Ramón Pané and the Beginnings of American Ethnography

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The first book written in America and about America by a European writer is a curious ethnographic treatise by a Hieronymite friar named Ramón Pané (or Pane), who was brought to the Indies by Columbus on his second voyage and commissioned by him to learn the language and customs of the inhabitants of the island the Spanish called Hispaniola, a people ethnologists now refer to as the Taino. Because of the presumed virtual extinction, within thirty or forty years of 1492, of these and other first-contacted New World people of the Antilles (although the continuing existence of indigenous populations in Cuba and elsewhere is now widely acknowledged, along with Taino cultural revival movements in the Caribbean and in diaspora) we are now wholly dependent for knowledge of the pre-Columbian Taino on archaeology, and on Pané's contact era treatise and on such other, less systematic, contemporary accounts as have come down to us; of these sources, the most important are the following:

Columbus: the *Diario* of the first voyage (the original is lost but was abstracted by Las Casas); the Letter to Santangel of 1493; accounts of the second voyage, non-extant, but utilized (along with the Journal of the first voyage) by Fernando Colon in his biography of his father; by Peter Martyr in his *Decade;,* by Las Casas in his *History of the Indies;* and by Andres Bernaldez in his *Historia de los Reyes Catolicos*.

Ramón Pané: "*Relacion acerca de las antiguedades de los indios.*" The presumed Spanish ur-*text* is lost, but was used by Fernando Colon, Peter Martyr, and Las Casas. The *editio princeps* is the Italian translation by Alfonso Ulloa of Fernando Colon's biography of his father (*Historie della vita e de' fatti dell' Ammiraglio D. Christoforo Colombo*) published in Venice in 1571, which contains Pané's treatise as an addendum to chap. 63. This was translated by Benjamin Keen as 'The Relation of Fray Ramón Concerning the Antiquities of the Indians, Which He, Knowing Their Language. Carefully Compiled by Order of the Admiral"), appended to chapter 62 of his translation of *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His son Ferdinand* [Rutgers, 1959, 1992).

Other second voyage reports: including the Letter of Dr. Chanca: the Letter of Michele de Cuneo: and the second-hand Letter of Nicolo Syllacio which transmits information about this voyage from one Guillermo Coma. All these contain, as Las Casas would put it, defamations of the Indians "after the manner of sailors" (*Defense* 348).

Las Casas: who in such works as the *Breve Relación* (*Very Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies*) 1542, published 1552; the *History of the Indies* (1527-61*);* and the *Apologetic History;* Las Casas is both an independent source and a crucial transmitter of Columbus, Pané, and other early witnesses.

Oviedo y Valdes, whose *Historia Natural y General de las Indias* incorporates observations during a period of tenure in Santo Domingo commencing in 1532 (and whose earlier *Sumario de la Natural Historia de las Indias* of 1526 dealt primarily with the mainland of New Spain), and whose negative reporting on the Indians is specifically refuted by Las Casas in his *In Defense of the Indians* (chap. 57).

Peter Martyr d'Anghiera who, while not an eyewitness himself, as Chronicler of the Spanish Council of the Indies is our most important transmitter of contemporary eyewitness accounts in his humanistic *Letters*, collected as *De orbe novo decades* (*Decades of the New World*), the first volume of which, containing the Columbus/Pané material, was published in Italian translation in 1504, and in the original Latin in 1511, but circulated earlier and was long the most influential book on the New World.

There is no consensus on the population of the Antilles at the time of European contact, but estimates by both early chroniclers and modern scholars range between one and three million (for instance. both Las Casas and an independent Dominican source of 1519 report that the tribute system ordered by Columbus had counted one million, one hundred thousand people on Hispaniola [Sauer: 66J, though modern scholars tend to give lower figures [Rouse 1992: 7: and see Henige and Cook and Borah]), but what is clear is the catastrophic demographic collapse of the Taino and other Antillean peoples within a very short time. By the end of Ovando's term as governor in 1509 only sixty thousand native inhabitants, all in *encomiendas*,

remained on Hispaniola, which in the dominant native tongue ("Classic Taino," a branch of the Arawakan language family which encompassed most of the Caribbean [Granberry 1994; Rouse 1992: 37-42]) was called *Bohio,* "The People's Home": a repartimiento census in 1514 recorded only 22,726 Indians able to work, although this figure did not include personal slaves: a smallpox epidemic of 1518/1519 further decimated the population, perhaps by half; and by 1524 there were more African slaves than Tainos on "The People's Home" (Rouse 1992: 155; Sauer 200-206). As Sauer points out, this collapse derived not from military conquest (it was in no sense a "war") but from disease and the relentless imposition of a system of forced labor: "A well-structured and adjusted native society had become a formless proletariat in alien servitude, its customary habits and enjoyments lost. The will to live and to reproduce was thus weakened. One way out was to commit suicide by the juice of the bitter yucca" (204). At any rate, the Taino, as noted, were long regarded as a culture virtually extinct by the mid-sixteenth century, and while it is true that there was some biological continuity (according to the census of 1514, 40 percent of Spanish men had Indian wives [Sauer 199]) and significant survival and impact of linguistic elements and even cultural traits on European colonial cultures (words and word-roots: agriculture and food traditions [Rouse 1992: 161-64; Amy-Moreno]), genocide and culture-cide remain the operative concepts.

