A000-AM,C-Taino-Cemi-*Maquetaurie Guayaba*- Porphyritic Steatite-1000 CE



AM,C-Taino-Cemi-*Maquetaurie Guayaba*- Porphyritic Steatite-1000 CE

Anthropomorphic *cemi* (spirit) of *Maquetaurie Guayaba*, Lord of the Dwelling Place of the Dead, *Coaybay. c* 900-1500 CE, height 7 in.

Case No.: 18

**Accession No.**

**Formal Label:** AM,C-Taino-Cemi-*Maquetaurie Guayaba*- Porphyritic Steatite-1000 CE

**Display Description:**

*Maquetaurie Guayaba* is the skull mask at the bottom of the celt with hollow circular eyes and skeletal teeth (signifying death). Above, a nocturnal bird, perhaps an owl with large eyes, has a clearly defined navel, which signifies that it is a bird of the living world, is transporting *Maquetaurie Guayaba*. Owls were revered as the avian counterparts of the spirits of the dead with their haunting nocturnal calls. Consequently, Taínos were reluctant to travel into the forests at night as this was the owl’s realm and was also considered to be the realm of deceased ancestors. The right-hand (obverse) image shows *Maquetaurie Guayaba* with an with his skeletal countenance surmounted by a skull and both hands placed to the mouth as though having divulged a secret. This side of the figure is probably intended to be a body stamp used with the black juice of the fruit of the tropical tree *Psidium paniferum,* traces of which may still be adhering to its surface

**LC Classification: F1909**

**Date or Time Horizon: 1000 CE**

**Geographical Area: Caribbean**

This Taino cemi features Maquetaurie Guava-Lord of the Dead- with his exposed lipless mouth, indicating that he is in fact dead and requires nothing to ingest except other deceased individuals who have not entered his domain honorably. The depiction of Maquetaurie Guava-Lord of the Dead- is significant since one has to metaphorically die to one’s previous self in order to experience the effects of *cohoba*, a true *metanoia.* So, here is Maquetaurie Guava to act as a psychopomp to help us on our way.

Taíno cosmology, religion and its rituals is described in Fray Ramón Pané’s *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians*, the most important anthropological document on the Taíno that contains a wealth of information on this extinct culture. His commission from Columbus required him to record the Taíno beliefs and ceremonies as accurately as possible, and to that end he lived among the native Taíno population from 1493 to 1498. However, he was also a product of fifteenth century Roman Catholicism, and his primary goal was to convert the Taínos whom he regarded as heathens and idolaters. “[Some] were inclined to believe easily. But with others there is need for force and ingenuity because we are not all made of the same stuff. Although those people made a good beginning and a better end, there will be others who will begin well and afterwards will laugh at what has been taught them; with them there is need for force and punishment” (Pané p. 38).

**LC Classification: F 1909**

**Date or Time Horizon: 1000 CE**

**Geographical Area:** From Eastern Hispaniola, i.e., the Dominican Republic

**Map:**



Caribbean c 1500 after http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/maps/Ciboney-Taino-Carib-

**GPS coordinates:**

**Cultural Affiliation:** Classic Taino

**Medium:** Manatee rib

**Dimensions:** Length 7.9 cm. or 3.1 in.

**Weight:**

**Condition:** original, intact

**Provenance:** From Eastern Hispaniola, i.e., the Dominican Republic

**Discussion:**

Since this cemi has a “V” shape, it is possible that this was going to be drilled to act as a *cohoba* inhaler.

Pané was a Catalan a Hieronymite monk of the Order of St. Jerome. These hermit monks lived according to the Rule of Saint Augustine, which stresses chastity, poverty, obedience, worldly detachment, physical labor, fraternal charity, common prayer, fasting and abstinence. Saint Jerome, a fifth-century hermit and biblical scholar, formulated the rules of the order. In the eyes of the Spanish church hierarchy, Pané was a poor Hieronymite hermit, a Catalan peasant not of Castilian origins and was dismissed probably for these social reasons by the Spanish Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas (ca. 1484– 18 July 1566) as a “simple man” with “limited faculties” (Pané p. 57), whose efforts, “amounted to nothing more than to say the Ave María and Pater Noster to the Indians, and some words about there being a God in heaven who was the creator of things, according to what he was able to teach them with abundant flaws and in a muddled way” (Pané p. 57). However derogatory Las Casas’ criticisms of Pané are, Pané’s *Account* is still the best source of information on the Taíno.

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