

A Troumassoid site at Trois-Rivières, Guadeloupe FWI Funerary practices and house patterns at La Pointe de Grande Anse

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Abstract

The site of La Pointe de Grande Anse, Trois-Rivières, was discovered in 2006 by members of the French National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research (INRAP). The site is situated on the right bank of the Grande Anse River in the south of Basse-Terre. During April and May 2008, a preventive excavation was conducted by Inrap covering a total of 1784m² and thereby revealing a part of a Precolumbian village.

Radiocarbon dates and a few characteristic ceramics attributed the occupation to the Troumassoid period (650 - 1600 AD). The excavation plan showed various concentrations of postholes, burial clusters and numerous waste pits revealing at least 3 house locations. Within one house location, a clear house plan was detected which also evidenced a burial cluster of 5 pits in its north-west quarter suggesting that the house and burial group could be contemporaneous. However, the radiocarbon dates suggest a difference in age between the house and the burials of at least 500 years, thereby covering almost the whole post-Saladoid period. The authors propose that Amerindians from the Late Ceramic Age B buried their dead at Early Ceramic Age B sites creating cemeteries.

Resumé

Le site de La Pointe de Grande Anse, Commune de Trois-Rivières, a été découvert en 2006 par une équipe de l'Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (INRAP). Le site est situé sur la rive droite de la Rivière de Grande Anse dans le sud de Basse-Terre. Pendant les mois d'avril et de mai 2008, une fouille préventive a été réalisée par l'Inrap de 1784m² et a mis au jour une partie d'un village amérindien.

Les résultats des dates radio carbonées et quelques éléments céramiques caractéristiques ont attribué l'occupation à l'époque troumassoïde (650-1600 AD). Le plan de fouilles a relevé plusieurs ensembles de trous de poteaux, des groupements de sépultures et plusieurs fosses à dépotoirs, qui évoquent au moins trois ensembles archéologiques distincts. Dans un de ces ensembles, le plan d'un carbet amérindien a été reconnu nettement. Dans l'angle nord-ouest du

carbet se situait une concentration de 5 fosses sépulcrales, suggérant la contemporanéité du carbet et des sépultures. Pourtant, les datations radio carbones ont mis en évidence une différence chronologique entre le carbet et les sépultures d'environ 500 ans qui couvre presque l'intégralité de la période post-saladoïde. Les auteurs proposent que les amérindiens de l'époque Late Ceramic B ont enterré leurs morts dans les sites datés de l'époque Early Ceramic B, créant des cimetières.

Résumen

El sitio La Pointe de Grande Anse, Trois-Rivières, fue descubierto en 2006 por miembros del Instituto Nacional para la Investigación Arqueológica Preventiva (INRAP en su acrónimo francés). El sitio está situado en el banco derecho del río Grande Anse, al sur de Basse-Terre. Durante los meses de abril y mayo de 2008, Inrap condujo excavaciones preventivas que cubrieron un total de 1,784m² resultando en la revelación de una parte de una villa precolombina.

Los resultados obtenidos de fechas radiocarbónicas y algunos fragmentos diagnósticos de cerámica sugieren para el sitio una ocupación del periodo Troumassoide (650-1600AD). El plan de excavación mostró varias concentraciones de huellas de poste, agregados de fosas de enterramientos y numerosos depósitos de basural, revelando al menos 3 ubicaciones de casas. En una de estas ubicaciones, la planta claramente definida de una casa fue detectada registrándose en ella un agregado con 5 fosos de enterramientos en su cuadrante noroeste, sugiriendo que la casa y el grupo de entierros pueden ser contemporáneos. No obstante, los fechados radiocarbónicos plantean una separación de al menos 500 años entre la casa y los entierros, cubriendo así casi todo el periodo post--Saladoide. Los autores proponen que los amerindios de la Era Cerámica tardía B enterraron a sus muertos y crearon cementerios en sitios de la Era Cerámica temprana B.

Samenvatting

De indiaanse vindplaats van La Pointe de Grande Anse, Trois-Rivières, werd in 2006 aangetoond door medewerkers van het Frans Nationale Institute voor Preventieve Archeologie (INRAP). Deze site is gelegen op de rechter oever van de Grande Anse rivier in het zuiden van Basse-Terre. Gedurende de maanden april en mei 2008 werd in totaal 1784m² van een pré-columbiaans dorp blootgelegd.

De houtskool dateringen en enkele kenmerkende aardewerk scherven suggereren dat deze vindplaats aan de Troumassoïde Periode kan worden toegekend (650-1600 AD). De sporenkaart van de opgraving laat verschillende palen-, begravings- en kuilen-concentraties zien die minimaal drie sporen zones weergeven. Eén zone laat duidelijk een huisplattgrond zien met, in de noordwest hoek van het huis, een verzameling van 5 begravingen die doen vermoeden dat het huis en de begravingen gelijktijdig zijn. Echter, de resultaten van de houtskool dateringen suggeren een tijdsgat van minstens 500 jaar tussen de huizen en de begravingen die bijna de gehele post-saladoïde periode in beslag neemt. De auteurs willen aantonen dat de indianen uit de Late Ceramic B periode hun doden hebben begraven op vindplaatsen die uit de Late Ceramic A periode stammen en zodoende begraafplaasten in het leven hebben geroepen.

Introduction

The Precolumbian site of La Pointe de Grande Anse, Trois-Rivières (Guadeloupe FWI) was discovered in 2006 by members of the French National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research (Inrap) (Van den Bel 2007). The site is situated at the summit of a volcanic flow in the south of the island of Basse-Terre on the right bank of the Grand Anse River (Fig. 1). In colonial times, the site housed a local pottery production centre (Fils Fidelin) but also a sugar cane factory. These colonial activities have entirely disturbed the Amerindian archaeological level until the sterile yellowish brown subsoil. The northern and southern slopes of the site still evidenced an Amerindian archaeological layer but yielded very little material; no midden area was encountered within the perimeter of the excavation. In total, 1784m² has been uncovered by means of a mechanical shovel revealing over 1200 features ascribed to both Precolumbian and colonial times. This paper focuses on the Precolumbian features of the site.

The Trois-Rivières area, situated between the Petit-Carbet and Grande Rivière River, is well known for its high concentration of Precolumbian rock-art but few (contemporaneous?) habitation sites have been recorded in the vicinity (Ruig 2001). In 1994, the French Ministry of Culture (DRAC) and the University of Leiden excavated various test-pits near the petroglyphs of Derussy, Romuald, Anse Duquerry but also on the left bank of the Grande Anse River to collect archaeological material in order to obtain a first chrono-cultural framework for the rock art sites (Delpuech et al. 1994).