Consequently, study of the Taino has of necessity focused primarily on archaeology and artifacts, but even there Caribbean studies have long been peripheral to Mesoamerican and Andean studies as European interest in indigenous American cultures from the beginning, that is, from the 1520's, shifted, along with the political center of gravity of New Spain, away from the Caribbean to Mexico and Peru and the highly organized and statist Aztec and Inka societies. There was never any possibility of, let alone interest in, a sustained Sahaguntine ethnographic project on the Taino; Las Casas himself was no ethnographer, and by his time, the Taino were no longer a living independent culture in any case. Thus, Columbus and Pané (along with the passing remarks of the other voyagers mentioned above) remain as our indispensible sources on the Taino.

To Columbus, of course, attaches the special interest of literal first contact and first impressions, and his comments, as reported in the Letter to Santangel and in the (Las Casas/Columbus) *Diario*, have been minutely observed, analyzed and deconstructed (as in such notable recent studies as Todorov. Greenblatt and Hulme). On the other hand, almost no attention has been paid to Pané outside of Catholic studies in the Dominican Republic, for whom he is something of a major historical figure (see, e.g., Brito), except for the work of Alegria and Arrom, including the latter's superb re-translation of Pané back into Spanish (1974, 1988), and collation of the text with the use made of it by Peter Martyr, Las Casas, and Columbus (as mediated by Hernando Colon) -- a work itself then translated into English by Susan Griswold (1999) -- and Arrom's subsequent study of the art and mythology of the pre-Hispanic Antilles (*Mitologia y artes prehis panicas de las Antillas*, 1989), and the work by his student, Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua: The Mythological World of the Tainos,* 1988).

Other scholars who focus on the Taino typically mention Pané only in passing or even not at all, though drawing directly or indirectly and without acknowledgment on his testimony (Rouse's article on the Arawak in the *Handbook of South American* Indians contains sections on "Religion," "Shamanism," and "Mythology" (1948: 535-39) which all draw practically verbatim from Bourne's English translation of Pané (1906) but in which he is never acknowledged or mentioned -- although in Rouse's more recent work (1992), Pané, and his modern Spanish translator Arrom, are prominently acknowledged, and Rouse and Arrom jointly authored the entry on 'The Tainos" for the *Circa 1492* catalogue to the Quincentennial National Gallery of Art exhibit (1991).

Less specialized scholars never mention Pané at all, and this can lead to such a blatant omission as a failure to mention him in an article on "The Earliest Accounts on the New World" which duly notes the insubstantial (but, alas, influential) comments of such propagandizers as Dr. Chanca and Michele da Cuneo, and such misinformation as that Pigafetta, who wrote a Mandevillean account of Patagonian giants and "was the first to try to study the native's languages" (Gerbi 39- 41*),* or an article on "The Effect of the Discovery on Ethnological and

Folklore Studies in Europe" which asserts that "well into the sixteenth century, most of the common information about the Discovery itself and about conditions in the New World was passed on by word of mouth," and goes on to quote from the 1530 edition of Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo* a lengthy passage described as "perhaps the earliest description of a rudimentary kind of shamanism to come from the New World," with no indication that Peter Martyr is quoting from Pané's book written thirty-some years earlier than that publication date (Hand 46, 49; actually, as noted above. this first "Decade" of Peter Martyr was published. in Italian translation, as early as 1504).

Finally, in contrast to the close analysis and deconstruction of Columbus' comments on the Taino noted above, it seems remarkable that, other than the works by Arrom and Stevens-Arroyo, no literary or phenomenological analysis has been undertaken on Pané's indispensible text, no sustained attempt made to fit it into the trajectory of the earliest American historiography or the spectrum of colonialist/ anti-colonialist discourse, as has been done for Columbus, Bernal Diaz. Las Casas, or Guaman Poma, by such contemporary critics as Todorov, Adorno, Pastor, Merrim, Rabasa, Mignolo, Greenblatt, and Hulme.

There are two chief reasons, apparently, for this neglect of the New World's first book (this can be put this way because pre-Columbian books or codices represented not the New World created by the encounter, but a venerable Old World). First is the virtual inaccessibility of the-book in any form until recent years; buried in the Italian *editio princeps of* Fernando Colon's biography -- itself the subject of a long and lively battle over authenticity, now seemingly tipped decisively in its favor -- the work was seldom included in translations, especially non-Spanisb translations, of that work and it was not, until recent years, issued as a separate publication in its own right. There are now some dozen Spanish, Mexican, Dominican and other Latin American editions of Pané, along with a French edition, all evidently prompted by the 1992 Quincentennial (lack of the original Spanish text apparently made Latin Americanists slow to claim the work as fundamental to the canon), but still no modern English edition, other than Bourne's 1906 translation in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* -- recently reprinted, however, in Keagan's *Earliest Hispanic/Native American Interactions in the Caribbean* (1991)

-- and the translation incorporated in Keen's translation of *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus By His Son Ferdinand* (1959; new edition 1992).

