A000-AM,C-Taino-Spatula-Alligator Cemi-Manatee Rib Bone-1000 CE







Figs. 1-3. AM,C-Taino-Spatula-Alligator Cemi-Manatee Rib Bone-1000 CE

Case No.: 18

**Accession No.**

**Formal Label:** AM,C-Taino-Spatula-Alligator Cemi-Manatee Rib Bone-1000 CE

**Display Description:**

The local Bohique or shaman leader would use this spatula for ritual cleansing by vomiting before consuming the *cohoba halluc*inogen, usually *Anadenanthera* a genus of South American trees in the Legume family,*Fabaceae.* The genus contains two to four species, including *A. colubrine* and *A*. peregrina. These trees respectively are known as sources of the hallucinogenic snuffs Vilca/Cebil and [Yopo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yopo)/*Cohoba*. The main active constituent of *Anadenanthera* is [bufotenin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bufotenin) (5-HO-DMT, bufotenine) a tryptamine related to the neurotransmitter serotonin. It is an alkaloid found in the skin of some species of toads.

The depiction of an alligator is significant since alligators wrap themselves around their victim and then twirl them in the water to exhaust and finally drown them. This is the technique metaphorically that the Bohique of the village would perform to spiritually engage those who wished to partake of *cohoba*, for the use of the spatual is on for physical purging of contaminants, the spiritual site is to be done by the alligator.

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:** Manatee rib

**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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