The latter site, situated opposite the excavated area, was recorded in 1984 by Pierre Bodu (Bodu 1984). In 1994, 12 test pits were excavated by members of the University of Leiden to the west and south of the present day football field. In total, 441 sherds were found which were attributed to the Cedrosan-Saladoïd sub-series by the excavators (Delpuech, Hofman and Hoogland 1994).

Another Precolumbian habitation site was found on the island of Terre-de-Bas (Les Saintes) situated opposite Trois-Rivières. In 1995, a



Figure 1. Aerial view of La Pointe de Grande Anse indicating the 2008 excavation, the 1994 test pits and the possible limits of the site (dotted line).

small-scale excavation, directed by the SRA of Guadeloupe, yielded ceramics attributed to the Suazan Troumassoid sub-series dated between 1000 and 1450 AD (Delpuech et al. 1995).¹

Description of House Locations 1 and 2

The excavation yielded 211 features attributable to the Precolumbian era. Most of the features are concentrated on the longitudinal summit of the volcanic flow (south-east to north-west).

The post holes can be sub-divided into 2 types: Type A is a large oval shaped hole, deeper than 80cm (Fig. 2). These holes have a clear post mould and represent the principal or central posts (>20cm in diameter) of the house. The

Type B post hole is smaller, has a roundish to oval shaped hole which does not exceed 50cm in depth and represents the secondary or supporting posts (10-20cm) of the house. Both types were dug into the volcanic bedrock and both types were accompanied by additional rocks that supported the posts. Small and large amounts of pottery or lithic debitage were found in numerous fills. The spatial distribution of the features revealed four principal concentrations of features consisting of a mix of burials, post holes and pits. These concentrations represent house locations of which only House Location 1 and 2 will be discussed since the radiocarbon samples were taken from these locations.

House Location 2

We start with HL 2 since the house plan was already 'recognised' in the field. Such a 'clean'

¹ This hypothesis is confirmed by one radio carbon date of 810 ± 30 BP (GrN-20874) but also contradicted by a second date on human bone from an older burial dated 1210 ± 50 BP (GrN-21562).

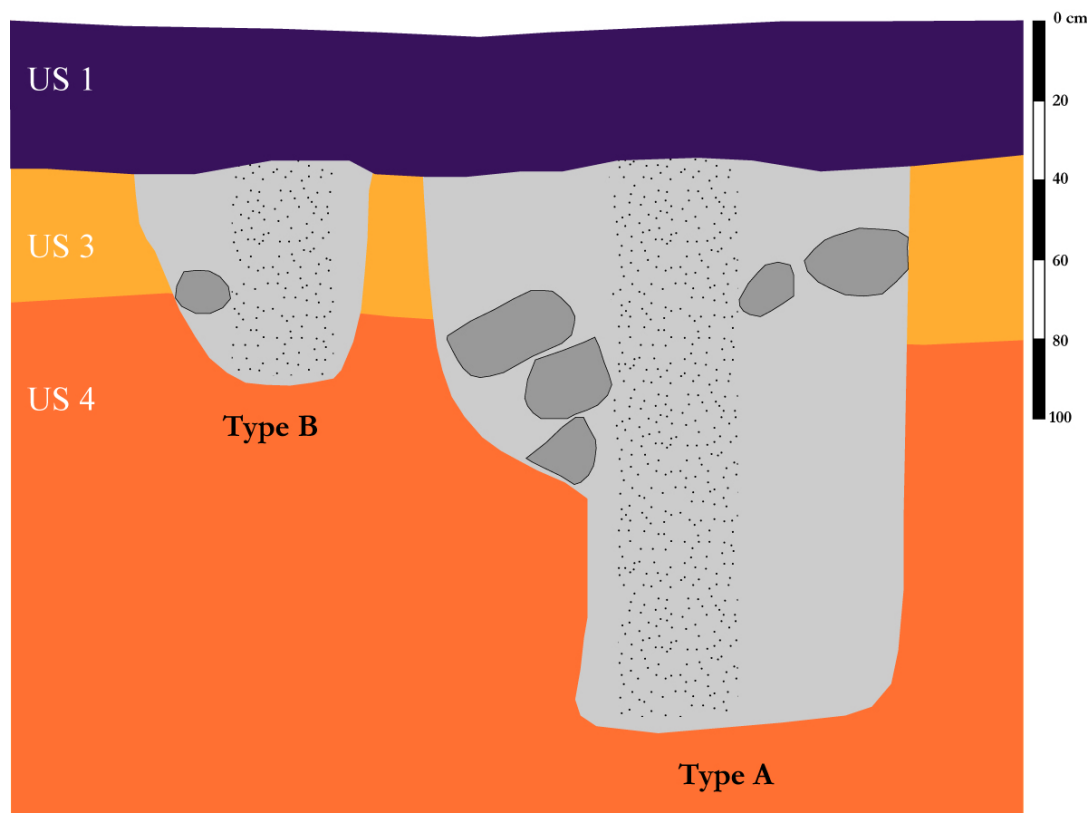


Figure 2. Schematic overview of the posthole types.

