

INVESTIGATIONS AT CINNAMON BAY ST. JOHN, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS AND SOCIAL IDEOLOGY IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AS REFLECTED IN PRECOLUMBIAN CERAMICS

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ABSTRACT

The scope of Cinnamon Bay research is presented here, followed by an overview of investigations conducted in the prehistoric sector of the site. Material remains recovered confirm that the Northern Virgin Islands are associated with Classic Taino. The archaeological evidence indicates the area under investigation was used as a ceremonial site for over 400 years and that in the last phase of cultural development, before European contact, the area evolves into the chief's "caney" or temple. Analysis of ceramic adorns from sequential yet separated subseries deposits provides information associated with temporal style, cognition, and links to the ancestor cult and indicates that this iconography is also reflective of temporal social change.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Over the past forty years between 150 to 250 feet of coastal beachfront has been inundated along the north shore beach of Cinnamon Bay, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands. The exceptional number of hurricanes over the last ten seasons has escalated this erosional process. Large portions of the historic cotton plantation and burial ground are now underwater. In 1998, the National Park Service archeologist assigned to the Caribbean observed that the prehistoric site was washing out as a result of a large storm in 1997, which eliminated what was left of the sterile buffer zone that protected the site. In 1998, the non-profit organization Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park obtained funding through a private grant given by Donald Sussman for archeological work at the endangered Cinnamon Bay Pre-Columbian Site (State # 12VAm-2-3 and CIS # VIIS0002) and the Cinnamon Bay Plantation Site (National Register of Historic Places, Nomination 78000269).

*Erosion of the
Cinnamon Bay
Beachfront*



Archaeological data recovery focused on those areas threatened by erosion. Documentary research was undertaken to gain a comprehensive

understanding of human occupation at Cinnamon Bay from prehistory through the plantation era. Project historian David Knight completed records research in Denmark and compiled his findings in his report *A Documentary History of the Cinnamon Bay Estate: 1718-1917* (Knight 1999). Archaeological investigation of the historic site is being conducted along with Syracuse University's archaeological field program. Ethnographic field research was completed through funds from the Southeast Regional Office of the NPS. University of Florida doctoral candidate Karen Hjerpe conducted research on many topics including the community's perception of the archaeological research. Research on the Pre-Columbian sector of the site is the focus of this paper.

PREHISTORIC SITE BACKGROUND

Gudmund Hatt discovered the Cinnamon Bay Prehistoric Site on St. John while conducting fieldwork in the islands in 1922 and 1923 (Hatt 1924). In 1960, archaeologists Ripley P. Bullen and Frederick W. Sleight visited the Cinnamon Bay Site and designated it Site #7 (Sleight 1962). During the summers of 1969 and 1970, Ed Rutsch of Fairleigh Dickinson University conducted archaeological testing prior to the construction of campground facilities at Cinnamon Bay (Rutsch 1970). In 1978, Jay Havisier completed his master's thesis on the pottery recovered by Rutsch, and in 1980 James Stoutamire et al. completed a report on the materials recovered. Both reports emphasized the significance of the site and the scientific potential for determining cultural chronology, subsistence, religion, and culture change of these Pre-Columbian peoples of the Northern Virgin Islands. However, the authors concluded that the data gathered were not sufficient to address these significant questions adequately (Stoutamire et al. 1980; Havisier 1978).