A second reason for the book's neglect, I think, is internal. A perception that the work's contents border on incoherence begins with Columbus' own comment that the report he himself commissioned and is introducing to the reader "contains so many fictions that the only sure thing to be learned from it is that the Indians have a certain natural reverence for the after-life and believe in the immortality of the soul" (Colon 153), continues with Peter Martyr's frequent editorial interventions, such as that "to conclude my decade, listen still to some details concerning the ridiculous superstitions of Hispaniola" (166), and with Las Casas' comment that Pané was a Catalan who did not peak Castilian perfectly, and was a simple-minded man whose reports were thus sometimes confused and of little substance (*Apologetica historia*, cxx, in Arrom 1974: 105). The subsequent neglect of the book as a rather useless source has extended, with few exceptions, up until the last generation.

All that has now changed. The most recent studies of Antillean art and archaeology, and linguistics, by Arrom, Cassa, Alegria, Rouse, and Granberry have all demonstrated the tremendous pertinence of Pané's treatise. In fact, if one comes to a first reading of the text, *after* first having had some exposure to Antillean art and archaeology, which was my own situation, then what is striking indeed *is* the shock of recognition, the amazing correspondence between expository details of this 1490-something treatise and characteristics of Antillean artifacts in museum collections and illustrated studies; and when the range of reference is wider, to Arawakan and other South American culture traditions and to myth and shamanistic practice in a pan-Amerindian context, then the pertinence of Pané is even more evident two recent studies, by Lopez-Baralt and Alegria, focus on the connections between Antillean and South American myth).

We know from a comment in Las Casas that Pané, whom Las Casas says he knew, came to Hispaniola with Columbus (*Apol. hist.* cxx. in Arrom 1974: 105; see comments in Arrom 3, and Bourne 313-14), and that this must refer to the

second voyage, when, unlike the first voyage, a. number of clerics were brought along, led by Fray Buil, a Benedictine particularly charged by the Crown with evangelization(to little avail. as it turned out. although Pané himself had some successes). During this second expedition the Admiral charged Pané to "set down all their rites and antiquities" (Columbus' words, in Colon 153), to "write... what I have been able to learn concerning the beliefs and idolatry of the Indians. and the manner in which they worship their gods" (Pané's words, in Colon 153 -- hereinafter cited as Pané/Colon).

In the. second half of his treatise, Pané gives us some additional detail about the circumstances of his assignment, and these have a bearing both on the material itself and on the dating and transmission of the work. Pané tells us that when he and a group of other clerics were about to depart for Castile (after an indeterminate stay in Hispaniola), that he \Vas charged to remain and work in the province of Macorix near the Spanish fort of Magdalena in the Vega Real (see map 4 and figs. 2 and 6), where he says he successfully evangel-ized the local cacique's household, baptizing four brothers who were the cacique's relations. In the meantime, Magdalena came under seige by men of a hostile cacique (preumably Caonabo, whom Columbus' original "ally" from the first voyage. the cacique Guacanagari, blamed for the destruction of La Navidad).

Moreover, Pané says, Columbus, bemg concerned that the local langu age in the vicinity of Magdalena, Macorix, was not understood elsewhere on the island, wished him to "go to live with another principal cacique named Guarionex, a lord over many vassals, as his language was understood throughout the country. Pané says he at first demurred because "the only language I know is that of Macorix," but Columbus allowed him to select an Indian companion who knew "both languages. . . . And God was pleased to give me for my companion the best of all the Indians, and the best instructed in the Holy Catholic Faith; afterwards He took him from me: Praised be God who gave him to me and then took him away. Truly I looked upon him as my own good son and brother" (Pané/Colon 166; some critics have taken a comment by Las Casas in the *Apologetic History* (chap. cxx) to mean that Pané never did learn the dominant

language of the island, but the full passage says that Pané knew Macorix "*no perfectamente, y de la universal supo no mucho, como los demás, aunque mas que otros*" [cited in Arrom 1974: 10. italics his, and full excerpt on 105]).

Thus Pané reports going to the region near the fortress of La Concepcion in the cacicazgo of Guarionex (see map 4 and figs. 2 and 6) and "We stayed with the cacique Guarionex almost two years" (166) -- which would bring us to sometime in 1496. Now some scholars have rather carelessly dated Pané's treatise to 1496 (see the excellent discussion in Ramos 420), perhaps under the presumption that Columbus returned with it to Spain in June 1496, because Peter Martyr in his Letter to Leto dated 13 June 1497 refers to information supplied by "*Remonus quida heremitanus ivt vulg inquit*" (Anghierra Opera 383; see Ramos 422). And yet, as further reading of the text shows, the text as we have it must date from 1498, for Pané goes on to explain how Guarionex, at first receptive, grew hostile; other elites

> scolded him for obeying the Christians. They said the Christians were cruel and had taken their lands away by force; therefore they advised him to pay no heed to the Christians; instead they should take counsel together how they might best kill the Christians. since these were insatiable and there was no way of placating them. So he gave up his good ways [here we may be tempted to intervene and acquiesce with Las Casas in his estimation of Pané's simple-mindedness, or his "colonialist discourse," if you prefer] and we, seeing that he was drawing away from us and abandoning our teachings, decided to go wheren we might have more success in indoctrinating the Indians in our holy faith. (Pané/Colon 166-67)