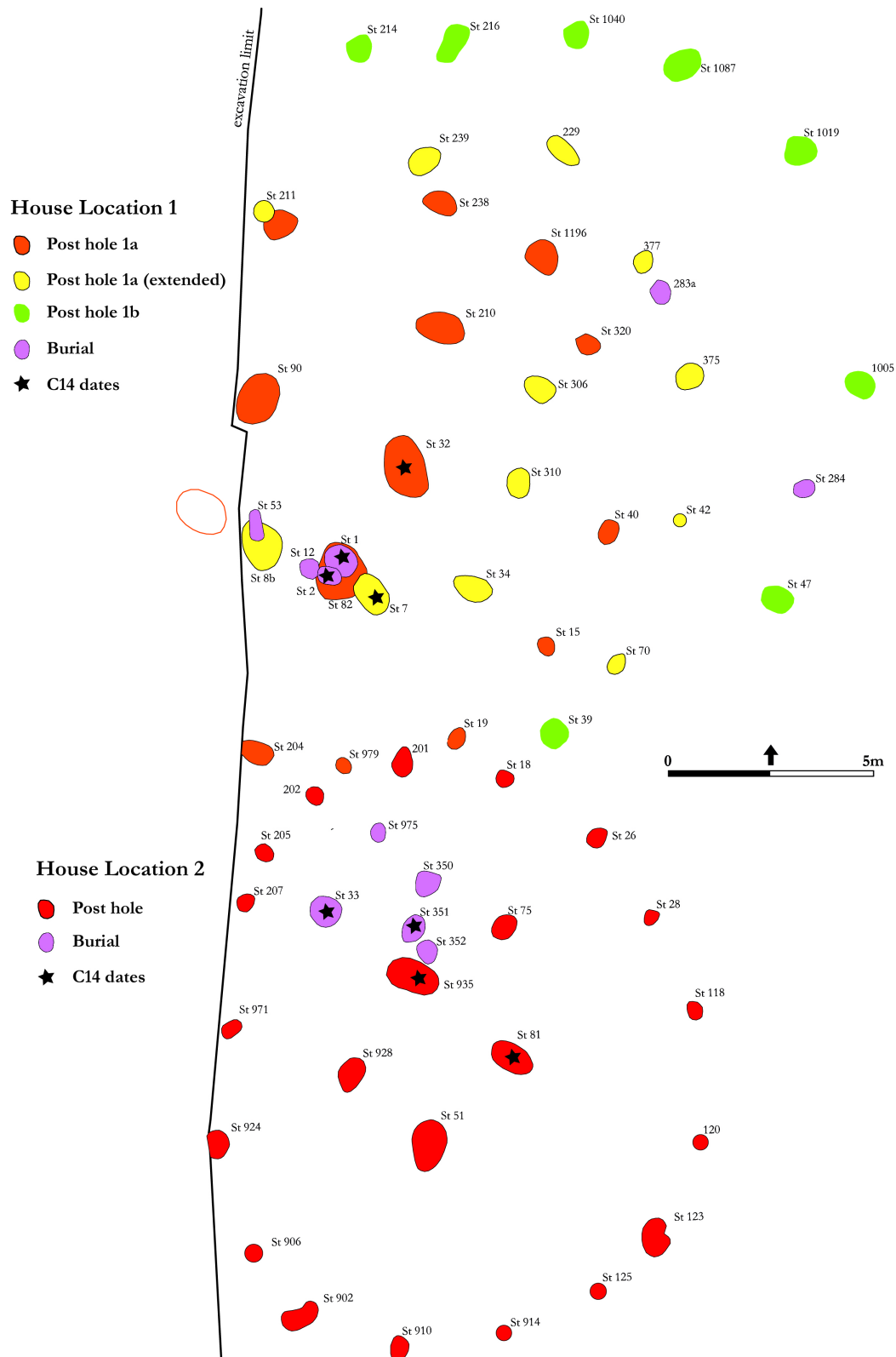


Figure 3. Detail of the excavation plan showing House Location 1 and 2.

plan is a rarity in the Lesser Antilles since most house plans are hidden within a 'cloud' or palimpsest of postholes, as is the case for HL 1. House Location 2 covers a surface of 132m² and consists of four large central post holes, one off centered post hole and an outer peripheral circle of at least seventeen smaller post holes (Fig. 3). The 4 central posts are situated in the middle of the outer circle and form a rectangle of 2,70 x 2,70 meters. The fifth central post is situated 2,5m north east of the latter rectangle. The function of the latter post is probably governed by a particular roof construction. The posts of the outer circle are separated by five meters. Archaeological material was found in abundance in the fills of the central post holes and assigns this house location to a later phase of occupation which is stressed by the slightly 'off to the side' position. The wooden post in St 935 was carbonised and attributed to the *Cynotmetra* / *Hymenea* species, better known as courbaril.² In the north western 'quarter' of the house, 5 burial pits (one of which contains 2 individuals) were found grouped together suggesting that the house and the burials could be contemporaneous.

House Location 1

House Location 1 is situated at the longitudinal summit of the site, slightly to the north of HL 2. This house location is also represented by a concentration of post holes and a burial group but is obviously less evident than HL 2 (Fig. 3). These kinds of feature densities are probably due to rebuilding of the first house forming a rather clearly demarcated palimpsest which is typical for Precolumbian habitation sites in the Lesser Antilles (cf. Delpuech et al. 2001). We estimate that the first plan (HL 1a) also consists of four large central posts of which one is located outside the excavation. The additional off centered post can be post hole

St 210 and the outer arc is touching HL 2 in the south. The total surface is bigger by a few square meters. In a second stage the central framework is extended by 5 posts of which one (St 8b) cuts into a burial (St 53) and one is replaced (St 7). The outer circle of post holes is extended to the north and its surface is thereby enlarged (HL 1a 'extended'). Another outer arc is visible (HL 1b) but no central posts could be ascribed to this arc which may be an indication for a secondary function of these post holes. They may even have functioned as another extension to HL 1a or 1b. The rebuilding or re-constructions of this house location are confirmed by the sectioning of Burial 1, the position of Burial 2 on top of a post hole and the presence of post hole fills without archaeological material evidencing the first installation at this site. It should be noted that this reconstruction remains hypothetical.

Brief comparison of Amerindian house plans on Guadeloupe

In the southern part of the island of Basse-Terre, three contemporaneous Amerindian habitation sites yielded similar house patterns: Bisdary at Gourbeyre (Romon et al. 2006), Moulin-à-Eau and L'Allée Dumanoir at Capesterre-Belle-Eau (Mestre et al. 2001; Etrich et al. 2003). The latter two sites did not yield burials but several oval-shaped pits with complete vessel deposits which have been interpreted as inhumations. On the other hand, they did reveal similar round or slightly oval-shaped house plans. These round houses showed a ring of either 15 (Bâtiment N de Moulin-à-Eau; Mestre et al. 2001:25) or ten external post holes (BP 8, 9 and 13 at L'Allée Dumanoir; Etrich et al. 2003:82) which were spaced some five meters apart. Their total surfaces are estimated at between 100 and 180m² and clearly correspond to the estimated surfaces of the La Pointe de Grande Anse plans. There are also smaller house plans (<10m in diameter) with

² Cesalpineacea family. Determination by Christophe Tardy (Inrap) (cf. van den Bel et al. 2009:32).

eight peripheral or outer posts (Fig. 4).