INVESTIGATIONS

In 1992, funding was secured from the Federal Highways Administration to mitigate a minor adverse impact incurred during road construction activity at Cinnamon Bay. This funding allowed Ken Wild and Regina Leabo of the Southeast Archeological Center, National Park Service to conduct investigations. Wild and the Territorial Historic Preservation Office's archaeologist Elizabeth Righter decided to direct research towards a greater understanding of the Pre-Columbian peoples who occupied Cinnamon Bay. A 2X2-meter test

*Articulated Turtle
Plastron just
below the surface*



Articulated turtle plastron



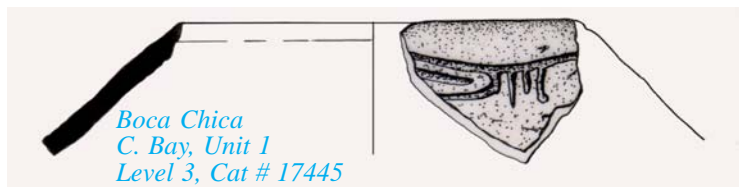
unit was excavated in the beach sector of the site. Excavation of the unit uncovered many decorative ceremonial ceramic types, faunal remains, stone ceremonial artifacts, adornments, lithic and shell tools, carbonized material for dating and paleosubsistence material. During the excavation it appeared probable that the remains represented sequential deposits that were *in situ*. The context of intact pottery and the articulation of delicate faunal remains evidenced this, particularly the articulated underbelly shell fragments (plastron) of a turtle found just centimeters below the surface. No signs of deep burrowing animals, roots or agricultural activity to disturb context were observed. It is now apparent that the original alignment of the Colonial Period North Shore Road preserved the site. Since the Cinnamon Bay Estate was established in the late 1600s this road, which runs over the area under investigation, has protected the site for nearly three hundred years preventing animals, roots and man from disturbing the subsurface context. The loose wind blown beach sand that covers the area prevents any surface disturbance by pedestrian and vehicular traffic today and has apparently done so since the Pre-Columbian inhabitants abandoned the area.

At the base of the 1992 excavation, a posthole feature was observed extending into the culturally sterile white sand, suggesting a pre-Columbian structure had been built here. Radiocarbon dating and sequential ceramic types confirmed that the meter thick cultural deposit was a result of consecutive deposition. Three carbon samples submitted to Beta Analytic in 1992 provide a preliminary temporal range of AD 1000 to AD 1490. A very large carbon sample has been recovered from each ten-centimeter level in the three 4X4 meter units excavated that will refine this temporal range.



In the laboratory, analysis of the 1992

assemblage was completed. The ceramic research was patterned after the detailed attribute analysis used by Hofman in her report on Saba (Hofman 1993). The pottery assemblage consisted of two sequential ceramic subseries, Elenan Ostionoid and Chican Ostionoid. The ceramics within these two subseries were found to conform to ceramic styles as described for eastern Puerto Rico, in that they are predominately Monserrate as

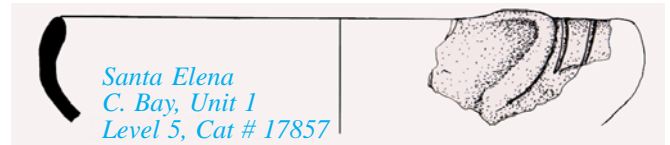


described by Rodriguez (1992), followed by Santa Elena, and Esperanza as defined by Rouse (1992).

Within the Chican Period, Esperanza attributes predominate but there are some decorative traits associated with Boca Chica and Capa that may be interpreted as occurring on trade items. Each

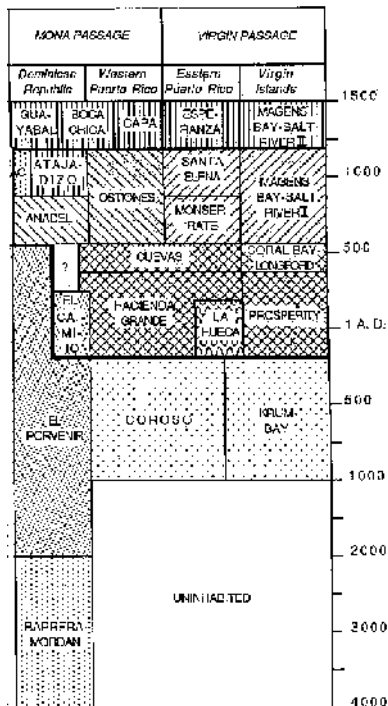
subseries is confined to specific vertical context with

