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Interacción colonial en un pueblo de indios encomendados: el Chorro de Maíta, Cuba

Valcarcel Rojas, R.

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Author: Valcárcel Rojas, Roberto

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Propositions

Colonial interaction in an *encomendados* Indian town. El Chorro de Maíta, Cuba.

Roberto Valcárcel Rojas

1. The study of the interactions between Europeans and indigenous peoples cannot continue to be regarded as a marginal research topic in the Caribbean. As in other areas of the world, it should be regarded as research topic of its own. Herein lies the key for constructing a more realistic and less colonialist history, and an additional motive for developing the archaeology of the region and protecting its patrimony.
2. The imposition of an *encomienda* system marks the onset of the Spanish domination of local societies and the presence of a colonial situation in the Greater Antilles. Given its economic importance, this system structures the lifeways of both indigenous peoples and Europeans. The study of the *encomienda* system brings us to the core of early colonial life and its archaeological reflection has the potential to reveal not only the evidence of the destruction of native societies but also their continuities.
3. European domination transforms indigenous peoples into colonial subjects. The ‘*indio*’ is the result of this process, which does not deny his/her capacity as a social actor to adopt different positions attuned to interests and specific circumstances, and to find solutions for survival and continuity.
4. The indo-Spanish interaction was not an undifferentiated process. It was structured from both sides with very concrete objectives and according to specific circumstances of historic moments as well as aspects of gender and class.
5. Up to this point, the enormous knowledge potential of funerary contexts in the Caribbean and their impact on the analysis of indo-European interactions have not been adequately recognized. This will be, without doubt, a key area of research in the coming years. The study of taphonomy integrated with diverse techniques for the analysis of human remains, particularly those addressing the determination of geographic origins and ethnicity, will have a leading role in future studies of interaction situations in the Caribbean.
6. Despite the problems and errors of older, previous excavations and archaeological studies, these provide a very important source of information. These studies constitute a large part of Caribbean archaeology and are of fundamental importance and, in many cases, provide the only sources of evidence available about some exceptional sites. We should find ways to maximize our capacity to make use of them.
7. The study of El Chorro de Maíta alerts us about the need to recognize that every late indigenous site could have potentially been the scene of colonial interactions even when there is no clear indication of indigenous relationships with Europeans or their materialities.

8. Although the process of *mestizaje* marks the disappearance of the 'indio', it is also a phenomenon of genetic and cultural continuity of these peoples. This process is difficult to perceive, particularly when it is not explicitly investigated, as is often the case.
9. All that glitters is not gold and gold is not always the most important element in cultural terms. We do archaeology and archaeometallurgy not only for eliciting this, but also as a way to remember the millions of deaths that the love of gold in any of its forms caused and is still causing.
10. Living/Studying in the Netherlands is an incredible opportunity. Rain and cold do not matter if they serve to grow personally and professionally. It would be great to continue living this experience, or let others have it in the future.