A difference is observed concerning the positioning of the central house posts. The Capes-terre-Belle-Eau plans showed in most of the cases two central posts –or even one– where as House Location 2 of La Pointe de Grande Anse has four or five. On the other hand, the Anse à la Gourde site, situated in the east of the island of Grande-Terre clearly showed house plans with 4 or more central posts in rectangular constitution such as Structures 1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 20 (Bright 2003:17-27; Morsink 2006:19-47). The other constructions at this site have a double peripheral ring and a larger total surface (Structure 17, 18 and 21)³.

3 Here, we would also like to point to the great resemblance between HL 2 of La Pointe de Grande Anse and the pre-historic longhouse of FAL-7 in the Maticora Valley of Western Venezuela. An ovoid longhouse measuring 18 x 13 m (234m²)

The co-existence of different house types on Amerindian sites in the Antilles is common when conducting large scale excavations. These differences are generally interpreted as architectural / functional differences and express various cultural functions such as ethnic identity, socio-economic organisation and religious practices. For example, the house plans at the Golden Rock site (Saint Eustatius), dated to the 7th and 8th century AD, and the larger house plans at Anse à la Gourde have revealed a more complex plan than the Troumassoid house plans of Basse-Terre. These house surfaces are larger and can be estimated between 250 and 360m². Secondly, another peripheral (semi) circle is situated on the outside which has been interpreted as passage ways, veran-
showing four central posts with an outer ring of smaller posts (Oliver 1995:151).

site	code	dimensions	surface m ²	central posts	rings	reference
Moulin à Eau	N	9 x 9m	81	2	1	Mestre et al.2001
Allée Dumanoir	BP 5	11,5 x 11,5	132,25	2	1	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 6	13 x 13	169	2	2	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 7	9 x 9	81	0	1	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 8	13,5 x 13,5	182,25	2	1	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 9	9 x 8	72	2	1	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 10	6 x 6	36	2	1	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 12	10 x 10	100	2	1	Etrich et al 2003
Allée Dumanoir	BP 13	13,5 x 13,5	182,25	2	1	Etrich et al 2003
Anse à la Gourde	S 1	11,5 x 7	104	0	2	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 3	10 x 7	70	2	1	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 4	2 x 8	96	1	2	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 6	11 x 11	121	0	2	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 8	10 x 8	80	4	1	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 10	9 x 7	84	4	1	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 17	18 x 18	324	1	3	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 18	18 x 18	324	2	2	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 20	10 x 10	100	4	1	Morsink 2006
Anse à la Gourde	S 21	20 x 18	360	2	2	Morsink 2006
Pointe de Grande Anse	HL 1a	12 x 14	168	4	1	van den Bel et al. 2009
Pointe de Grande Anse	HL 1b	14 x 16	224	1	2	van den Bel et al. 2009
Pointe de Grande Anse	HL 2	17 x 14	238	4	1	van den Bel et al. 2009
Pointe de Grande Anse	HL 3	11 x 11	121	2	1	van den Bel et al. 2009

Figure 4. Short overview of (post-saladoid ?) house plans on Guadeloupe from large scale excavations.

das, screens or walls. According to the authors, the interior organisation of the house plan reflects the co-habitation of multiple families in the same house (Versteeg and Schinkel 1992). In general, the changing morphology of the house plans coincides with the cultural changes proposed for the Late Saldoid Period that marks a socio-cultural differentiation between the Saladoid and Troumassoid Periods in the Lesser Antilles (Curet and Oliver 1998; Waters 1994; Keegan 2000; Bright 2003; Petersen et al. 2004; de Waal 2006; Hofman et al. 2007).

Burials

First we have to mention that the presence of (human) bone remains is a rarity for volcanic soils due to its high acidity. DNA samples were taken from all individuals but the low rates of collagen in the human bone did not permit analysis on genetic relationships between the individuals within and between the burial clusters to be performed. Gender could not be determined for any of the individuals.

Spatial distribution

Thirteen of the 16 exhumed burials are clearly grouped together into 3 distinct spatial units (Fig. 3 and 5)⁴. The distribution of the remaining 3 burials seems more random. This is probably due to colonial and current activities but can also be a result of different Amerindian funerary practices.

The first concentration is situated along the western limit of the excavation within the plan of House Location 1 and consists of 4 burials. The second spatial unit is situated to the south of the first unit and located within the north-western quarter of House Location 2 and consists of 5 burials. The third unit is to be found in the south eastern corner of the excavated area within House Location 3 and comprises 4 burials. Spatial units 4 and 5 are localised

⁴ House Location 3 is not discussed in this paper (only the burials) because no charcoal was sent for analysis but HL 3 is situated 30 meters to the south east of HL 2 (cf. Fig. 5).

in the northern part of the exaction and total 3 burials.

Burial types

Five of the 16 burials are incomplete which is due to the bone conservation and later disturbances. One burial is strictly secondary. Three burials show evidence of bones in both primary and secondary position which is related to Amerindian activities once the tissue had decomposed. Seven burials are strictly primary and 3 burials yielded multiple individuals. The orientation of the burials is rather heterogeneous: 6 are directed towards the north, 1 to the south, 1 to the south-east, 1 to the south, 2 to the west and 1 towards the north-west. Only one burial is associated with a ceramic vessel which is partly destroyed. This is probably due to ploughing during the colonial period. The vessel was probably placed upside down over the upper part (head?) of the individual as a lid or cover.

Primary burials

Primary burials are the most common burials at La Pointe de Grande Anse and also in the (Lesser) Antilles. The Amerindians dug a pit in which they deposited their dead and left it untouched. This site yielded seven simple primary burials and the five incomplete burials can most probably be associated to this group. Within this group (n=12), two individuals were deposited in semi-seated position (St 1 for example), eight on their back (St 1197 for example), and two on their sides (St 571 for example). The upper limbs are bent and the hands are placed on the abdomen either. The lower extremities are bent or hyper flexed in a vertical way (n=3), or the knees touch the shoulders (n=3) or are in front of the individual (n=2 on the decubitus side).