Hence Pané departs for yet another cacicazgo, of one Maviatue, about whom, at the end of his treatise, he is able to say, "for three years now [he] has continued to be a good Christian," implying that these words were written in 1498, as Arrom indeed concludes (Arrom 1974: 6). Arrom tries to solve the dilemma his creates by suggesting that Peter Martyr did not in fact have in hand Pané's book in 1497, but only Columbus' oral account of Pané's researches; that Columbus could not have brought the book to Europe until his return from his third voyage, in the Fall of 1500. But as Ramos notes, this is not really persuasive

(because Peter" Martyr's use of Pané is too closely verbal to be based on anything but a manuscript), nor necessary, if we hypothesize instead that it was Peralonso Nino who brought the first part of Pané's treatise, the ethnographic "*Relacion*" proper, to Europe with him in October 1496, in time for Peter Martyr to have consulted it by June of 1497 and eventually incorporate it as chapters 4-7 of the ninth book of the *First Decade*, printed in an Italian translation in 1504, and the Latin text in Seville in 1511 (Arrom 1974:11).

Thus, in Ramos' thesis, the second part of Pané's tract, the personal evangelistic experiences recorded in the section beginning "*Lo que yo he visto*" l"Now I shall tell what I have seen and experienced" [Pané/Colon 165]) -- which Peter Martyr did not allude to in any case -- would have been attached at a later time (Ramos 424-25). Subsequently, Las Casas saw a complete MS in Spain and incorporated it in chapters 120. 166 and 167 of his *Apologetic History of the Indies* (reprinted from holograph MS Coleccion Munoz A-73 [Real Academia de la Historia]. in Arrom 1974: 102-117) . But the full Pané text apparently survived intact only in Hernando Colon's biography of his father, which remained unedited at his death in 1539, eventually seeing the light of day in Ulloa's Italian translation of 1571.

But, finally, it is the content of the ethnographic section of Pané's treatise which is of paramount interest, especially in relation to other early historiography and "colonial discourse" such as Columbus' own comments, and those of Dr. Chanca, Michele de Cuneo, Syllacio, Oviedo y Valdes, and, of course, Las Casas and Peter Martyr, on the native peoples of the New World. What is striking about each of these, except for Las Casas. is the overwhelmingly colonialist "locus of enunciation" of their comments on the New World inhabitants. Oviedo in effect treats the Indians as an aspect of natural history; he is good at describing such things as physical body type (13, 23), fishing and trapping methods (29), house types and methods of making *chicha* or "wine" (39) and the structure of hammocks (42), but as persons they are invisible -- for instance. in describing the pearl fishers. he emphasizes their methods and skill, and then it occurs to him to ask "some of the masters for whom the Indians work if the pearls became

exhausted from working such a small spot" (17) -- whereas Las Casas famously railed over the exhaustion of the pearl fishers (*Devastation* 99-100)! Another interesting and revealing colonialist comment is Oviedo's remark that "Since I have said they have no alphabet, before I forget it I should say just how frightened they are at ours.... often the stupidest of these Indians believe that these letters are living things" (38 -- a dramatic instance of Purchas' famous "literal advantage"; see Greenblatt 9); but perhaps the grossest of his observations is his matter-of-fact observation that "I also happened to think of something that I have observed many times with regard to these Indians. Their skulls are four times thicker than those of the Christians. And so when one wages war with them and comes to hand to hand fighting, one must be very careful not to hit them on the head with the sword, because I have seen many swords broken in this fashion" (43).

For Peter Martyr the constant note struck seems to be that the Indians re the object of the rather disdainful curiosity of an exalted humanist whose role is to record, comment, judge and suggest interesting comparisons out of classical learning -- rather in a mode that should be recognizable to the academic community. In his use of Pané, for instance, when he is not simply following his source, he sorts ("leaving out," he says, "some questions of small importance" [1671J and smoothes out the more incoherent-seeming details that Pané was willing to let stand as he received them , and when he cannot do that he intervenes with an aside about their "singular beliefs" and "superstitions"(168).

The Taino myths of human origins and transformations particularly strike the humanist's attention. (In good Victorian fashion translator MacNutt chastely leaves the origin of women story in Latin, explaining that it "does not lend itself to admissable translation" [Anghiera/MacNutt 169). a squeamishness not shared by his Elizbethan predecessor Richard Eden, who does. however. offer a marginal gloss on the incident of how androgynous eel-like beings are turned into women by woodpeckers who "opened the womens priuities" with the comment,

"Here nedeth sum tropologicall interpretour'· [Anghiera/Eden 100]. Indeed. These freewheeling origin myths cause Peter Martyr to exclaim, now "I cease to marvel, since it is written in many volumes of veracious Greek history that the Myrmidons were generated by ants. Such are some of the many legends which pretended sages expound with calm and unmoved visage from pulpits and tribunals to a stupid gaping crowd" (169). And the Taino "fable" of the origin of the sea is "yet more chyldysshe" (Anghiera/Eden, 100: here MacNutt silently emends to "more serious" [170] and Bourne. in his excerpt based on Eden [342], brackets,"[rather, more sober]." both modern editors apparently concurring that nothing could be more outlandish than the women and woodpecker story).

