A000-AM,C-Taino-Fish Cemi of Yayael-Manatee Rib-1000 CE

This piece is made from manatee bone. Standing up it appears anthropic but when flat it appears to be a bird. Duel characterization is a common Taino theme. Length 4.6cm or 1.8". Unknown island origin but likely the Dominican Republic where most of the manatee bone artifacts are from. Dating c1000-1500AD.

What the four brothers could not have known was that the endless ocean and all the fish that issued from that gourd were born of a great tragedy. For that was where Yaya kept the bones of his son, Yayael, an upstart who had once challenged his father for ownership of his conucos. Indeed Yayael had tried to kill his father for his inheritance. Yaya exiled the young man for four months, but knowing he could never trust the treacherous youth, finally decided to kill his son. As was their custom for honoring their dead, Yayael’s parents conserved his bones, hanging them from the rafters in a calabash. But one day as they grew heartsick for their dead son, the couple rushed to take his bones down and look on them kindly. They were surprised to find that the gourd was filled with fish and they wondered if they should eat them. Many kinds of fish swam in that gourd, as if Yayael’s bones had oozed briny water and come alive. They hung the gourd again in the rafters until they could devise some use for this sudden windfall.

So it was that when Deminán Caracaracol spilled the contents of that gourd, he unleashed an ocean, filled with fish, born of the honored bones of an impatient youth. Yayael’s parents could not have been pleased. But we know nothing of their reaction, for they were already far behind Deminán’s as he and his brothers fled in the deluge ([Pané ch.IX and X](http://ancientantilles.com/bibliography.html)).

Case no. 18