no gradation or mixing. Remarkably, out of hundreds of sherds not a single sherd with diagnostic attributes of a particular subseries as defined by Rouse (1992) was found in context with a different subseries. Laboratory analysis undertaken to date suggest that this same pattern is present in the three 4X4-meter units excavated. At 100 to 70



centimeters below the surface (cmbs), ceramics

with Monserrate attributes predominate. From 70 to 30 cmbs only attributes associated with Santa Elena occur. From thirty centimeters to the surface the pottery consists of attributes assigned to the Chican Ostionoid subseries.



The Virgin Islands ceramic styles for these periods, respectively known as Magens Bay-Salt River I, II and III have led to much confusion, as they are postulated styles that have not been well defined. The current research effort at Cinnamon Bay, as well as early findings in the Virgin Islands by Gary Vescelius (1952), Irving Rouse (1952) and Jay Havisier (1978) observed a close if not nearly identical ceramic style correlation to the Ostionoid styles of eastern Puerto Rico. It is with this in mind that the ceramic analysis of this project will concentrate on providing detailed descriptive information and comparative analysis to assess the relationship between eastern Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Material remains recovered from Cinnamon Bay that are associated with the elite of Taino society and their ceremonial activities provide confirmation that the peoples of the Northern Virgin Islands aligned with Classic Taino culture as suggested by Lundberg, Righter and Caesar (1992). When Columbus arrives into the New World the Taino inhabit Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and the Bahamas. Classic

A portion of Rouse's 1992 ceramic subseries chart. The dates indicated for Virgin Islands will likely be updated pending C-14 analysis.

Taino culture has predominantly been associated with ceremonial centers and religious artifact types and ball courts found primarily in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico.



Shell inlay from Cinnamon Bay. It is slotted like the beaded Pigorini Zemi. Most inlays have round holes

was inserted into a wooden object such as a chief's Duho. Rouse (1992: 177, 186) defines "Zemi as a "Taino deity or figure of a deity and a Duho as a "Stool used by Taino chiefs as a sign of rank". Tiny

Beaded Zemi from the Dominican Republic in the Pigorini Museum. (Courtesy of El Museo Del Barrio. In TAINO Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean. page 161).

shell beads and several carved shell inlays for eyes like those of a beaded zemi and cotton ancestral zemi have been recovered. The center hole of a number of shell inlays are carved round like the Dominican Republic zemi of cotton which

encases a human skull while the other is slotted like the beaded zemi in Rome's Pigorini Museum (Bercht et al. 1997:127-128). It is interesting to note that the tiny shell beads recovered are only in red or pink, black and white; the same colors used in the post contact beaded zemi in Rome, and the pre-contact belt from the Dominican Republic (page 10). Recovered from the upper levels at Cinnamon Bay were; a gold disk, shell disks and carved teeth that were probably used as inlays to decorate wooden or stone statuette zemis, and possibly duhos. Other items include shell amulets, a ceramic rattle, petaloid stone celts, stone pestles, a fragment from a stone ceremonial dagger and a carved ceremonial stone axe.

Analysis of the faunal material by the Florida Museum of Natural History has identified the remains of four extinct

animals and possibly six that are extirpated from St. John. Mammals identified in Pre-Columbian context include the extinct Monk Seal (*Monachus tropicalis*), small dolphin and the first guinea pig (*Cavia porcellus*) to be identified in the archaeological record of the Virgin Islands. They have also found remains of a large extinct shrew (*Nesophontes* spp.). The hutia (a small extinct rodent) material may be the largest sample of adult material recovered by the museum. In 1999, Dave Steadman, Irv Quitmyer and Elizabeth Wing's examination of the bird remains identified Audubon's shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*, medium sized rail, large rail, possibly a flightless rail and heron/large wading bird. Of particular interest, as they may relate to ceremonial activity, is the recovery of a freshwater pond turtle, snake, bat and an owl *Otus nudipes*. Irv Quitmyer noted while on site that the shellfish are big even for the Pre-Columbian record but