In his comparativist mode, Peter Martyr compares the fundamental Taino concept of *zemis* to the ancient belief "that the dryads, hamadryads, satyrs, pans, nereids, watched over the fountains, forests, and seas, attributing to each force in nature a presiding deity" (174), while Pané's account of caciques consulting their *zemis* through a ritual of snuffing hallucinogenic powder puts Peter Martyr in mind of "the spirit of Apollo which inspired the fury of the Sibyls. You thought that the ancient superstition had perished, but you see that such is not the case" (ibid.). Peter Martyr frames his rendition of Pané with the introductory remark that "These things are only the fancies of the islanders; nevertheless, though fanciful, they are more interesting than thetrue histories of Lucian *for they really do exist in the form of beliefs*, while the histories were invented as a pastime; one may smile at those who believe them" (166 -- a rather post-modern reflection; emphasis mine), and with the concluding comment, after recounting a native prophecy that their culture was destined to be overthrown by "a race of men wearing clothes," that "in this they were not wrong, for they are all under the domination of the Christians, and those who resisted have been killed: all the zemes having been removed to Spain, to teach us the foolishness of those images and the deceits of devils, nothing remaining of them but a memory" (176).

It is interesting, finally, to look at Columbus' own rhetoric in his use of the Pané material as given in chapter 62 of Fernando Colon's biography. Speaking of how the Spaniards learned a great deal about the natural resources of the Indies from the natives, Hernando goes on to say, "Our people learned many other things having to do with their customs that seem worthy of being told in this history. Beginning with their religion, I shall cite here the Admiral's own words. . . . " (Colon, 151). What follows is a passage of some eight hundred words presumably offering those observations that most struck Columbus (at least as far as we can tell according to Hernando's editing) either from his own observations or from Pané's report. for the passage ends with the remark, "All this is more fully told in the following account by Fray Ramon, who knew their language and was charged by me to set down all their rites and antiquities" (*Ibid*. 153).

Columbus' observations fall into two sections. The second of these, about one-third of the whole, is devoted to a summary of burial practices and the belief that the dead go to a valley of ancestors where they "have wives, and enjoy pleasures and comforts." Interestingly, he says that this information came chiefly from Caonabo, "who was the principal king of the island of Espanola; he is a man of mature age, very knowledgeable and sharp-witted." This is curious, indeed, insofar as Columbus had referred to Caonabo in his Memorial to the Soverigns (April 1493) regarding plans for the second voyage as a cacique "very evil and much more daring," and a threat to prospecting for gold in the Cibao (Columbus/Jane 80). Subsequently, during the second voyage, Caonabo was blamed for the decimation of La Navidad and was eventually captured, (not by conquest as Fernando reports [148-49]. but by a ruse of Alonso de Ojeda. as recounted by Las Casas [*Historv of the Indies*_1.102 -- translated in Tyler, 162-6]) and died en route to Spain as a captive (see Sauer 84-871.

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The Memorial. incidentally, had gone on to explain that Columbus "now sent with these ships some of the cannibals, men arid women and boys and girls" so that these "slaves" might be cared for and educated. eventually to serve as interpreters and especially that "they may one day be led to abandon that inhuman custom which they have of eating men... and more readily receive baptism and secure the welfare of their souls" He goes on to suggest quite specifically that the material needs of the new colony might well be paid for "in slaves, from among these cannibals, a people very savage and suitable for the purpose" (Columbus/Jane 88, 92 -- passages Samuel Eliot Morison saw fit to omit from his collection of documents [see 199-202]). As Hulme has analyzed persuasively and at length, the peaceful Arawak/man-eating Carib (i.e., cannibal) was a fundamental dichotomy of colonialist discourse, one brought to the New World encounter and not grounded in actual evidence (see Hulme. chaps. 1 and 2).

But to return to Columbus' later comments introducing Pané. The first two-thirds of the passage deal, appropriately, with that distinctive feature of Antillean religion, the *zemis*, a name today understood to designate both a deity and the artifact representing that deity (somewhat analogous to a Hopi kachina). but which Columbus speaks of exclusively with reference to the artifacts themselves, which he describes as the objects of family and village pride so that "what is even more laughable, they have the custom of stealing each other's *cemies*" (Colon 151). He goes on to detail a story about a talking zemi which the Spaniards exposed as the ruse of a cacique who spoke through the zemi by means of a hollow tube, and who, like the Wizard of Oz, begged not to be exposed "because it was by means of that deception that he kept them in obedience to him....We may therefore," Columbus concludes, "say that there is a semblance of idolatry among them, at least among those who are not aware of the deception practiced by their caciques" (152. emphasis mine). "A semblance of idolatry" is an interesting construction, and its pointedness is highlighted by the fact that Columbus begins this account of the zemis with the curious declaration, "1 found neither idolatry nor any other religion among them" (151) -- a comment to which we shall return.