Primary burials with secondary disturbances This burial type is less frequent than the cases

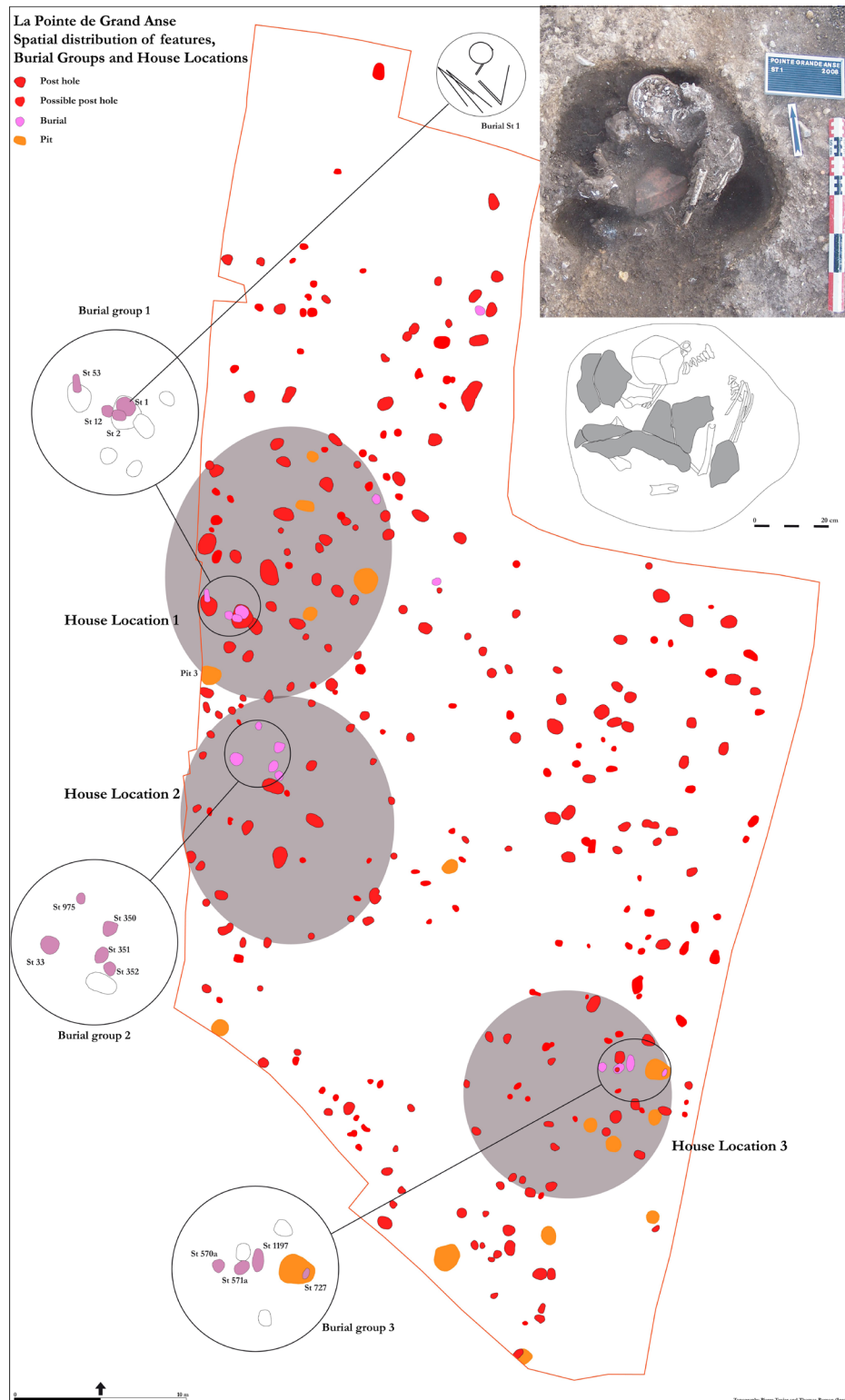


Figure 5. Spatial distribution of features, Burial Groups and House Locations.

above presented. Once the deceased was buried and the decomposition of the soft tissues was fairly well advanced, the Amerindians returned to the corpse, and generally moved it and / or removed bones. This type of activity is mostly encountered at Late Ceramic Age habitation sites.

For burial 1096, the mandible was replaced against the left upper limb and the cranium on the left lower extremity but the remainder of the individual was in primary position. Burial 351 contains an individual without cranium in primary position and features two craniums in secondary position. The individual in primary position is buried on the back, similarly to the simple burials, but it is not possible to determine if either of the two skulls belongs to this individual. Burial 33 is a double burial, though the individuals were not buried simultaneously. The first individual was deposited in a pit and afterwards (after complete decomposition) the same pit was re-used to deposit a second individual. In doing so, some bones of the first individual were taken and re-deposited in this same pit. The remains of the first individual which were still in primary position, indicating that this person was buried on the back like the other simple primary burials.

Secondary burials

Burial 727 is a true secondary burial. This burial represents the bones of two individuals that were collected after their complete decomposition and re-deposited in a pit. Whether this pit was one of the original pits is unknown but all bones are clearly in secondary position. The long bones were gathered in a bundle and deposited against the eastern wall of the pit; a cranium and a mandible were found in the middle of the same pit. The absence of many bones and in particular small sized ones speaks for decomposition in a different place. At the moment, it is difficult to attribute this phenomenon with certainty to Precolumbian activity

since several burials were disturbed by colonial activities. However, strict secondary burials are known from other Amerindian sites and are usually dated to the post-Saladoid period.

Indications for grave goods and body preparation.

Ten burials show evidence of grave goods and preparation of the deceased. Hereby we want to refer to objects of any perishable material (eg. hammocks, basketry etc.) that may create empty spaces. Burial 1 features such empty spaces: a dislocated cranium and the collapse of the ceramic vessel (Fig. 5 and 6). This burial also revealed clogged spaces (the thorax was supported to keep it in an upright position) and secondary fillings (sediment between the left humerus left and the ribs). This (perishable) matter creates 'holes' which force certain parts of the body to move independently such as the thorax, the upper limbs and the lower extremities.

Burial 2 shows indications for independent constraints concerning the left side of the body, the upper limb and the lower left extremities. First of all the left ribs have been moved forwards while there is lateral space under the left elbow. Secondly, the left upper limb forced the radius into an unstable position. Finally, the left lower extremities are maintained in a parallel position according to the body axis while there is lateral space available on top of the left elbow. These observations show that the morphology of the various segments may have moved in one "bloc".

Another example is burial 571. Here, the position of the upper right limb is somehow maintained in an articulated position in spite of the observed displacement and in this matter is an obstacle between the upper limb and the lower extremities. This object is not present anymore and has been replaced by sediment, but clearly affected the position of the thorax, the upper limbs and the lower extremities. The residual

position of the corpse is a position clearly desired by the Amerindians before burying the individual.

