A000-Am,C-Taino-Cemi-Dwarf-Slit Eyes-Porphyritic Rhyolite-1000 CE



Figs. 1-5. Am,C-Taino-Cemi-Dwarf-Slit Eyes-Porphyritic Rhyolite-1000 CE

**Case No.: 18**

**Accession No.**

**Formal Label:** Am,C-Taino-Cemi-Dwarf-Slit Eyes-Porphyritic Rhyolite-1000 CE CE

**Display Description:**

This dwarf figure, with slit eyes sculpted in porphyritic rhyolite and curvilinear limbs with hands resting on back of head, provides a glimpse into the revered nature of dwarfism among the Taino and its association with perceived meditative expertise. Dwarfs were thought to possess heightened spiritual powers, so that the slit eyes should probably be interpreted as being the metaphor for heightened spiritual vision.

The markings of the spine on the back suggest the different levels of trance states similar to that of chakras but without any cultural connection. The choice of porphyritic rhyolite was apropos of the subject since this rock and its blotchy appearance due to crystal inclusions in the porphyritic rhyolite gives the appearance of body in a glistening, elevated trance state.

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:** Sub Taino

**Medium:** Made from porphyritic rhyolite.

**Dimensions:**

**Weight:**

**Condition:** original, intact

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

**Discussion:**

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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