The other Spanish witnesses from the second voyage represent rather more simplistic portrayals along the spectrum of Indian representations. At the heart of the depictions in Cuneo and Syllacio, as Morison notes, is the fundamental distinction "between Caribs and Arawaks or Tainos, whom alone they call Indians" (221, n. 5) -- a polarity not recognized by modern ethnographers, although the accepted ethnographic names "Taino" and "Island Carib" (who, like the Taino, were Arawakan, and not Carib speakers) ironically perpetuates the colonialist polarization. ("Taino" is not what any natives called themselves, but rather the name given them from their word for "good" [see, e.g. Chanca. in Columbus/Jane 28: Rouse 1992: SJ.)

Cuneo's portrait is particularly gross, beginning, "As I have told about the nature and variety of the brute beasts, it now remains to tell something about the people," and after discussing their ancestor-"idols" or "Seyti"s, he notes that "said Caribs and Indians. apart from that idol, do not worship anything else nor do they sacrifice in any way to that idol. nor do they know god or devil; they live like proper beasts" (Morison 219-20). He goes on to focus on how Caribs catch and eat Indians, "And should they not do that, those Indians would multiply in such a way that they would cover the earth. That happens because as soon as they are of procreating age they procreate, respecting only their sisters: all the rest are common" (219). And yet a page later he comments that the natives are "cold-blooded people, not too lustful, which may come from the fact that they eat poorly. According to what we have seen in all the islands where we have been, both the Indians and the Caribs are largely sodomites,.... [and] that this accursed vice may have come to the Indians from those Caribs; because these, as I said before, are wilder men" (220). It would be hard to find a more perfect paradigm of racist discourse, and it is made complete by Cuneo's personal anecdote of how he "captured a very beautiful Carib woman," tried to have his way with her and finally overcame her fierce resistance by thrashing her with a rope: "Finally we came to an agreement in such manner that I can tell you that she seemed to have been brought up in a school of harlots" (212).

The better-known account of Dr. Chanca is tame by comparison, but at the heart of it is the same fundamental distinction between "good" (i.e., Taino) Indians

and "bad" (i.e.. Carib) Indians, "who eat hu man flesh" (Jane 26) and carry off the "good" Indians' women and eat their children (32J. Again, as Hulme argues (chap. 2), it is impossible to reconstruct what the actual pre- contact relationships might have been between the "Classic Taino" *cacigazgo*s of the greater Antilles and the other ethnic groups of the Caribbean. including the "Island Caribs" (who actually spoke an Arawakan, not a Carib language, although the Island Carib men did use a pidgen Carib among themselves (see Rouse 1992: 21-22).

In contrast to these other "eyewitnesses" and notably in contrast to the use made of his treatise by Columbus and Peter Martyr (only Las Casas. of course, presents it in a fundamentally sympathetic way). Pané gives us his ethnography relatively "straight." To begin with, the whole missionary discourse embedded in his personal narrative is. as noted above. composed as virtually a separate "Part I1," thereby, as Sahagún was to do in Mexico in his *General History of the Things of New Spain* (The Florentine Codex), demarcating a fairly strict separation between his "field notes" and his personal story and observations. (Of course, such a demarcation is never wholly possible, as recent scholarship on Sahagún, and on modern ethnography as well. has amply demonstrated [see essays on Sahagún in Klor de Alva and on modern ethnography in Stocking and m Clifford and Marcus].)

In the ethnographic section. which extends from chaps 1 through the beginning of chapter 25, Pané presents information as he received it on four inter-related subjects: origin myths (1-11); beliefs about the dead (12-13); practices of the "*Bohuti*" or shamans 0.4-19); and the panoply of zemis (19-25). As noted earlier, the really remarkable thing about this material is how closely it illustrates and how usefully it illuminates what we now know from archeological evidence and artifacts about Antillean culture, and how well it correlates with what we independently know about Arawakan culture and Amerindian shamanism generally. Las Casas noted that Pané was a "simple- minded" man, and perhaps this simple-mindedness is his strength as an ethnographer. At the outset, he tells us, "I write only of the Indians of the island of Espanola, for I know nothing about the other

islands and have never seen them," and then in introducing the section on mythology, where Columbus spoke of "fictions" and Peter Martyr of childish fables, Pané says simply: "These Indians... know whence they came and where the sun and moon had their beginning, and how the sea was made, and of the place to which the dead go" (153).

These myths of emergence and transformation, as Pané tells them, are bewildering on a first reading, first, because of the \\'elter of garbled Taino words and names (compounded of course by the fact that we have this in Ulloa's Italian translation. but with Peter Martyr and Las Casas. who used the Spanish original, to collate with it, as Arrom has admirably done in his edition), and secondly, because Pané evidently had trouble following some of the stories and lacked, of course, modern knowledge of other Amerindian mythologies. which makes it easier for us now. frankly. to understand the mateial he so doggedly and faithfully collected, so often without the reward of comprehension.

Thus. in telling the story of how primordial men and women came to be separated (a motif found in other Amerindian traditions. such as the Navajo <u>*Dine Bahane*</u>) when one man in a pique of anger carried off all the women and children from Hispaniola. or *Bohio,* Pané becomes frustrated with a confusion of subsidiary names and details and comments exasperatedly, "As these Indians have no alphabet or writing, they cannot give a coherent account of these matters. but thev have them from their forebears. Therefore their accounts do not agree, not [*sld* is it possible to write down in an orderly fashion what they say" (Pane/Colon 154). and then again, further along, he repeats, "As the Indians have no alphabet or writing, they do not tell their myths well, nor can I write them down accur-ately, and I fear that I am telling last things first and first things last; but I put it down just as I had it from the natives of the country" (155) -- and. of course, it is our gain that he attempted to do so according to his lights.

