GOEIZ[1]--CLASSIC TAINO SOCIETY AND CULTURE *(1998; amended March 2007)*

This is Chapter 1 of my doctoral dissertation titled *Cultural Genesis: Relationships among Indians, Africans, and Spaniards in rural Hispaniola, first half of the sixteenth century*, which I completed in 1998 for Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A. (UMI Microform no. 9915091). This chapter deals with the Classic Taíno, that is, the Taíno people before the 1492 arrival of the Europeans, which totally changed the trajectory of their socio-cultural development.

--Lynne Guitar, Ph.D. History and Anthropology

After the cross was set up, three sailors went into the bush to see the trees and undergrowth, and they heard a large band of people, all naked like those seen previously, to whom they called, and they

chased after them. But the Indians took to flight. Finally they captured one woman--for they could catch no more--because, he [Christopher Columbus] says, I had ordered them to catch some [people] in order to treat them courteously and make them lose their fear, which would be something profitable since it seems that the land cannot be otherwise than profitable, judging by its beauty. And so they brought the woman, who was very young and pretty, to the ship and she talked to those Indians [who had been captured on other nearby islands], because they all have one language.

--Quotation is from Christopher Columbus's diary, Wednesday, December 12, 1492, the first day the Europeans were able to make contact with the indigenous peoples of Hispaniola.[2] The photo, taken by the author in 2006, is of a young and pretty Dominican of acknowledged indigenous descent in Santiago de los Caballeros.

--The Taínos then and now--

The "Indians" who were living in the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, on Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Hispaniola when Christopher Columbus and his three small ships full of Europeans first arrived in the New World were the people whom we call Taíno today.[3] The first time he encountered them, Columbus described the Taínos as being neither white nor black, like the Europeans or the Africans with whom he was familiar. The Taínos' hair, he said, was black, "straight and coarse." They had wide foreheads, for they practiced elongation of the skulls of infants,[4] large black eyes, "very straight legs and no belly."[5] Two months later, having met many more Taínos, he observed: "And as to their beauty... there was no comparison, of men as well as women."[6]

The word "taíno" appears to be a shortened version of *nitaíno*, which is how the Indians whom Columbus met designated themselves. Perhaps they meant to imply that they were "nobles," the word's most frequently accepted gloss.[7] It is more likely, however, that they meant they were “not cannibals,” which is another of the glosses for the word "nitaíno," and it is the way that most Spaniards who followed Columbus to the region used the term. The people we call Taíno do not appear to have had a collective name for themselves--they identified themselves by region.[8]

The Taíno had the dubious distinction of being the first group of indigenous Americans to experience sustained contact with Europeans, not counting "skraelings" with whom Norsemen in Vinlandia (modern Newfoundland) traded or lived circa A.D. 1000. Unfortunately, the Taíno were also the first indigenous Americans whose relations with Europeans sent them to the brink of extinction. There are many people today on Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, plus others who have emigrated to the United States and to other foreign countries, who are aware that they are Taíno descendants--they have lost much of their classic history, language, customs, and traditions, but there are several steadily strengthening research and revival movements, most notably in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Many other people, also Taíno descendants, are unaware of their indigenous inheritance.[9] The Taínos who managed to survive the wars, abuse, famines, and multiple epidemics after 1492 by fleeing to peripheral regions, led lives that were far different from the well organized, intensively agricultural, well populated societies first encountered by the Europeans. Others survived by intermarrying with Spaniards, with natives brought to the Greater Antilles from other regions of the Americas, and with Africans. Many Taíno socio-cultural traditions were subsumed under the barrage of customs, beliefs, and traditions that arrived with the new voluntary and involuntary immigrants, whose socio-cultural patterns and traditions were adopted and intermixed with Taíno customs and traditions by their mixed-blood *criollo* ("born in the Americas") descendants.

--Sources of information about the Classic Taíno--

Unlike the Aztec and Maya peoples of Mesoamerica, the Taíno did not develop a written method of recording their own history. And although some Taínos were taught to read and write by the Spaniards, only one left written evidence.[10] Therefore, in order to understand where the Taínos came from and what their life was like before Europeans arrived, we must rely upon four main sources: 1) small snatches of information gleaned from the Spanish documents of the era before Classic Taíno society disintegrated, 2) the writings of the contemporary chroniclers, 3) archaeological analyses of material remains at Taíno sites, and 4) anthropological analyses of the cultures of comparable peoples.

As explained in the Introduction, all of these sources are problematical, for they are "tainted" by private agendas and erroneous interpretation, none more so than the chronicles. Nonetheless, we can glean useful information from all of these sources, keeping in mind the authors and their limitations. The most useful chronicles for this chapter on the pre-Hispanic history of the Taíno are those by Christopher Columbus, Fray Ramón Pané, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdéz, Peter Martyr D'Anghiera, and Bartolomé de las Casas.

Columbus was eager to prove that he had reached the "Indies" as per the terms of his *Capitulaciónes* with Isabel and Ferdinand.[11] His writing, especially his *Diario* of the first voyage, is peppered with assumptions and wild stretches of "logic" that attempt to link what he saw in the Caribbean with what Marco Polo had seen and written about China. He had to imagine Taíno responses and reactions because there were no able translators until at least the second voyage. To add to the problems, his original *Diario* was lost. All that remains is an abstract of the original by Las Casas, which magnifies the possibility for misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the material. Nonetheless, Columbus's written observations about the Taíno are valuable because they are the earliest available.

Pané was a Jeronymite friar (of the order of St. Jerome) who was sent by Columbus to live among the Taíno and record their religious beliefs, which he did circa 1498 in his *Relación acerca de las antiqüedades de los indios*.[12] The original of this was also lost. Pané's *relación* was preserved in a biography of Columbus written by his illegitimate son, Fernando Colón, in the 1530s.[13] Pané did not attempt to sort or interpret what he reported; indeed, he was admittedly confused by the many overlapping tales he heard and rituals he witnessed. He also complained frequently about a shortage of paper. He brief *relación*, therefore, presents tantalizing bits of cultural information that suggest rather than answer questions about the Taínos' beliefs and traditions.

Oviedo, the official Royal Historian of the Indies, made only brief stops on Hispaniola from the time he arrived in the New World about 1509 (on his way to Darien in today's Panama) until the 1530s, when he took up residence on the island and held the post of *alcaide* ("warden") of the fortress in Santo Domingo.[14] He stayed through the mid-1540s, writing his multi-volume *Historia general y natural de las Indias* and campaigning against the New Laws that were promulgated in 1542.[15] Due to his late arrival, Oviedo did not have first-hand experience with Classic Taíno society.[16] His experience was primarily with indigenous peoples from the mainland region. Furthermore, Oviedo was notoriously anti-Indian, describing them as generally "bestial and inclined to evil."[17] He was an avid naturalist, however, and even Las Casas admitted that "he is correct whenever he describes the trees and plants of this region."[18]

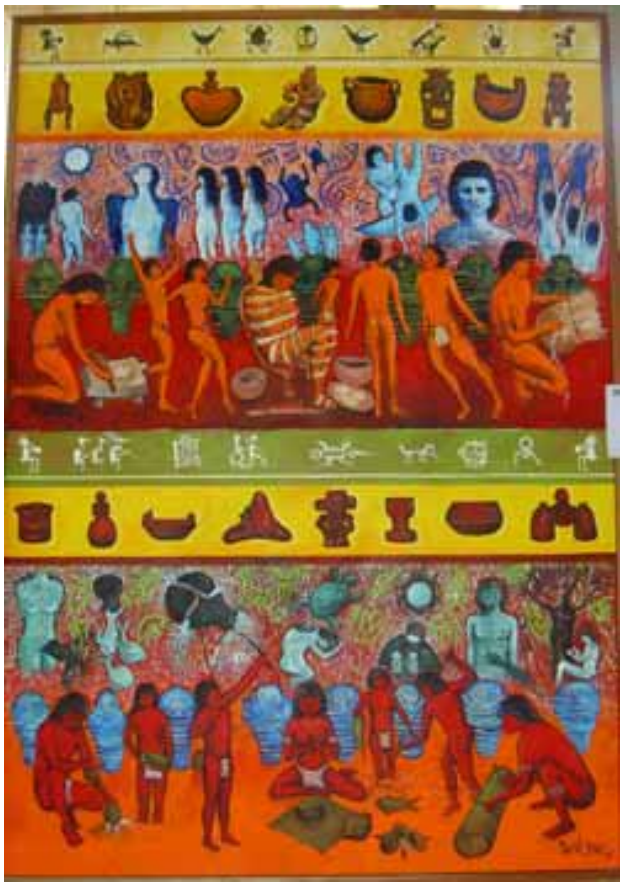
As a source of information about the New World, Martyr has been criticized because he never stepped foot out of the Old. But as a tutor to Isabela and Ferdinand's children, and as one of the most trusted advisors to Their Catholic Majesties as well as, later, to their grandson Charles, he had privileged access to royal records and reports. Martyr also had royal permission to interview conquistadors, mariners, merchants, and clergy who had been to the colonies. His *De Orbe Novo*, which he added to until his

death in 1526, reflects a disciplined, inquiring mind.[19] He was particularly interested in learning about the indigenous peoples of the New World and devoted more of his writing to them than to Spanish politics, unlike either Oviedo or Las Casas. This makes his work very valuable for this chapter.

Las Casas wrote more books and treatises about the Indians than any of the other chroniclers. Yet his multiple works (*Historia de las Indias, Apologética historia sumaria, On the Only True Way to Attract People to the Faith, The Very Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies, On the Treasures of Peru, Rules of Confession*, and *Twelve Doubts*) contain surprisingly little that can be used to reconstruct the history and culture of the various indigenous peoples he was trying to save from the *encomienda* labor system and convert to Christianity.[20] For example, the cultures of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans take precedence in *Apologética historia*, which was supposed to be his *magnum opus* on Indian culture (his thesis was that the Indians' customs were similar to those of the ancients). Throughout his works, it was more important for Las Casas to present the "poor and forsaken Indians" as victims of the Spaniards[21] than it was to give an accurate account of their history, culture, and society.

For the most accurate information about the Taíno, then--especially for that portion of their history that preceded the arrival of Europeans in the New World--historians cannot rely only upon the documentary record, which is sparse enough for the encounter era, nor upon the Spanish chronicles. We must turn to anthropology and archaeology to help fill in the gaps. The first archaeologists to focus on the Taíno were Jesse W. Fewkes (*The Aborigines of Porto Rico and Neighboring Islands*, 1907), Sven Loven (*Origins of the Taínan Culture*, West Indies, 1935), and Irving Rouse (most recently *The Taínos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus*, 1992), followed by José M. Cruxent, Marcio Veloz-Maggiolo, José Alcina Franch,

Ricardo E. Alegría, and Kathleen Deagan, among others. The works of Rouse and Deagan are the most important to this chapter, Rouse because of his long-term investigations into the origins and development of the Taíno culture, and Deagan because of the freshness of her approach.[22] Other archaeologists and anthropologists whose work has been especially helpful in suggesting methods and areas of study for this work include Samuel M. Wilson (political organization and social hierarchy); José Juan Arrom (language and mythology); and Jalil Sued-Badillo (gender). William F. Keegan's work on the Lucayans (indigenous people from today's Bahamas) sheds light on the Classic Taíno by comparison, and the work of the geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer suggested a general framework for the balance of this chapter.[23]



---How the Classic Taíno lived---

At first, Christopher Columbus believed that all of the peoples of "The Indies" spoke the same language. At least all of those whom he met in 1492 seemed to be able to understand each other. Despite the predominance of many aspects of so-called Classic Taíno culture throughout the Greater Antilles, however, regional differences still remained in the 1490s. For example, as he was leaving Hispaniola for Spain in early 1493, Columbus and his men fought with a people that have been identified as "Ciguayos" or "Macorixes," in northeastern Hispaniola, at a site he called Gulf of the Arrows (above right, photo of the gulf today). Columbus described these Indians as a much fiercer people than the "peaceful" Taíno and said that they had a totally different language.[24]

The following pages, then, contain general descriptions of how Taínos lived in the core regions of the Greater Antilles circa 1492. The Taíno culture, like any other living culture, was dynamic, constantly evolving as information and goods were traded across the land and water routes connecting the various indigenous groups. The many differences of opinion that scholars have about the Classic Taíno material culture, and about their rituals and beliefs, are due to gaps in our knowledge,[25] to differing interpretations of the material records and/or of Spanish chronicles and documents, and to the fact that the geographic area of Taíno influence was so widespread that it engendered regional differences.

Development of the Taínos' major identifying characteristics

The most advanced agricultural features of the Classic Taíno culture arose in the northern valleys of Hispaniola's Cibao, where the people developed a truly sedentary style of agriculture based not on the Tropical Forest technique of shifting plots cleared by slash-and-burn, but on a type of permanent *camellón* or *montículo* ("prepared mound") agriculture. Their specially constructed agricultural fields were called *conucos,*[26] which consisted of a number of knee-high mounds about eight to nine feet in circumference.[27] The aerated mounds allowed the Taínos to grow more food in smaller spaces and to harvest it more easily. In another very advanced region, in the western part of the island, Taínos dug irrigation canals for their conucos, making them even more efficient.

(Left, drawing of yucca plant and tubers; right, closeup of the tubers.)

