

Kathleen Deagan, *En Bas Saline: A Taíno Town before and after Columbus*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2023. xix + 330 pp. (Cloth US\$ 90.00)

This erudite volume is the culmination of archaeological research on the north coast of Haiti, spurred by the tantalizing prospect that En Bas Saline may well have been the seat of Guacanagarí, the *cacique* or lord of the Marién “chiefdom” with whom Christopher Columbus established a long-lasting political alliance in his quest to conquer and colonize Hispaniola. If so, this area would also be where Columbus’s crew built their headquarters from the remains of the *Santa María* flagship, naming it La Navidad in 1492. Several seasons of intense fieldwork, from 1984 to 1988, and one final season in 2003, have amassed a wealth of data that form the basis of this book. In the two decades before its publication, various topics had already been published by Kathleen Deagan and/or her extended team of collaborators and specialists in journals and other publications. Yet this book is not merely a summary of these previous publications. Rather, as Deagan herself notes, the lapsed time has enabled her to recast and reevaluate the previous analyses in what can best be described as a “reflexive archaeology” format, reconsidered in light of the most current “theoretical constructs and contemporary thinking related to the dynamics of middle-range societies and inequality” (pp. 7–8). Additionally, she explicitly shows the different methodologies she has chosen to operationalize the archaeological inquiry.

En Bas Saline is among the very few richly documented pre-Columbian Taíno settlements that lasted into the early Spanish contact period (ca. AD 1150–1520s), and is thus ideally placed to address questions of culture change—how and why the indigenous precolonial lifeways and material culture were altered after Spanish Contact, and how its residents confronted and negotiated with these European strangers. Through intrasite spatial analyses (surface and excavations), a wealth of empirical archaeological evidence, and the judicious use of ethnohistorical documents, Deagan provides robust insights on the social organization of En Bas Saline by focusing on households, foodways, ceramics and crafts, and feasting and rituals, all of which were evaluated in terms of social equality and inequality, with particular attention to gendered relations.

The book is organized in 15 chapters. Following an introduction to the En Bas Saline project, Chapters 2–5 contribute illuminating analyses of the Taíno peoples of Hispaniola before and after 1492, a critical discussion of their sociopolitical structure (caciques, commoners, polities), and a useful overview of the Taíno social landscape in Hispaniola; they also describe how En Bas Saline fits in the broader context. Chapters 6 and 7 define the site and discuss the sampling and excavation methodologies as well as the ordering of the data. The core of the book (Chapters 6–12) is devoted to results of the analyses and inter-

pretation of the houses and households, community and ritual spaces (plazas, mounds), food technology and foodways, and craft production. The numerous elegant illustrations and informative tables in the book are further supplemented by six appendices (available online: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00011988/00001>).

Finally, in Chapters 13 and 14, Deagan returns to the matter of whether En Bas Saline was the seat of Guacanagarí and La Navidad, by pulling together the various strands of evidence presented throughout the book. Most crucial for me is Deagan's demonstration that regardless of whether it was or not, En Bas Saline is undoubtedly an indigenous Taíno settlement, continuously occupied since AD 1150 and into the first two or three decades after Spanish Contact, whose impact on the Indigenous residents is well reflected in the archaeological record. The volume closes with a consideration of En Bas Saline, and indeed, the plight of Haitian archaeological heritage, in a nation wrecked by climatic, social, and political strife. I marvel at the commitment and perseverance that Deagan has demonstrated in fruitfully completing such a monumental task in difficult circumstances. This book is a tribute to Haiti and its people's heritage. In reading it, I found myself engrossed in silent dialogue with Deagan, gaining many fresh insights thanks to her work. As colleague Joanna Ostapkowicz stated, it is "a milestone" in Caribbean archaeology. It should be added that En Bas Saline is the logical companion of Deagan et al., "*Puerto Real*" (1995) and Deagan and José María Cruxent's "*Archaeology at La Isabela*" (2002), both of which deal with the earliest Spanish settlements in Hispaniola. I highly recommend this book to *NWIG* readers.

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