

Iguanaboina and its Mesoamerican influence in Boriken

Emerging Taino Cultural Legacy Connects to Mesoamerica
by Roger Hernandez (*Presencia Taina.TV*)

Jayuya, Puerto Rico - Archeologist Robinson "Urayoan" Rosado delivered his ground-breaking presentation "En Busca de Iguanaboina" on the 513th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landfall on the indigenous Taino island homeland of Boriquen (Puerto Rico). This fascinating lecture took place at the Cedetra Centro Cultural in Coabay, Jayuya during the 37th Annual Festival Indigena (Nov. 17-19).

Rosado's latest Taino studies of the famed Caguana Centro Ceremonial Indigena in Utuado has regenerated significant interest regarding Caribbean indigenous petroglyphic stone artworks. Robinson relates the positions of the petroglyphs surrounding the ceremonial grounds (called batey) and their spatial architecture to the mythical symbolism of iguana and serpents in Puerto Rico.

Founder and President of La Sociedad Arquelogical Ciba de Ciales, and a member of the Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos, Rosado has long advocated that the Caguana site reveals linkages to Mesoamerican styling that dates back some 5,000 years. The Maya and Aztec cultures traditionally venerate the serpent and iguana art styles as symbols of water and fertility. These are two major elements deemed most relevant to the neighboring agrarian societies of the Caribbean and Yucatan. Closely related symbolism is also found in Ohio (USA) in the form of large serpent mounds, which can be viewed clearly from aerial photographs.

Prominent members of Caribbean academia have long dispelled any connection between Taino and Mesoamerican civilizations although documented evidence and geopolitical proximity would suggest otherwise.

For example, the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture (ICPR) and its founder; Dr. Ricardo Alegria, have not fully supported this linkage research although Mesoamerican ties are found in the language, mythology, and cultural lifestyles in Boriken. A few decades ago, Dr. Oswaldo Goyco documented and published some of these influences but was dissuaded from delving further into this theme by members of the island's academic elite.

It would seem that funding polemics and academic politics dictate where Puerto Rico's ancestral legacy begins and ends.

This unfortunate situation is evident in all historical and cultural subject areas as the ICPRs adversarial attitude against any challenges to the accepted position of the academic establishment continues to reveal itself. Beyond academia, the ICPR and its policies continue to discount the call for community participation by local Taino leadership with regard to elements of cultural importance such as indigenous related education, sacred sites preservation, and related national/international indigenous policies.

In response to the ICPR's anti-indigenous position, recent direct actions taken by local Taino leaders such as the 2005 seventeen-day take over of the Caguana Ceremonial park (now known as "El Grito de Caguana") have spawned a growing interest in areas of preserving cultural ancestral lands and sacred indigenous sites among various sectors of the Puerto Rican populace.

These educational initiatives however are met with conquista-like reprisals championed by the ICPR. An ICPR media campaign attempting to defame the character and legitimacy of the local Taino leaders has been initiated by this intergovernmental agency, which continues to reinforce the "Taino extinction myth" despite DNA evidence to the contrary.

The indigenous reclamation of "El Grito de Caguana" and Robinson Rosado's recent presentation suggesting a greater Mesoamerican linkage at Caguana are intricately related. Both events represent aspects of indigenous culture and heritage that the island's academic elite have not been willing to readily accept.

At a time when conflicting reports involving ICPR and its governmental administrative leadership has created less public confidence in the agency's ability to properly manage and direct elements of its own mandate - notwithstanding Taino culture - it remains to be seen if ICPR will continue to resist or will embrace these emerging challenges to the island's established local history.

*UCTP Taino News Moderator's Note: More detailed converge on Iguanaboina from El Nueva Dia can found on page 18 of "La Revista" (Nov. 19, 2006) or at:
http://www.endi.com/noticia/la_revista/vida_y_estilo/en_busca_de_iguanaboina/112645*