Monk Seal tooth drilled possible for use as a pendant. Recovered in Taino/Chican cultural level at Cinnamon Bay

At Cinnamon Bay artifacts typically associated with Classic Taino culture recovered to date include: portions of carved three-pointed zemi stones, plain three pointers, ball belt fragments and a carved stone head. The rough base of the stone head suggests it



In situ stone carving in Unit 3, Level 3 Cinnamon Bay.



Carved shell teeth and gold inlay recovered from Cinnamon Bay.

A wooden Zemi from the Dominican Republic with inlayed teeth identical to shell teeth recovered from Cinnamon Bay. The golden eye from Cinnamon Bay has been superimposed by computer graphics onto this Zemi to demonstrate how it and other inlays from the site may have been applied. Of the few wooden objects such as duhos and Zemis that are preserved from the Taino culture most have their inlays removed which may reflect the Spanish insistence to relinquish this metal. (Courtesy of El Museo Del Barrio. In TAINO



many of the fish are huge, particularly the porcupine fish. There are also a significant number of Murex shells, which were probably harvested and prized for their blue dying ink. The Spanish observed that the Taino tattooed their bodies with blue zemi figures.

Comparison of the faunal remains of Cinnamon Bay to the Pre-Taino Trunk Bay Site (ca. AD 900) is suggesting either a procession in technology through the ability to obtain deeper and faster marine resources or the necessity to exploit other ecosystems having overexploited resources readily available. Trunk Bay is located immediately west of Cinnamon Bay. A rocky promontory separates the two bays (See page 8).

SITE AREA FUNCTION

In determining the site function of the area investigated archaeological data were examined combined with previous archeological research conclusions on Taino Culture and the Spanish historic documentary record.

Bartolome de Las Casas relates, that Columbus observed (on Hispaniola and other islands), that the Taino “kings” had a special house separated from the population and holding only those images they called zemis. This special house was used only for “ceremony and prayer, which they go there to make, as we go to church” (Dunn et al. 1989). Las Casas, in summarizing Fray Ramon Pane’s manuscript, (chapter 166), observes that the Taino make offerings in the special house of the “kings” except here Las Casas uses the term cacique: “they put this portion of first fruits of the crops in the great house of the lords and caciques, which they called *caney*, and they offered and dedicated it to the zemi. All the things offered in this way were left there until they rotted” (Las Casas 1909). Offerings were conducted on an annual basis (Rouse 1992:14). This unique Taino activity recorded by the Spanish is discussed below as comparative data is examined that appears to reflect this ritual in the archaeological record of Cinnamon Bay.



Adorno from Trunk Bay left and adorno from the base of Unit 4, Cinnamon Bay, on the right.



Head of a quartz carved Zemi stone recovered at the same level as Monserrate pottery.

In 2001, excavations extended through cultural remains to a depth of 125 cmbs. At 115-125 cmbs in Unit 4 a flat stone was uncovered around which were found charcoal deposits and two adornos. One of these adornos is very similar in shape, painting and design to one of the very few effigy faces found at the neighboring Trunk Bay Site that dates to circa AD 700- 1000. These two artifacts certainly suggest a cultural continuum between the two sites but they may also suggest a possible shift in these peoples society as activities were abandoned at Trunk Bay and begun in this area of the site at Cinnamon Bay. All the faces recovered from Trunk Bay are very much anthropomorphic, but as habitation and activities shift to Cinnamon this same basic design shape has distorted the human characteristics.



Above: Monserrate vessel face down insitu at 75 cmbs. Right: Same Monserrate vessel face up without additional piece found sandwiched between sherds of the first diamond shaped ceremonial vessel depicted below.