He does not shrink from telling the subsequent story of how the men. now bereft of women, resorted to the device of using woodpeckers to transform some slithery androgynous creatures found falling from trees into women; after these slippery creatures were caught by men whose hands were sufficiently scabby and rough from a certain sickness. "Then seizing those women without male of female genitals, they bound their hands and feet, and tied tlat bird to the body of each. The bird, thinking they were trees, began his accustomed work, pecking and hollowing out the place where women's genitals are wont to be" *(*156; Peter Manvr's rendition, incidentally, is actually more lurid: the men "hould fast the womens thighes abrode with their rowgh handes" [Anghiera/Eden, 100)). A modern commentator might interrogate the sexism of the myth (and make interesting comparisons with comparable Dogon or Australian Aborigine gender renditions [see Griaule, and Cowan, respectively), but Pané's exasperated authorial intervention here relates only to cogency: "As I wrote in haste and had not enough paper, I could not put everything where it belonged. yet I have made no mistake, for they believe everything that is written here" (156). Pané continues: "Turning now to what l should have related first. I shall tell their beliefs concerning the origin of the sea." As in the story of human origins, here again it is a matter of emergence out of a cave. a motif now so familiar from modern recountings of traditional mythologies from South America, Mesoamerica and the Southwestern United States.

On the subject of the dead, Pané gives us our earliest account of a Caribbean belief in the zombie-like night-walking of the dead. of their fondness for the fruit of the guayaba and their succubus-like proclivity to have intercourse with the living, and of how they can be identified by their lack of a navel (157). On the subject of the shaman-like *bohutis,* Pané at last drops his "editorial restraint" and condemns these "deceptions I have seen with my own eyes" (158) -- possibly the "talking *zemi*" ridiculed by Columbus, although he does not regale us with any actual specifics. Or possibly he means the curing

practices of the *bohitos* detailed in chapters 15 and 16. This lengthy account of a *bohito's or* shaman's healing methods. including his preparation by painting his body and taking a purgative, and then the business of hiding a stone or bit of food in his own mouth, an object which is then ritually sucked ·out of" the patient -- all this is of enormous · interest in relation to similar shamanic sucking-cures documented from Alaska to the Amazon (see Eliade). And rather than editorialize about the implicit "deception," Pané instead gives us this rather interesting gloss on homeopathic method: "This doctor must observe a diet just like [that of] his patient and must assume the suffering expression of a sick man" *(* 159).

An interesting addendum is a chapter on how the culture kept its shamans "honest" (another motif which could be usefully explored in a widespread Amerindian context): relatives may seek to know if a patient died through a doctor's fault by practicing divination with the corpse and then, if the corpse reveals any malpractice, punishing the shaman by pulverizing him. And if, by chance, the shaman should be miraculously healed by snakes. and appear again among the living, they can catch him a second time and "pluck out his eyes and smash· his testicles. for they say no amount of beating will kill one of these physicians if they do not first tear out his testicles" (161-62).

Among Pané's details about shamanic practice, his reference to the practice of snuffing up hallucinatory powder and of the shaman's or cacique's (the distinction among the Taino is unclear) entering trance "with bowed head and arms resting on his knees... then lifting his head to speak his vision, is of extraordinary interest in relation not only to the known artifacts or paraphernalia associated with this practice, such as the spatula for regurgitating, and the y-shaped *inhalador for* snuffing (see Maggiolo, plates 46-48; Garcia Arevalo, n.p.), but specifically in relation to that type of *zemi* figurine which shows just the posture Pané here describes and the top of whose head is precisely the flattened dish for the powder-snuffing (see Rouse 1992: 118, and fig. 29d).

Pané's descriptions of specific *zemis* are invaluable; Rouse notes ethnohistorians' interest in identification of "the deities portrayed by the figures, basing their conclusions primarily on Father Ramon Pané's report" (1992: 118). Indeed Arrom (1989) has supplied just such a systematic commentary on the *zemis*, and similar material can be found in Carra and Alegria. Among some of the most interesting identifications Arrom has made on the basis of Pané are dog-shaped zemis (Arrom 61-66 & fig. 40) portraying Opiyelguobiran. guardian of the dead (Pané xxii); *zemis* that show tears streaming down their cheeks, representing Boinavel, a rain god, images that Pané reports (Pané xi) are believed to perspire as a sign of rain (Arrom 37-45 & figs. 19-21); stylized female figurines with whirling arms (Arrom 46-51 & fig 28) that Arrom thinks represent Guabancex, spirit of the hurricane (Pané xxiii: "They say that when Guabancex is angry, she raises the winds and water, throws down houses, and tears up the trees" [Pané/Colon 164]); male phallic deities representing Baibrama (Pané xx), a god of cassava and of the healing of cassava-poisoning (Arrom 67-73 & figs. 43-48).

