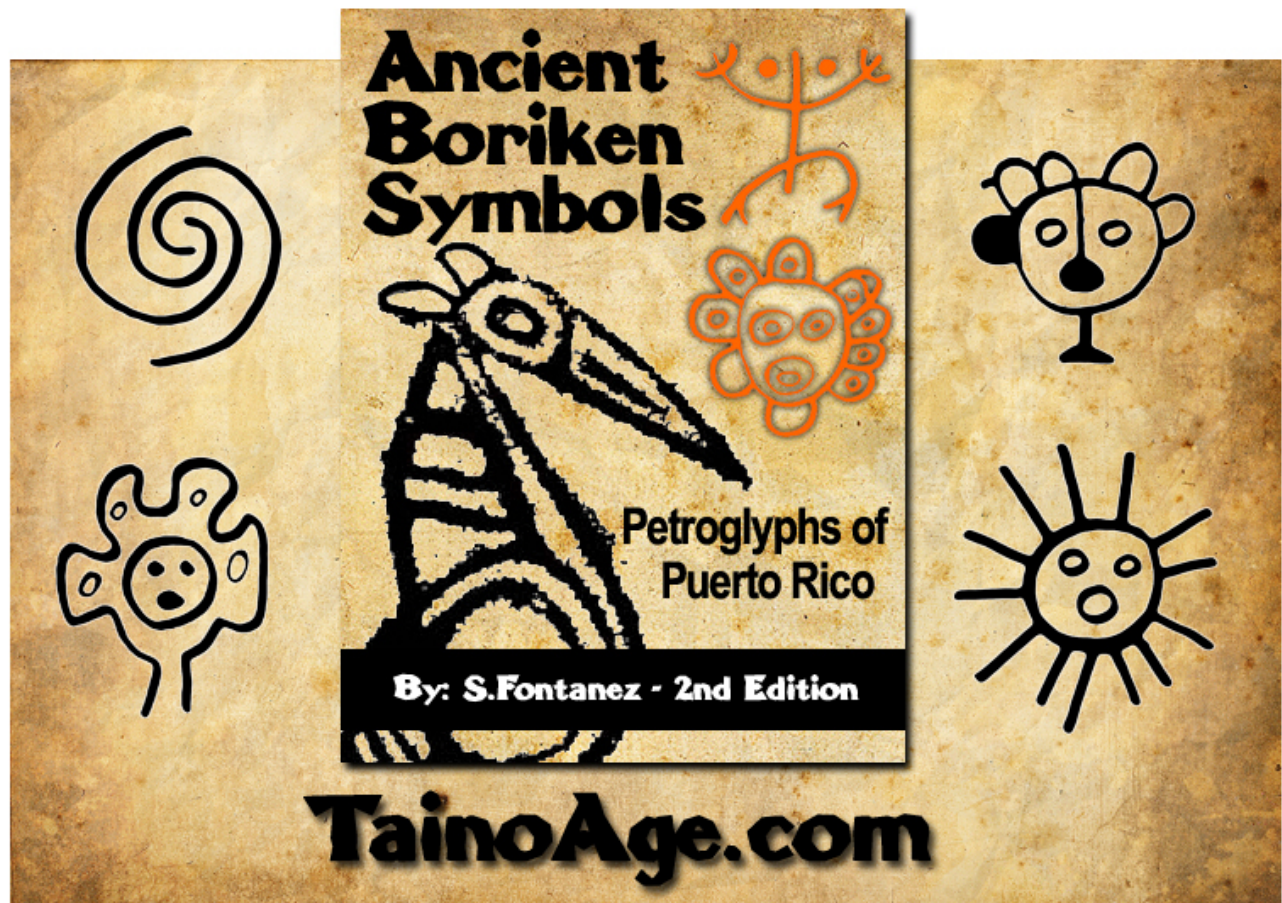




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A Brief History

FIRST MIGRATIONS

Many historians believe that there were a series of immigrations to the island of Boriken. Many historians believe that the Tainos originated from Venezuela's Orinoco basin or coastal areas, while others believe they came from North America. These first people were called Arcaicos. The second migration came from South America, near the Orinoco River and were the Araucos, around the year 370 A.D. The third migration, the Caribs and the Arawaks, came also from South America; this cultural phase is known as Pre-Taíno. Taino People are descendants of the Arawaks who migrated into the Caribbean islands.