In 1992, the head of a carved “zemi” stone was recovered at 75 cmbs from Unit 1. In 2000, at the same depth in Unit 2, (75 cmbs) a black and red painted Monserrate style vessel was found *in situ* with the center of the vessel knocked out. Later that year another sherd from the same platter was found sandwiched between a shallow diamond shaped effigy vessel in Unit 3 at the exact same depth. This diamond shape appears to be introduced at this stage of social development. The shape continues in ceremonial bowls as the culture becomes complex in the following Santa Elena level and later Chican/Taino Period.



In each unit excavated at Cinnamon Bay, within the Chican and Santa Elenan ceramic levels, ceremonial pottery adorned with appendages of zoomorphic or anthropomorphic figures or a combination of both was recovered. Within



Stacked sherds from a single ceramic vessel at 20-30 cmbs.

these two deposits that are stratigraphically separated by these two sequential ceramic Ostionoid subseries, Chican and Elenan, broken pots were found purposely stacked. These and other ceramic vessels recovered have, once mended, round holes punched out of the bottom as if in a ceremonial fashion as first observed by a vessel in the Monserrate levels (60-125 cmbs).



Santa Elenan vessel with hole knocked out of the bottom.

Beginning in the Santa Elenan through the Chican levels, piles of shells increased in number and were found mixed with (1) a large proportion of adult faunal remains, (2) ceremonial vessels and (3) ceremonial objects and artifacts associated with the elite. These separate piles of shell are primarily restricted to a specific species. The majority of these shell deposits first recognized in Unit 2 consisted of gastropods, primarily *Citarium pica* and conch; but in the summer of 1999, a deposit of bivalve shells was exposed in the Chican 20-30 cmbs level of Unit 3. Almost all of these shells were found tightly sealed as found in nature with no evidence at attempts to open them. These shellfish are very large for their species, suggesting that this deposit and other invertebrate deposits excavated were offerings as indicated by their association with other ceremonial materials. Most of the bivalve shells found unopened are Eared Ark (*Anadara notabilis*), but there are some unopened Tiger Lucine and Turkey Wing. The project was fortunate that on site, during excavation of this shell feature, were project zooarchaeologist Irv Quitmyer from the Florida Museum of Natural History, project lithic analyst Jeff Walker of the Caribbean National Forest and Virgin Islands archaeologist Emily Lundberg, who is working with the project's ceramic attribute analysis. Having these researchers on site greatly assisted in determining depositional site function in relationship to ceramic deposits and faunal features.

Offering consisting primarily of the unopened bivalve, Eared Ark.



When investigations began at Cinnamon Bay in 1998, the answer to what could possibly cause a sequential yet separate deposition of ceramic styles as observed in the 1992 materials was puzzling. Uncovering the bivalve offering in 1999 after finding large amounts of elite associated materials and zemi related artifacts, indicated a probable explanation. Offerings were performed in the cacique's temple, but more important to solving this depositional mystery was that the historic record indicates that this was an annual ritual, occurring only once a year as required by the chief. Thus, an explanation for temporal spacing between episodes of deposition is present in the historic record and one that would separate these ceramic styles. In this depositional situation, deposits are separated not only by time, but are located in a sacred area and mixing of materials on a daily basis was restricted. Fortunately for us this archeological record remained intact thanks to a Danish road.

That these offerings are predominately marine resources and mammals probably reflects the primary subsistence resources available for offering. That they consist of adult mammals or very large shellfish specimens for their species may reflect the "first fruit" or the best collected for the offering. What is especially interesting is that this ceremonial place, once established in the Monserrate Period maintained a similar function for almost 500 years, evolving into an apparent Classic Taino offering "temple", the "Caney" of the sort observed by the Spanish.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FROM EGALITARIAN TO A COMPLEX ELITE HIERARCHY

The archaeological evidence from Cinnamon Bay demonstrates that the material culture from the area investigated was deposited in sequential ceramic subseries episodes that were temporally separated due to the ceremonial function of the site area. Analysis of ceramic zoomorphic/anthropomorphic adornos, from this type of chronologically intact context, indicate that these “faces are not simply interesting objects stuck on the side of bowls but should provide a wealth of knowledge about social change” (Wild and Lundberg 1999: personnel communications). This paper proposes that these are symbolic representations associated with Taino ancestor worship, or the “ancestral cult”, linking temporal style to temporal cognition, and that these patterns in iconography as they shift in style can reflect social change and development.