Moreover, Arrom has proposed (17-30; but contrast the interpretation of Hostos 108-24) that the omnipresent three- pointed stone *zemis*, which sometimes do and sometimes do not have zoomorphic or humanoid faces represent Yucaha. the supreme sky god, although Pané himself does not suggest this connec-tion between Yucaha and the three-pointers (Pané, prologue [Pané/Colon 153]). What Pané does say about- the "stones" is that "There are some that speak, others that cause food plants to grow, others that bring rain, and others that make the winds blow." adding, "These simple, ignorant people, who know not our holy faith believe that these idols or rather demons do all these things" (xv; Pané/Colon 159).

As we can see, for all his remarkable degree of "editorial restraint" in comparison with his contemporaries. Pané is not as editorially silent as Sahgún, and as we also can see he is no Las Casas. In the personal narrative that follows the ethnography, Pané reports how Guarionex turned against the

Christians, and how when Pané had left for another locale, leaving a small group of converts to guard a chapel with its Christian images. Guarionex's men martyred the converts and "threw the images to the ground, heaped earth on the m. and pissed on top, saying, 'Now will you yield good and abundant fruit'; they offered this insult because they had buried the images in a tilled field" (Pané /Colon 167l.

We might, incidentally, wonder whether to worshippers of Baibrama the cassava god this was, precisely, an insult or rather an appropriation of a new image for an old rite. but to Pané the meaning was clear, and so was the solution: "I speak with authority," he says, "for I have worn myself out in seeking to learn the truth about this matter": while for some natives, simple basic catechetical instruction is sufficient ("being taught that there was a God who made all things and created Heaven and earth"), "with others force and craft are necessary, for we are not all of the same nature.... Such require the use of force and punishment" (Pané/Colon 168).

So we will not find in Pané the counter-colonial discourse Merrim analyzes in Las Casas. But we can apply to a reading of Pané and Columbus a method of reading she applies to Columbus and Las Casas. Merrim has shown us how one and the same text, Las Casas' abstract of Columbus' Diario can best be read not as a series of Las Casian "interpolations" but rather as *both* selections from a text by Columbus and, in the selectivity and consequent highlighting process itself, a text of Las Casas. so that a given passage on the simplicity of the natives would likely have had one implication for Columbus (amenability and exploitability) and another for Las Casas (innocence and natural rights) at one and the same time (Merrim 157). This is an extremely useful suggestion that helps us read more than one enigmatic and seemingly contradictory comment in Columbus.

We alluded earlier to the fact that Columbus begins his own digest of Pané's information with the remark that "*I found no idolatry nor any other religion among them,*" but then goes on to detail how they demonstrate their "devotion and reverence" for *zemis*, "as we do in processions to the saints in time of need" and to tell the story of the fraudulent "speaking zemi" which leads him to conclude "that there is a semblance of idolatry among them, at least among those who are not aware of the deception practiced by their caciques" (Colon 151-52. emphasis mine).

This is a strange seeming contradiction, but it does not stand alone. Recall Columbus' first description of the natives. in the *Diario* entry for October 11/12, 1492, in which he makes his remarkable heuristic leap in communication: seeing marks or wounds on their bodies, "I made signs to them asking what they were; and they showed me how people from other islands nearby came there and tried to take them. and how they defended themselves; and I believed and believe that they come here from *tierra firma* to take them captive" (all that communication on the first day?! -- as Greenblatt reasonably asks [chap. 1]). This idea of captive-taking apparently leads Columbus to the following reflection: "They should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them: and I believe that they would become Christians very easily for it seemed to me that they had no religion (*Diario* 67-69, emphasis mine). And in the corresponding passage in the Letter of 1493. Columbus savs. "And they do not know any creed and are not idolators, only they all believe that power and good are in the heavens" (Columbus/Jane 8-10. 9-11, emphasis mine).

It is interesting that these three declarations that the islanders have "no religion or idolatry" have a formulaic quality about them. In fact, not only do they reflect Columbus' famous double-mindedness about the Indians, but they have a specific legal implication in the matter of slavery. It is not that "no religion" simply meant in a Eurocentric way, "no Christianity," for "no idolatry" is also specified. As Las Casas himself pointed out in commenting on this passage (Historia i.40) and as he elaborates throughout his apoloegetic writings (e.g., *In Defense of the Indians,* chaps. 6-8), natural "unbelievers" are not heretics and the use of force against them is illegitimate: the Church has no authority over those with "no religion."

Columbus quickly resolved his own dilemma by dividing Amerindians into "good" and "bad." "peaceful and "cannibal." with the latter, of course, eligible for enslavement. But Las Casas, without distorting the text of the *Diario*, highlights or "magic-markers" this "no religion" passage, so crucial to his argument against coercion and enslavement. Similarly, are not Columbus' apparentlv contradictory remarks about "no religion" in chapter 62 of Colon's biography, in which he presents his précis of Pané's *Relacion,* not only a reflection of his own continued double-minded ness, but also a reflection of the thinking of a predecessor of Las Cass, not nearly as counter-colonial, to be sure, but nonetheless one whose evangelical vision regarded Antillean "antiquities" (i.e., "rites" and "beliefs" and even "idolatry" -- but not ever called "religion") as misguided, but innocent and non-heretical, and the people themselves as ripe for conversion and even discipline, but not for enslavement -- namely Ramon Pané?

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