

THE JAMAICAN TAINO

FROM JAMAICA JOURNAL VOL. 25/2 1995

THE ABOUKIR ZEMIS

SYMBOLS OF TAINO PHILOSOPHY, MYSTICISM & RELIGION

George A Aarons

In the McKenzie District above Top Aboukir in St Ann, almost at the geographical centre of Jamaica, there is a small rock shelter, roughly eight feet high (2.5 m) with a floor of some 140 sq ft (13 sq m) filled in places to a depth of well over four feet (1.25 m) with bat guano, limestone dust and organic detritus.

At some time in the 1940s, an Aboukir resident, whose name is withheld here, removed from a flat rock in the southern section of this limestone pocket cave three carved wooden objects. Believing them capable of bestowing superior powers upon him, he took them to his home. However, it is said that the same night unseen hands threatened to strangle him. As a result, he returned the objects to the cave.

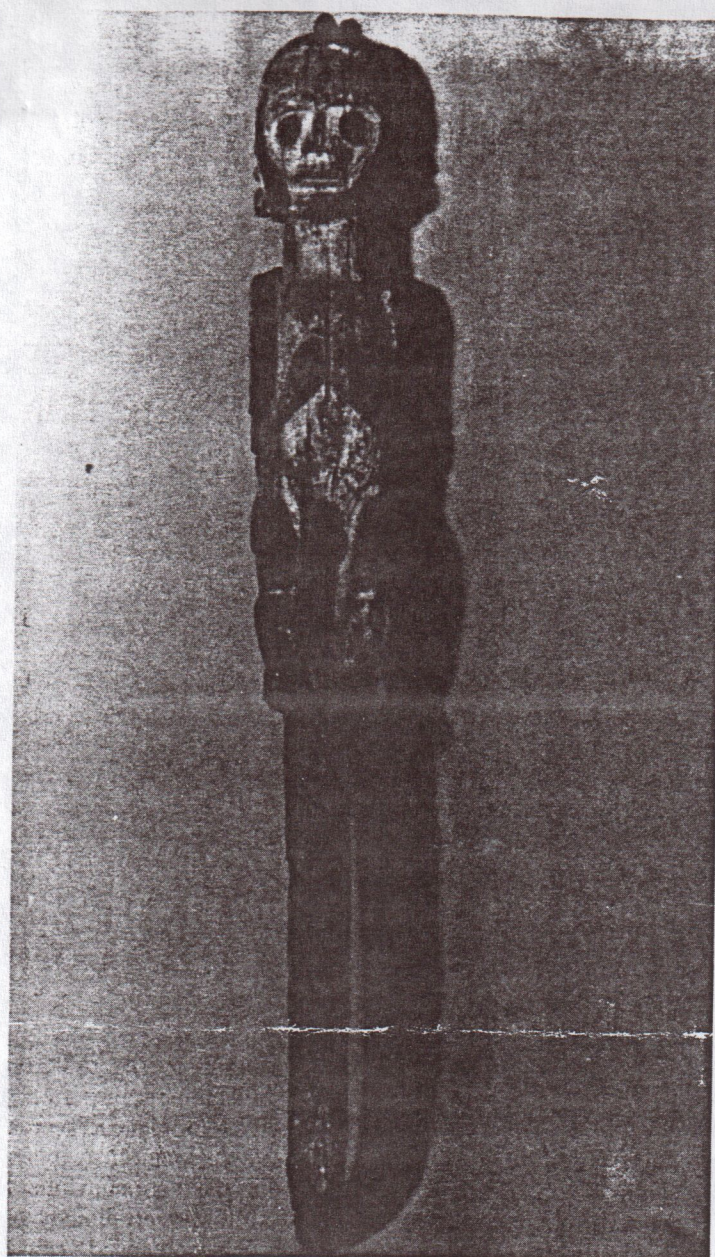
Some two decades later, another resident, Mr Leonard Clayton, heard the story and went to view the objects, which were still in the cave. In June 1972, with a friend, he returned to the cave and took the carved wooden pieces to his house. There he hid them under his bed for almost twenty years, awaiting a time when he believed the world would be ready to receive them. He fully realized their connections with the prehistoric Amerindian inhabitants of Jamaica and that they were of supreme magico-religious importance.