Recently, Curet and Oliver (1998) discussed and summarized previous works on the development of a stratified or complex society from a communal or egalitarian society. They hypothesize a slow development towards an elite complex Taino society in eastern Puerto Rico and detail archaeological evidence on mortuary practices that coincide with a shift towards an elite society. The authors discuss how the emerging elites acquired power over time and retain that power through a process of religious manipulation of existing beliefs, principally ancestor rites, and by controlling the “religious structures and symbols” to legitimize elite authority (Curet and Oliver 1998:219).

In presenting their hypothesis Curet and Oliver (1998) argue a specific point that is fundamental in understanding the cognitive processes that may be evidenced in the iconography of Cinnamon Bay and how this is reflective of temporal social change. They propose that the dual identity of ancestor worship (the natural world and access to the powers of the supernatural world of ancestors) as it functioned in the communal society provided the “ideal nexus for developing the legitimizing ideologies that are used by emerging elite”. By reorienting or redefining the relationship between the ancestors and the people, chiefly elites can dismantle some aspects of communality at the same time that they legitimize their authority and control over status and resources. Legitimizing this authority by claiming a closer proximity to the apical ancestor through their lineage than that of other sectors of the community is probable (Curet and Oliver 1998:219). The authors point out that in this way the chief becomes the direct descendant of the worshipped ancestor and claims exclusive and direct access to ancestors and the power of the supernatural world. This serves to neutralize the egalitarian society and “institutionalize the inequality already present in the communal egalitarian societies (Curet and Oliver 1998:219). Thus, through the use of the ancestors, power is masked by being ideologically mystified and legitimized. “Power over ‘ is justified in kin-based societies, by ‘power from the ancestors or the gods” (Curet and Oliver 1998:219; Bender 1990:260). This observation of empowerment through deifying caciques at the time of European contact has also been observed by Peter Siegel (1997:106) using historic records on the Taino and ethnographic data gathered by Anna Roosevelt (1987) in the Lower Amazon. Identifying these temporal shifts in social change in the iconography of Cinnamon Bay is explored below.

Proximity of 1999 excavations at Cinnamon Bay to the beachfront.



Insitu stone effigy face at 30cmbs.

SOCIAL IDEOLOGY AND CHANGE AS REFLECTED IN THE CERAMIC ICONOGRAPHY

Analysis of six hundred years of ceramic iconography recovered from sequential ceremonial episodes that begins at Trunk Bay and continues at Cinnamon Bay has provided one possible bit of evidence in understanding this culture's shift from a simple society to a complex hierarchal society. Taino ancestral worship had evolved to empower an elite lineage. An explanation as to how this evolution may have occurred was presented by Curet and Oliver (1998:219) in their study of mortuary practices. The study of the ceramic iconography from St. John demonstrates graphically a possible scenario for this evolution. The pottery depicts how the power was acquired over time and retained through a process of religious manipulation of existing beliefs in ancestor rites by controlling the religious structure and symbols to legitimize the elite authority.