The hammock is an object which answers to the above mentioned criteria. Amerindian burials in hammocks are well illustrated by chroniclers of the 17th century. Father Breton (who resided in Guadeloupe from 1635-1653) stated:

They dig a round pit of 3 feet deep in the house floor. They wash the body, dye it with roucou, oil his hair and dress him up nicely just like for a great feast. They put him in a new bed [hammock] and seat him in the foetal position, and cover the hole with a plank (Verrand 2001).⁵

Conclusion

The number of burials remains very modest when taking into consideration the number of people that might have died at the site. The absence of pre-adult individuals is also disconcerting and may suggest that only a part of the population was actually buried at the site. We wonder what factors governed this choice and which fate was reserved for the other part of the deceased population ?

The ceramic assemblage

The ceramics collected during the excavation were found in the feature fills since no midden area was present within the excavated area of the site, therefore creating a certain bias. In total, we found 1.505 sherds (21 kilos) which yielded 47 diagnostic elements (3%) consisting of 3 complete vessel shapes and various decoration modes (n=215 or 14%).

In general one can say that the ceramic assemblage is characterised by its simplicity. Vessel shapes are mainly represented by large open carinated bowls (85%) and small restricted

bowls. These vessels exhibit a preference for rounded lips and diameters vary between 42 and 52cm with red slipping and scratching as the most important finishing modes. Mineral temper characterises 88% of the ceramics. Griddles feature a triangular section or are legged. Decorated elements are fairly rare and represented by red and black monochrome as well as some polychrome (red/orange/white) painted ware. Incision is represented by large circles on the exterior or grooves (cannelures) below the rim. Figuration is absent and all handles are ribbed.

The small amount of ceramics does not permit the assigning of the assemblage to a specific period but it can be largely attributed to the Troumassoid or Late Ceramic Age A Period as defined by Rouse and Morse (1999:49-50). Both Mill Reef and Mamora Bay Styles are present but a few diagnostic elements from later periods have been found such as Early Suazan Troumassoid. The latter period is for example represented by a whole ceramic vessel from Burial 1 and waste pit 3 which is confirmed by the radio carbon dates (Fig. 6 and 7).

Dating the burials and house locations

In total, 10 charcoal and 5 bone samples were taken for radio carbon dating. Alas, only two bone samples contained sufficient collagen for dating. Consequently, we were not able to fully compare the results of the charcoal samples taken from the burials pits with the results of the bone samples taken from the same burial for correlation. In order to bridge this lack of data we tried to date the apatite fraction of the bone samples taken from burials 2, 33 and 71.⁶

⁶ The results are satisfying but radiocarbon dating of bone apatite is still problematic. During the decomposition of the sample material characteristic diagenetic changes take place, such as decomposition of the organic content and crystal reorganisation within the apatite, which are again depending on environmental conditions such as temperature and water saturation. During this process, an apparent apatite crystal growth is observed (indicated by the so called splitting factor SF in the FT-IR spectra), which is related to crystal size. For further detail see Trueman et al 2004, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 31(6):721-739.

⁵ Ils creusent une fosse ronde de 3 pieds de profondeur dans le sol de la case. Ils lavent le corps, le rocouent tout, lui oignent les cheveux d'huile et le troussent aussi proprement qu'à leurs grands festins. Ils le mettent dans un lit neuf et l'assoient dans la position du fœtus, et couvre le trou d'une planche.

The results show an occupation span of the excavated area roughly between 650 and 1600 AD which was already mirrored by the miscellaneous ceramic assemblage (Fig. 7). The youngest date (KIA 36683) is interesting but not of our concern at the moment but it does reveal a very long occupation of this site into colonial times. We concentrate on the samples taken from House Locations 1 and 2.

Although we have difficulties in recognising the house plans in HL 1, we consider this house location as a continuum in space and time. In both house locations, the burials are younger than the post holes which appear somehow logic but the most astounding aspect is probably the enormous time gap between the house plans and burials in both house locations

(Fig. 8). If we put it boldly, the houses were built in the Early Troumassoid Period whereas the dead were buried in the Late Troumassoid Period (Early Suazan Troumassoid). We observe a difference of at least 300 years and a maximum of 500 years.⁷

The perception of time for HL 2 is especially puzzling since this house plan is undisturbed by later constructions and the position of the burials within the house does not appear accidental. Although there is very little archaeological evidence on the life span of Amerindian houses, it is highly probable that HL 2 was already abandoned at the time when the burial pits were dug. Somehow, Suazan Troumassoid Amerindians had an interest in burying their

⁷ Burial 571 is dated by apatite to the earliest occupation of the site. Alas, we do not have radio carbon dates for the post holes surrounding this burial group.

