

# KACIKE

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*Special Issue:*

## New Directions in Taíno Research

**Nuevas direcciones en las  
investigaciones sobre la herencia Taína**

**Edited by Dr. Lynne Guitar**

**Contributors:**

- ◆ Lynne Guitar
- ◆ P. J. Ferbel
- ◆ Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado
- ◆ Fernando Luna Calderón
- ◆ Jorge Ulloa

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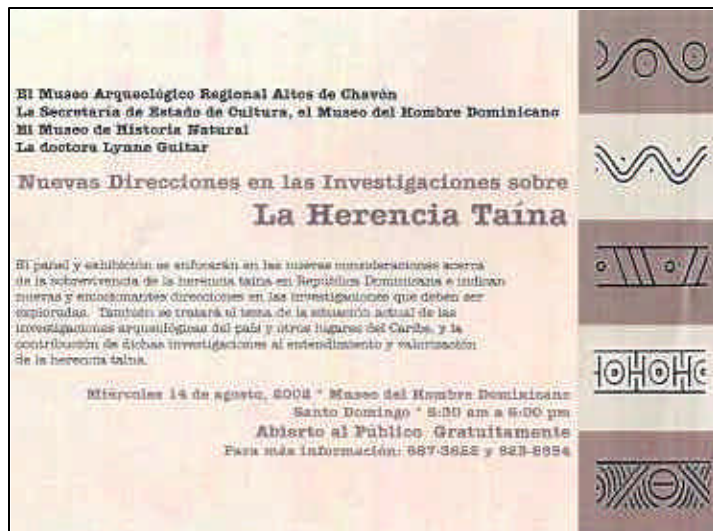
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# NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF TAÍNO HERITAGE Conference and Exhibition

Introduction by  
Pedro Ferbel and Lynne Guitar



Poster for the Conference

On Wednesday, August 14, 2002, we attended the first conference of what we hope will be an ongoing series focusing on “New Directions in the Study of Taíno Heritage” at the Dominican Republic’s National Museum of Dominican Man, Santo Domingo. This conference and exhibition signaled a new approach to Taíno studies as it focused on the survival of the Native People of the Caribbean as opposed to the traditional academic orientation that assumes Taíno cultural and biological extinction. Presentations from historical, anthropological, and

genetic perspectives, along with cultural exhibitions showcasing contemporary Taíno heritage, suggested the beginning of a new understanding of the history and identity of the multi-ethnic, creolized Caribbean. Multi-disciplinary evidence demonstrates that Taíno culture and bloodlines survived on the margins of Spanish colonial society from the earliest period of colonization to the present day. The conference was a great success in elevating the position of Taíno studies from the dusty shelves of artifact collectors to an informed dialogue about the politics of history, race, and culture, and the composition of national identity. In this way, the cultural institutions of the Dominican Republic could see their role as leaders in the evaluation of culture for all the people of the Dominican Republic.

The conference represented a first in collaboration among several Dominican cultural organizations and foreign institutions. The regional Archeological Museum at Altos de Chavón, directed by Arlene Alvarez, and the National Museum of Dominican Man, through Glenis Tavarez, one of their vice-directors, collaborated with independent scholar Lynne Guitar to organize the event and to bring in specialists from Puerto Rico and the United States. With financial assistance from Dominican institutions and the Centro Franklin of the United States Embassy, the conference and its linked events became a reality. Among those linked events, the national Museum of Natural History arranged a workshop on mitochondrial DNA analysis for Dominican scientists, under the guidance of Dr. Fernando Luna Calderón (director of the museum) and Dr. Juan Carlos

Martínez Cruzado from Puerto Rico; the workshop took place the day after the conference, on August 15.

The conference actually began the evening of Tuesday, August 13, with a small cocktail reception at the elegant Pat'e Palo restaurant, off the Plaza España in the Colonial Zone, facing Diego Colon's *Alcazar* on the Ozama River, or, as it is locally called, the Columbus House. Artisans whose work was being showcased during the next day's conference, conference speakers, museum directors, and diplomatic guests gathered over drinks and *picadera* to become acquainted and discuss their work before the next day's sessions began.