Just as in the earlier slash-and-burn gardens, Taínos grew multiple crops on their conucos. Multiple cropping provides ground cover, which helps reduce weed growth, moisture loss, and soil erosion. Unlike simple slash-and-burn gardens, however, the mounded fields were "too difficult to prepare to leave them and move on easily."[28] Not only did the Taínos remove trees from the conuco fields (by "girdling"), they also removed the tangle of roots and woody stems, which was tedious work in the former tropical jungle, especially since the primary agricultural tool that the Taínos had was a heavy pointed wooden stick called a *coa*. Once crops of bitter yucca, the Taínos' primary crop were established, however (about one year from the time pieces of root were planted), harvesting was continuous over a period of several years. And the conucos required only occasional weeding and pest removal. There was no need to build storage barns, either, for the yucca could be left in the ground until needed.[29]

Having a stable food base allowed the populations in central Hispaniola to expand exponentially.[30] Archaeological evidence of their intensification of sedentary food production is found not only in the increasing use of *burenes*, the griddles used to cook "cakes" of *casabe* (bread made of bitter yucca), but also in the remains of larger, more densely populated sedentary villages.[31]

Meanwhile, a cultural subgroup called Chican (after archaeological finds in the Boca Chica region in eastern Hispaniola) brought pottery making to "a new height of ceramic art... characterized by elaborate modeled-incised designs, many of which appear to be representations of zemíes."[32]

By A.D. 950, the agricultural advancements and artistic advancements had spread, culminating in the culture known as Classic Taíno. (Right, a Chican style ceramic replica by Los Hermanos Güillén.)

Socio-political structure

Classic Taíno peoples are characterized not only by their advanced forms of agriculture and art,[33] but also by large sedentary villages averaging 500-1,000 inhabitants—some had as many as 5-10,000--with houses centered around a central *batey* ("plaza" or "playing field") upon which the *cacique's* ("chief's") *caney* ("house/temple") faced.[34]

Las Casas, who was not known for his subtlety, was upset by the allegations that the Taíno were a primitive people who needed the help and guidance of a Spaniard for even the simplest of tasks. He asked:

> And who, down to the lowest idiot, will not think blind and downright malicious those who dared... defame so many people, saying Indians need tutors because they are incapable of organization, when in reality they have kings and governors, villages, houses and property rights, and communicate with one another on all levels of human, political, economic, and social relations, living in peace and harmony?[35]

Anthropologists most frequently describe the Classic Taíno as having been at the chiefdom level in an ascending classification system of bands, tribes, chiefdoms and states.[36] Chiefdoms like the Taínos' are characterized by:

> [T]he permanently centralized but nonbureaucratic decision making authority of chiefs, generalized leaders who assume the administrative duties and functions of leadership, and who have the capacity to summon laborers and warriors and to collect other forms of tribute from local communities.[37]

José Alcina Franch argues that, properly speaking, the Taíno appear to have been in a transitional stage between the tribal and chiefdom levels.[38] This may have been true at the peripheries of their domain, but at the core they appear to have been in transition from chiefdoms to state-level societies.

While not as intricately stratified nor as rigidly organized as the state-level Aztecs or Incas, the Taíno appear to have had at least two distinct social classes, *nitaínos* and *naborías*.[39] These appear to have been closely equivalent to the "noble" and "commoner" classes with which Europeans were familiar.[40] Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about the naboría class. Naborías may have been descendants of "less pure" kinship lines, i.e., descendants of Guanahatabey or the unnamed Indians of the second wave of immigrants to the island (see Prologue), or of kinship lines not as crafty in statesmanship as others. Naborías were described as the workers among the Taínos, less privileged than the nitaíno class. Two of the indications we have of differentiation are that they ate bread made of corn, while the nitaínos ate cassabe, and they slept on the ground, while nitaínos slept in cotton hammocks. We do not know, however, if naboría houses were relegated to the periphery of the village, if naborías participated in the "communal" *areitos* ("dances/songs"), or what kind of work, exactly, was designated as too lowly for nitaínos to do--manatee hunting, for example, might have been seen as a prestige activity, not as "work." Sued-Badillo maintains that all the food production (including planting, hunting, fishing and gathering/collecting) was done communally throughout the Caribbean, "but... production was not divided equally, for the caciques and their family reserved the best for themselves."[41]

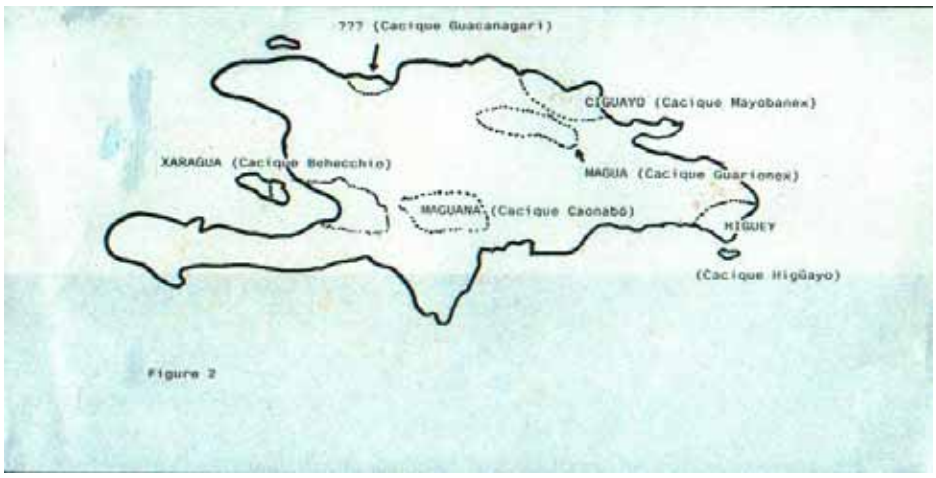
We know far more about the nitaínos than about naborías, especially about the chiefs, the *caciques*. Caciques and *behiques* (closest English equivalent is "shaman"), and their families appear to have comprised the nitaíno class. There is no clear indication that merchants or artisans were included in the nitaíno class, nor that there was a permanent priesthood, although greater levels of specialization and stratification may have been developing in the core regions by 1492.[42]

The caciques

There was a clear hierarchy among the Taíno caciques. Some were more like *principales* or "headmen," holding authority only in a particular *yucayeque* (“village”). Other caciques held authority over several politically connected yucayeques--which together was called their *cacicazgo.* A few others, whom anthropologists call “paramount caciques,” held authority over cacicazgos that encompassed large territories in which there were many yucayeques and many subsidiary caciques. In ascending order, the Taíno terms for the various levels of caciques were *guaoxerí*, *baharí*, and *matunherí*.[43] "All the islanders attach great importance to know the frontiers and limits of the different tribes," wrote Martyr. "And... the nitaínos... are very skillful in measuring their properties and estates."[44]

The caciques used marriage alliances to expand their cacicazgos. The preferred successor was the son of the cacique's eldest sister. If none of his sisters' sons were available, a sister herself (female caciques were called *cacicas*) or the cacique's own biological son could rule.[45] It was this inheritance pattern that led to "the consolidation of political units" among the Taínos.[46] Wilson illustrates it this way: If a "dying cacique's sister is wed via elite intermarriage to another cacique... her son could stand heir to *both* cacicazgos"--his father's and his uncle's.[47]

Map of *cacicazgo* centers

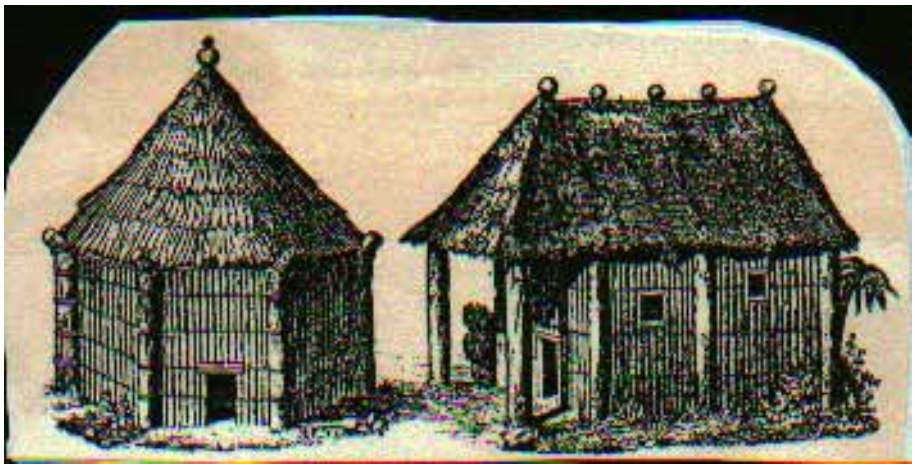


When a potential successor to the cacicazgo was born, neighboring caciques welcomed the baby with gifts at a special *areito* in his honor. The gifts included not only high-status material goods but also gifts of names. Each name had "religious and political significance... that denoted grandeur and nobleness among the Indians."[48] This name-gifting process indicates a type of fictive-kin relationship of allegiance among the nitaínos who were represented at the natal fete. Wilson suggests that the numerous names each cacique had also contained elements of his "pedigree" and of his "acquired status."[49] The most prominent, most politically and socially active caciques, therefore, would have had the longest string of names. Martyr tells us that Behecchio, the cacique of Jaraguá in the 1490s, had more than forty names, all of which were to be recited by heralds whenever he proclaimed an order. Among these names were Tareigua Hobin, which meant "prince resplendent as copper," Starei, which meant "shining," Huibo, "haughtiness," and Duyheiniquem, "rich river." If even one of the forty-plus names were omitted by the herald "through carelessness or neglect... the cacique would feel himself grievously outraged," said Martyr.[50]

There appear to have been five paramount caciques on Hispaniola when Columbus arrived in 1492, perhaps six (the Taíno petroglyph from Cueva Pomier, at right, is believed to represent the 5 paramount caciques).[51] The questionable one, Guacanagarí, was the most powerful cacique living near where Columbus's flagship, the *Santa María*, sank on Christmas Eve 1492--and where Fort La Navidad was built out of the ship's wreckage. Guacanagarí may have gained a status approximating that of a paramount cacique due to his association with the exotic strangers from a distant land, strangers who might even have been considered gods, at least at first.[52] It is difficult to gauge what his status may have been before "the encounter" in late 1492.

Elite collusion, then, was another strategy used by the Taíno elite to attain and expand upon their privileged status. Succession to leadership was not simply a matter of heredity: "[H]e who would be a successful chief may overtly have had to express the inherent energies and capabilities by which (along with genealogical legitimacy) he was presumed fit for office," writes Mary W. Helms. He must be "in constant action against rival competitors in war, competitive games, long-distance exchange and distribution, and pursuit of esoteric knowledge."[53] In fact, chroniclers made reference to Taínos, at various times, using all of the common "tools" of diplomatic maneuvering that Old World elites used, including gift exchange, marriage strategies, war alliances, and another form of fictive kinship--the exchange of names, called *natiaos* or *gautiaos.*[54] The reciprocal responsibilities of those who exchanged names were similar to those of the blood-brother relationships among North American Indians or the relationships among baptismal *compadres* in Latin America today.

Successful caciques were accorded many privileges of rank, with the more powerful caciques garnering more privileges. The chroniclers all recorded that, instead of living in a common round bohío, caciques lived in special rectangular houses called caneys facing the village's central batey.[55] Caciques had multiple wives --as many as thirty.[56] Select foods, such as the meat of the iguana and manatee, were reserved



(Drawing of the two types of homes is by Oviedo.)

for the exclusive use of caciques.[57] They had special clothes and accessories that set them apart from others--brilliant capes of parrot feathers; carved, gold-and-pearl-embellished masks, crowns and pendants, and elaborate belts. While all the other Taínos sat on the ground, caciques sat elevated above them on elaborately carved and polished black wooden *dujos* (low, intricately carved seats or benches—see photo on right). Caciques had elaborately decorated canoes, too, some of which could hold hundreds of people. When on land, some caciques were carried about on litters. Some caciques were buried in caves, which were frequently decorated with petroglyphs and paintings, or at other prestige burial sites, and their corpses were accompanied by elaborate grave goods--among which might be the buried-alive body of "the most beloved" of their wives.[58]

All of these special privileges and accoutrements were symbols of the awesome powers of the caciques. Both spiritual and political power were intimately combined at the highest rank of the Taínos' social hierarchy, for, "The cacique intercede[d] between the Taíno world and the chaotic non-Taíno world."[59] It was the caciques who were able to communicate with the most powerful zemíes, who held the most political power; the zemíes were the caciques' other-worldly advisors, "supernatural allies to be venerated and courted."[60]

With the help of his zemíes, then, it was the caciques who decided what was appropriate propitiation to the spirits and when it was the proper time to hold a ritual or celebration. In addition to being the Taínos' spiritual leader, the cacique made the day-to-day decisions about labor: who was to be a hunter, a fisherman or cultivator;[61] when new fields were to be cleared, planted, cared for, or harvested; when to build a new canoe or go on a turtle hunt. "Whatever is sown or planted or fished, and whatever has to do with hunting, or is manufactured in any way whatsoever, is done in accordance to his pleasure," writes Martyr.[62]

Francisco Moscoso argues that the caciques not only controlled labor, but also had a well established tribute system.[63] Las Casas explains that the tribute the cacique received for his role as administrator was called *cacoma*.[64] He wrote in his *Historia de las Indias* that the Cacica Anacaona (she inherited the cacicazgo in Jaragua from her brother, the paramount Cacique Behecchio) showed Christopher Columbus's brother Bartolomé "her treasure"--a collection of prestige goods that she had received as tribute, which included dujos, carved wooden bowls, large balls of spun cotton, and the cotton skirts called *naguas* that the elite Taíno women wore after they were married.[65] No archaeologists have unearthed Taíno edifices built solely for the storage of tribute goods, but this does not negate Moscoso's hypothesis. The caciques' large caneys could have served as repositories and, if the tribute were in the form of yucca, for example, no storehouse would have been required, for the roots were kept in the ground until needed. The caciques' symbolic role as distributor of cassabe, which was celebrated with an elaborate annual ceremony (*areito*), is indicative that they were, in fact, controlling food tribute and redistributing the surplus.[66] Or it may be that the tribute was not accorded to the caciques, per se, but to their "spiritual doubles," their powerful zemíes.[67]

The nitaínos, then--particularly the highest-ranking males--based upon their bloodlines, their association with powerful zemíes, and their success in building alliances with other high-ranking nitaínos, enjoyed a life of privilege and command. In times of war, however, the caciques do not appear to have had absolute control--they had to defer to the advice of their senior counselors.[68]

The behiques

The mythical Guaguyona, recognized by the Taínos as the first behique (also written as *bohuti, buhuitu, buhitihu* or similar spellings), became one of the original culture heroes when he was reborn on the island of Guanín after an illness, from whence he brought the first gold and other precious objects to the *lokono* (the "people").[69] Guaguyona was also known as the "unifier of the East with the West,"[70] which may be why behiques, not caciques, were the officiators at the Taínos' bateyes (discussed in detail later in this chapter). Spaniards denigrated the behiques in their chronicles, representing their religious functions as demon inspired and their cures as hoaxes: "These men, who are persistent liars, act as doctors for the ignorant people, which gives them great prestige, for it is believed that the zemíes converse with them and reveal the future to them."[71]

Behiques were far more than just healers. They may have been as important to the success of a cacicazgo as the cacique. Robiou Lamarche suggests that the cacique and behique were complementary pairs, with the cacique representing the powers of the sun, and the behique the powers of the moon.[72] Behiques were renowned for their ability to communicate with the souls of the (recently) dead,[73] in much the same way that caciques were renowned for communicating with the Taínos' legendary hero and creator zemíes. (The two kinds of spiritual entities were not quite the same, although both were venerated.) The behique acted as a spiritual advisor to the cacique and as the "court diviner," in addition to his many other roles.

