

PRESS RELEASE

Sidestone Press releases “Costly Giving, Giving *Guaízas*” by Angus A.A. Mol.

Leiden (The Netherlands), 04/06/2008

Angus Mol (University of Leiden) recently graduated on an excellent thesis in Caribbean Archaeology. His thesis “Costly Giving, Giving *Guaízas*” (Paperback: 978-90-8890-002-0) has now been published by Sidestone Press.

An Archaeology of Exchange is primarily an archaeology of human sociality and anti-sociality. Nevertheless, archaeological studies of exchange are numerous and varied, and archaeologists do not always approach exchange as a social mechanism, concentrating rather on the cultural, economic or political implications of exchange. Even so, at times it is worth retracing the implicit theoretical steps that archaeologists have taken and look at human sociality through the eyes of exchange as something new.

Mol undertakes this by concentrating on the exchange of social valuables in the later part of the Late Ceramic Age of the Greater and Lesser Antilles (AD 1000/1100-1492). Questions concerning this exchange are framed in a novel mix of theories - such as Costly Signalling Theory coupled with the paradox of keeping-while-giving and the notion of gene/culture co-evolution joined with Complex Adaptive System theory. Still, all these theories can be related back to the concept of exchange as put forward by the French sociologist Marcel Mauss in his famous *Essai sur le don* of 1950.

This theoretical framework is put to the test by an extensive case-study of a specific category of Late Ceramic Age social valuables: shell faces, which have an area of distribution that ranges from central Cuba to the Île de Ronde in the Grenadines. The study of these enigmatic artefacts uncovers novel insights on the nature and use of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age by communities and individuals.

Costly Giving, Giving *Guaízas* - Towards an organic model of the exchange of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean - Angus A.A. Mol.

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