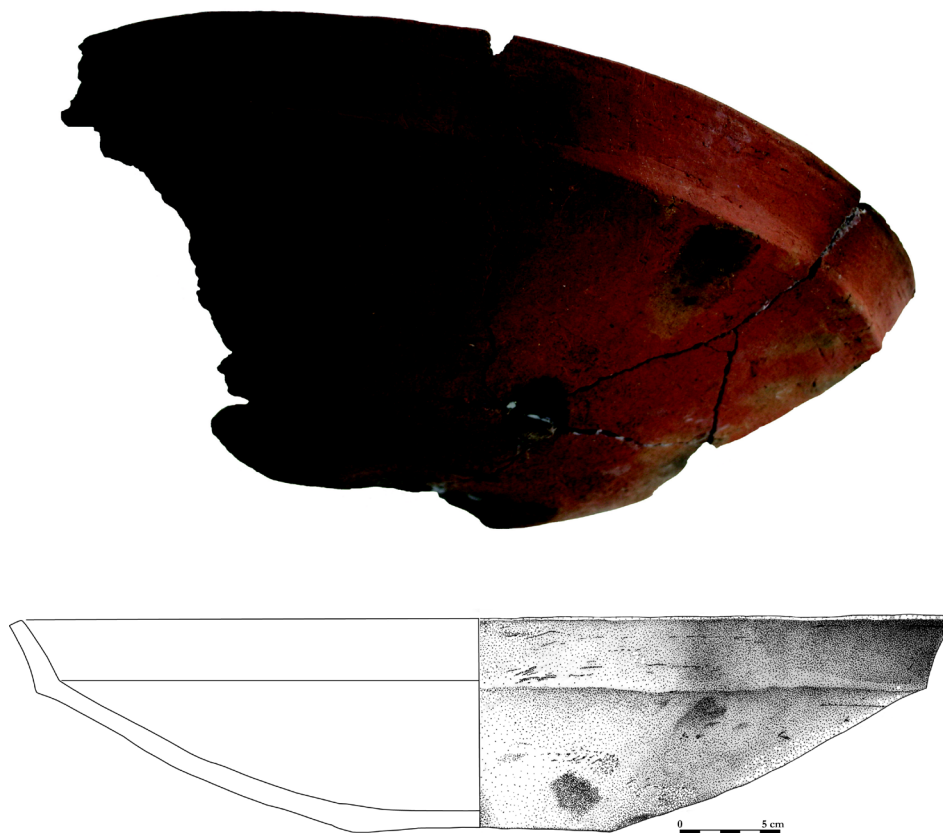


Figure 6. Ceramic vessel found upside down in Burial Pit 1 (drawing by Monique Ruig).

House Location 1						
<i>n°</i>	<i>feature</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>n° Kiel</i>	<i>convent. BP</i>	<i>cal. AD</i>	<i>"2 ? range (95,4%)"</i>
7	post hole	charcoal	KIA 36671	1230 ± 30	761 - 884	67%
32	post hole	charcoal	KIA 36672	1340 ± 25	646 - 694	89%
1	burial	charcoal	KIA 36673	945 ± 35	1019 - 1166	95%
1	burial	"human bone, collagen"	KIA 36675	915 ± 50	1024 - 1214	95%
2	burial	"human bone, collagen"	KIA 36676	565 ± 25	1308 - 1362	54%
2	burial	"human bone, apatite A"	KIA 36676	348 ± 39	1458 - 1638	95%
2	burial	"human bone, apatite B"	KIA 36676	431 ± 22	1430 - 1481	95%
3	pit	charcoal	KIA 36674	945 ± 30	1025 - 1158	95%
House Location 2						
935	post hole	charcoal	KIA 36677	1245 ± 30	683 - 870	95%
81	post hole	charcoal	KIA 36678	1065 ± 30	937 - 1023	76%
33	burial	charcoal	KIA 36679	625 ± 30	1291 - 1398	95%
33	burial	"human bone, collagen"	KIA 36681	x	x	x
33	burial	"human bone, apatite A"	KIA 36681	620 ± 25	1336 - 1398	57%
33	burial	"human bone, apatite B"	KIA 36681	625 ± 25	1338 - 1397	57%
351	burial	charcoal	KIA 36680	690 ± 30	1267 - 1310	72%
351	burial	"human bone, collagen"	KIA 36682	650 ± 140	1000 - 1650	95%
Other						
265	post hole	charcoal	KIA 36683	330 ± 25	1482 - 1642	95%
834	post hole	charcoal	KIA 36684	1000 ± 30	984 - 1050	75%
571	burial	"human bone, collagen"	KIA 36685	x	x	x
571	burial	"human bone, apatite A"	KIA 36685	1435 ± 20	586 - 652	95%
571	burial	"human bone, apatite B"	KIA 36685	1340 ± 20	648 - 690	93%
9	pit	charcoal	KIA 31187	1210 ± 20	773 - 890	94%

Figure 7. Table with the results of the radiocarbon dates. The calibrated age was calculated using CALIB rev 5.0; Data set: IntCal04, Reimer et al. 2004 Radiocarbon 46 (pp.1029-1058). KIA 31187 was taken during the survey in 2006 (van den Bel 2007). BP dates in italics exist only in Radiocarbon Age (apatite samples). With the exception of the apatite A fraction (KIA 36676) all apatite fractions gave more than the 1 mg of carbon recommended for a precise measurement and produced sufficient ion beam, and insofar the results are reliable. The $\delta^{13}C$ values are in the normal range for apatite with a conjectural C3-diet signal. According to Kiel, the $\delta^{13}C$ value of the human bone sample (KIA 36676) is somewhat heavy for collagen from a C3 diet. If the deviation reflects a C4 component in the diet, it has no consequences for the measured 14C age. If, however, it reflects a fish or shell diet, one has to consider a possible reservoir age and the measured age may be too old. The carbon recovered represents only 0.1% of the original bone and, although the collagen was "cleaned" the age obtained is very sensitive to even small contaminations and should also in this respect be used with some caution. The $\delta^{13}C$ value of KIA 36675 is more negative than usual for collagen and suggests a C3 contamination. The age, although in range with the others, should thus also be interpreted with caution. Considering the very small sample size of KIA 36682 (second extraction), the low ion beams and the large age difference between the two collagen extractions from one sample, the results are clearly not reliable. The quite negative $\delta^{13}C$ value of the first preparation suggests the carbon measured in the target did not come from the original bone collagen, but is a contaminant. The $\delta^{13}C$ of the second preparation is near the collagen range and the measured age is in the range of the other samples of this series. Yet, this cannot be considered a usable age (pers. comm. 2010 with Matthias Huls, University of Kiel, Germany).

dead at this particular place.

Discussion

Large scale excavations in the Lesser Antilles

already evidenced the co-existence of (different) house plans and burials at Amerindian sites but their chronological relationship remained difficult to determine. A certain distinct relation between burials and houses is undisputed for

many researchers (eg. Curet and Oliver 1998, Drewett 1999). The excavation plans of various Late Ceramic sites in the Lesser Antilles show that burials are most often situated within (high) concentrations of postholes. Nevertheless, the designation of specific burials to a specific house plan is very difficult despite the results of multiple radio carbon dates for the burials (Morsink 2006:49).

Although we must be cautious regarding the results of the radio carbon dates from La Pointe de Grande Anse, the time gap between the house structures and the burials at La Pointe de Grande Anse remains an interesting fact. The burials are relatively well clustered within the older houses and maybe be referring to a specific desire among Suazan Amerindians to bury their members in an old, abandoned and maybe ancestral village. In this manner, we hypothesise that this site was used at first as a habitation site and later as a funerary site.

We have to remind you that only a part of the site has been excavated. It is highly possible that the whole Pointe de Grande Anse was occupied throughout the entire Troumassoid Period and consisted of different diachronic habitats. In this case, the abandoned parts of the village may have been used as burial grounds and they were actually part of the village.

