, Davy Damien, Nathalie Cazelles, Claude Coutet, Catherine Losier, Fabrice Lavallette, Stéphen Rostain, Eric Gassies, Hervé Théveniaut, Bruno Hérault, Julien Engel, Vanessa Hecquet, Maël Dewynter, Guillaume Feuillet, Stéphanie Barth, Damien Davy, Vincent Freycon, Eric Palvadeau, Matthieu Le Bailly, Jago Birk, Jaime Pagán Jiménez, José Oliver, Kay Scaramelli, João Saldanha, Mariana Cabral, Nelson Sanjad, Denise Gomes Cavalcante, Eduardo Góes Neves, Michael Heckenberger, Lillian Rebellato, José Iriarte, Alston Thoms, Steve Black, Cheryl White, Aad Versteeg, Laddy van Putten, Jimmy Mans, Tom Hamburg, Sebastiaan Knippenberg and Lodewijk Hulsman. Last but not least I have to thank Peter Richardus for checking my Franglish while proofreading previous versions of the manuscript as well as Jimmy Mans and Sebastiaan Knippenberg for being my “paranymphen”.

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*oft imant hier enge foüten in fonde die ick gisse seer wennich te zien
die dinck dat dar nit is sonder gebreck en verbeterd stiel swigende
want imants werck wert vel erder berispt dan verbeterd*

Gelein van Stapels (c.1630:24v)²

*C'est semble-t-il le destin constant de la Guyane, que chaque génération, ignorant
ou rejetant systématiquement l'œuvre de la précédente, reprenne indéfiniment les
tentatives et butté sur les mêmes obstacles*

Jean-Marcel Hurault (1989:65)

2 'If anyone finds any faults herein that I reckon to be very few, he should think that nothing is without fault and should correct them in silence, for one's work tends to be sooner criticised than corrected.' These are the last sentences of the journal of Gelein van Stapels on his voyage to the Amazon River, the Guianas and the Caribbean in 1629 and 1630' (Zeeuws Archief, MS 182, Middelburg). Transcription made by the present author and translation by van Wallenburg et al. (2015:52). All translations are by the present author unless indicated otherwise. Citations are in chronological order, quotations in running text are 'single' hyphoned, expressions or terms are "double" hyphoned and words in other languages are in *italics*.