TAINO SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Taino society was basically a gentle culture. It was characterized by happiness, friendliness and a highly organized hierarchical and paternal society. In fact the word "Taino" means Good and Noble. They lived in large farming communities throughout the Greater Antilles that included the islands of Puerto Rico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Cuba.

The Taino's primary source of protein was meat or fish which was either raw or partially cooked. There were some small mammals that were hunted which included snakes, rodents, bats, worms, birds, ducks and turtles from the lakes and sea.

The Taino had a developed system of agriculture which was environmentally friendly and almost maintenance free. They raised their crops in a conuco, a large mound which was devised especially for farming. They packed the conuco with leaves which improved drainage and protected it from soil erosion. One of the primary crops cultivated by the Taino was cassava or yuca, which they ate as a flat bread. They also grew corn, squash, beans, peppers, sweet potatoes, yams, peanuts as well as tobacco. Their villages were governed by chieftains, or caciques. The cacique's function was to keep the welfare of the village by assigning daily work and making sure everyone got an equal share.

The relatives of the caciques lived together in large houses in the center of the village. These houses reflect the warmth of the climate and simply used mud, straw and palm leaves. The houses did not contain much furniture. People slept in cotton hammocks or simply on mats of banana leaves. The general population lived in large circular buildings called bohios, constructed with wooden poles, woven straw, and palm leaves.

WARFARE

Not particularly warlike people, the Tainos did have to defend themselves from the aggressive Caribs who were cannibals. The Caribs often raided the peaceful Tainos, killing the men, stealing the women for breeding, and eating the children.

Tainos had some weapons which they used in warfare. They used the bow and arrow, and developed poisons for their arrow tips. They made cotton ropes for defense purposes and spears with hooks on the ends. Hardwoods on the island of Boriken, provided the means to make a war club made of macana.

MYTHOLOGY

Taino mythology tells that life originated in a cave, called Cacibajagua, the same name given to the bat, which was associated with the origin of life. This figure is commonly found on mashers, pots, plates and amulets. Tainos often made idols of their gods out of clay, wood, cotton, or stone. These idols are also called cemís.

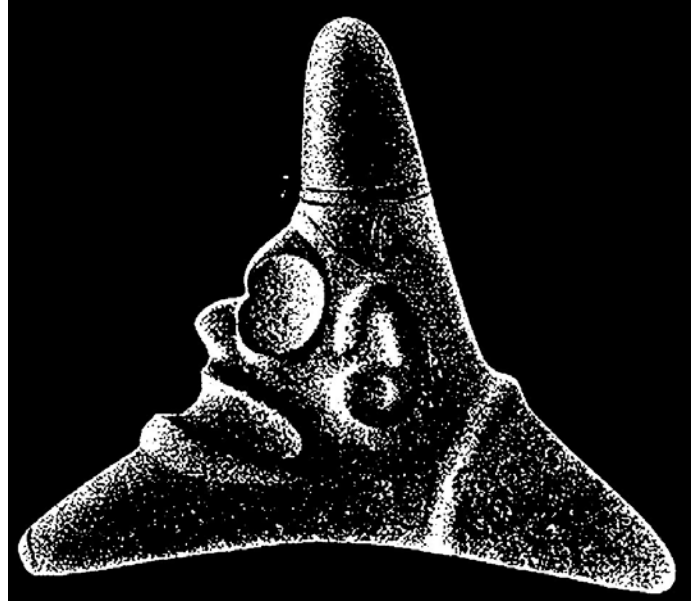
One of the most common cemís is the three-pointed figure Yucahú. Yucahú was the guiding spirit for all the Taínos. Sometimes they buried their cemís in their fields or mounds to ensure good crops.

TAINO ART & SYMBOLS

The Taínos decorated their bodies with imprinted designs. These designs held spiritual significance and depicted beliefs of religious rituals, social and political organizations.