Central to the argument is that ceramic adornos depict how and when the emerging elites enhance the established ancestral cult by introducing a visual manifestation into the natural world that has a dual connection to the supernatural world. This then provides that symbolic link between the human soul and the supernatural through this physical manifestation of the dead that comes to life in the natural world. This supernatural manifestation was the bat as chronicled by the Spanish, which enters the natural world of the living and is to be worshiped, consulted, and as the historical record indicates, feared. This then enforces institutionalizing a need for specific individuals who can communicate with the supernatural. In this process the elite have the power to determine the appropriate symbolic imagery that portrays the physical representations of the ancestor. Symbolic imagery permeates almost all of pre-Columbian art. From the two sites on St. John the symbolic imagery depicted in the ceramic adornos attached to offering vessels shifts over time from strictly anthropomorphic to anthropomorphic faces with a zoomorphic bat nose indicating the probability that the offering is intended for the deceased ancestor. Offerings in the archaeological record dramatically increase when this imagery is introduced. They have made ritual activities and offerings mandatory in order to "propitiate" as Rouse notes (1992:14) or appease ancestry deities and attain knowledge needed to cure, make rain and obtain appropriate direction on community needs.



Two of the three anthropomorphic faces recovered from Trunk Bay. The third face is depicted on page 4 demonstrating an iconography transition between the two sites.



Map of St. John depicting the proximity of the Trunk Bay Site to that at Cinnamon Bay.

The bat is a predominate figure in Taino art. From the Chican and Santa Elean levels at Cinnamon Bay, ceramic adornos with fruit bat shaped noses are recovered. At Cinnamon Bay all anthropomorphic figures and ceremonial pots with adornos depicting headdress and the bat nose associated with the ancestral cult occur only in the upper three Chican levels. An anthropomorphic adorno with the bat nose but without the headdress was recovered at forty-five cmbs with typical Santa Elena ceramics. No anthropomorphic figures with a bat nose have been found below this level. Garcia Arevalo (1997:115) points out

that in the past these figures were falsely identified as monkey designs (Krieger 1931) and that Herrera Fritot and Youmans (1946: 69-83) correctly identify these as "humanized faces that highlight the isomorphism between these animals and the souls of the dead".

In essence these are, as Seigel (1991:234) points out, “physical representations, or icons, of their zemis”. The recognition that these adornos represent “ancestral zemis” appears particularly evident in the specimens from Cinnamon Bay with the obvious bat nose representing the dead soul mixed with human facial attributes, many with headdresses. The Taino believed that these icons held the spirit of the zemi or the apical ancestor. Although speculative, this may provide a clue as to why these effigy vessels have holes punched out of the bottom, in that, like other Native American cultures, this releases the spirit.

At Trunk Bay, a series of archaeological excavations were completed in 1997 for the installation of visitor facilities. Fourteen radiocarbon dates determined the site was occupied between A.D. 700-1000 with a primary occupation occurring around circa A.D. 900. Investigations found no evidence of ceremonial offerings, carved stone artifacts, stone beads, inlays or other objects associated with Taino elite. One secondary burial was identified for which certain remains may have been retained for ancestor worship and four ceramic anthropomorphic vessel fragments suggest a continuation of an ancestral cult. The presence of these symbolic ceramic figures indicates that the production of effigy vessels in the Saladoid Period (200 B.C.-600 A.D.) was continued, but in a different stylistic form much earlier than Period IVa (1200-1492 A.D.) as indicated by Rouse (1992:121). However, the presence in the archaeological record of this symbolic imagery is minimal compared to later periods. This lack of symbolic imagery may reflect a more communal society. As habitation shifts towards Cinnamon Bay, in the Monserrate level, roughly dated at A.D 1000-1200, a ceremoniously broken vessel and the head of a carved “zemi stone” are found in Unit 2 at 75 cmbs. The introduction of this type of “zemi” iconography and a commitment to braking a decorative pot in a specific manner for a ceremonial purpose may possibly indicate, in the Northern Virgin Islands, an initial reorientation in religious beliefs away from communal activity.



Large hearth and midden material along with outlying structural post molds exposed during excavations at the Trunk Bay Site.



Earliest ceramic adorno from Cinnamon Bay depicting a bat nose on an anthropomorphic face. Recovered from a Santa Elena ceramic subseries level.

