



•food sources and methods of cultivation:

-societies of the Greater Antilles took advantage of the island's rich and diverse natural resources; diets consisted of fish from rivers, lakes and the ocean; water and land fowl ; and crabs, lobsters, sea turtles and manatee  
-in addition, both the mountain valleys and grasslands were cultivated using slash and burn techniques and crops of starchy root vegetables, cotton and tobacco were grown

•warfare: formal warfare took place over matters such as trespassing on fishing or hunting territory, breaches of marriage agreements between elite families of different groups, etc; successful leaders were successful warriors

•role of the elite:

-directed some agricultural, fishing and hunting activities, especially those connected with public feasts and celebrations; received first fruits during harvest time  
-engaged to an unknown extent in long-distance trading  
-controlled production and distribution of certain luxury goods, such as salt (southern Puerto Rico) and objects carved from a particular black wood (western Hispaniola)  
-possessed decorative items which distinguished them from commoners, such as textiles and ornaments made from placer gold and semi-precious stones  
-were associated with sacred world and its powers  
-individual chiefs gained and maintained power through success in warfare, polygamy (which connected him through marriage to other elite families), and ownership of a large dugout canoe which allowed sea travel

**The Lesser Antilles:**

•social organization:

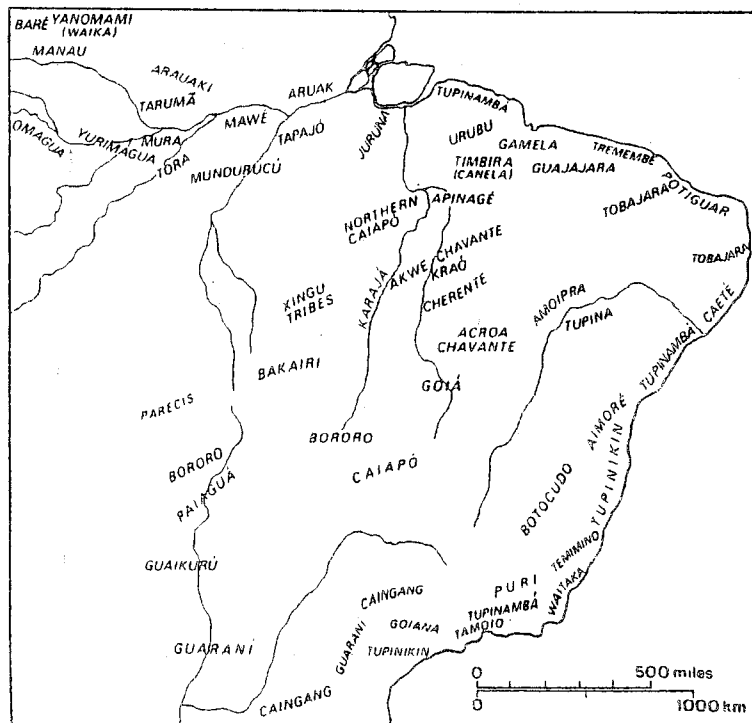
-less complex hierarchical societies with a more egalitarian socio-political organization than in the Greater Antilles; social groupings consisted of 30 to 100 individuals, usually the extended family of the village headman (a "man of importance") living together in a village; the headman practiced polygamy and controlled the labor of his sons-in-law and unmarried sons  
-wives of headman lived virilocally, while all others lived matrilocally

•routes to political influence:

-men could gain influence in one of three ways: by directing a large family; by being successful in warfare; or by owning a canoe; the most successful combined more than one of these

•warfare: warriors travelled long-distances in canoes, to other islands of the Lesser Antilles as well as to the South American mainland, to conduct surprise raids in order to acquire booty including captive women who were subsequently incorporated through marriage into the local community

*sources: Hemming, John. "The Indians of Brazil in 1500." (pp. 119-46) and Helms, Mary W. "The Indians of the Caribbean and Circum-Caribbean at the end of the fifteenth century." (pp. 37-57) in The Cambridge History of Latin America, Vol. 1: Colonial Latin America. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.*



The Indians of the Amazon basin and Brazil, c. 1500