One of the roles of the behique was that of herbal healer and doctor/physician. In addition to knowledge of special "sacred" herbs, behiques healed "by adoration."[74] That is, they spoke with the spirit that was causing the illness, after first fasting, purging, and inhaling *cojoba* to induce a trance state, during which they asked the spirit what it wanted.[75]

The spirit's usual response was that it was angry because it had "not received [its] share of the products of the field," had "not been treated with the proper respect," or had "not had a house constructed" to honor and remember it. Once the request(s) was fulfilled, the patient's illness would disappear. Behiques also healed by removing polluting objects from a patient's body that had been "sent" by spirits or by rival behiques.[76] It was these healings, in which the object was "magically" sucked or massaged out of the patient's body, that the Spaniards perceived to be outright shams, for they frequently caught the behiques palming the objects beforehand. Perhaps the Taínos, like the modern-day Warao of Venezuela, did not consider the behique to be a charlatan at all because the object, which they knew he had beforehand, "is not the complete object until its spiritual essence [or positive balance] has been restored to it" by the healer[77]--which is what effects the cure.

(Dominican specialist Domingo Abreu believes this pictograph from Cueva Sanabe represents an ill person being carried to a behique)

Successful behiques "were held in veneration... like saints."[78] They were granted privileges nearly equal to those of the caciques, including prestige foods, distinguishing clothes and adornments; Oviedo says they dressed in black cloth and covered their bodies with paintings of zemíes.[79] But healing was also the most dangerous of the behiques' many roles, for if a noble patient died, the behique was put to death. Pané describes in gruesome detail how breaking his legs, arms, and head with sticks was not enough to kill a behique, for spirits in the form of snakes would take possession and heal his body. To make sure he was dead, after beating him, you had to tear out his eyes and crush his testicles.[80]

Like the caciques, behiques had multiple functions: they were the Taínos' liturgical experts, diviners, teachers, pharmacists, herbal healers, and surgeons.[81] They most likely also directed the craftsmanship of zemíes and other sacred art,[82] and may, themselves, have been the artists who created the pictographs and petroglyphs found in caves and on exposed rocks all around the island (photo at right is of a sacred cave's guardian petroglyph in Los Haitises National Park).[83] The behiques' art would have reinforced their position as both teacher and liturgical expert--some caves appear to have been devoted to teaching hunters, and there are rocks that appear to be permanent "blackboards" illustrating how procreation results from the combination of male and female (specifically, a rock in the Boca Yuma region with nearly life-sized figures), while others appear to have been devoted to specific ceremonies and/or specific zemíes. For the Taínos, the profusion of symbols and representations that surrounded them was both a constant reminder of the society's values and beliefs, and a basic explanation "of their magico-religious world, a world that they could not see but could sense."[84] (pictographs upper left and to the right are from Cueva Sanabe; pictograph of Boyanel, the rain god, is from the principal cave at Pomier)

Gender roles

Jalil Sued-Badillo has been criticized for exaggerating and romanticizing gender equality among the Taínos. It may be correct, as Ricardo E. Alegría argues, that Taíno women did not succeed to the position of cacica until after the arrival of Europeans, which disrupted normal indigenous patterns of succession. Nonetheless, Taíno society was quite likely far more gender equal than, for example, Spanish society at the turn of the sixteenth century, as it is in many societies below the state level of socio-political organization. This is indicated by the importance of matrilineal inheritance patterns and the prominence given female images among the Taínos' myths and socio-religious symbols.

The importance of the female for her "reproductive capacity" in association with the land and fertility had been celebrated by the Taíno since antiquity, as evidenced throughout their myths. "The trinity of woman-land-moon," Sued-Badillo writes, "has a wide diffusion in Prehispanic America," as it does in most agricultural societies.[85] The Taíno reckoned the passage of time by the phases of the moon[86] and planted crops at the time of the new moon,[87] which strengthens the principles cementing the triad of symbols, for not only is timekeeping a wondrous, "magical" thing in most societies, but women's menses are also in tempo with the phases of the moon.

Women figure prominently in the ancient myths, but the majority of the symbolic images representing the various Taíno zemíes are male, perhaps a reflection of a growing cult of (male) ancestor/zemí worship, evidenced in the material record from about 1200 A.D.[88]

Nonetheless, figurines of gravid women are prevalent among the Taíno artifacts collected by anthropologists over the years, and petroglyphs of Atabeyra, who was the mother of the Taínos' supreme zemí, Yúcahu (the god of yucca[89]), are prominent at the largest and most complex of the batey sites so far discovered in the Caribbean, a site near Utuado on Puerto Rico called the Caguana Ceremonial Indian Park (see drawing, right). According to Pané, both she and her son were known by multiple names--she was "Atabex, Iermao, Guacar, Apito and Zuímaco"; he was "Yócahu, Vagua and Maorocoti."[90] Since multiple names among the Taíno were indications of high rank and accomplishments, scholars such as Sued-Badillo and Eugenio Fernández Méndez believe that the mother's having more names than the son is indicative of the importance attached to the female line by the Taíno. Fernández Méndez also suggests that the "primordial pair" (Pané wrote that Yúcahu had no father) represented "both the duality and the unity" inherent not only in gender, but in all things among the Taíno.[91]

The prominence of Atabeyra's images at Caguana Ceremonial Indian Park (photo is the petroglyph of her image there) may even indicate a rising symbolic importance granted to high-ranking females, both those living and dead-but-revered-as-zemíes, much like what happened in Europe with the elevation of heroic queen figures and the Virgin Mary in the 1400s. We know that, by the time Europeans arrived, or shortly thereafter, *bateys* (Taíno ball games) were frequently played with teams of married women vs. single women, or women vs. men--but women hit the balls with their knees and clenched fists, while men used their hips and buttocks.[92] There were female warriors,[93] female artisans,[94] female leaders of areitos,[95] and possibly cacicas and female behiques among the Taínos.[96]

Some of the Taínos' activities, however, appear to have been restricted to males, such as the cojoba ritual and the gathering of gold.[97] Sued-Badillo points out that both activities included women in the preparations, and Martyr wrote that, in the cojoba ritual, women were in attendance on the male cacique and his senior counselors.[98] The Taíno men who went to gather gold first had to abstain from sex for twenty days, perhaps as a sacrifice to or symbolic union with Guabonito, the mythological "goddess" who created gold.[99]

But what about gender roles in the day-to-day activities of the Taínos? We know that Taíno women were responsible for the usual domestic activities that women are responsible for nearly worldwide--childbearing, child care, food conservation and preparation (see drawing, left, by Oviedo of women preparing *arepas*, cornbread, which has been erroneously described as their preparing cassabe, as pointed out by Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate, an archeologist and colleague of the author). Sued-Badillo's research indicates that they were also responsible for the preparation of medicines and poisons, as well for domestic pottery, textiles and basketry[100]--but we do not know to what extent the nitaíno women shared these daily roles with naboría women. Nor do we know to what extent men and women may have shared responsibilities such as the production of pottery and textiles for ceremonial use or for commercial trade, the clearing of fields for conucos (a laborious task), the sowing, weeding and harvesting of crops, building houses, constructing canoes, etc. Several of the chroniclers mention both men and women working together to gather fish, but this might have been only at particular times of the year, when fish were spawning, for example, and the labor of the entire village was needed to reap the harvest.

The Cacica Anacaona told Bartolomé Colón that women were the expert sculptors of the prized wooden objects that were reserved for elites and gift exchanges.[101] Were there special ceramics, textiles, and straw weavings that were made only by women? Or only by men? Were there "men's gardens" where ritual herbs like tobacco and those used in the cojoba ritual were grown? Did women have their own secret gardens for medicinal plants that only they knew how to grow, prepare and use?

One thing that is particularly striking is that most scholars who study the Taíno (overwhelmingly male) have attributed the "rise" of the Taíno to "the ease" with which they could harvest an abundant crop of yucca once they had mastered the conuco technique. Antonio M. Stevens-Arroyo, for example, says that the vast amounts of yucca grown by the Taíno "liberated" them "from the sporadic foraging of hunters and gatherers, permitting them to develop newly specialized forms of economic and social organization."[102] Sued-Badillo agrees, adding that "the progressive liberation of the work force from the chores of "food production permitted the Taínos to develop "artesanal specialization," which he says was primarily in the female domain. He writes that the province of Jaragua, which Las Casas called "'the court of this island,"' was so advanced that it innovated new technologies, such as methods of irrigation, which provided a substantial increase in food production.[103]

There is a major problem with this rosy view of the benefits the Taíno reaped by an increasingly large supply of bitter yucca. Anthropologists who have studied living peoples dependent upon cassabe have found that the women live lives of self-described drudgery, saying that they are "enslaved" to the complicated, time-consuming process of washing, grating, and extracting the poisonous juices from the yucca root (a cyanic acid known as *manihotoxina*) and the other procedures to make bread. After the grated pulp has been squeezed in an ingenious contraption called a *cibucán*,[104] the Taíno women had to spread it out to dry into flour, gather it, sift it, store it and, when ready to cook the cassabe, shape the cakes, prepare the fire and the *buren* ("griddle"), cook the cakes, then set them out to dry before serving them.[105] And do not forget all the work needed to make the scrapers, graters, filters, bottles, jars, bowls, baskets, knives, cibucanes, and burenes needed to prepare and store not only yucca flour, but all the other foodstuffs as well.

If it is true that the Taíno were in the process of switching from a varied diet to one that relied predominantly on cassabe made from bitter yucca, as hypothesized, then perhaps the ritual or symbolic elevation of women seen in the Taínos' material artifacts was to compensate for a devolution of women's day-to-day equality with males, who alone were more liberated than previously.[106]

Sued-Badillo's work on relative gender equality among the Taínos is suggestive, but not conclusive. He acknowledges that the positive view he presents may have been changing as they evolved toward state-level. Live interment of the wives of deceased caciques, he believes, may have been a new practice in the fifteenth century, part of the Taínos' "increasing trajectory toward stratification."[107] And while polygamous practices inspired artisanal specialization among the nitaíno women, they also represented justification for the exploitation of those women.[108]

There is much work still to be done on gender and the Taínos. If the status of women was devolving as the Taínos approached state level, it may not have affected all women. Taíno patterns might have followed those which the Mexica or Incan societies did as they evolved--nitaíno women among the Taínos might have enjoyed "parallel" or "complementary" roles to those of the high-ranking males.[109] At the very least, however, the lives of the naboría females must have been getting progressively worse as more and more of their waking hours and energy were devoted to the onerous tasks involved in the production of cassabe.

