**Where the Indigenous people came from**

It is important to note that indigenous people and their generations predated Christopher Columbus’ apparent discovery of the Americas in 1492. The ancestors of the Tainos, largely the Paleo – Indians of 17,000 years ago came from Siberia during the Wisconsin glaciations across the land bridge of Beringia that joined Siberia to North West, North America (Alaska). As they were hunter gathers by ‘profession’ it is fair to assume that the initial reason for their migration was linked to the need for food. They followed the migration of the herds of mammoth which led them to the Americas where the climate was warm and where they could settle on the land permanently. Some of the groups moved further down into North America into Central America. Eventually they took up permanent residence in all of Central America and spilt into different tribes and ultimately created different cultures, traditions including worshipping different Gods.

The Taíno Indians, a subgroup of the Arawakan Indians (American Indians who settled in northeastern South America), inhabited the Greater Antilles (comprising Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola – now known as [Haiti and the Dominican Republic], and Puerto Rico). They lived in the Caribbean at the time when Christopher Columbus arrived in the New World. At the time of Columbus' arrival in 1492, there were five Taíno chiefdoms and territories in Hispaniola, each led by a principal Cacique (chieftain), to whom tribute was paid. They had an organized system based on their cultural beliefs. Taíno society was divided into two classes: *naborias* (commoners) and *nitaínos* (nobles). These were governed by male chiefs known as *caciques*, who were advised by priests/healers known as *bohiques*.

Furthermore, the Tainos have a hereditary blood-line, meaning if the Cacique died, his son would take his place but if he didn’t have a son, the title was passed to the Cacique's elder sister’s eldest son. The Tainos were a peaceful and kind tribe who held several ceremonies which ranged from ceremonial ball games to honoring the ancestors. They had olive brown skin with long black silky hair which they dressed with oil. Tainos were short, slightly plump and big boned. The Arawaks flattened their baby's head at a young age, to give it an elongated slope on the head. This became a distinctive feature when in battle because they could take a blow to the head and it was also considered to be a sign of beauty.

**Their way of life including their inventions**

Although, they were in a primitive era,they were very skilled in making tools and other items.The Indians were inventive people who learned to strain cyanide from life-giving yuca, developed pepper gas for warfare, devised an extensive pharmacopeia from nature, built oceangoing canoes large enough for more than 100 paddlers and played games with a ball made of rubber, which fascinated Europeans seeing the material for the first time. Although the Taíno never developed a written language, they made exquisite pottery, wove intricate belts from dyed cotton and carved enigmatic images from wood, stone, shell and bone.

**The arrival of Christopher Columbus in the New World**

A geographical miscalculation based on God, gold and glory could sum up Christopher Columbus’ arrival in the New World in 1492. The Taíno impressed Columbus with their generosity, which I think contributed to their demise due to the negative impact that The Spaniards had on their lives. “They will give all that they do possess for anything that is given to them, exchanging things even for bits of broken crockery,” he noted upon meeting them in the Bahamas in 1492. “They were very well built, with very handsome bodies and very good faces....They do not carry arms or know them....They should be good servants.”[[1]](#endnote-2)

**Columbus’ encounter with the Tainos in Cuba**

According to the book or the information that I read, Columbus’ visit to the New World impacted them negatively because they were vulnerable and easy to trick.

Columbus' encounter with Arawarks/Tainos was somewhat manipulative, he restricted them from doing anything else and took advantage of their kindness and used them as labor to mine for gold. He demanded food from them, shelter and gold when he arrived on the islands. He even tricked into thinking that he had the power to block the moon but in reality, there was an eclipse on that night. That how he tricked them into working for him. The Spaniards completely changed the Tainos' culture. They introduction new fruits they had never seen before, brought animals: like horses, dogs, rats, cows and sheep. The animals ate the Tainos crops and many starved to death.

**The negative impact that Columbus had on the Tainos**

The invasion of Columbus and the other Spaniards had a catastrophic impact on the lives of the Tainos over the next twenty to thirty years. From a population which had an estimated 8 million people living on the island in 1492. It was cut by nearly half by 1496 (three to four million natives had died in less than four years). By 1508 the population was less than one hundred thousand. By 1518 there were fewer than twenty thousand and by 1535, the entire population of Hispañiola was gone.

1. Columbus, Christopher. The Log of Christopher Columbus. Trans. Robert H. Fuson. Camden, ME: International Marine Publishing Co., 1987.

   In just 43 years an entire culture had been eliminated. In fact, every island in the Antilles experienced similar purges and rapid decreases in population. Columbus decided that they were a simple people who needed to be civilized through religion. There are several factors which led to the destruction of the Tainos diseases were among the main cause. The Spaniards brought with them a range of diseases such as small pox which the Tainos had no physiological or immunological defense for.

   Columbus and his men forced the Tainos to work daily for hard labour, which resulted in the death of some members of the tribe due to being over worked. The Tainos were expected to search for gold and the fact was that the islands didn’t have much gold. This greed of the Spaniards led to the horrible ill-treatment of the Tainos. They were over worked, under fed and brutally abused even killed in many cases.

   Futhermore, on one of Columbus’ later voyage he had his men round up over 1,500 Taino men, women, and children, then forced the Tainos into slavery. Any attempt by the natives to fight back was squashed immediately and efficiently by the Spanish invaders. Those who led and participated in revolts were punished by death. In order to undermine the authority of chiefs within the Taino villages, the Spaniards would gather thirteen of the leaders and, before a gathered crowd of enslaved natives, burn them alive. This served as strong warning to the rest of the tribe especially the men. The leaders were very respected and had a very important function in battles so the fact that they were slaughtered meant that the rest of the men felt helpless and would be reluctant to revolt again.

   Not only were the Tainos losing their independence as all work and farming was now solely for the Spaniards, their culture was dismantled including their religious practices. Some Arawaks could not take it anymore and decieded to commit suicide by drinking the poisonous part the cassava. They also committed infanticide so that their children would not suffer the same pain they felt under Spanish rule. Some fought back by destroying crops to starve the Spanish. The Tainos tried to fight back but it was no use because the Spanish had pikes, guns, silver sword and canons.

   In conclusion,

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)