In the Santa Elenan deposits at Cinnamon Bay (1) food offerings are either introduced or simply become obvious in the archaeological record, (2) there is a substantial increase in the number of ceremonial vessels and ceremoniously broken vessels, (3) symbolic iconography in the form of ceramic adornos greatly increases and (4) incised pottery becomes a dominant decorative technique. Within the upper most Santa Elenan cultural level (30-40 cmbs) the bat nose first appears on an adorno with an anthropomorphic face. The introduction of this specific symbolic iconography, in the archaeological record, suggests a cognitive reorientation of the religion reflective of a specific developmental stage in the evolution from egalitarian to complex society. The introduction of the bat effigy during this period serves several functions: (1) it introduces into and enhances the established ancestral cult by providing that physical manifestation of the natural world that has a dual connection to the supernatural world, (2) it offers the symbolic link between the human soul and the supernatural, (3) by so doing it brings into being a visual manifestation of the dead that is to be worshiped, consulted and, as the historical record indicates, feared and appeased, (4) thereby institutionalizing

a need for specific individuals who can communicate with the supernatural. In this process the elite have the power to determine the appropriate symbolic imagery that portrays the physical representations of the zemi. They have made ritual activities and offerings mandatory in order to “propitiate” (Rouse 1992:14) ancestry deities and attain knowledge needed to cure and obtain appropriate direction on community affairs associated with rain, harvest, war, and civil matters.

The Spanish observed, “that the chiefs were distinguished by headdresses adorned with gold and feathers” (Rouse 1992:11). Therefore it is hypothesized, that the sudden appearance of headdresses on all anthropomorphic bat-nosed adornos in the Chican levels reflects, at least in the Virgin Islands, that at this stage of social development the elite hierarchy emerges. The chief at this point is now the direct descendant of the worshiped ancestor and claims direct association and access to ancestors and the power of the supernatural world. He also gains an elite status by “claiming to have ancestors and spiritual beings (cemis) of a higher rank or status” (Curet and Oliver 1998:234).



Two head dressed anthropomorphic bat-nosed adornos from the Chican level 20-30 cmbs.

The archaeological evidence from Cinnamon Bay indicates that the area under investigation was continually used to worship ancestors and developed into the chief’s caney or temple between Levels 3 and 4. Here, as Rouse (1992:14) describes, the chief presides over, with the assistance of priests, a ceremony wherein he obligates the entire village to attend once a year and pay homage to his (the chief’s) zemis by praising them in song and dance, purifying themselves with vomiting sticks and producing offerings.



Face carved into a stone bead. Two holes are drilled through the stone. One hole through the length and the other through the diameter which makes an eye for the face. These two holes were possibly used to string with one and feather with the other for either a headdress or necklace.

The materials reflective of social change recovered from Trunk Bay and Cinnamon Bay support Curet and Oliver’s proposed hypothesis that an elite society evolved from an established ancestral cult over a long period possibly beginning in the Saladoid Period.

However, the sequential yet distinctly separate disposition of the ceramic subseries suggests that this evolutionary process is punctuated with sudden shifts in religious orientation.



In closing, a primary goal of this program is the promotion of community and visitor awareness about the island’s past and archaeology through volunteer participation and education. In many respects this project could not have been accomplished without this support and the help of the park’s Friend organization. Thousand of volunteers have donated their time and volunteers continue to assist in the program as

Many of these very small shell beads in pink, black and white and several bone carved objects were recovered from Cinnamon Bay that match this beaded belt found in the Dominican Republic. The teeth ornaments used in this belt also may indicate the use of the Monk Seal tooth depicted on page 4.



anthropology student interns continue to enlist there help. This help has become essential in the recovery and processing of the large amounts of materials. The educational program continues to involve schools from St. John and St. Thomas. With public education as a project goal, we have found that the science of archaeology still gets completed and in much greater detail with the extra help this goal has, as a result, provided.

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