On June 12, 1992, at Mr Clayton's request, a Mr Neville Young of Aboukir contacted the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) about this find. A team led by Mr Dorrick Grey, then Acting Technical Director of Archaeology, was dispatched to Aboukir where between August 22 and 29 they examined the three objects and their provenance. After some discussion, Mr Clayton released the finds and led the JNHT team to the findspot. Two small test pits were dug in the middle of the cave and in front of the flat rock, producing rodent and lizard bones and quartz crystals. The flat rock was

found to be a small platform like a seat facing the cave entrance. The team arranged for the finds to be transported to the Port Royal Project Centre for Archaeological Research. There they received some superficial conservation treatment and in October 1992 were transferred to the National Gallery. Since then the carvings have been almost continuously on public display, most recently as the centrepiece of *Arawak Vibrations: Homage to the Jamaican Taino*, an exhibition marking the quincentennial of the first encounter between the Jamaican Tainos and Christopher Columbus. Mr Clayton later received an honorarium from the government on behalf of the nation for caring for the objects and for his generosity in bringing them to the attention of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

The three wooden carvings from Aboukir were given wide coverage outside Jamaica. They were featured on US television (CNN) in October 1992 and, in September 1993, an item in the 'Geographica' section of *National Geographic* quoted this writer and showed the largest of the carvings. My first knowledge of the find was from Professor Barry Higman of the History Department, University of the West Indies, while I was on a visit to Jamaica in December 1992. I first viewed the pieces in early January 1993. Discussions with Mr Ainsley Henriques, Chairman, JNHT, Dr Boxer and Mr Grey led to my subsequent study of them with the purpose of documenting and classifying the finds and preparing a soon-to-be-published monograph.

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Paragraph 3



Object A. Staff with carved male figure

Height: 150 cm

PARAMOUNT CACIQUE STAFF

The lower section of the staff, slightly less than half the length, is a tapered shaft with a rounded end. The upper section consists of a carved male figure. A small projection rises from the top of the head and possibly served as a mount for some finishing feature, e.g. a small cup or bowl. Below the curving hairline, what appears to be a helmet-like feature covers the brow, the cheeks and the jaw on each side as far as the protruding chin. It also protects the nose which has flared nostrils. The round, staring eye sockets (diameter 3.5 cm), the hollows at the ears (diam. 2 cm) and the elliptical mouth (max. diam. 7 cm), would all have held ornamental inlays. The neck is elongated and the shoulders hunched, the upper arms are held close to the torso and the forearms and hands laid at an angle across the upper body, the stylized 'spatula-shaped' hands without fingers in 'suppliant pose'. Below the lower abdomen, a stylized projection and vertical, incised circles represent the genitalia. The legs are held apart with emphasized calves and suggested knee and ankle joints and thighs. The feet are joined at the toes. Traces of white pigmentation viz. calcium carbonate (chalk) or soil paste on certain areas of carved figure and shaft.

PRAYEE

Wood: possibly mahogany (*Swietenia mahogani*)
Conservation condition: Vertical hairline exterior cracks and splits at 'hairline and helmet-like features', face, neck, chest, abdomen and stomach to genitalia and along staff.