--Taíno religious and artistic expression--

Zemíes

It is difficult to separate religion from other aspects of the Classic Taíno way of life, especially from art, for religious concepts appear to have permeated the Taínos' daily as well as ceremonial activities. Fray Ramón Pané, sent to live among them in 1493 in order to record their beliefs, encountered what he described as a confusing profusion of spirits that walked in the night, legendary and mythological "gods," anthropomorphic beings, "living" trees and stones, and ancestral remains (skulls or other bones or body parts, desiccated bodies, etc.), that the Taínos adored.[110]

"Celebrated" or "prized" might be better verb choices than "adored" or "worshipped," which Pané and most of the chroniclers used in reference to zemíes. Consider how Christians celebrate and prize the cross and crucifix symbols, but do not adore them or worship them, *per se*.[111] Understanding how the Taínos conceptualized zemíes is complicated by the fact that when the Taínos spoke of zemíes, the term appears to have encompassed two separate-but-linked concepts: 1) a spiritual being, a complementary counterpart or double, who acted as advisor to and protector of an earthly being, and 2) the physical manifestation or symbol of that spiritual being on earth. Las Casas wrote:

> I asked the Indians several times: "Who is this zemí that you call upon?" And they responded: "It is the one who makes it rain and makes the sunshine and gives us children and other good things that we want."[112]

The earthly manifestation of the zemí who was Yúcahu, the "spirit of the yucca," for example, was embodied in the numerous three-pointed stones the Spaniards call *trigonolitos* that the Taínos made of clay, stone, bone, shell and, perhaps, other less durable materials (see photo, left). At least some of these were buried in the conucos when the yucca was planted, in a ritual no doubt intended to increase and/or to protect the crop.[113] Not all of the zemíes, however, were representations of Yúcahu. Columbus himself noted that there were three different kinds of stone zemíes, each used for a different purpose:

> [M]ost of the caciques have each three stones, for which they and their people feel great devotion. According to them, one of these stones helps the grains and vegetables grow, the second helps women give birth without pain, and the third secures rain or fair weather when they are in need of either.[114]

Many stone images of zemíes have been recovered that are not three-pointed; Columbus may have been referring to them, too, in the above-quoted passage. There is even one surviving example of a cotton zemí in the form of a "doll," inside of which is a human skull, no doubt that of a revered ancestor (photo, right). And it was frequently recorded that zemí symbols were worn as painted and/or tattooed personal adornments, as zemí symbols no doubt adorned other objects for personal, ritual, and general use that have not survived the passage of time.[115]

Some of the trigonolitos and other zemí figures that have been recovered are small, simple, unadorned, while others are elaborately carved with human, animal or anthropomorphic features.[116] Were the more elaborate zemíes considered to be more powerful? That is quite likely. Francisco José Arnaiz suggests that it was not only the artisanry of the design that indicated a zemí's power, but that "its power was in relation to the type of material of which it was made."[117] Based on our own values, we might imagine that gold was the most precious, therefore the most powerful material from which to make or decorate zemíes. The Taíno did use gold to embellish religious and ceremonial objects; however *guanín*, a copper-gold-silver alloy that shines more brilliantly than gold and that was probably imported from the mainland--hence was more rare on Hispaniola than gold--was valued more highly by the Taíno.[118] (drawing by Joel Villona, Santiago) Also, cotton cloth, brilliantly colored feathers, rare colored stones (especially green), and marble (which was said to be "of the feminine sex"[119]) were highly valued materials among the Taíno. Even "lowly" materials were used, however, in the making of zemíes, for material value was not the only determinant. Martyr writes:

> Some are made of wood, because it is amongst the trees and in the darkness of night they have received the message of the gods. Others, who have heard the voice amongst the rocks, make their zemíes of stone; while others, who heard the revelation while they were cultivating their ages--that kind of cereal I have already mentioned--make theirs of roots.[120]

Each of the nitaínos had his or her own personal zemíes, perhaps as many as ten or more. It is not known whether naborías had zemíes, or only nitaínos. Zemíes--and their powers--were passed down to successors, given as gifts, traded, or sometimes stolen or acquired as war trophies. Caciques and other nitaínos "boasted that theirs were the most glorious, saying they had better zemíes than other villages and other nitaínos."[121] The entire village or cacicazgo paid tribute to the cacique's zemíes, which protected and helped all the people. It is unclear, however, whether a high-ranking cacique became paramount because of the power of his zemíes or if his zemíes were considered powerful because he was a high-ranking, successful cacique--perhaps it was a combination of both.

It was probably the most powerful of a cacique's zemíes whose miniature image he wore on a pendant tied with string on his forehead.[122] Archaeologists have found small figurines with holes for suspending them from a cord that may have been used for this purpose, but no scholars have connected them to the Taínos' ritual greeting of touching one another's heads or foreheads.[123] Perhaps the ritual was a token of paying obeisance to one another's spiritual double, one's zemí. Taíno sculptures of heads are prominent among their material artifacts (photo, left) as was the veneration of the skulls of deceased ancestors, which suggests that for the Taíno, the head was where the living soul and the zemí spirits met—it was the most important part of the body.

Other religious art

Sued-Badillo has suggested that the caciques took advantage of the captive artisanry of their multiple wives to enhance the quantity and beauty--hence also to enhance the power--of their possessions.[124] These included all manner of practical objects, from food and beverage containers (like the one pictured on the right) to hammocks and canoes, as well as a wide array of ceremonial and religious items, such as: figurines and trigonolitos, large sculptures for placement on "altars," effigy vases, dujos, vomiting spatulas and inhalers, and elaborate feather-and-gold headdresses, belts, capes, masks, collars, and bracelets. All appear to have been decorated with the symbolic representations of zemíes, which "had power, gave power and reflected power."[125]

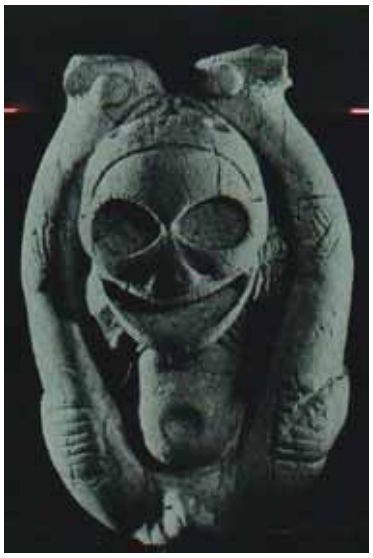
One of the most prized possessions of a cacique was his dujo, a type of short-legged stool or chair. Dujos were skillfully carved (probably by the cacique's wives) out of a single piece of *lignum vitae* or *caoba* that was then polished to a high gloss.[126] Most dujos took the four-legged shape of anthropomorphic beings. Oviedo says this was "to signify that the one seated there is not alone, but [with] his adversary"--his zemí.[127] The caciques also sat on dujos to elevate them above all the rest of their people, who sat on the ground. Sebastián Robiou Lamarche suggests yet another reason the caciques valued dujos. The traditional sling-back, low-profile shape of the dujo was designed "to facilitate" the cacique's important function as an "interpreter" of the zemíes' messages when he was in a cojoba-induced trance.[128]

No doubt personal items, and domestic and practical objects owned by the other nitaínos, and perhaps even the naborías, were embellished with symbols of the zemíes to remind the people of their reliance upon them for everything from daily health and subsistence to fruitful childbearing and the successful outcome of wars.[129] Few items made of perishable materials have survived the passage of time, but Las Casas notes that even the insides of the Taínos' huts were decorated with intricate designs woven in dyed straw, wood, and bark.[130] The profusion of zemí symbols was decorative and, simultaneously, was a constant reminder of the peoples' sacred obligations. Those obligations, of course, were not just to other-worldly spirits, but to the cacicazgo's caciques and behiques due to their intimate connection to the most powerful of those spirits.

Sellos, as shown in this poster at the Museo del Hombre Dominicano in Santo Domingo, were used to stamp zemí symbols on both cloth and on one's skin.

Fasting, purging and the cojoba ritual

Caciques, behiques, and sometimes even the entire Taíno community, went on ritual fasts as a sacrifice to the zemíes. Arnaiz suggests that the fasts alone could induce trances similar to those of the cojoba ritual, which facilitated communication with the zemíes.[131] Certainly fasts would enhance the depth of cojoba-induced trances and the speed with which they took effect. The caciques and behiques would lie back in their dujos after first purging their stomachs (using both herbs and vomiting sticks—left, a double vomiting stick carved in bone), and women would serve them the cojoba--a finely ground dried powder that included *Piptadenia peregrina* or *Anadenanthera peregrina* (photo of seeds, upper right), powdered tobacco, and finely ground shell; the latter acted as a catalyst. The cojoba mixture was mounded in a "round bowl... made of wood, very handsome"[132] set atop a statue of a zemí with a flat "table" top and inhaled through the nose using a special tube made of bone, wood or fired clay. Some of the inhalers were elaborately crafted, others unadorned. Among those collected by archaeologists is one depicting a figure that is clearly male. Its genitals would have been set into the cojoba mixture and the feet of its uplifted legs inserted in the user's nostrils (see photo, left).



"Almost immediately" after inhaling the drug, wrote Martyr, "they believe they see the room turn upside down, and men walking with their heads downwards."[133] They would lose consciousness, he continued, wake slightly, act "drunk," and speak incoherently "like Germans." It was in this state that caciques and behiques communicated with their zemíes, learning "the secrets" of future events, "for good or bad."[134] (photo, right, pictograph depicting the cojoba ceremony from the principal cave at Pomier, near San Cristobal)

Pané was the first of the Spaniards to record that "purging" was not only part of a religious rite among the Taíno, but a panacean method of healing as well.[135] The many purgative "medicines" used by the Taínos and the proliferation of vomiting spatulas among their material remains--both unadorned and elaborately engraved--testify to the prominence of ritual fasting and purging among them. Arrom notes that the importance associated with vomiting makes sense "to a people who could die if they ingested bitter yucca without first extracting all of the poisonous juices." He suggests that ritual vomiting was a sacrifice of "total purification" aimed at appeasing "the fearsome zemí" who controlled the process of turning poisonous yucca into nourishing bread.[136]

Areitos

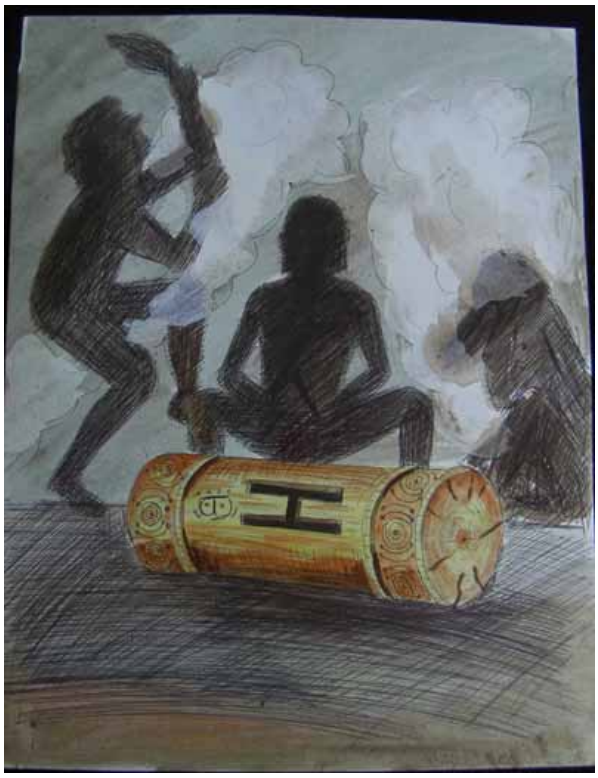
The areitos are among the best known of the Taíno rituals, for nearly all of the chroniclers went to great lengths to describe the Taínos' "fondness for celebrations, songs and dances."[137] (photo, a graceful dancer pictograph in Cueva Sanabe dominates this mural) There were different kinds of areitos that took place in the batey, a kind of central plaza. There were areitos to celebrate annual events such as solstices, first plantings and first harvests, and to celebrate special events, such as the marriage of a cacique, the birth of an important nitaíno, the coming of age of an important female,[138] a visit from a neighboring cacique, or victory over an enemy. Areitos may have been held for no other purpose than to entertain or appease the people of the cacicazgo,[139] or to bond them more closely to each other and to their cacique. Areitos were also held to propitiate a particular zemí or "to educate the youths in knowledge about the history and secrets of tribal life."[140]

The Taínos had no form of writing, so they kept their history alive in their art and in songs, a proven mnemonic technique.[141] Martyr writes that the Taínos learned about their history and legendary heroes (which he calls a "mass of ridiculous beliefs") directly "from their ancestors... preserved from time immemorial in poems which only the sons of chiefs are allowed to learn."[142] He explains later that:

> These poems are called arreytos. As with us the guitar player, so with them the drummers accompany these arreytos and lead singing choirs.... Some of the arreytos are love songs, others are elegies, and others are war songs; and each is sung to an appropriate air.[143]

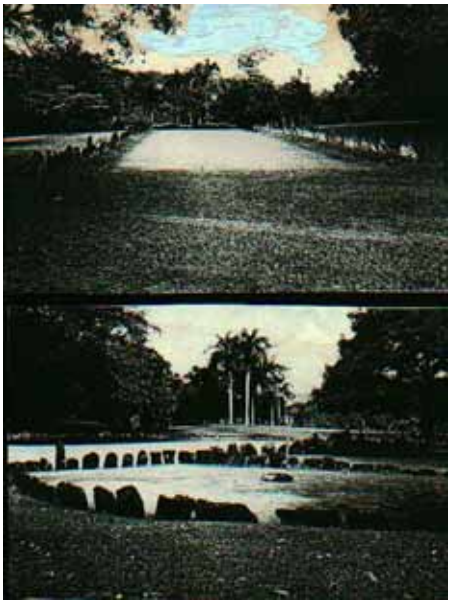
Many aspects of the areitos were ritualistic. For example, the participants (usually described as the entire village, but perhaps only the nitaínos) fasted, taking only "the juice of certain herbs" called *digo* for six to seven days. Just before the areito began, they cleansed their bodies in the river using the same *digo* herbs.[144] The ritual baths may have been obeisance to Atabeyra--in one of her multiple guises, the mother of Yúcahu was the "goddess" of the water. Then they painted their bodies "in divers colors with vegetable dyes" and, to complete the purification, they vomited together as a sacrifice to the zemíes. Martyr describes this part of the ritual in vivid detail: "[T]hey thrust a stick, which each carries on feast days, down their throats to the epiglottis or even to the uvula, vomiting and vigorously cleansing the body."[145]

Next the cacique partook of the cojoba ritual and consulted his zemíes, revealing the prophecies to the people. From that point, each areito, depending upon its purpose (and whether the prophecy was favorable or not), followed a different sequence of celebration, but a focal point of each was a series of songs and dances in which participants alternated as leaders.[146]



Drums, called *mayohuacanes* (drawing by Santiago artist Joel Villalona) were the principal, but not the only instrumental accompaniment, as Martyr believed. The Taínos had a wide variety of instruments that included drums, *maracas* (rattles), *guiros* (scrapers), flutes, and other wind instruments.[147] The rhythmic tinkling of strings of snail shells with which "both sexes weighted their arms, hips, calves, and heels," added to the beat. Martyr wrote that, "Loaded with these shells they struck the ground with their feet, dancing, leaping, respectfully saluting the cacique who [sat] at his door... beating on a drum with a stick."[148] As many as 300-400 dancers participated at a time, weaving around the batey " with their arms around each others shoulders."[149]

Perhaps, like the Suya Indians, the Taínos' "very social coherence hinge[d] on song and dance.... The people ma[d]e music to 're-establish the good and beautiful in the world.'"[150] "Sacred songs" were among the most valued of the prestige gifts exchanged among Taíno nobles. The exchange of songs created strong bonds of fictive kinship and reciprocal responsibility. Las Casas noted this several times when explaining in his *Historia general de las Indias* why one cacique or another would not turn traitor against another Indian or Spaniard, i.e., when he wrote about how the cacique Mayobanex defended Guarionex, who had taught him and his principal wife '"to sing and dance, a thing not to be held in mediocre consideration."[151]



Bateyes

Most of the Taíno rituals that we know about were officiated by the caciques, but the game played in the batey (photos are of two bateyes in Caguana, Puerto Rico) was officiated by a behique. The term "batey," like many of the Taínos' terms, encompassed two linked concepts: their multi-purpose ballgame and the plazas where they played it and celebrated their areitos. (This suggests that the batey's use as a site for celebrating areitos was secondary. Note that today, many Taíno descendents call the game *batu*.) Many scholars, comparing batey to the games among the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica, have suggested that batey was a form of "ritual warfare."[152] Bateyes were probably played in lieu of battles and/or to bond together neighboring villages or cacicazgos, or groups of Taínos within a cacicazgo. Fernández Méndez suggests that "each game was an invocation to the gods."[153] The outcome of the game was considered to be divinely prophetic, which must have added a thrilling component both for the players and for the spectators who surrounded the court to cheer the game on--the caciques and their families sat in places of honor at the head of the playing field.

Batey was played like modern soccer, with two competing teams of twenty to thirty players each. The balls were made of rubber—from "the roots of trees and herbs and juices and a mixture of [other] things... like a black pitch."[154] The players wore specially constructed hoops about their hips and elbows for protection as well as to send the ball back across the court at high velocity.[155] (molds for balls, left; mold for rubber waist hoop, right)

It was exciting, notes Oviedo, to see the agility of the players as they leaped high in the air or dropped abruptly to the ground, and raced from one side to the other of the playing court, sending balls flying "as fast as the wind," trying to score goals for their team while preventing the opposing team from scoring.[156]

Bateyes were fun sport, but were also sacred rituals. Standing stones, frequently

with pictographs and petroglyphs of zemíes, formed the boundary walls of the Taínos' bateyes, which appear to have been situated so as to be in alignment with the sun during the four solstices. Robiou Lamarche suggests that the batey's rectangular shape was symbolic of the four cardinal directions.[157] The most important of the batey sites found so far (Caguana Ceremonial Indian Park in Puerto Rico, near Utuado) was located in a valley among high mountain peaks, near the source of a great river--the same kind of location celebrated in so many of the Taínos' sacred myths.[158] The games of ball, then, could also have served as vivid symbolic recreations of the great difficulties the original culture heroes went through in order to bring the gifts of earthly life to the Taíno--water, fire and yucca.

--Foodways--

Cultigens[159]

In addition to bitter yucca (*Manihot utilissima*), the Taínos' primary staple,[160] from which they made their cassabe bread (see photo, right, of cassabe that is still being made in the Dominican Republic today) they cultivated numerous other root crops in their conucos, including sweet yucca (*Manihot palmata*), which does not require the extensive processing that bitter yucca does, but neither does its flour make a good-tasting bread that does not go moldy in the tropical humidity. Sweet yucca was most likely boiled and eaten as a vegetable.[161] *Batatas*, "sweet potatoes" in English, were an important crop as well—the Taíno called them ñ*ames*. There were at least five different types, distinguished by their colors and subtle flavor differences. The one called *aniguamar* was the Taínos' favorite.[162] Either the Taínos made a kind of bread from the flour of the ñames or Christopher Columbus mistook ñames for bitter yucca, for he wrote in his journal of December 13, 1492, that he was given bread made of "*niamas*" by Indians off the north shore of Hispaniola.[163] Another tuber from which the Taínos made bread was *guáyiga* (*Zamara integrifolia*).[164] It is poisonous, like the bitter yucca, and prepared in the same tedious way. Other tubers they cultivated included *ages*, a "nutty" tasting root that looks like yucca but is more "hairy" and is related to the sweet potato, but has a white interior and is not sweet; *ararú* ("arrowroot"); *yerén* or *lerén*

(*Calathea allouia*) that Oviedo said had "lots of flavor but not much substance";[165] both white and yellow *yautías* (*Xanthosoma saggitefolium*); and *maní* (*Arachis hipogea*), "peanuts."

Most of the root crops produced edible greens, as well, which were eaten like Europeans eat spinach. And the Taínos grew maize, beans (which were probably a type of "Lima" bean), squash, avocados, and several varieties of *ajies*, "peppers," among which was *Capsicum frutensens*, which most English speakers know as "cayenne peppers."[166] Maize, however, was most likely not grown in conucos, but along river banks, where it could be irrigated easily, and in fertile, well watered valleys, like the Maguana region.[167] Maize may have been the Taínos' second most important staple crop, next to bitter yucca, for chroniclers noted that the bread of "the commoners" was made from maize.[168] *Arepa*, a type of bread made from corn meal is still very popular in the Dominican Republic today.

Fruits

The Taíno also cultivated a wide variety of fruit- and berry-bearing bushes, trees, and plants.[169] A favorite fruit was the *yayama* or *boniama* (*Ananas comosus*), which is called "pineapple" in English), which Spaniards called *piña* because it looked like a pine cone. Oviedo called this fruit "one of the most beautiful that I have seen in all the world." He raved over its beautiful shape, aroma, and its "excellent flavor."[170] (Photo, right, of pineapple growing wild on the island today.) Another favorite was the *mabí* (*culubrina reclinata*), a berry from which they made a popular non-alcoholic beverage, according to Stevens-Arroyo,[171] although most mabí on the island today is made from *bejuco*, a type of vine. There is no clear evidence that the Taínos made any alcoholic drinks.[172]

Among the known varieties of fruit trees cultivated by the Taínos were: the *mamey colorado* (*Pouteria mammosa*); *guanábana* (*Annona muriacata*), which is commonly called "soursop" in English), and *anón* (*Annona muricata*, two types of "custard apples"; *caimito* (*Chrysophyllum caimito*), which is known as "star fruit" or "star apples" in English; *guayaba* (*Psidium guajaba*), "guava" in English; *jagua* (the fruit of the inaja palm), which they also used to create a black dye; and *papaya* (*Caica prosoposa*), which is known in the Dominican Republic today as *lechosa*; as well as many other fruits that have no names in English.[173] The Taíno also cultivated *corojo* (*Acrocomia armentalis*) for its "palm nut," from which they obtained a cooking oil; *higüero* trees (*Crescentia cujete*) that provided *calabazas* ("calabashes" or "bottle gourds" for use as containers—photo, left); and the *achiote* or annato trees that provided the red seeds from which they obtained *bixa* (*Bixa orellana*—*photo, right*), a popular food additive and skin coloring. Bixa was used as body paint in times of war, as body decoration for areitos, or just "to look beautiful," but Oviedo noted that it gave “a bad odor” to those who used it on their bodies.[174] All of these various trees were planted in or near the Taínos' villages, not in their conucos.

The Taínos may also have harvested various parts of a number of different indigenous palm trees for food, such as the heart (*palmito* or *yema*) of the royal palm (*Roystonea boringuena*), the purple seeds (*palmiche*) of the royal palm, and the medula, the inner sheath, of the *cachéo* palm (*Pseudophoenix vinifera*). And they certainly used various palms for the construction of their houses and other shelters, as well as for practical and decorative crafts.[175] The Taínos also gathered "Sea Island" cotton from the small tree classified as *Gossypium barbadense* and perhaps from a variety classified as *punctatum*, as well as from the *ceiba* tree, whose product is often called "silkcotton" or "kapok"; however, the Taíno do not appear to have cultivated cotton, per se.[176] The Taíno may, however, have cultivated (or simply gathered; it is not known for certain) other fibrous plants, such as the agaves and furcraeas known as *henequen*, *cabuya, maguey*, and *pita*, as well as hibiscus (*H. tiliaceus*).[177] Sauer noted that a "fruit" the Spaniards called *manzanillas* ("chamomile") was grown in the Taíno villages and used as a purgative, but agronomists do not recognize it today from the Spaniards' descriptions.[178] It is likely that the Taíno did grow some common medicinal herbs close to their homes, where they would have been readily available. It is also likely that there were special "sacred" gardens--perhaps hidden in the dense jungle near the villages--for growing tobacco and the cojoba herbs (*Piptadenia peregrina* and *Anadenanthera peregrina*), and other ritual or medicinal plants.

Protein preferences[179]

Different regions settled by the Taínos most likely had different major sources of protein, among which the most prominent were various saltwater and freshwater fish, shellfish, and marine reptiles and mammals, including the *manatí* ("manatee"—see photo), which was especially prized,[180] as well as sea turtles[181] and waterfowl. Chroniclers described the ingenious method the Taínos developed for sneaking up on waterfowl by releasing a number of floating gourds among them. After the birds lost their fear of the gourds, the hunter would place one with eye holes over his head as he waded among the other gourds. Thus "hidden" from the birds, he could pull them by the feet, stuffing them into his underwater collection basket until it was full.[182]

Fishing was done by numerous ingenious methods as well, including hook-and-line, netting, spearing, and by the use of pet remoras, a sucker-fish that was tied on a line and hauled up along with the large fish, turtle, or manatee to which it would attach itself.[183] The stupefacient called *barbasco* was also used to stun and then harvest freshwater fish, and Martyr describes the use of a kind of firefly, *cucurios*, as bait, "from the time [Taínos] were in their cradles."[184] In Cuba, it was noted that Taínos captured fish and either raised them or maintained them in special ponds until needed; on Hispaniola, they raised manatees this way, and there were numerous fishing camps where fish were dried or smoked for shipment to inland settlements.[185]

The land provided protein, too, although not as much as the sea and freshwater sources did, for the islands of the Greater Antilles were never connected to the continent, thus did not have the same wide variety of terrestrial life as South America. Archaeologist Kathleen Deagan's material analyses at En Bas Saline, a site near modern-day Limonade Bord de Mer, ten kilometers east of Cap Haitien, Haiti, show that "bony fishes were the major food source" there, totaling seventy-eight percent of the Taínos' overall pre-European-contact diet, followed by various lizards and small mammals, possibly guinea pigs and/or the domesticated dogs that the Spaniards called *gosquez,*[186] and definitely the agouti or hutía.[187]

(photo is a pictograph of an hutia in Cueva Sanabe) Taínos also ate a wide variety of birds and their eggs. They did not, however, eat land turtles because they were considered to be sacred.

Parrots were the special prey of young Taíno boys and were also raised in the Taínos' homes "for entertainment," wrote Martyr,[188] but no doubt for food and for their colorful feathers as well. Most of the chroniclers noted, with horror, that the Taínos ate insects, worms, and snakes. One of Columbus's friends from Genoa, Michele de Cuneo, complained vehemently about the spiders, rodents, and the "other wild and poisonous beasts" that the Taínos ate—the latter almost certainly refers to the iguana (*Cyclura maceayi*), which was a Taíno delicacy.[189]

Food preparation

Fishing camps were set up at locations convenient to the source, where fish and other seafood could be caught and either smoked or dried, then transported inland. Fresh meat or seafood was roasted on a spit made of green sticks called a *barbacoa* or *bucán*. The words "barbecue" and “buccaneer” are derived from the Taíno cooking method and apparatus.[190]

Meat and seafood were also stewed in a traditional *ajiaco* or "pepperpot" stew, a legacy of the Taínos' mainland tropical-forest ancestry. Pepperpot stew (still a daily staple of many indigenous peoples of Central and South America) features a rotating selection of protein and vegetables, mainly tubers, that are kept constantly simmering over a low fire, the day's mixture depending upon the season and availability. One of the two invariable ingredients is a sweet-sour “vinegar” made from the juice extracted from the root of the bitter yucca--once it is boiled, it is no longer poisonous.[191] The other invariable ingredient is peppers, from which the dish gets its name. Apparently the Taínos ate hot peppers--not just for their "heat" but for flavor--with every one of their dishes, whether the food was "stewed, roasted or eaten raw."[192] The Spaniards who settled Hispaniola, however, were unaccustomed to hot peppers, and today very few Dominicans eat foods spiced with hot peppers. But the most popular Dominican fiesta food is *sancocho*, a stew that combines a wide variety of tubers and meats, and is obviously the descendant of ajiaco, although it is spiced with bitter orange instead of the boiled juice of bitter yucca, and has no hot peppers (but does include sweet Cuban peppers for flavor).

--Utopian or totalitarian?—

Many scholars have presented the Classic Taíno lifestyle as utopian. The Taíno appear to have been in harmony with their island environment and did not know the difference between "mine" and "yours," believing that the greatest insult was to find a person "mean" or stingy.[193] They represent the epitome of the romantic "noble savage" concept. Sauer wrote:

> The tropical idyll of the accounts of Columbus and Peter Martyr was largely true. The people suffered no want. They took care of their plantings, were dexterous at fishing and bold canoeists and swimmers. They designed attractive houses and kept them clean. They found aesthetic expression in woodworking. They had leisure to enjoy diversion in ballgames, dances, and music. They lived in peace and amity.[194]

But even Las Casas admitted that the Taínos had some "bad customs," among which he lists washing their bodies and brushing their teeth with urine, eating each other's head lice, cooking and eating animals without first removing the entrails,[195] urinating while squatting, and "breaking wind in public."[196] Oviedo found most of the Indians' habits and beliefs to be vile and disgusting, especially their "unnatural" lovemaking (he accused them all of being sodomists) and the way both men and women "took smoke."[197]

Some modern scholars find more serious faults when researching the history and culture of the Taíno. Francisco Moscoso, for example, has found what he believes to have been a totalitarian pattern of increasing monopolization of chiefly positions in all levels of Taíno life--political, military and ceremonial--by the fifteenth century. He suggests that this pattern would have had chilling consequences had Taíno societal development not been interrupted by the arrival of Europeans in 1492, consequences that would have been the opposite of a harmonious utopia, particularly for the naborías.[198]

The "truth" about the Classic Taíno way of life is no doubt somewhere in between the extremes. We may never know for certain how the Taíno lived before the Europeans arrived, because most of what we can discover about them, their society, and their way of life comes to us filtered through European eyes. Columbus's arrival in 1492 severed the Taínos abruptly from what would have been their natural course of societal evolution by the introduction of distinguishably different socio-economic systems, foodways, values, and beliefs. The most severe disruptions were caused by consciously imposed systems of forced labor that further disrupted the course of the Taínos' lives and by unconsciously imposed disease germs to which the Taínos had no previous exposure, hence no immunities. (See Chapter IV of Guitar's doctoral dissertation.)

The Taíno were the first casualties of the New World/Old World encounter. Their well organized society was shattered, and their people scattered--those who survived the wars, abuse, multiple epidemics and famines, that is. The Taíno were so successful in their tropical island environment, however, and numerous enough, that they have had a significant genetic influence on subsequent generations of the island's inhabitants, and significant aspects of their way of life became the cornerstone of the new criollo culture that evolved in the Greater Antilles after 1492.

For a detailed examination of the support for Taíno survival on both the biological and cultural levels, see Lynne Guitar, Pedro Ferbel-Azcarte, and Jorge Estevez, "Ocama-Daca Taíno (Hear Me, I am Taíno): Taíno Survival on Hispaniola, Focusing on the Dominican Republic," in Maximilian Forte (ed.) *Indigenous Resurgence in the Contemporary Caribbean: Amerindian Survival and Revival*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2006: 41-68.

ENDNOTES:

[1] *Goeiz* is a Taíno term signifying the soul or spirit of a living being, as opposed to an *opia/hupia*, the soul or spirit of a dead ancestor. Emilio Tejera, *Indigenismos* (Santo Domingo: Editora de Santo Domingo, 1977), Vol. 1, 534.

[2] Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America 1492-1493*, abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr., eds. and trans. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 218-219.

[3] There were at least 3-4 different groups of indigenous peoples on the island of Hispaniola alone, perhaps more, each with their own language—which helps explain why there were so many different names for the island: Haití, Bohío, Kiskeya…. The most advanced group technologically, agriculturally, and culturally were the Taíno, whose language was used as a *lingua franca* among all indigenous peoples on the island. See Julian Granberry and Gary S. Vescelius, *Languages of the Pre-Columbian Antilles*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004.

[4] It is likely that the practice began as a way to "improve the eyesight" of males so that they could become better hunters, for it caused their eyes to bulge forward, but over the course of time, what Europeans saw as a deformation came to be seen as an attractive cosmetic improvement by those who practiced it. Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, third edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 322.

[5] Columbus, *Diario*, 68-69. Opening paragraph of Columbus's entry for Saturday, October 13, 1492, describing the events of the previous day. The Taínos' physical attributes obviously fascinated Spaniards, who puzzled over how these previously unknown people "fit into" an ancient scheme. Bartolomé de las Casas devoted three entire chapters--Vol. 1, Chps. 25, 26 and 34--of his *Apologética historia sumario* to their external characteristics and internal organs. See Vols. 6, 7 and 8 of *Obras Completas*, comp. Paulino Castañeda, Carlos de Rueda, and Carmen Godínez e Inmaculada de la Corte (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995).

[6] Columbus, *Diario*, 224-225. Entry of December 13, 1492.

[7] Douglas Taylor, *Languages of the West Indies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 18.

[8] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 197, 1278.

[9] Most Dominicans today deny any genetic or cultural inheritance from the Taínos, having been led to believe that they were wiped out in the Conquest. See Peter Jordan Ferbel, "The Politics of Taíno Indian Heritage in the Post-Quincentennial Dominican Republic: 'When a canoe means more than a water trough,'" an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1995.

[10] That one piece of written evidence is a letter from "*don Enrique yndio*" written to Emperor Charles in 1534, in which the rebel cacique most commonly known as Enriquillo agreed, henceforth, to be a model and obedient vassal (see Chapter VI of my dissertation). The letter has been preserved at the Archivo General de Indias (henceforth AGI), Audiencia de Santo Domingo 77.

[11] See Helen Nader, ed. and trans., and Luciano Formisano, philologist, *The Book of Privileges Issued to Christopher Columbus by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel, 1492-1502*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[12] Ramón Pané, *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones de la Fundación Corripio, 1988).

[13] Ferdinand Colón, *The Life of the Admiral, by his son Ferdinand*, trans. Benjamin Keen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1959).

[14] AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, L1, f14v. Oviedo also wrote that he owned an hacienda in San Juan de la Maguana, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, vols. 117-121 of *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* (Madrid: Gráficas Orbe, 1959), Book 3, Chp. 11.

[15] AGI, Audiencia of Santo Domingo 868, L2, f337 and f351.

[16] Oviedo did, however, escort six female and three male Indians from Hispaniola to

Seville for the crown in 1515. AGI, Indiferente General 419, L5, ff467v-468.

[17] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 5, Preface.

[18] Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, vols. 1-3 of *Obras Completas*, comp. Paulino Castañeda, Carlos de Rueda, and Carmen Godínez e Inmaculada de la Corte (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1988), Vol. 2, 173.

[19] Peter Martyr D'Anghiera, *De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D-Anghiera*, trans. Francis Augustus MacNutt (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970).

[20] Encomienda was a system of enforced labor that was not slavery; but more like European feudalism. It will be explained in detail in subsequent chapters.

[21] Las Casas, *Historia*, Vol. 1, 77.

[22] Deagan consistently uses gender as an analytical tool and, although she is particularly interested in contact-era sites (her findings at La Isabela, Puerto Real and comparative Caribbean sites have proven especially useful for Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 8), she has attempted to meticulously detail the prehistoric culture of the Taíno, too, so as to better understand the changes catalyzed by the arrival of Europeans. Kathleen Deagan, ed., Puerto Real: The Archaeology of a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Town in Hispaniola (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995); "Spanish-Indian Interaction in Sixteenth-Century Florida and Hispaniola," in Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions, A.D. 1000-1800, ed. William W. Fitzhugh (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); "La Isabela: Foothold in the New World," in National Geographic 181(1), 1992: 40-53; and "The Archaeology of the Spanish contact period in the Caribbean," in Journal of World Prehistory 2(2), 1988: 187-233. See also Irving Rouse, The Taínos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Migrations in Prehistory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); "The West Indies," in Handbook of South American Indians, Vol. 4, ed. Julian H. Steward (Washington, D.C.: Bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1948); and Prehistory in Haiti, Yale

University Publications in Anthropology No. 21 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939).

[23] Among other works on the Classic Taíno, see: Ricardo E. Alegría, Apuntes en torno a la mitología de los Indios Taínos de las Antillas Mayores y sus orígenes Suramericanos (San Juan, PR: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1978); José Juan Arrom, Mitología y artes prehispánicas de las Antillas (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1975); Roberto Cassá, Historia social y económica de la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Editora Alfa y Omega, 1992) and Los Taínos de la Española (Santo Domingo: Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, 1974); Eugenio Fernández Méndez, Arte y Mitología de los Indios Taínos de las Antillas Mayores (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Ediciones el Cemi, 1979); Jesse W. Fewkes, The Aborigines of Porto Rico and Neighboring Islands (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1970; originally 1907); Manuel García-Arévalo, El Arte Taíno de la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1977); William F. Keegan, The People Who Discovered Columbus: The Prehistory of the Bahamas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992); Loven, Origins of Taínan Culture, West Indies (Göteburg, Sweden: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1935); Francisco Moscoso, Tribu y clases en el Caribe antiguo (San Pedro de Macorix, Dominican Republic: Universidad Central del Este, 1986); Frank Moya Pons, La Española en el siglo XVI, 1493-1520 (Santo Domingo, 1971) and Manuál de historia Dominicana (Santiago: Universidad Católica Madre y Maestre, 1977); Fred Olsen, On the Trail of the Arawaks (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974); Carl Ortwin Sauer, The Early Spanish Main (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992/1966); Antonio M. Stevens-Arroyo, Cave of the Jagua: The Mythological World of the Taínos (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Jalil Sued-Badillo, La mujer indígena y su sociedad (Puerto Rico: Editorial Cultural, 1989); Ernesto E. Tabío, Arqueología: Agricultura aborigen antillana (Havana, Cuba: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1989); Samuel M. Wilson, Hispaniola:

Caribbean Chiefdoms in the Age of Columbus (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990); and Marcio Veloz-Maggiolo, Medio ambiente y adaptación humana en la prehistoria de Santo Domingo (Santo Domingo: Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, 1976), Las sociedades arcaicas de Santo Domingo (Santo Domingo: Fundación García-Arévalo, 1980), Arqueología prehistórica de Santo Domingo (Singapore: McGraw and Hill, 1972), and *Los modos de vida meillacoide y sus posibles orígenes (un estudio interpretativo)* (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1981).

[24] The first time Columbus met some of the Ciguayos was January 13, 1493, in a bay he called Golfo de las Flechas after the bows and arrows that they used to attack the Spaniards. (The "peaceful Taínos" of Hispaniola generally did not use bows and arrows except for fishing). He wrote that they were probably Caribs. Columbus, *Diario*, 328-341. For more detail on the Macorixes, see Dato Pagán Perdomo, "Notas acerca de la identificación étnica y arqueológica de los grupos Macorix-Ciguayos," in *Boletín Museo del Hombre Dominicano* 19(25), 1992: 49-56.

[25] Relatively few archaeological projects, especially in recent decades, have focused on the indigenous peoples of Hispaniola. Most of the focus has been on European developments on the island, although Kathleen Deagan has been working to distinguish the differences between Taíno culture in the prehispanic and post-hispanic periods. As I was drafting this chapter, however, Dr. Charles Beeker, University of Indiana, announced that his underwater archaeological team had discovered a large pre-Columbian Taíno village and religious center at a site called La Aleta in the Dominican Republic's East National Park (at the extreme southeastern end of the island). Announcement by Matt Crenson of the Associated Press, "Jungle Find: Settlement that Greeted Columbus," in *The Miami Herald*, Saturday, March 29, 1997, 18A.. The work that has been done in and around the Dominican Republic's Parque Nacional del Este since then is shedding new light on indigenous movement and settlement of the island and on Classic and Pre-Classic

Taíno culture and society.

[26] Taylor glosses *conuco* as "garden," but notes that the Arawak term "*kúnnuku*" for "forest" appears to be related, which attests to the evolution of conuco agriculture out of the swidden concept. *Languages of the West Indies*, 20.

[27] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2; see also Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 1, Chp. 10, 331.

[28] Sauer, Early Spanish Main, 51-53.

[29] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2. See also Leví Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad* (Puerto Rico: Editorial San Juan, 1972), Vol. 1, 59-63; Cassá, *Historia social y economica*, Vol. 1, 22-23; and Tabío, *Agricultura aborigen antillana*. The last reference is a focused study on the history and development of bitter yucca as a staple food crop.

[30] Estimates range from as low as 60,000 to as high as six to eight million indigenous peoples on the island of Hispaniola alone circa 1492, with most scholars agreeing on about a million, though the number rises as more archaeological work is done. Deagan believes that "the higher figures may have been more accurate," based on material evidence of population densities at various archaeological sites on Hispaniola; see Kathleen Deagan, "Sixteenth-Century Spanish-American Colonization in the Southeast U.S. and the Caribbean," in *Columbian Consequences*, ed. David Hurst Thomas. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990: 234. One of the new excavations that helps support the higher numbers is the work of July 1998 directed by Gabriel Atiles and Harold Olsen of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano at a site known as La Laguna, on the southeastern coast adjacent to the western border of the Parque Nacional del Este. For an excellent review of the population debate, see Noble David Cook, "Disease and the Depopulation of Hispaniola, 1492-1518," *Colonial Latin American Review* 2(1-2), 1993: 213-245.

[31] Keegan, The People Who Discovered Columbus, 17-18.

[32] Irving Rouse, "Origin and Development of the Indians Discovered by Columbus," in *Columbus and His World: Proceedings of First San Salvador Conference*, 1986 (Fort Lauderdale, FL: College Center of the Finger Lakes, 1987) 300. The multiple meanings and uses of zemíes are detailed later in this chapter.

[33] Roberto Cassá maintains that it was the artistic and artisanal achievements of the Taínos (particularly the Chican branch) that distinguished them from their predecessors. Both he and Sued-Badillo, however, acknowledge that it was the more efficient mound agriculture that provided the Taíno with the increased leisure time required to bring their art to new levels. Cassá, *Historia social y económica*, Vol. 1, 23; Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 14.

[34] Keegan, The People Who Discovered Columbus, 19.

[35] Las Casas, *Historia*, 83.

[36] Chiefdoms are distinguishable from nomadic tribes and from lower-level sedentary societies by the degree of their socio-cultural specialization and differentiation, neither of which are as complex as in state-level societies. For a detailed, yet concise, commentary on the distinctions among the band, tribal, chiefdom and state levels of socio-cultural development as used by anthropologists, see Frank Fernández, "An Afterword: Taíno Culture and its Place in Anthropology," in *Revista Interamericana* 8(3), Fall 1978: 511-516.

