

tradition through daily practice. She highlights that even marginalised places exercised choices and the importance of studying community-based variation. Joyce advocates for continued broadening of research frames to include women and diverse ethnicities in places like historical Yucatan. Ethnographer Fernando Armstrong-Fumero (Chapter 13) discusses the contributor's findings in terms of questions of ethnicity and authenticity, maize agriculture's changing history, key political-geographical shifts and the impacts of Caste War migrations.

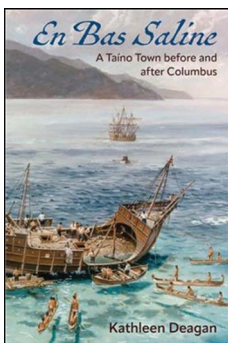
The book has production errors that should have been caught by the press. Some maps are poorly reproduced and tiny fonts plague many figures. One figure caption (8.1) includes several lines of chapter text and some publication dates are missing in references.

Overall, this is an interesting book about historical archaeology in the Yucatan peninsula, mostly eastern Yucatan. The archaeological case studies in many of the book's chapters will stand as key sources consulted by scholars planning research in later periods of history in the region. The book offers compelling reasons to undertake such work, ranging from the comparative need to understand more diverse perspectives from communities and different ethnicities to the real potential to link archaeological investigations to living descendants by focusing on the more recent past.

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KATHLEEN DEAGAN. 2023. *En Bas Saline: a Taíno town before and after Columbus*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press; 978-1-68340-355-5 hardback \$90.



On Christmas Eve of 1492, while sailing east along the north coast of what is now Haiti, Christopher Columbus's main ship, the *Santa Maria*, grounded on a reef while the crew were asleep. Unable to save the vessel, Columbus enlisted the help of local native chief Guacanagarí to unload what could be salvaged. It was impossible to fit 39 of the crew members on the remaining ships, so they were left in the native village in a large house, given by the chief, and fortified by using the timbers from the *Santa Maria*. The settlement was named La Navidad. When Columbus returned a year later, the town had been burned down and his men were dead. He left there to found the city of La Isabela further east, without ever identifying the location of the failed settlement. The search for this lost fort has captivated archaeologists and historians for more than five centuries, and *En Bas Saline: a Taíno town before and after Columbus* is a synthesis of the results from an archaeological project undertaken at one possible location, En Bas Saline, Haiti. En Bas Saline is located on the north-western edge of a

broad alluvial plain found along the northern part of the island of Hispaniola, known as the *Plaine du Nord* in Haiti and the Cibao Valley in the Dominican Republic.

In this book, Kathleen Deagan, leading archaeological researcher of the Spanish colonial period in the USA and the Caribbean for over 40 years, meticulously compiles and analyses data recovered during the 1983–1988 and 2003 field seasons conducted at this archaeological site, as well as related reports, articles and theses from an extensive range of sources. The book is divided into 15 chapters, including two introductory chapters and a final analysis chapter.

Although the original aim of the En Bas Saline project was to locate La Navidad, it became evident after the first season that the site was one of the largest in western Hispaniola (more than 90 000m²) and related to an understudied time period (*c.* AD 1200–1500). The focus of the project, and this book, became a study of pre- and post-contact lifeways at the site, bridging the so-called ‘historical divide’ of Caribbean archaeology. Traditionally, Caribbean archaeologists have focused on either pre-contact or post-contact studies, and it is only in this century that a singular connected focus has started to become the norm, although it is more seen in journal articles than in book form.

Caribbean archaeologists cannot deny that part of the delay is related to the entrenched theoretical positions within the discipline, particularly with regards to the Rousean classification. Irving Rouse (together with Claude Rainey) started his archaeological career at Fort Liberté, 35km east of En Bas Saline in 1939. By 1992, his cultural-historical taxonomy of pre-contact Caribbean peoples, based largely on ceramic styles, was the prevalent classification method used by most pre-contact Caribbean researchers, but new data began to question the categories utilised. In the ensuing years, consensus has been reached that the taxonomy must be replaced, but no substitute has been agreed upon yet. Deagan acknowledges these debates and discusses them throughout the book but opts to use Rousean’s terminology out of a practical need to label and name the people of En Bas Saline. She also purposely provides a very general discussion of Hispaniolan prehistory, citing various more-detailed sources as a way to focus on other aspects of analysis such as social variability and spatial organisation.