Clay seals engraved with symbols called pintaderas dipped in red dye made from achiote seeds were commonly used. Taino people used many ceremonial designs found throughout the island of Boriken.

The Tainos carved symbols representing many aspects of daily culture and spirituality which are usually found today around freshwater pools, along streams and rivers, on rocks found in caves, on coastlines, and at ceremonial sites such as ball courts.



Ancient Boriken Symbols

On a hot summer evening the rains come down on the tropical forests of Boriken. The rain retreats, steam from the giant boulders rise into the air, as the sun settles to the west, the shadows return and once again give life to the ancient rock carvings, making them visible to the naked eye.

Hundreds of symbols in the form of petroglyphs (rock carvings) can be found on the island of Puerto Rico.

With the lack of scientific evidence, **no one knows for certain what most of these symbols mean**, although many theories are possible. To better appreciate these ancient symbols, a good understanding of how these indigenous people lived is essential.



Rock Art

Petroglyphs are rock drawings or carvings. The word comes from the Greek words petros meaning "*stone*" and gluphē, meaning "*carving*". These are images created by removing part of a rock surfaces by carving, and abrading. Petroglyphs are found world-wide, and are often associated with prehistoric peoples.

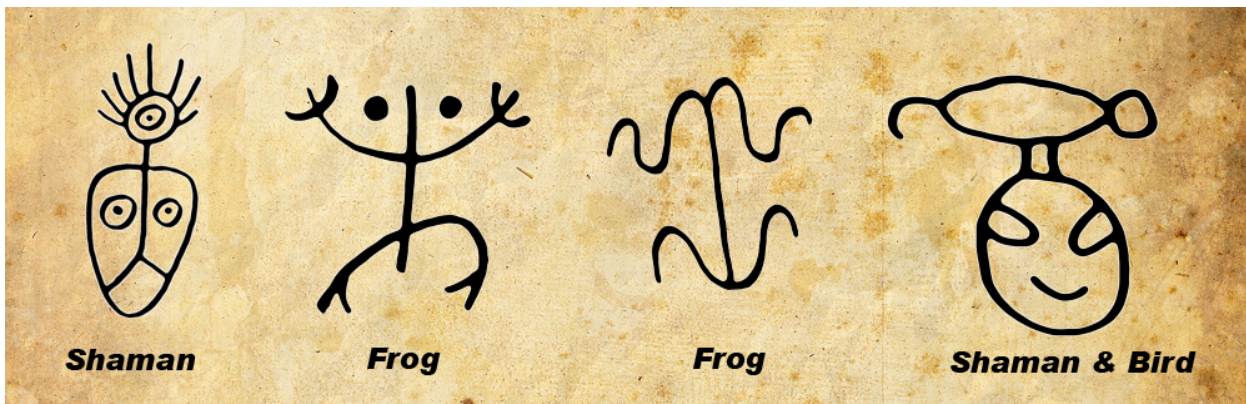


Meaning of the Petroglyphs (Symbols)

