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## **Asyèt yo, Ollas, and Vasijas: situating pottery production in the circum-Caribbean through a technological perspective**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research takes a technological approach to ceramic production to explore socio-historical aspects of the Circum-Caribbean region. The combination of the *chaîne opératoire* approach with the “the community of practice” model leads to the understanding of ceramic productions at multiple social and environmental scales. To begin with, detailed analyses explored the technological knowledge and the series of actions carried out to achieve certain qualitative and aesthetical features that identify a ceramic production. The main components of the ceramic *chaîne opératoire* and the modes of identification of the diagnostic attributes on both the macro and micro dimension are discussed and contextualized to disentangle the sociological complexity that lies behind the manufacturing knowledge and their transmission modes between people and communities. Results allow us to explore large-scale cultural process by tackling micro-scale events at the community level.

The dissertation includes four articles published in different peer-reviewed journals. Each article tackles diverse aspects of the manufacturing process, from the procurement of the raw materials to the forming stage. Together the four case studies propose a detailed research strategy that encompasses the use and critical interpretation of different archaeometric methods together with a deep understanding of the principles for identifying diagnostic attributes of ceramic fashioning processes and their socio-cultural interpretations. The outcomes of this research strategy provide a fine-grained view of the circum-Caribbean region.

First, the potential of archaeometry to trace the origin of clay materials used to manufacturing ceramic is tested. Geochemical analysis (pXRF) and petrographic observation of raw clay and ceramic materials clarify the human-environmental interactions in the Mayales Subbasin and around the monumental site of Aguas Buenas (400-1250 CE) in central Nicaragua. The chapter explores the initial phase of the ceramic production, the raw materials selection and how people moved and related with their surroundings (Chapter 2). In the next chapters, macro and micro observations of the ceramic materials from different sites in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico advanced knowledge on the ceramic production, exchange and understanding of technological behaviors between distant communities during the Early and Late Ceramic Ages in the Greater Antilles. Chapter 3 through petrographic analysis examines the interactions with local environments of Saladoid and Late Ceramic Age communities in the northeastern part of the Dominican Republic. The ceramic assemblage from the site of El Frances is compared with a selection of Saladoid materials from Puerto Rico. Petrographic data helped to understand the technological transformation and clay procurement strategies of the ceramic materials between the Early to the Late Ceramic Age.

## ABSTRACT

Chapter 4 offers the first complete ceramic technological analysis in the Caribbean Archipelago. Six hundred years of ceramic production were analyzed, revealing important insight on transmission processes and manufacturing traditions between Ostionoid and Chicoid communities. The site of El Cabo and its ceramic assemblage are situated in the socio-historical context of the Mona Passage during the Late Ceramic Age, showing a technological continuity across a long-term historical period. The next chapter deals with colonial ware imported during the French regime in the area of Fort Liberté, Haiti. The combined use of the SEM-EDS, ICP-OES and petrography clarified technological aspects of a highly standardized and globally exported 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic production in Albisola, Italy. Results revealed social aspects of colonial life and of early years of independence in Haiti.

This dissertation provides an overview of the usefulness of the *chaîne opératoire* methodology, together with the community of practice theory, as models to potentially explore questions related to the boundedness and cultural relations of peoples during the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods.