

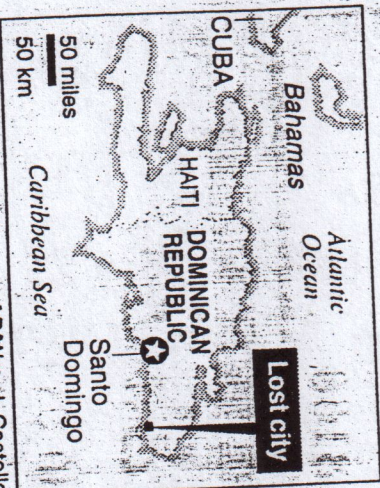
Archaeologists find lost city whose people met Columbus

► Discovery of artifacts in sinkhole led to unearthing of infamous jungle city

EAST NATIONAL PARK, Dominican Republic (AP) — In the remote jungle of the Dominican Republic, archaeologists have discovered a long-lost city once inhabited by the people who welcomed Christopher Columbus to the New World.

The Taino Indians were the first people Columbus encountered after landing on an island he called San Salvador in 1492. They numbered in the millions and had developed a network of small cities ruled by chieftains.

Last week, archaeologists found one of those cities, in the easternmost part of the Dominican Republic. On March 20 researchers exploring around a



sinkhole in the country's East National Park found three large ceremonial plazas and the remains of a substantial settlement that appears to have been home to thousands of people.

There is a strong possibility that the city is the same one whose brutal destruction in 1503 is described in an account by the

missionary Bartolome de Las Casas. The incident was one of the first conflicts in what would become the conquest of a continent.

"This is going to give us more insight into the Taino then has ever been known before," said Charles Beeker, director of the underwater science program at Indiana University. The find was announced Friday at a meeting in Rohnert Park, Calif., of the Society for California Archaeology.

Beeker and several colleagues traveled to the site by helicopter last week to investigate the area around a cenote, or natural well, that the Indiana archaeologist has been studying for several months. Last fall scuba divers retrieved carved wooden axes, baskets, ornate pottery and other artifacts from the well that were

probably dropped into the water as part of a sacrificial ceremony.

With Beeker were Geoff Conrad of Indiana University's Mathers Museum, California state archaeologist John Foster and three East National Park consulting archaeologists.

"Nobody's ever going to encounter a whole new world again, not on the face of this Earth," Conrad said. "That's just never going to happen again. And this is where it happened first."

Though the Taino are all but forgotten today, certain aspects of their culture live on. The English word barbecue comes from the Taino term for the rock slabs they used to cook bread. The hammock is also a Taino invention discovered by the Spanish upon their arrival in the New World.

Mankato,
(Minnesota)