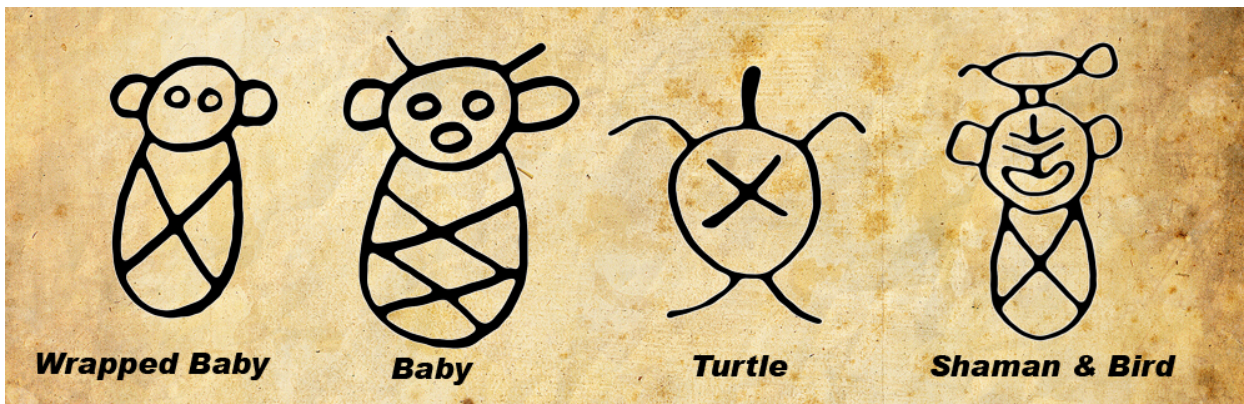
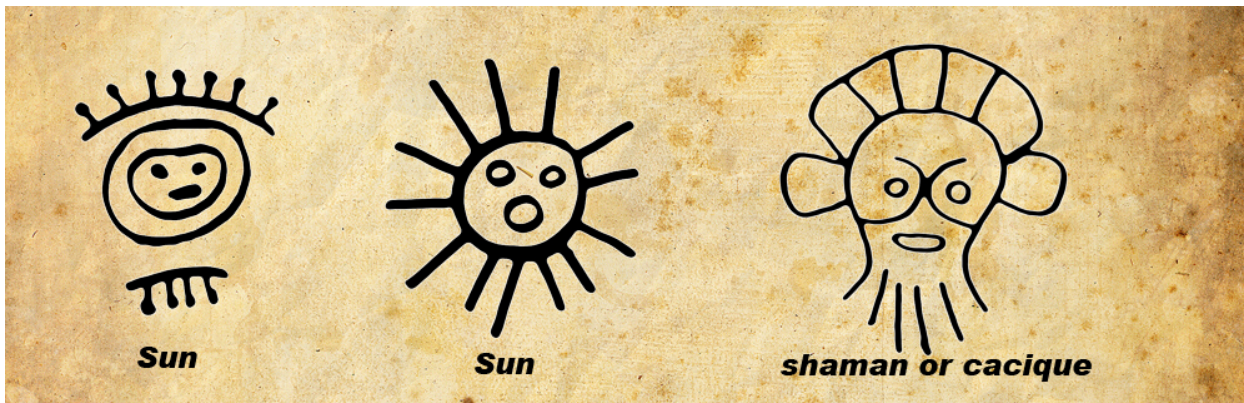
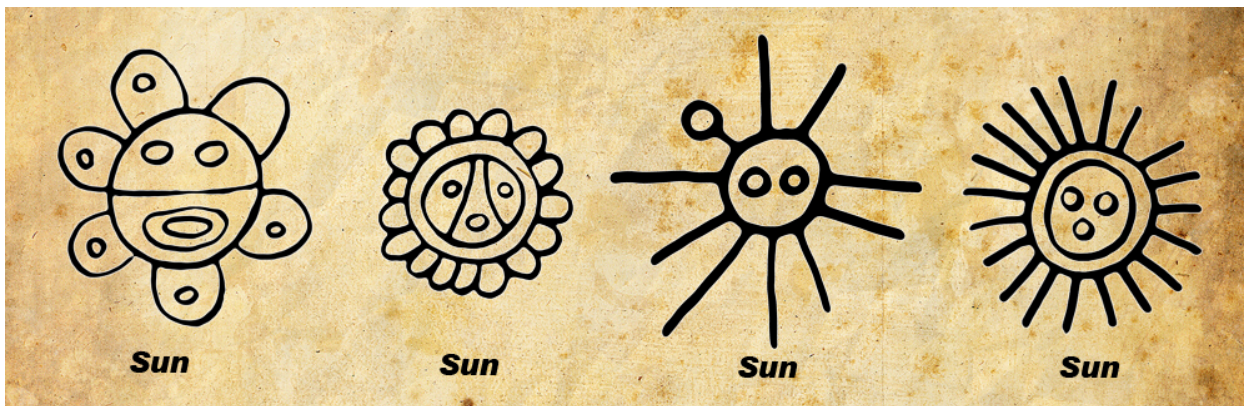
It is unclear of what most petroglyphs or symbols really mean. Over time, scholars have taken educated guesses of what they might mean and to this day can only speculate.