[37] Elsa M. Redmond and Charles S. Spencer, "The Cacicazgo, An Indigenous Design," in *Caciques and Their People: A Volume in Honor of Ronald Spores*, ed. Joyce Marcus and Judith Francis Zeitlin (Ann Arbor, MI: Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1994), 190.

[38] José Alcina Franch, "La cultura taína como sociedad en transición entre los niveles tribal y de jefaturas," in *La cultura Taína: Las culturas de América en la época del descubrimiento* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario and Turner Libros, 1983), 67-79. He admits, however, that the chiefdom level is the most fluid, hence the most ill

defined, of all four of the classifications.

[39] "*Nitaíno*" is glossed as "his [the cacique's] nobles" and "*naborías*" as "the remainder, the rest of them." Douglas Taylor, "Some Remarks on the Spelling and Formation of Taíno Words," in *International Journal of Linguistics* 26(4), 1960, 348.

[40] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 197, 1280. In fact, the two classes are described as suspiciously similar to European models. It could well be that the true social organization of the Taíno was far more complex than the chroniclers reported. Eugenio Fernández Méndez believes that the Taíno modeled their stratified society on that of the Maya, but his "explanations" of their multiple levels of cultural convergence are facile, based on individual trait units and myths that, in fact, were not the sole domain of the Maya, but were general Mesoamerican tendencies. Fernández Méndez, *Arte y Mitología de los Taínos*, 26-27. In another of his works, Fernández Méndez suggests that nitaínos and naborías were not two social classes, but two "moieties," two complementary tribal divisions. "Los Indios Taínos de Puerto Rico, Vida y Cultura: Apuntes para un estudio," in *Revista Interamericana* 8(3), Fall 1978, 389.

[41] Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 16.

[42] Sued-Badillo maintains that there were artistic specialists among the Taíno who were employed by the caciques, thus they were freed from doing any agricultural work. *La mujer indígena*, 22. Perhaps he bases this belief on Martyr, who recorded that women "employed by" the Cacica Anacaona "on the island of Ganabara" (near present-day Port-au-Prince) were specialists in the sculpting of the decorative black bowls valued by the nitaíno class. Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, 125.

[43] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 199, 1288. See also Redmond and Spencer, who suggest that there was one higher level, *guamiquina*, but that no caciques with this designation were found at contact. They surmise that this position was held by the "supreme or divine ruler of all things who stood over them, and clearly sanctified their authority." Redmond and Spencer, "The Cacicazgo," 202. Las Casas,

however, wrote that guamiquina was the term the Taínos in Jaragua used to address Governor Nicolás de Ovando and that it meant "the lord of the Christians." Las Casas, *Historia*, 97.

[44] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 362.

[45] Ricardo E. Alegría argues that there were no *cacicas* (female caciques) until after the arrival of the Spaniards, when the Taínos' normal succession patterns had broken down, "Apuntes para el estudio de los caciques de Puerto Rico," in *Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* 85 (1979): 25-41. Jalil Sued-Badillo is his strongest opponent, *La mujer indígena y su sociedad* (San Juan, PR: Editora Cultural, 1989) and "Las cacicas indoantillanas," in *Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* 87 (1985): 17-26. The main argument against Alegría's hypothesis is the importance of matri-lines among the Taínos and other South American Indian peoples. See also Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 119. For a detailed discussion of comparative succession practices, see Mary W. Helms, "Succession to High Office in Pre-Columbian Circum-Caribbean Chiefdoms," in *Man* 15 (1981): 718-731. Helms says that "the Panamanian evidence further suggests that although males were the preferred rulers, in some circumstances sex was jurally irrelevant, at least when the filial line of succession from father to eldest son was broken." She found similar evidence for succession among the people of the Cauca Valley in Colombia.

[46] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 112.

[47] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 118.

[48] Fernández Méndez, "Los Taínos de Puerto Rico," 390.

[49] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 117.

[50] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 386-387.

[51] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 14; see also Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 197, 1279.

[52] See Mary W. Helms, Ulysses' Sail: An ethnographic odyssey of power, knowledge

and geographic distance (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[53] Helms, "Succession to High Office," 728.

[54] Redmond and Spencer, "The Cacicazgo," 203. See also Alfredo E. Figueredo, "The Virgin Islands as an Historical Frontier Between the Tainos and the Caribs," in *Revista Interamericana* 8(3), Fall 1978, 395. Figueredo explains that, when two parties exchanged names, they "adopted each other." When this happened between two caciques, he suggests, "Enmity did not cease between them altogether, but peace or cooperation with a common foe became possible."

[55] The caney was usually described as a large, rectangular house/temple that faced the batey, whereas the round or bell-shaped bohíos of the rest of the villagers (each of which was the sleeping and storage quarters of several interrelated families) were irregularly placed. For detailed descriptions of Taíno dwellings, see Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp 1. (There is confusion as to whether the cacique's or the common dwelling was called a bohío. This work follows the usage of Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 166, 1151.) Cassá notes that many scholars today doubt that rectangular dwellings existed at all in the pre-Columbian era, that the shape may have been European-inspired. Cassá, *Historia social y económica*, Vol. 1, 23. It is quite unlikely that the Taínos' houses were irregularly placed, or that the villages "were loose and formless clusters except for a central open space" as Sauer described them in *Early Spanish Main*, 57. The houses were more likely laid out spatially to reflect degrees of kinship and reciprocal responsibility, like the village layout of many indigenous peoples today.

[56] In a description of a "triumphal reception" that the paramount cacique Behecchio of Jaragua gave for the Adelantado Bartolomé Colón, "some thirty women, all wives of the cacique, marched out to meet them, dancing, singing and shouting." Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Book 1, 119. See also Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 199, 1288.

[57] This is what all the chroniclers except Las Casas say; Las Casas, however, says that

the caciques had so little "presumption" with regard to their subjects, that they not only ate the same foods, but ate off the same plates and drank out of the same cups. *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 198, 1282.

[58] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 387. Oviedo says the victims of this live interment were known by the term *"Atabeane nequen*." *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 3. See also Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 203, 1308.

[59] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 65.

[60] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 87.

[61] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 362.

[62] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 252.

[63] He bases his hypothesis on the Spanish *repartimientos* and *encomiendas*, which he says "tapped into" this established tribute system. Moscoso, *Tribu y clases en el Caribe antiguo*, 324.

[64] *Cacoma* meant "bonus or reward," Las Casas, *Historia*, Vol. 2, 113.

[65] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 125.

[66] See Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 316-317, for a vivid description of the Taínos' annual harvest festival.

[67] See Redmond and Spencer, "The Cacicazgo," 203, wherein they propose that the Taíno villagers "were not obliged to render tribute" to the cacique, *per se*, but that such tribute, particularly the "first fruits" of the harvest, were brought as offerings to his zemí. See also Cassá, *Historia social y económica*, Vol. 1, 26.

[68] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 102.

[69] For the details recorded by Pané about this Taíno hero of myth, see his *Relación*, 23-29.

[70] Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, *Encuentro con la mitología Taína* (San Juan, PR: Editorial Punto y Coma, 1992), 55.

[71] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 172.

[72] Robiou Lamarche, *Encuentro con la mitología Taína*, 58-59. Note, too, that the Taínos reckoned the passage of time and annual dates by the moon, which is an indication of the power they believed inherent in it. Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 111.

[73] Cassá, Historia social y económica, 25.

[74] Carlos Esteban Deive, "El Chaminismo Taíno," in *La Cultura Taína* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Centenario and Turner Libros, 1989), 83.

[75] Cojoba was probably a mixture of hallucinogenic drugs that included *Piptadenia peregrina, Anadenanthera peregrina* and tobacco. For more information on trances and shamanic healing among comparative peoples, see Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Michael Harner, *Hallucinogens and Shamanism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) and *The Way of the Shaman* (Toronto: Bantam, 1980); Alfred Métraux, "Religion and Shamanism" in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949): 197-370; Dale A. Olsen, *Music of the Warao of Venezuela: Song People of the Rain Forest* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996); and Johannes Wilbert, *Tobacco and Shamanism in South America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) and *Mystic Endowment: Religious Ethnography of the Warao Indians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), particularly Chp. 3 on "Tobacco and Shamanistic Ecstasy."

[76] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 173. For the earliest descriptions of how behiques cured their patients, see Pané, *Relación*, 43-57. See also Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 2, Chp. 120, 872.

[77] Olsen, Music of the Warao of Venezuela, 226-228.

[78] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1.

[79] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1. Francisco José Arnáiz also discusses the behiques' clothing, which he says was all black and hooded so as to completely cover their heads. "El mundo religioso Taíno visto por la fe católica española," in *La Cultura Taína*

(Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario and Turner Libros, 1989), 145. Their appearance, then, no doubt fueled the fear and hatred that the Spaniards already had toward behiques as "depraved priests" promoting demon-inspired idolatry.

[80] Pané, *Relación*, 52.

[81] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 2, Chp. 120, 872.

[82] Arnáiz, "El mundo religioso," 145. See also Darío Suro, "El mundo mágico Taíno: Amuletos, espátulas y majaderos," in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 17 (Sep-Oct 1950): 259-264. He decries the lack of freedom of expression that the Taíno artist had, saying that his work was totally at the service "of the cacique or priest... who told him what to make."

[83] Robiou Lamarche, *Encuentro con la mitología Taína*, 40. For more information on Taínos, behiques, and their use of caves, see Lynne Guitar's illustrated article at http://www.centrelink.org/TainoCaves.html.

[84] Nelsonrafael Collazo, *Enigmas y revelaciones de los petroglifos*, second edition (no publishing information is included in the booklet, which appears to have been self-published by the author, a Puerto Rican scholar and wood sculptor), 8. This is similar to the way that Christians relied upon stained-glass illustrations of Bible stories.

[85] Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 21.

[86] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 111.

[87] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 1.

[88] Rouse, *The Taínos*, 121.

[89] Arrom, *Mitología y artes prehispánicas de las Antillas*, 17-30. This hypothesis is based on the work of Pané, who recorded that the Taínos buried trigonal stone zemíes in their conucos (and then appear to have urinated on them, which many scholars have interpreted as fertilizer) to speed the growth of the yucca. Pané, *Relación*, 71-72.

[90] Pané, *Relación*, 19.

[91] Sued-Badillo, La mujer indígena, 23; and Fernández Méndez, Arte y mitología de los

indios Taínos, 29.

[92] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 204, 1317.

[93] Both Las Casas and Oviedo mention them numerous times, as did Amerigo Vespucci in his detail-filled letters to Italy; the women fought with the men and, in some cases, in all-female groups; hence the rumor that the "Isle of the Amazons" was in the newly discovered Indies.

[94] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 125; see also Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 35-39.

[95] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1.

[96] In 1517, a long-time Spanish resident of Hispaniola spoke of an "*yndia behique*" in his response to an interrogation by the Jeronymite friars. By 1517, however, the term may have devolved to include female herbal healers, hence offers no proof that there were female behiques before 1492. Quotation from page 353 of the transcription of the Jeronymite Interrogatorio in Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, comp., *Los Dominicos y las encomiendas de indios de la Isla Española* (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1971). Original document, AGI, Indiferente General 1624; responses to question number seven are filed separately in Patronato 172, R9. Another transcription appears in César Herrera Cabral, *Colección César Herrera*, unpublished documents, Vol. 21, No. 335 (a few pages, however, are missing in the latter). For an annotated, partial English translation, see John H. Parry and Robert J. Keith, eds. and trans., *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early Seventeenth Century*, (New York: Times Books, 1984), Vol. 2, 329-334.

[97] Since completing this dissertation in 1998, the author, Lynne Guitar, has been researching this area and believes that Taíno women who were of the nitaína class probably underwent their own cojoba rituals during transition ceremonies, but since they were women-only rituals, Spanish male chroniclers would not have known much, if anything, about them.

[98] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 317.

[99] For the story of Guabonito, see Pané, *Relación*, 28-29. For purifying rituals before seeking gold, see Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 329; and Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 3.

[100] Sued-Badillo, *La Mujer Indígena*, 33-36. For a description of their artisanry in cotton textile making, see Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 2, Chp. 61.

[101] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 125.

[102] Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*, 45.

[103] Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 14-15. For a description of the irrigated fields, see Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 388.

[104] Woven out of palm, a cibucán is like a large version of a child's Chinese finger trap.

[105] For a description of the laborious process used by the Taínos to make cassabe, see Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2; Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 342-343; and Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 1, Chp. 11, 334-337.

[106] This line of thought was inspired by an ethnography of the Mundurucu people by Yolanda Murphy and Robert F. Murphy, *Women of the Forest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

[107] Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 44.

[108] Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 38-39.

[109] See Susan Kellogg, "The Woman's Room: Some Aspects of Gender Relations in Tenochtitlán in the Late Pre-Hispanic Period," in *Ethnohistory* 42(4), Fall 1995: 563-576; and Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[110] For a clear, concise description of the various hero myths and spirits in Pané's *Relación*, see Robiou Lamarche, *Encuentro con la mitología Taína*, which also has wonderful illustrations. Stevens-Arroyo's *Cave of the Jagua* is a more detailed investigation of Pané's work, but his interpretations are rigidly Structuralist and hypothetical.

[111] It is not just "primitive men" who become emotional when viewing sacred symbols, writes Suro. Taíno "amulets" no doubt produced the same feelings and had "the same sense of protection and of defense" as viewing an image of Christ or the Virgin can have on Christians. Suro, "El mundo mágico Taíno," 259.

[112] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 166, 1152.

[113] Pané, *Relación*, 72; see also, Arrom, *Mitología y arte prehispánicas*, 18-19.

[114] Ferdinand Columbus, *The Life of the Admiral, by his son Ferdinand*, trans. Benjamin Keen. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1959), 152.