It is obvious throughout the book, however, that presenting archaeologically grounded evidence of these aspects at En Bas Saline proved to be more difficult than expected. This is in part due to the site’s relatively homogeneous Chicoid occupation throughout the 300 years before European arrival, and no definitive evidence of interaction with its Mellacoid neighbours is found. A further factor is that it is one of the few sites in the Greater Antilles where attempts have been made to use households as a unit of analysis in an effort to humanise archaeological findings. Archaeology in the Greater Antilles, both pre- and post-contact, continues to place great importance on researching and dating ‘display’ artefacts, as opposed to increasing knowledge about past lifeways. Despite this, it was possible to determine the elite and less-elite areas of the site, based on artefact variety and certain artefact types. Interestingly, although there were changes in the artefact types present in pre- and post-contact contexts, the areas of occupation by each group did not change.

Deagan is more successful in presenting the case for En Bas Saline being the most likely candidate for the site of La Navidad and Guacanagari’s town (Chapters 13 and 14). The elite area of the site, located on a mound, shows evidence of burning at high temperatures after the arrival of the Europeans. All European fauna and the majority of the European-origin artefacts were also found in the elite area. A study of the lead isotope values of a fragment

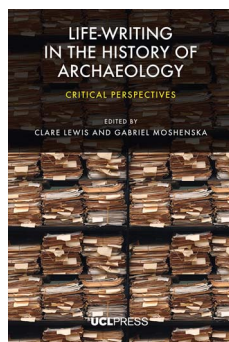
of *filigrana* glass link it to similar glass fragments found at Long Bay, Bahamas, where it is believed that Columbus first landed. Most significantly, the strontium values of a pig's tooth found at the site conform most closely to values from Seville, Spain, the place of origin of the first and second Columbus voyages.

In sum, Deagan achieves her stated aim of this book to present a comprehensive synthesis of all research undertaken at the site, in both pre- and post-contact contexts. She readily states and accepts that, in the process, many questions have remained unanswered, which is largely due to the time lapse between the end of excavations and the present. She even advocates reanalysis of the En Bas Saline legacy collections, particularly those that can help to better define the diet. As with her other books on Hispaniolan archaeology, *En Bas Saline: a Taino town before and after Columbus* will serve as an essential guide for how Caribbean archaeology approaches seminal legacy sites.

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CLARE LEWIS & GABRIEL MOSHENSKA (ed.). 2023. *Life-writing in the history of archaeology: critical perspectives*. London: University College London Press; 978-1-80008-450-6 paperback £35, OpenAccess. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800084506>



One recent expression of archaeological self-reflexivity has been the use of life-writing to explore the people, places, institutions and relationships that have influenced the development of the discipline. In their Introduction, Clare Lewis and Gabriel Moshenska explain that life-writing can be conceptualised as “a set of practices, creating forms of writing that take individual lives as their focus or frame” (p.5). The first six chapters, grouped together under the heading ‘Critical perspectives’, address some fundamental questions about life-writing, its relationship to biography and microhistory and its relevance to the study of archaeological history. Readers learn that life-writing often engages topics and persons found at the periphery

of the discipline; much of it is based on the contents of institution or family archives that contain previously unstudied field notes and correspondence. In Chapter 1, Marc-Antoine Kaeser describes these mini-biographies as a social practice, a creation of self against a specific context and it is this theme of “life-writing as contextualization” that carries throughout the volume. Chapter 2, written by Thomas Gertzen, contains a useful example of (what we in linguistics would call) discourse analysis, explained as a form of “historical or higher criticism [that] has to be applied to reconstruct ‘the world behind the text’” (p.56). Thea De Armond’s Chapter 3 brings home the point that life-writing looks to the “margins, minor