Dr. Juan Carlos  
Martínez Cruzado

The conference officially began on Wednesday morning with brief presentations by the directors of both sponsoring museums--Arlene Alvarez, director of the Archaeological Museum of Altos de Chavón; and Carlos Andujar, director of the Museum of Dominican Man. The directors summarized their current research programs and their visions and challenges for developing their institutions. This led to an important discussion about protecting national patrimony and archaeological heritage. The invited lecturers followed, beginning with historian Dr. Lynne Guitar with her presentation on "Documenting the Myth of the Extinction of the Taíno Culture" and Dr. Pedro Ferbel with his anthropological work on "The Survival of Taíno Culture in the Dominican Republic." These presentations led to an intensive conversation with the other panelists and the audience, which included professional researchers, students, and interested general citizenry. After a break for lunch, we returned to hear lectures by Dominican physical anthropologist Dr. Fernando Luna Calderón on "Taíno Mitochondrial DNA in the Dominican Republic" and Puerto Rican biologist Dr. Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado on "The Use of Mitochondrial DNA to Discover Pre-Columbian Migrations to the Caribbean: Results for Puerto Rico and Expectations for the Dominican Republic." After these presentations, there was another flurry of discussion. Conversation moved between disciplines and prompted many exclamations of interest and sharing of ideas among researchers and institutions. In the last session, Dr. Jorge Ulloa of Cuba outlined the state of archaeology and directed Taíno research in his country, and José Guerrero and Gabriel Atilles did the same for the Dominican Republic.



Dr. Fernando Luna  
Calderon

In the salon immediately outside the conference room, there were simultaneous exhibitions all day long of Taíno-inspired textiles created by Gloriver Cordero Wright, Taíno ceramic replicas created by the Hermanos Guillén, Taíno-inspired ceramics created by Rafael Sepúlveda, cassabe and other yucca-based products prepared in the ancient Taíno way (with modern adaptations) by "Mecho" Castillo Reyes of Cacique, and Taíno musical instruments presented by the family of Román Pérez, representing the New-York-based Grupo Maisiti Yacayeque Taíno. Román, his wife Diana, and their

two children, Gabriel and Sofiya, closed the conference in a gala way by presenting an exhibition of Taíno dancing and singing, encouraging all the audience to join in.



Sofiya Perez

After the conference, a group of us participated in three days of anthropological and biological field study in the region around San Juan de la Maguna in the southwestern mountains, Cacique-Monción in the northwestern mountains, and in Boca Nueva/Los Cocos, along the Atlantic coast just east of Puerto Plata, as well as in small towns along the scenic mountain route (La Ruta Turística) that crosses the mountains between Santiago and Puerto Plata/Sosua. The group's principal work of collecting hair samples for mtDNA analysis and interviewing the volunteer donors was led by Dr. Juan Carlos Martínez Cruzado, assisted by Dr. Lynne Guitar, Dr. Pedro Ferbel, Lic. Glennis Tavárez, Lic. Arlene Alvarez, and the entire family of Román Pérez. This study not only will contribute to our knowledge of Quisqueyan Taíno origins and their relationship to the Taínos of Boriquén, but also furthered our ability for institutional sharing and planning for future events--publications, workshops, seminars, and what we hope will become an ongoing series of conferences and exhibitions highlighting new directions in Taíno Heritage.



Pedro Ferbel and Fernando Luna Calderon

Herewith, in this special edition of *KACIKE*, we would like to share with you the papers that were presented at the NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF TAÍNO HERITAGE conference and exhibition. Pedro Ferbel translated his own to English from Spanish (note that there are slight differences in the two versions); the rest were



translated by Lynne Guitar, who takes sole responsibility for any errors committed in doing so. Unfortunately, written papers were not made available by either José Guerrero or Gabriel Atilles.



Dr. Lynne Guitar and the conference featured in *Rumbo* Aug. 26, 2002.