It is remarkable that the different burial clusters are found within a house plan. To our opinion, this may be an indication for the marking of this burial ground. The excavation did not reveal landscape markers such as mounds or stone slabs. Although these markers could have been destroyed during colonial times, we suspect that a wooden construction and / or the remnants of the house represented the burial site. Further, we also would like to stress the idea that the site location itself was probably remembered within their oral tradition.

Whether the deceased were family could not be analysed but we assume that the burial clusters correspond to a family or lineage tomb. The spatial configuration of 3 to 5 burials within a

house plan may suggest kinship. Since we have various burial clusters we can also submit the idea that they represent a cemetery of different lineages that may have inhabited (this part of) the former village. Furthermore, a (partial) separation of habitation and funerary locations may also be an indication of hierarchy and social stratification.

The best comparison at the moment for similar feature configurations on Guadeloupe is the site of Anse à la Gourde at Grande-Terre (Delpuech et al. 2001). The house plans were attributed to the Troumassoid period (1025-1515 AD) based on the radio carbon dates taken from the burials (Delpuech et al. 2001:65; Bright 2003:34). Earlier ceramics were encountered in the middens and older dates (600 - 800 AD) have been obtained from post holes but the feature abundance within the excavated part of the site did not make it possible to correlate burials to any house plan. We observe that the radio carbon dates of the postholes also differ clearly from those of the burials. We suppose that the site of Anse à la Gourde evidenced a similar change in site function around 1000 AD as may have been the case for many other large multi component sites in the Lesser Antilles during the Troumassoid period.

Conclusion

The excavation at La Pointe de Grande Anse revealed that burials and house plans are not necessarily contemporaneous as is the case for other post-saladoid sites in the Lesser Antilles (eg. Kelbey's Ridge, Saba; Port Saint Charles, Barbados; Manzanilla, Trinidad). We learned that one must be careful when dating post-saladoid sites solely by samples (charcoal and ceramics) taken from burials or either post holes. We conclude that the site of La Pointe de Grande Anse is setting an example of how Troumassoid Amerindians re-used a (parts of) abandoned village as burial grounds around 1000 AD. Somehow, these sites were probably

Atmospheric data from Reimer et al (2004); OxCal v3.10 Bronk Ramsey (2005); sub r:5 sd:12 prob usp[chron]

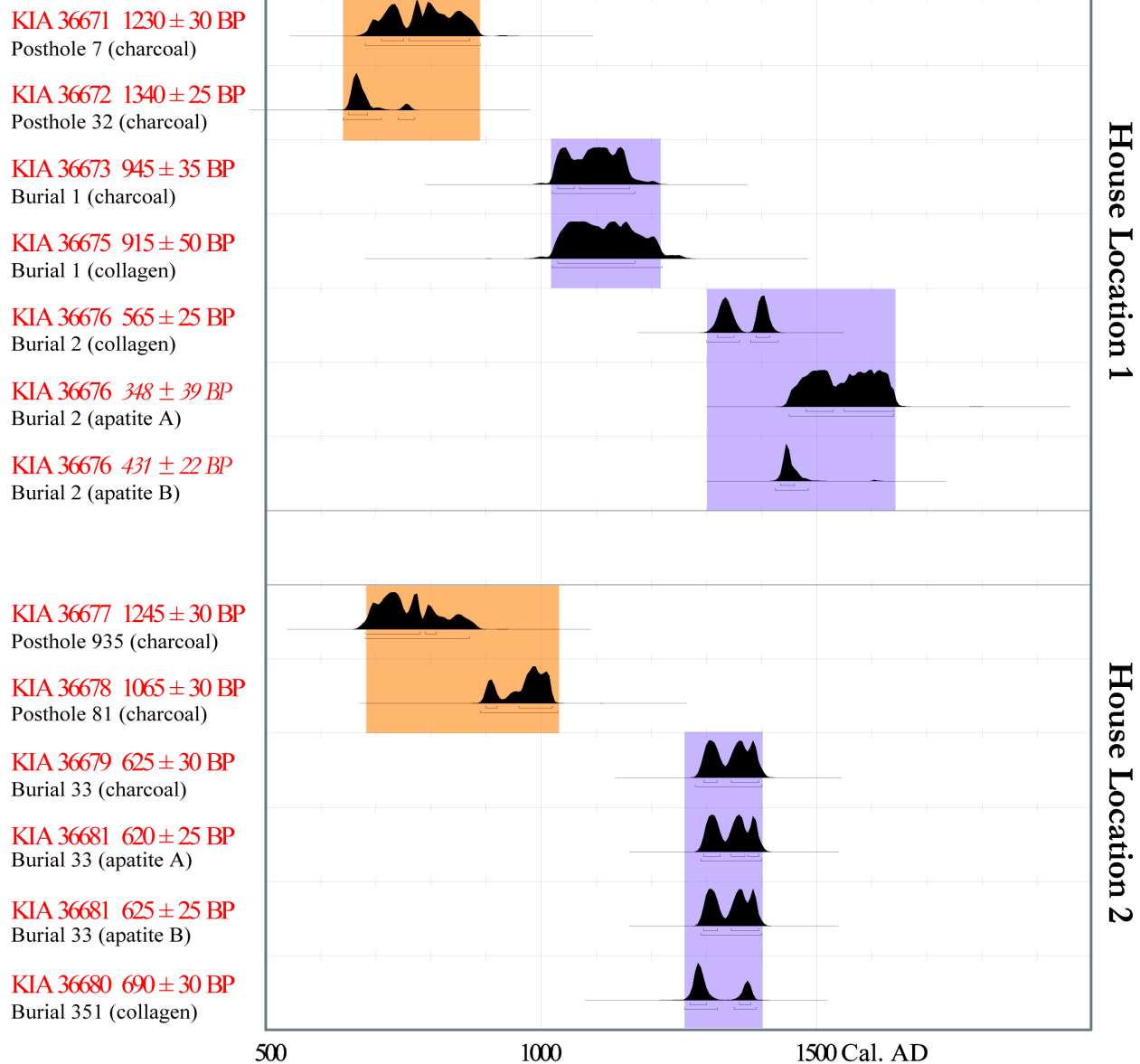


Figure 8. Radio carbon dates per House Location.

still ‘alive’ in oral tradition and may have been visualised in the landscape at that time. To our opinion, this metamorphosis of places tends to be a regional development in the Lesser Antilles that marks the separation of habitat and ceremonial sites as has been suggested for the Greater Antilles (Oliver and Curet 1998)

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