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William F. Keegan. *Taino Indian Myth and Practice: The Arrival of the Stranger King.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-3038-8.

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To categorize William F. Keegan's *Taíno Indian Myth and Practice: The Arrival of the Stranger King* simply as an excursus on a particular topic in Caribbean prehistory–that is, the figure of Caonabó, a *cacique* on Hispaniola captured by the Spanish during an unsuccessful rebellion in 1495–would be doing it a disservice. Assuredly, while the figure Caonabó is the axis around which the rest of the book revolves, he is but one player in the larger story that Keegan wishes to tell, which takes in not only wider aspects of Caribbean archaeology but the whole way that cultural narratives of this sort are constructed and understood. Indeed, categorizing Keegan's approach as a "story" is not inappropriate, given that he explicitly frames the book as a kind of postmodernist, "non-fiction novel," inspired, he recounts, by Truman Capote (pp. 15-16). The relative successes of both this approach and the specific arguments regarding Caonabó's origins are perhaps best considered separately from the book's wider discussion of Taíno culture and particular focus on Bahamian archaeology.

Indeed, whether Keegan achieves his nominal goal of pegging Caonabó's place of origin to a particular Bahamian site, MC-6 on Middle Caicos Island, may well be debated. Reduced to its most basic components, the argument seems to run broadly as follows: evidence regarding both Taíno and Spanish understandings of Caonabó suggest he was foreign to Hispaniola (location of his *cacicazgo* and rebellion); Bartolomé de las Casas indicates Caonabó was Lucayan (that is, from the Bahamas); and site MC-6 is the sort of suitably impressive and distinctive site that might be imagined as capable of producing a figure such as Caonabó. The journey through this argument is both entertaining and informative, though such an argument itself can hardly be more than speculative. Ultimately, the closer Keegan gets to the archaeology of site MC-6, the more authoritative his discussion becomes. Fortunately, this subject occupies much of the book's latter portions, where Keegan's formidable expertise in Bahamian archaeology makes for a powerful synthesis of undoubted value to experts and novices alike, regardless of whether or not one accepts the arguments regarding Caonabó and his career trajectory.

Indeed, though Keegan's various arguments that we should attempt to study culture in its totality, that cultural beliefs structure actions, and that observers' own beliefs structure their understandings of the observed are all eminently acceptable (and welcome), the further from archaeology and into areas such as folklore and history he moves, the more questions may appear. For example, after a dense theoretical discussion in the opening chapters, Keegan's quest for Caonabó begins with analysis of historical accounts of early Taíno-Spanish interaction that is almost immediately handicapped by reliance on translations and secondary sources that inevitably distance him (and the reader) from the material. Moving on, while his discussion of the mythologically informed Taíno worldview is erudite and thought-provoking, the critical reader may sometimes wonder how much is speculative (and how speculative it is), while specialists in particular areas–say, folklorists or linguists–may feel some issues that might have usefully been brought to bear on the argument have been omitted or sidelined. This is, perhaps, inevitable in a study of such ambitious scope by single specialist, but equally it might hint that answering Keegan's call to approach culture as a complex and holistically understood "hyperspace cloud of meaning" (synthesizing descriptions from pp. 14 and 15) is something almost inevitably beyond the capacity of any one observer if it is to be simultaneously authoritative in both detail and scope. Accordingly, a further silent, unarticulated argument of this book might be that a multivalent approach to the study of culture calls for the coordinated efforts of multidisciplinary teams.

Nevertheless, while the book's nominally central argument for Caonabó's origins in site MC-6 in the Bahamas must almost inevitably remain speculative, and the unorthodox structuring of that argument may not

immediately inspire a host of imitators, if this book perhaps raises more questions than it answers, that is not necessarily a bad thing in itself. This book's principal attractions probably lie in Keegan's accessible and appealing–and, in his areas of strength, highly authoritative–discussion of complicated (and, perhaps to many, unfamiliar) issues in Taíno archaeology, as well as in its broader journey through Caribbean prehistory and culture. By its end, any reader should feel, if not a king, at least much less a stranger to these topics.

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