[115] Anthropologist David Gus describes his experiences with an extant Indian tribe whose religious beliefs are vividly illustrated in the symbols that adorn and actually form their architecture, and both domestic and ritual objects, especially objects woven of straw. David Gus, *To Weave and Sing: Art, Symbol, and Narrative in the South American Rain Forest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[116] Oviedo saw them all as demonic, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1. Las Casas, however, found much to be admired, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 2, Chp. 61. For a detailed look at Taíno sculpture, see Jalil Sued-Badillo's amply illustrated, "La industria lapidaria pretaína en las Antillas," in *Revista Interamericana* 8(3), Fall 1978: 429-461.

[117] Arnáiz, "El mundo religioso, 141.

[118] Martyr, like other Spaniards, could not believe that the Taínos truly valued guanín more than gold. "[I]t was surmised that they dealt with tricky strangers who sold them these guanines, palming off upon them vile metal for gold." *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 344.

[119] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 175.

[120] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, 173.

[121] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 2, Chp. 120, 872.

[122] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 167.

[123] Columbus was the first to write about this ritual: "All of them came to the Christians and put their hands on their heads, which was a sign of great reverence and friendship."

Diario, 222-223. Entry of December 13, 1492.

[124] Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 38.

[125] Arnáiz, "El mundo religioso," 141.

[126] Lignum vitae is a dark black wood; caoba is mahogany.

[127] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 61, Chp. 1. Later he notes that some caciques were even buried seated on their dujos, Book 6, Chp. 3. This has been verified over and over at archaeological sites across the island.

[128] Robiou Lamarche, Encuentro con la mitología Taína, 63.

[129] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 174.

[130] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 1, Chp. 43, 480-481.

[131] Arnáiz, "El mundo religioso," 145.

[132] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 166, 1152.

[133] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 174.

[134] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 166, 1152-1153.

[135] Pané, *Relación*, 12. Europeans of the era, too, relied extensively on purging for curative purposes. See Nicolás Monardes, *Joyfull news out of the newe founde worlde*, trans. John Frampton Marchaunt (London: W. Norton, 1577 and New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925). Monardes was a Spanish physician (1512-1588) who collected samples of the herbs, barks, etc., used by the Indians for curing, as well as descriptions of their preparation and application. See also Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 10, Chp. 3 on *bálsamo*; Chp. 4 on *manzanillo*; Book 11, Chp. 2 on Hispaniola's other herbs; Chp. 3 on an all-purpose herb called simply "*y*"; and Chp. 4, also on bálsamo.

[136] Arrom, Mitología y artes prehispánicas, 113-114.

[137] Las Casas, *Historia*, 278.

[138] Martyr suggests there may have been smaller family celebrations to mark the coming of age of less important females--and to get them married. *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 251.

[139] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1.

[140] Fernández Méndez, "Los indios Taínos," 390.

[141] Panels of pictographs that appear to "read" from left to right in the Cueva José María, Parque del Este, suggest that the Taínos may have had a type of glyphic or illustrative history akin to that of the Mayas. Information gathered during author's orientation on March 14, 1998, to the archaeological projects at the Dominican Republic's Parque Nacional del Este under the auspices of Dr. Charles Beeker, Dr. Geoffrey Conrad, and Dr. John Foster, Indiana University.

[142] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 172. The Mexica, too, had an oral culture and maintained their histories through song. They had specialists teach the sons of their nobles "divine hymns... to set the nobles apart from the plebeians." See Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th-18th Centuries*, (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1993; translated from the French, *La colonisation de l'imaginaire*, by Eileen Corrigan), 9-10. See also the ethnography devoted to indigenous song: Olsen, *Music of the Warao of Venezuela*.

[143] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 361.

[144] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 167, 1155. Las Casas also observed Taínos washing the sick with herbs, believing that frequent washing "had the virtue of cleansing [away] sins and giving corporeal health." *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 204, 1312.

Pané made mention of swimming and ritual bathing repeatedly in his brief *Relación*, and Martyr complained that, "Nothing will prevent [the Taínos] from bathing and washing themselves in the river." *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 370.

[145] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 316.

[146] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1.

[147] See J.M. Coopersmith, *Music and Musicians of the Dominican Republic* (Washington, DC: Pan American Union, 1949).

[148] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 316.

[149] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 204, 1317.

[150] David Roberts, "The Suya sing and dance and fight for a culture in peril," in *Smithsonian* 27(2), May 1996: 66.

[151] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 146. For a general treatment of the value inherent in an exchange of this type of esoteric knowledge, see Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance*.

[152] See Fernández Méndez, *Arte y Mitología*, 18-19. Rouse does not dispute this aspect of the batey, but does maintain that the Taínos' version of the game/ritual developed from an early form of the game that "was played on unstructured ground." It developed parallel to the ballgame of the Mayas, not as a diffusion of an aspect of their culture, as Fernández Méndez proposes. Rouse, *The Taínos*, 116.

[153] Fernández Méndez, "Los indios Taínos," 392.

[154] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2. The "black pitch," of course, was rubber, a New World product that Europeans had never seen before.

[155] The "stone hoops" that most museum exhibits describe as equipment the Indian ballplayers wore around their waists and elbows were more likely molds, just as the round stones found in abundance were molds for their rubber balls (no has ever suggested that they played with stone balls). The actual equipment was probably made of rubber, straw and cotton. A grateful thank you for this insight goes to the curator of the J. I. Kislak Mortgage Corporation's museum and gallery in Miami Lakes, FL.

[156] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2. See also Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 204, 1317.

[157] Robiou Lamarche, Encuentro con la mitología Taína, 46-47.

[158] Water as a religious symbol and ritual bathing are common Taíno cultural elements. The "goddess" represented on the boundary stones of the main plaza at Caguana is considered to be that of Atabeyra, the "Mother of the Waters."

[159] For far more detail on Taíno cultigens than can be provided here, see Oviedo,

Historia, Books 6, 7 and 10.

[160] For a focused study on the history and development of bitter yucca as a staple food crop, see Tabío, *Agricultura aborigen antillana*.

[161] Oviedo gives extensive detail on the cultivation, processing and preparation of both bitter and sweet yucca. *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2.

[162] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 4.

[163] Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 222-223. Note that Dunn and Kelley say it was probably a misspelling of "niames," which they say means "cassava," but they are mistaken.

[164] Guáyiga was the staple crop in the province of Higüey in eastern Hispaniola. Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 15.

[165] Thanks to Francisco J. González for his help over the H-Latam Internet on March 29, 1997, on identifying both lerén and guáyiga. I have since eaten lerenes several times in the Dominican Republic and enjoy them very much. They look like small potatoes but taste like tender young corn. Dominicans still make a kind of bread from guáyiga, too, called *cholo*, which is delicious. The taste and texture are similar to cornbread made from finely ground cornmeal.

[166] Martyr wrote that one of the Taínos' ajíes was similar to the black pepper Spaniards were familiar with, for it had a "hot flavor but [was] not very sharp." There was another that "does not sting the tongue but is aromatic." Another, probably cayenne, he described as "biting." *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 186.

[167] Intensive mound-style conucos for crops like yucca and slash-and-burn plots for other crops, like maize, co-existed during the era of the Classic Taínos.

[168] For example, see Martyr *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 63-64, 123-127, and 338-34. Most scholars maintain that maize was only a "minor vegetable" among the Taínos. See Rouse, *The Tainos*, 109. They are in error, misled by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, who was appointed Cronista Mayor de Indias in 1596 by King Philip II. Herrera wrote his *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Océano* using

documentary sources that were previously closely guarded as Crown "secrets." His *Historia* was so influential that scholars, even today, rely upon it rather than going directly to source materials. Although Herrera was an excellent historian, he was not infallible. Far more interested in the Indians of Mesoamerica than those of the Caribbean, he gave the Taínos short shrift and made numerous errors about them, one of which was to say that, "*No tiene maíz ni trigo*." He maintained that they only ate cassabe, "*que era el pan de los naturales*." Herrera, *Historia* (Madrid: La Academia de la Historia, 1934), 23-24.

In addition to documentary evidence for the importance of maize to the Taínos and their ancestors, archaeologists like Anna C. Roosevelt are finding material clues. See Roosevelt, *Parmana: Prehistoric Maize and Manioc Subsistence along the Amazon and Orinoco* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

[169] For more detail, see Bernardo Vega, "Frutas en la dieta precolumbina en la Isla Española," in *CLIO--Organo de la Academia de la Historia* 64(153), Sep-Dec 1995: 11-90.

[170] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 14.

[171] Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*, 41.

[172] Oviedo's description of an areito where the Indians danced and drank until they fell down in a drunken stupor was more likely a description of an areito in Darién (east coast of today's Panama) or one on Hispaniola after Indian slaves from the mainland were brought to replace the native population. Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 1. Two Puerto Rican anthropologists, despite prevalent beliefs, have written that the Taínos did have alcoholic beverages: Lidio Cruz Monclova, "La colonización y el indio de Puerto Rico"--who says they made "chicha" from fermented maize--and Fernández Méndez, "Los Indios Taínos de Puerto Rico"--who says they had not only chicha but also an alcoholic beverage made from fermented yucca--both in *Revista Interamericana* (Fall 1978) 8(3), 418 and 391, respectively. Perhaps the Taínos of Puerto Rico, being near the frontier between their people and the Caribs, learned about alcoholic beverages

from the Caribs, who made a kind of beer from sweet-potatoes, as described in Figueredo, "Virgin Islands as an Historical Frontier," 396.

[173] The Taínos did not cultivate citrus fruits or bananas, for those appear to have been imported by the Spaniards. There is controversy over coconut, which may have existed in the Antilles but not in great quantity until after the Spaniards brought coconuts here from the Canary Islands.

[174] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp 6. Marrero points that bixa was also said to protect the wearer from insect bites and that it was used to dye textiles. *Cuba*, Vol. 1, 64.

[175] See Oscar H. Horst, "The Utility of Palms in the Cultural Landscape of the Dominican Republic," in *Principes* 41 (1), January 1977: 18-20, for a detailed description of the many practical uses of various parts and types of palm trees. His work demonstrates that they were once used for food, in the construction and decoration of homes and shelters, as well as to make all of the various containers that we make today of paper, wood, and plastic.

[176] See Richard Rose, "Lucayan Lifeways at the Time of Columbus," in *Columbus and His World: Proceedings of the First San Salvador Conference, 1986* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: College Center of the Finger Lakes, 1987), 328-329; and Marrero, *Cuba*, Vol. 1, 65.

[177] Sauer, Early Spanish Main, 61.

[178] Sauer, *Early Spanish Main*, 57. See Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 10, Chp. 4. He describes it as being like a "hazelnut."

[179] For more detail, see Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 12 (animals), Book 13 (fish), Book 14 (birds), and Book 15(insects).

[180] Manatee meat was reserved for caciques and their families, and its hide could be used for shields and footwear. See Charles R. Ewan, *From Spaniard to Creole: The Archaeology of Cultural Formation at Puerto Real, Haiti* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).

[181] But not *hicoteas* (freshwater turtles), which were considered sacred and not to be

eaten. Pané, *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios,* myth of Deminán Caracaracol.

[182] See Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 313.

[183] See Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 13, Chp. 9 and Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 299.

[184] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 313. The light shed by cucurios is so bright that Oviedo, who called them "*cocuyos*," says the Indians carried them in their hands or tied them to their toes to light their way in the night. Later, Spaniards swore they could read by their light. Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 15, Chp. 8.

[185] Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 54.

[186] Fernández Méndez believes that the *gosquez*, which the Spaniards described as barkless dogs, were more likely a type of Coati or guinea pig. "Los Tainos de Puerto Rico," 391.

[187] Kathleen Deagan, "Initial Encounters: Arawak Responses to European Contact at the En Bas Saline Site, Haiti," in *Columbus and His World: Proceedings of the First San Salvador Conference, 1986* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: College Center of the Finger Lakes, 1987), 348.

[188] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 304.

[189] As quoted in Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World*, Vol. 2, 91. Not long after the initial European settlement of Hispaniola, iguanas almost became extinct there. This is because the Spaniards not only found them tasty (once they got past their nasty appearance) but because no one could decide if they were "animal" or "fish" because iguanas lived "in water, in trees, and on the ground." Due to the confusion, the Church decreed that iguanas could be eaten on Fridays, during Lent, and other times of ritual fast when meat was forbidden. Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 7. The manatee population of Hispaniola's estuaries, for the same reasons, was also imperiled soon after contact, while the little mute dogs that had been domesticated by the Taínos--most definitely "meat"—were said to have been eaten into extinction by the Spaniards,

Marrero, *Cuba*, Vol. 1, 70. I believe, however, that the vast number of yellow dogs that one still finds throughout the Dominican countryside are most likely their descendants.

[190] Martyr wrote that, coasting along the shore of Cuba, Christopher Columbus and his men found "wooden spits" [a barbacoa] arranged about a fire on which hung "about a hundred pounds' weight" of fish and beside which were "two dead serpents [iguanas] eight feet long," *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 1, 94-96. The bucán was a similar native device which was used by later privateers along the island's north coast to roast and smoke cattle, hence their name, "buccaneers." See Fernández Méndez, "Los Indios Taínos," 391.

[191] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 7, Chp. 2. See also Rouse, *The Tainos*, 12; and Julian H. Steward and Louis C. Faron, *Native Peoples of South America* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959), 247.

[192] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 1, Chp. 10, 330.

[193] Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Vol. 2, 326.

[194] Sauer, Early Spanish Main, 69.

[195] Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, Vol. 3, Chp. 204, 1314-1315.

[196] Las Casas, *Historia*, Vol. 1, 278.

[197] Oviedo, *Historia*, Book 6, Chp. 2. They smoked cigars or inhaled smoke through a "y"-shaped tube. It was the smoking tube that the Taínos called "tobacco," he points out, "not the herb or smoke that they take, like some people

[198] Moscoso, *Tribu y Clases*, 18.