

into a wide range of different cultural groups (Keegan 2000). Because of these geographically broad and temporally disparate conditions that led to several major (and probably multiple minor) migrations, the Caribbean presents some unique opportunities and challenges for researchers in attempting to explain how prehistoric peoples colonized these islands and how settlement patterns were structured after initial occupation.

Some of the earliest work dedicated to looking at the origins of Amerindian peoples in the Caribbean was conducted by Fewkes (1907, 1914), who ventured through Puerto Rico and the Lesser Antilles collecting artifacts for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Researchers in the early part of the twentieth century included such prominent figures as Jesse Fewkes (1907, 1914), Froleich Rainey (1940), Ricardo Alegría (1965), Irving Rouse (1986, 1992a), and Ripley Bullen (Bullen and Bullen 1972), as well as Estrella Rey Betancourt, who all began to offer more detailed glimpses of the ancient Caribbean by examining and in many cases excavating sites in the Caribbean and on the South American mainland. Through these efforts, we have slowly begun to piece together when and how peoples colonized these islands, how cultural differences began manifesting themselves, and how these and other events structured settlement patterns, ultimately influencing resource use and social behavior through time (see Fitzpatrick and Keegan 2007).

The results of these investigations demonstrate that pre-Columbian peoples were interacting frequently (Hofman et al. 2008), adapting to variations in environment and resource availability, overexploiting many terrestrial and marine foods, and developing unique cultural traits. For a more in-depth treatment, readers can consult several key sources that summarize what we presently know about cultural periods in the Caribbean during pre-Columbian times: Rouse 1986, 1992a; Siegel 1989, 2005; Keegan 1994, 1996, 2000, 2007; Wilson 1997, 2007; Petersen et al. 2004; Newsom and Wing 2004; Fitzpatrick and Keegan 2007 (see figure 0.2 for a synopsis of cultural periods identified in the Caribbean).



Biological Perspectives

The origins of Native Americans, their dispersal patterns throughout the New World, and the unique cultures that developed have also been a topic of fundamental interest to anthropologists and other scholars for centuries. However, discussions and studies addressing Native American origins