



Guabancex — The Storm Queen, or Goddess of Hurricanes

The word "hurricane" is from the language of the Taino people, who were on Guana from about 1,500 years ago until just before Columbus' second voyage to the New World. In Taino mythology, the goddess "Guabancex" (gwah-bahn-say), meaning "Lady of Winds," controls the wind and the storms. When angered, she comes to remove corruption and decay from the islands, sweeping away everything in her path with the combined forces of the wind and water in order to renew the islands. It is believed she brings the hurricanes with the assistance of the gods of the rains and thunderstorms, who must do her bidding when called upon. Her visitation of the hurricanes on the islands is usually attributed to the straying of the population from worship of the deity or failure to make a proper offering. She is powerful and has the ability to force the other gods to assist her in her work.



A ceramic shard found on the Flat an anthropomorphic depiction of Guabancex, or at least a part of her with her head and one complete outstretched, upward curving arm. It is believed to be a significant first finding of her icon in the British Virgin Islands. Images of Taino gods found on ceramics are not common among these smaller, groups. Finding an image of Guabancex, such a powerful goddess, on Guana Island is a distinctive mark of the importance of the island and the status of its residents among the Taino society. While it cannot be inferred with certainty without further study, the finding of these higher-status items such as the Guabancex shard and other fragments indicates that the island played an important role in the apex of the Taino society in the northern Antillean archipelago.

Deb Davis, the archeologist who reported these findings in 2013, strongly urges that a rigorous program of study be undertaken to thoroughly and systematically investigate and review again the areas of occupation on the island. As it is in pristine condition, undisturbed by modern construction and activity over much of the island's landscape, Guana represents a unique opportunity to learn about the role of a small, yet possibly highly important part, of the pre-Columbian activities in the Virgin Islands.