State of preservation: Fair to good

YOCACUNA A

Maria LAYACONA

The Findspot

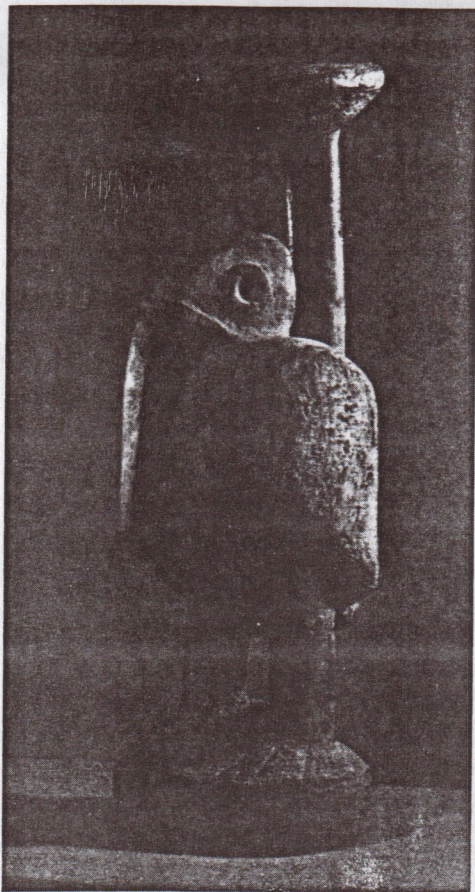
The exact original findspot and the orientation of the three pieces to one another and also to the cardinal points can never again be absolutely determined. That this is so is due to the events outlined above and the circumstances of their retrieval, replacement and second retrieval as recorded between the 1940s and 1972. It is conceivable that, even if the reconstruction made possible by the information provided by Mr Clayton and the first 'remover' were substantially correct, the cave described above might not be the original or primary depository of the objects. This uncertainty, therefore, limits the conclusions that can safely be drawn about the actual cave 'findspot' identified by Mr Clayton.

The three wooden carvings are undoubtedly attributable to the pre-Columbian Amerindian inhabitants of Jamaica, the Taino. There are many other precedents in Jamaica and elsewhere for the Taino placing important objects in caves and other hiding places for socio-cultural reasons as well as to

keep them safe from Columbus and his successors who deemed them idolatrous and their destruction an imperative. As has happened often before, these objects were not found as part of a professional stratigraphic archaeological field paradigm, thus severely depreciating the value of any locational data. It is hoped, however, that future planned stratigraphic excavations will be undertaken and will unearth undisturbed strata which may contain data related to the objects so as to address adequately the primary location issue.

Chronology

Absolute dating tests and detailed ethnobotanical analysis of the Aboukir finds have not yet been conducted although minute wood samples accidentally split off the carvings during their removals have been collected for the purpose. A relative dating can be assigned by association with similar dated objects, the assumption being, as seems likely, that they are coeval. They are undoubtedly neither modern creations



Jacqueline Gamble

PELICAN

Object B. Avian figure
Height: 63 cm

The standing avian figure is surmounted by a platform, semi-oval in shape, supported by a vertical, 'limb-like' shape which rises from the back of the figure between the folded wings. This support curves into the convex base of the surmounting platform. The slightly peaked head has 'staring eye' orbits and a 'beak ring'; the closed beak rests lightly against the bird's breast. The bird stands erect, supported by two sturdy 'legs', on a curved base which repeats the curve of the underside of the surmounting platform. Carved detail is on the two halves of the beak, the recessed eye orbits, the wings and on the under-belly below the breast. There is no trace of pigmentation on this object.

Wood: possibly Lignum Vitae (*Guaiacum Officinale*)

Conservation condition: No significant cracks or splits noted

State of preservation: Good

YOCATHUNA
ATABEYRA
GUACA



Jacqueline Gamble

OPUYER GUABIRAN
MAQUETARI GUYABA

Object C. Spoon or scoop
Height: 14 cm

The slightly elongated head which forms the 'handle' of the scoop or spoon has recessed eye sockets possibly intended to hold inlays, which are missing, a pronounced, slightly tapered nose under a 'pointed' brow, a 'glimming' elliptical mouth cavity, also recessed for possible inlays. On either side and just above the level of the mouth, where the ear lobes would be, are sockets for possible inlays. Slight indentations under both eyes emphasize the high cheekbones. Below the head, the 'neck' curves out into a petal-shaped spoon-like form slightly recessed near the base. There is no trace of pigmentation on this object but there is evidence of external polishing/burnishing, especially on the upper obverse of the 'spoon'.

Wood: possibly ebony viz *Brya ebenus* ;
Leguminosae (Faboidae) or *Ebenaceae*
possibly *Lonchocarpus patens*

Urb., *Sophora Saxicola* Proctor

Conservation condition: There has been some loss of mass from the upper head region as well as on the lower part of the 'spoon' and the lower part of the left ear socket; there are a few hairline cracks and splits on the lower front obverse of the 'spoon'

State of preservation: Fair to good

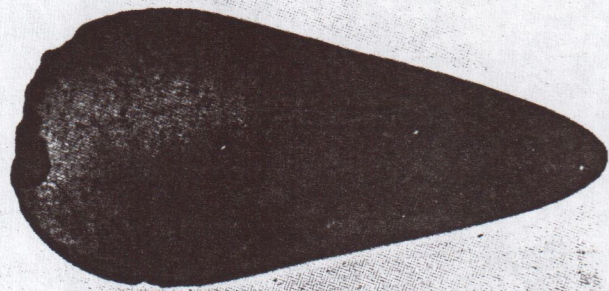
nor modern fakes. Based on their condition, the condition of the carving and the condition of the wood itself together with the absolute authenticity of the figures depicted, these pieces can be identified as genuine Taino products.

Jamaica's past can be divided into four basic periods: prehistoric, proto-historic, early historic and later historic. The craftsmanship displayed in the objects and its non-European and non-African attributes suggests a time prior to the 'early-historic' period. Jamaican artifacts which can be dated as belonging to the 'early historic' period of a non-Hispanic nature represent either a 'debased' Taino tradition or an 'acculturated' Taino tradition with clear Hispanic and African influences. This can be seen most obviously in the ceramic assemblages and in examples from New Seville (Sevilla la Nueva), White Marl and elsewhere. The three carvings therefore are attributable to the pre-Columbian Taino prehistoric period and Taino origins, specifically to the premier tradition of Taino craftsmanship associated with the Redware and 'earlier' White Marl style ceramic complexes, dateable to c.600 AD -1000 AD, rather than to ceramic complexes of the 'later' White Marl and Fairfield styles, dateable to c.1000 AD-1600 AD. The Redware and earlier White Marl styles are characterized by a higher technical, technological and artistic achievement, particularly in the ceramic assemblages. A preliminary date of c.1000 AD is offered for the probable chronological context of the Aboukir carvings.

Caves and cultural remains

The use of caves by the Jamaican and Caribbean Taino as multi-purpose depositories has been recorded from the sixteenth century to the present time for burials, for petroglyph sculptures and pictograph murals, all with corollary mystical and religious connotations. Caves were also used by the Taino as sacrosanct shrines and sanctuaries wherein were placed 'images' of supreme magico-religious, iconographic, socio-cultural and socio-political significance accessed only by the nitaino, 'the noble ones', specifically the caçiques (chiefs) and the boyez/bohuti (the shamens).

Within Caribbean Taino material culture assemblages of art and craft objects of various dimensions in bone, clay, stone, ivory, wood, shell, guannin and doré gold (mined gold and river gold) and other materials, can be found sculptures and carvings of heads, figures and shapes in anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or zoological form depicting the principal and minor deities of the Taino pantheon. Such images are termed generally *zemis*. These simple or complex objects are often combined with a more secular use, can be free-standing or pendant for use and display, individually or as part of an object arrangement. They include 'stone collars', ceramic containers such as 'boat-shaped' vessels decorated with *adornos*, (clay sculptured images), greenstone petaloid celts, wooden *duhos* (ceremonial seats) and stone *metates* (elaborate grain-kneading platforms). There are also spears and spearheads of wood, stone, shell and bone; darts, throwing-sticks and stone axes; wooden canoes and oars; wooden bowls, wooden fire drills; bone, stone, shell, wooden, coral and other beads; gold jewellery; organic fibre containers, baskets of various types, calabash gourds; three-pointed stones, anthropomorphic/zoomorphic/zoological statues in multimedia; ceramic cloth-marking stamps and seals, shell masks and stone, bone, and wooden vomiting spatulae and other objects.



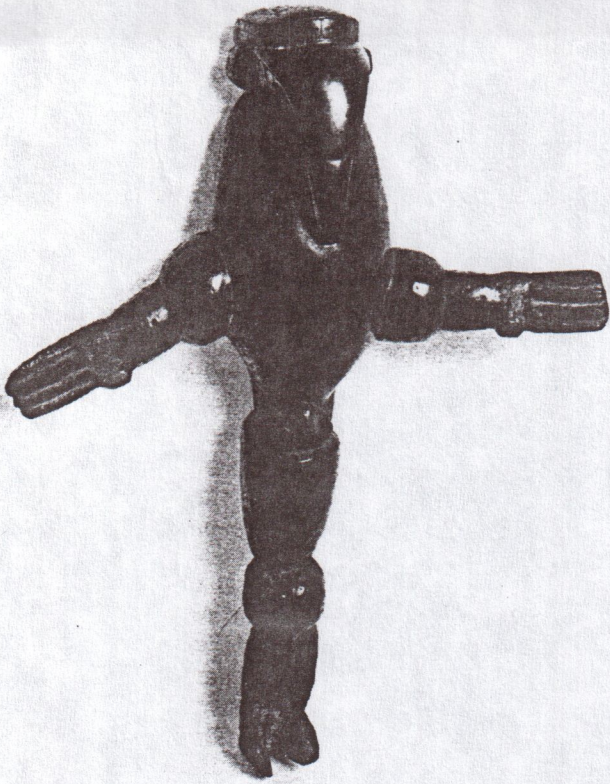
A polished greenstone petaloid celt - a common Taino tool

Historiography

The earliest published probable depiction of a carved Jamaican Taino wooden image is shown in a cartouche on the 1752 AD West Indian map of Captain John Henry Schroeter. Around the border of the plan are illustrations of *zemis*, at least two of which are wooden, described as 'characteristic of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Antilles'. One of these two has a 'helmeted head' on a tapered wooden cylinder, all carved out of one piece, resembling Object A. The exact provenance of this cartouche remains obscure but Schroeter served as a captain of the garrison at Fort Balisartes, Trelawny, and could have observed such objects there. The cartouche also bears similarities to the earliest, unequivocally Jamaican Taino cave-provenanced wooden *zemis*, described below, found about the time of the publication of the plan.

Still not fully provenanced, two wooden *zemis* were found some time before May 25, 1757 AD, on 'a large Jamaican estate, near the entrance of a deep cave'. One was presented on that date to the British Museum by James Theobald who described it as having been found by a friend 'some years ago'. This *zemi* may be the same as a small wooden carving (39.5 cm high) now at the British Museum depicting a pelican and snake entwined at the mouth under a cohoba bowl. *Cohoba* is the Arawak word for tobacco, particularly in its powdered form as snuff. In the *cohoba* ceremony, the powdered tobacco in the *cohoba* bowl was lit and the participants drew the smoke up through a forked nose pipe called a tabaco. This was the word the early Spanish colonizers mistakenly applied to what we now know as tobacco. The second *zemi* may be that housed at the Museum of Primitive Art in New York and later at the Rockefeller Foundation, Washington DC. It has been given a Jamaican provenance, and has a grotesque, staring visage and male torso. This figure holds a *cohoba* bowl. Irving Rouse and José Arrom have described this *zemi* as depicting the Taino deity *Baidrama*. Both objects are believed to be of mahogany.

Three more wooden carvings were found by a land surveyor in June, 1792, in a natural dry cave near the peak of high hill called 'Spots' in the Carpenter's Mountains of the



The Taino Bird Man (height 88.8 cm) found in the Carpenter's Mountains in 1792 and now in the British Museum.

Courtesy British Museum



The 'weeping figure' with canopy (height 37.5 cm) also part of the Carpenter's Mountain find.

Anna Henriques

old Vere parish, southern Manchester. They were facing the east, towards the rising sun and Hiccupaniola. On April 11, 1799, they were presented to the British Museum, where they remain today. The three wooden carvings in this find consisted of a male figure with a weeping face and outstretched legs, a human torso and the arms bent at the sides across the lower body; an anthropomorphic figure with an avian head and the arms and legs outstretched from a human body (88.8 cm), the so-called 'Bird Man'; and a 'grotesque-faced weeping figure' with a flattened canopy above the head, joined hands and stylized feet (37.5 cm).

In July 1939, the government of Jamaica submitted a request for the repatriation of these pieces, discovered in 1792. In response, the Trustees of the British Museum presented Jamaica with plaster casts of the male figure and the Bird Man and, in error, a cast of 'the 1757 pelican and snake carving'. All three have been on display at the White Marl Arawak Museum since it opened in 1966.

Since the 1960s an attempt has been made to rediscover the 'high hill' once known as Spots. In 1965 a cavern in the Carpenter's Mountains known locally as the 'Image Cave' yielded to Dr James W. Lee, then President of the Archaeological Society of Jamaica, no wooden carvings, pictographs or petroglyphs but a wooden spindle or loom weight, the sole example in Caribbean Taino collections. This discovery proved that the Taino at least made use of the Image Cave. The cave is located within a twenty-mile radius of the Redware Ceramic Site Complex at Alligator Pond and the Aboukir Cave findspot itself. The Spots finds, like the Aboukir pieces, were very exceptionally found all in one place and, in the context of the Caribbean Taino, represent a

unique combination of images, among the finest achievements known of Taino Art.

A ninth Jamaican Taino wooden carving was reportedly located within the same decade as the Aboukir find in a shallow cave immediately in front of the present New Seville Great House gate, St Ann. I was told in March, 1991, that in the 1940s a child at play fell into this cave and came out holding a small wooden figure about twelve inches high, apparently made of lignum vitae and with a 'hideous doll-face'. It was eventually mislaid in the overseer's house at Seville. I had heard this story earlier from Captain Charles Cotter in 1975 and I do not doubt its veracity. The object has not been seen for some fifty years but it appears to have been similar to the known pieces. It too was found in a cave, also within a twenty-mile radius of Aboukir, near to the large Taino site of Maima which featured prominently in Jamaica's proto-historic period.

Thus, prior to the Aboukir find, six Taino carved wooden objects had been discovered in Jamaica in three separate caves with heights varying from one to three feet. They contain anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or zoological images similar enough and with sufficient parallels to each other to be deemed to relate to one culture, the Taino Nation. The 'Aboukir' objects are similarly linked to these six and extend the height range from six inches to five feet six inches.

The Pantheon

The Jamaican (Caribbean) Taino were pantheists whose mythology and religion included vibrant magico-religious forces founded upon four principal deities and a number of minor spirits, all of which were represented and incarnated in

CEREMONIES

human or semi-human form materially as zemis made of or depicted on wood or stone. Animistic in manifestation, the foundation was based on ancestral and creation stories to explain human and elemental origins. The stories provided a conduit to the deities for appeals and blessings, enabling the individual to achieve a utopian afterlife.

The primary male deity was god of the heavens, the elements, the skies, volcanoes, thunder, lightning, storms and hurricanes, which word is itself derived from the Arawak 'Huracan', an alternative named for this deity. His counterpart was the female earth goddess, his mother and sometimes consort who controlled fertility, agriculture, flora and fauna, valleys and bodies of water. The third deity was the guardian who led the dead Taino to their heaven, Coyoba, in the islands to the south. His counterpart, also male, was a kind of benevolent uncle and father benefactor, uncle and brother-in-law of the first deity and brother of the second who mysteriously watched over the living Taino and could dispense intercessions and blessings. Other important deities evolved from the ancestral and creation stories with specific names and powers. The pantheon was completed by the one to ten zemis manifested in all living things and who could be contacted by depiction. These depictions themselves were transformed into zemis and could provide replacements for the flora and fauna consumed as food.

Associated with religious duties and their observance were ceremonies and rituals, incorporating areitos (songs and dances in established forms), customs and traditions relative to various illnesses, famine, drought, prosperity, death, interment, the seasons, lunar and solar cycles etc. and intended to express supplication or gratification. These included the various forms of the cohoba ceremony. The content of the rituals was related to the purpose and all were conducted at carefully prescribed venues such as the zemi bohio, the abode of the bohui/boyez, the cacique's bohio, the dwelling of the 'god-king/queen' who also functioned as principal shaman. Other venues were particular natural places such as blue or ocean holes on land and under water and marked boulders or caves, wet or dry, specially associated with the principal female deity. Within these natural sites, and oriented usually towards the rising sun, the principal male deity and the ancestral home, could be placed any of an assemblage of sacred objects including duhos, the bodies of the nitaino, pictographs, petroglyphs, canoes and oars, and carved anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and zoological zemis representing the principal and minor deities.

The paramount ritual, the cohoba ceremony, would take place in a venue with preparations, accoutrements and participants appropriate to the significance of the occasion. The cacique and bohui/boyez, the principals, would abstain from food and other bodily pleasures for days beforehand. Adorning themselves in full regalia, including feathered headdresses, capes and jewellery, with bodies intricately painted primarily in red, black and white patterns, they would use vomiting spatulae to void their stomachs. Entering the ceremonial area, they would place the cohoba in the form of snuff in a receptacle raised above a zemi, and having lit it, amidst appropriate areitos, would draw the smoke up their nostrils directly to the brain using a tabaco, the forked nose pipe. Hallucinogenic trances were thus induced during the ceremony which could take hours. Communication with the deities could ensue, often resulting in prophecy.

Iconography

Each of the principal deities had a number of names and name combinations, as well as associated sub-deities, relative to aspects of their powers. These names have been preserved for us largely through writings in European languages, and especially English and Spanish, so the orthographies used here are derived from those early works. The principal male deity was Yocahuna, usually shown with (at least stylized) male genitalia, with (at least partially) outstretched legs, with arms akimbo or laid to the sides or flat across the mid-torso, often with some kind of headdress, often adorned with some clothing and jewellery, with exaggerated eye sockets and mouths designed for insets to seal these body openings, and sometimes also with pigmentation. The figure of Yocahuna could be used to dignify a composite utilitarian piece, such as Object A, a staff of office, or a vomiting spatula, a stone collar or a belt. The image could also consist of a head alone, head and torso or full body, forming more than one image on the sides of the 'prayer-stones' or 'three-pointed stones'. Alternate names include Marcoti, Yobanua-Borna, Huracan and Baidrama.

Sometimes Yocahuna lived in Giovovava, the cave of human creation, in which he at times imprisoned himself. Yocahuna's main helpers were Guabanex, manipulator of wind and water, a seducer, represented by a cotton zemi; Boiniael, a rain and wind god, representing the sun, a son of the master of water, kept in a cave at Tomboyna from which the sun and moon had emerged, and Maroio also a rain and wind god, representing the moon and also a son of the master of water.

The paramount female deity was Atabeyra, usually shown with (at least stylized) female genitalia, sometimes with suggested breasts and a distended stomach, with head, arms and legs treated like those of Yocahuna and, like him, with decorated eyes and mouth. She too could dignify a composite utilitarian piece such as a prayer stone or three pointed stone, with dual or more images, affixing her to the earth, but directing her to heaven via the mound of her fertile, pregnant stomach. Alternate names include Iermaoguacer, Mamona, Apito, Siella, Suimaco, Cotyabara and Baidrama.

The third deity, usually in the form of a 'grotesque-faced' male, was called Opiyel Guabiran. He had bulging eyes and nose, a grinning mouth and a generally convulsed face. When shown with a torso, he had outstretched hands or hands holding a receptacle for the cohoba. Garbed as the two above deities, he could also be part of a composite object for utilitarian use or could be shown on a 'prayer-stone'. His hostility was intended to ward off the Kalina, the evil spirits, thereby safeguarding the deceased Tainos on their journey to Coyabo. Alternate names included Marquetarie Guyaba: the 'Lord of Coyaba'.

The mysticism surrounding the fourth primary deity, Guaca, the 'guardian spirit of the living', meant that he was less frequently depicted than the other three. In appearance and dress like the others, he was shown in an attitude conveying wisdom and sometimes melancholy. Guaca also served as the guardian of the cacique dynasty and succession, through the cacique's maternal uncle. Alternate names included Faraguuaol, represented by a tree trunk, incarnated as a wandering spirit, given to magical tricks. These principal deities could also be manifested in animal form, emphasizing their specific powers or origins as seen in certain species of fauna.

Identification

Columbus, his cohorts and successors actively tried to destroy the Taino religion and all its material manifestations although some objects were presented to the 'Catholic Kings', the Pope and the nobility. Few survive. What material culture remains in the Caribbean consists of what the Taino themselves saved, what the Europeans did not find, what Hispanic researchers such as Fray Ramon Pané and Dr Diego Chanca collected and saved and, finally, from what later became archaeological middens, buried in the rubble of Taino settlements and holy places, destroyed or deserted, through time.

Columbus and the other chroniclers of the *siglo de oro*, Spain's golden age, as well as later writers have left us descriptions of the superb artistic achievement of the Taino and their iconography, including the objects handled only by the nitaino such as the royal staff of office of the paramount caçiques, surmounted by a zemi, usually carved from one of the precious woods such as ebony, mahogany, lignum vitae, silk cotton or cedar. Such objects would have been displayed and used on special occasions, but only by a very few. No staff of office was thought to have survived.

From the chroniclers' descriptions, it is clear that Object A from Aboukir must be the ceremonial staff of office of a Taino caçique, the only known example extant and an object not seen for perhaps four and a half centuries. At prescribed times, each caçique sat on a duho on the porch of his bohios holding a ceremonial staff resembling Object A and waiting for his subjects to perform their civil, military and religious duties to him. The size, weight and height of this piece and the imagery of the carved figure of Yocahuna, suggests that this carving can be identified as the royal and ceremonial staff of office of a paramount caçique, perhaps the paramount caçique of eleventh century Jamaica. The missing projection above the head may have been a demitasse-sized receptacle for a special ointment, pigment or ornament. The eye sockets and mouth might have originally held insets of gold, shell, pearl, etc. and the white pigmentation might relate to the cohoba or some other ceremony.

Object B must be a support for a cohoba ceremony receptacle. The image of the pelican relates both to Yocahuna and Atabeyra with linkages to the heavens (flight) and the earth and the sea. Its importance is attested by its size and its artistic achievement. The wood used attests to intended permanence. The stance of the pelican suggests the sagacity of Guaca, guarding the living. This carving might also have had insets, now absent. The life-size scale adds to the importance of the piece and the 'hooded quality' of the slightly peaked head suggests further iconographic links to Guaca (and possibly also Opiyel Guaobiran).

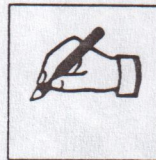
Object C is a spoon or scoop for placing the cohoba into the receptacle to be placed on the platform above the pelican carving during the cohoba ceremony. The surmounting figure is clearly Opiyel Guaobiran, in his Lord of Coyoba manifestation: Maquetari Guyaba. Originally, this piece might also have had inlays for the eyes and other features. The fact that all three objects are carved from the precious woods, mahogany, lignum vitae and ebony, increases their significance.

Placing all three of the Aboukir carvings in the context of their findspot, one can perhaps visualize the paramount caçique seated on the flat platform holding the Yocahuna staff

while cohoba was placed with the scoop into a receptacle resting on the platform atop the pelican figure. Above ground level, as with the 1992 Spots findspot, the caçique would be closer to the deities with which he communed. The suggestion is also that the Aboukir findspot is a Taino sanctum sanctorum. Like Spots, the original orientation of these carvings might have been to the east. Also significant is the fact that the findspot itself lies almost at the geographical centre of Jamaica, nearly equidistant from Spots, the south coast Redware sites, Maima at Seville and the north coast Redware sites. If this is indeed the original findspot of the carvings, it may actually represent the Taino bohio of Jamaica; the primordial home and contact point with the principal deities; the ancestral home, the original Bohio and Coyaba and indeed, the seat of Taino power and sovereignty in Jamaica.

The above represents a summary of a) 'The Aboukir zemis: A remarkable relic of the paramount Jamaican Taino caçiquedom and its religious iconography', a monograph by this author, Nassau/Kingston:1993/4, prepared for the Jamaica National Heritage Trust and the National Gallery of Jamaica, a forthcoming publication of the Rio Nuevo Heritage Foundation monograph series and, with their kind permission, offered to *Jamaica Journal* and b) A lecture delivered at the National Gallery of Jamaica on May 17, 1994 within the Institute of Jamaica's 'Downtown Forum Series' as part of *Arawak Vibrations: Homage to the Jamaican Taino*, an exhibition to mark the quincentennial of the first encounter between the Jamaican Tainos and Christopher Columbus: presented in association with the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

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