Some of the “face” symbols may represent shamans, gods, animals (bats & owls) and people of the tribes. Tainos may have also carved zemi spirits or gods with human-like faces.

Below are common symbols that have been interpreted:

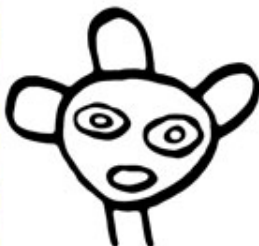
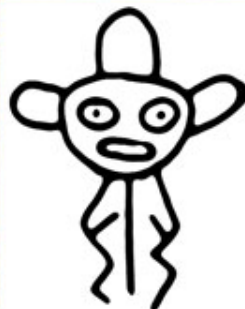


Note: Many of the symbols seen here are used widely by Artisans from around the island. These symbols are etched on stone, leather, wood and metal and found in gift shops in Puerto Rico.

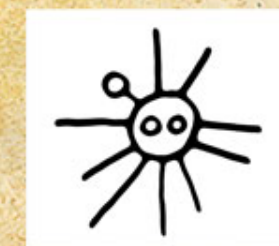
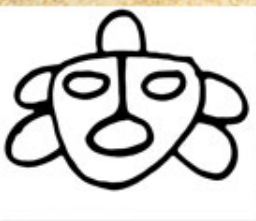
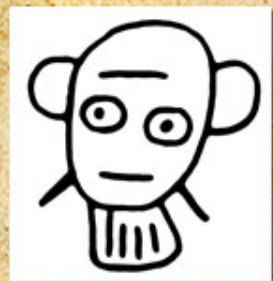
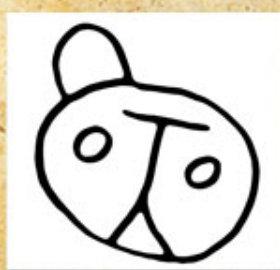
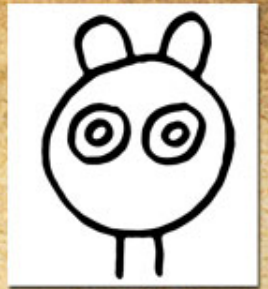
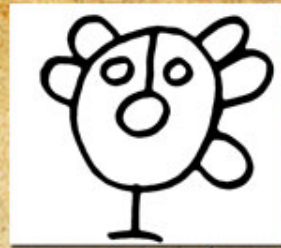


Though these meanings are “only” educated guesses it is up to the individual to find their own possible meaning and appreciate them as sacred Taino art.

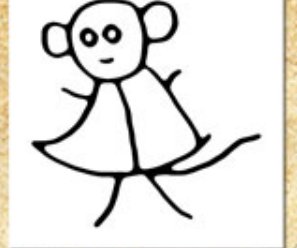
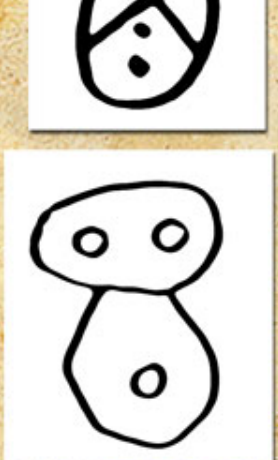
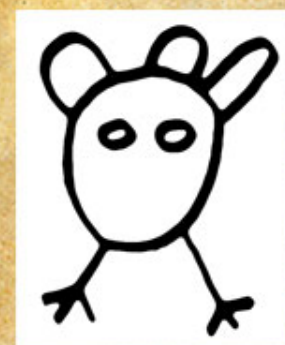
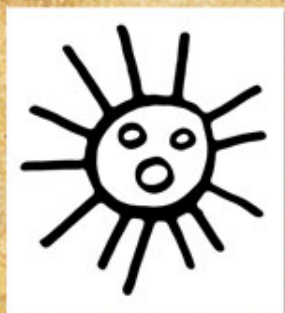
Boriken Symbols



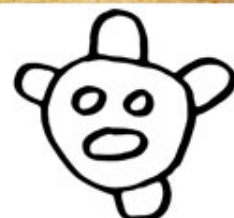
Boriken Symbols



Boriken Symbols



Boriken Symbols



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