A000- AM,C-Taino-Ceremonial Cohoba Pestle-Anthropomorphic-Bicephalic-Andesite-1000 CE

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This bicephalic Taino ceremonial cohoba pestle embodies Janus themes, suggesting a certain timelessness of simultaneously looking forward and backward in time. This is appropriate for the shamanic flight as induced by the hallucinogentic cohoba. Since the ceremonial pestle is rare among the Taino, their ownership was probably restricted to prominent *Bohiques* and *Caciques.*

Cemi bicephalism was important to Taino cosmological inquiry. They were associated both with the afterlife and the future and in this respect Behiques would seek their aid during hallucinogenic ventures.

These pestles are invariably fashioned from very heavy, dense, fine-grained andesite, which makes their surface very smooth when finished. Their subject matter ranges between anthropomorphic spirits to aviform spirits with large concave eyes, perhaps of owls. This suggests that these pestles were used in ceremonies invoking the spirits of either deceased ancestors or the nocturnal, all-seeing owl.

Intricate detail on the heads of these pestles may incorporate a series of concentric circles above the frontal region as in this example suggestive of superior enlightenment as the concentric circle is a symbol for the sun.

**LC Classification:**

**Date or Time Horizon:**

**Geographical Area:**

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:**

**Cultural Affiliation:**

**Media:**

**Dimensions: L 10.5 in**

**Weight:**

**Condition:**

**Provenance:**

**Discussion:**

Ceremonial pestles perhaps originated with the Olmecs (1400-400 B.C.E.) at sites like La Venta , where they depicted their most prominent deity, the god of maize. Post Classic Mayan traders (900-1698) interacted with many peoples of the Gulf of Mexico, probably including the Taino, whom they may have influenced to make their own ceremonial pestles since Mayan ceremonial hallucinogenic rites were an important part of their religion. The Maya drank balché (a mixture of honey and extracts of Lonchocarpus) in group ceremonies to achieve intoxication. The bark of [*L. violaceus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lonchocarpus_violaceus&action=edit&redlink=1) (*balché* tree) is traditionally used by the Yukatek Maya version of the mildly intoxicating mead, *[balché](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balch%C3%A9" \o "Balché)*, which was held in the highest esteem in antiquity and considered sacred to the god of intoxication. It is still drunk today and was, after the Spanish conquest of Yucatán, considered a less harmful alternative than the alcoholic beverages imported by the Europeans. It is not quite clear if roots were also used to produce *balché*, and to what extent toxic isoflavones are also present in *L. violaceus*. The potency of *balché* may be increased by using honey produced from *L. violaceus* nectar gathered by the Maya's traditional stingless bees. Ritual enemas and other psychoactive substances were also used to induce states of trance.

**References:**

Carod-Artal, F. J. 2014 [2011] “Hallucinogenic drugs in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican culture,”