



Fig. 2: Migratory Routes of the Kalinagos/Caribs and Arawaks into the Caribbean Islands



PRE-COLUMBIAN ART OF THE CARIBBEAN:

Taino (“good people” in Arawak) originated from Arawak tribes in South America



Taino later inhabited the Greater Antilles
“Quisqueya”: Dominican Republic
“Borinquen”: Puerto Rico



Conuco (agricultural mounds)

1. Yuca (cassava) associated with Taino supreme god Yucahu
2. Maiz (corn)
3. Batata (sweet potato)



Bohio (Taino homes)



- Egalitarian society with social hierarchy:
1. Nitaino, who supervise the working class
 2. Naborios, the working class

(cacique: rules over chiefdoms called yucayeques)



Taino traveled across the Caribbean in wooden canoes



“These canoes are fighting each other and when the enemy has been caught, he is a prisoner all his life. When waging war, they take their women with them; they pull the oar while their husbands fight.”

Histoire Naturelle des Indes

Illustrated manuscript

ca. 1586



Batey (ballgame played with a rubber ball like the one in Mesoamerica)
and **Areyto** (ceremonial event)





During areytos, Taino leaders would use zemis like this one.

Zemi, c. 1000, Dominican Republic, wood, shell (zemi found in a cave)

Zemi: Important ritual objects, represent gods or ancestors, and were used by caciques and shamans.





Zemis with a plate at top
were used to ground up
seeds into a
hallucinogenic powder
called cohoba

Other ritual objects include.....vomiting spatula and cohoba spoon.
Through the sniffing of cohoba, Tainos could communicate with the spiritual world of
their ancestors.



“The intoxicating herb....is so strong that those who take it lose consciousness; when the stupefying action begins to wane, the arms and legs become loose and the head droops.” Under its influence, users “suddenly begin to rave, and at once they say ... that the house is moving, turning things upside down, and that men are walking backwards.”
- Friar Ramón Pané, 1516

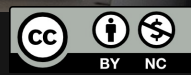


■ Según decían, la imitación de los porros provocaba la comunicación con los dioses y los muertos. También alegaban que podían predecir el futuro después de aspirar la cohoba y la coca antes de tomar decisiones relacionadas con la cosecha y antes de ir a la guerra.

■ Esta ceremonia tan particular era practicada por los indios en otras partes del Caribe y América del Sur.

Espátula vónicas para el ritual de la cohoba.
Yonic spatulas for the "cohoba" ritual.

Idolo de la Cohoba
"Cohoba" idol
University Museum
University of Pennsylvania





**Taíno *zemí* of Itiba
Cahubaba**
1200–1500 CE
Dominican Republic
Clay

Itiba: “Great Bleeding
Mother”

Mother goddess
associated with
motherhood, fertility, and
pregnancy.





Taíno *zemí* of Daminán Caracaracol
1200–1500 CE
Dominican Republic
Clay

-Son of Itiba Cahubaba





zoomorphism: animal-like depicted in human figures, characteristic of Taino art





What characteristics do these zemis share?



*Duho: ceremonial functional seat,
also communicates power and
status*





Duho, 1292–1399, wood and gold

How do these seats of power compare and differ?





Duho (dujo), Taino, 1200–1500 C.E., stone, Puerto Rico
<https://smarthistory.org/taino-duho/>



*Heart-Shaped Bottle, 11th–15th
century, ceramic, Dominican Republic*





Three-Cornered Stone (Trigonolito)
800–1500 CE. Dominican Republic, Stone

Zemi-like appearance seen in zoomorphic face reflects strong Taino artistic tradition.

Associated with the cultivation of the Taino main crop, cassava





Pigorini Zemi, c. 1510–1515, rhinoceros horns, Venetian glass beads and mirror, shell beads, cotton, gold, vegetable fiber, feathers (?)

-Zemi made most likely by a Taino artist (as seen in zoomorphic face and standing pose) but during the colonial period, as revealed in the use of Venetian glass beads and mirrors, and African rhinoceros horns and geometric patterns.





What is the myth of Taino extinction?

MANATÍ
manatee | manatí

TOTUMA
large calabash gourd bowl | recipiente grande hecho del fruto del higüero

HAMACA
hammock | hamaca

COCUYO
firefly | luciérnaga

CANOA
canoe | canoa

SABANA
open grasslands; savannah | sabana

MANIGUA
forest | bosque

COMEJÉN
termite | comején; termita

AJÍ
chile pepper | ají; chile

MACUTO
traditional backpack | mochila tradicional

BARBACOA
grill for cooking meat | parilla para asar carne

NASA
fish trap | trampa para pescar

GUASÁBARA
conflict; battle; uproar | conflicto; batalla; tumulto

HURACÁN
hurricane | huracán

JUEY
land crab | cangrejo de tierra



MYTH OF TAINO EXTINCTION: Taino DNA & Traditions



Juan C. Martínez Cruzado took samples from 800 randomly selected subjects, and reported that 61.1 percent of those surveyed in Puerto Rico had mitochondrial DNA of indigenous origin.

