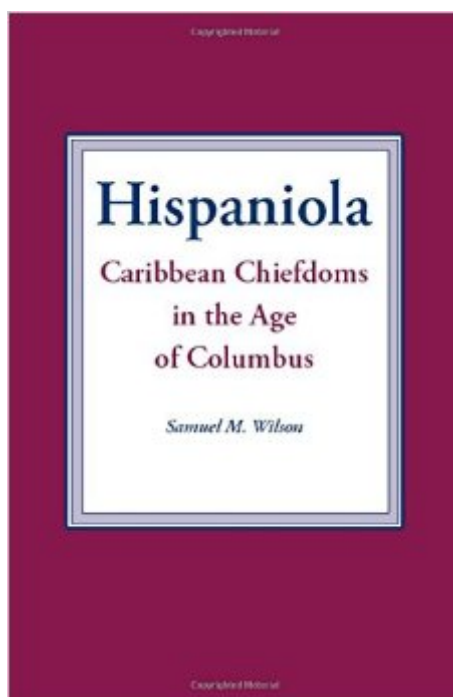


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Hispaniola: Caribbean Chiefdoms In The Age Of Columbus



Synopsis

In 1492 the island of Hispaniola was inhabited by the Taino, an Indian group whose ancestors had moved into the Caribbean archipelago from lowland South America more than 1,500 years before. They were organized politically into large cacicazgos, or chiefdoms, comprising 70 or more villages under the authority of a paramount cacique, or chief. From the first voyage on, Columbus made Hispaniola his primary base for operations in the New World. Over the subsequent decades, disease, warfare, famine, and enslavement brought about the destruction of the Taino chiefdoms and almost completely annihilated the aboriginal population of the island. This book examines the early years of the contact period in the Caribbean and in narrative form reconstructs the social and political organization of the Taino. Wilson describes in detail the interactions between the Taino and the Spaniards, with special attention paid to the structure and functioning of the Taino chiefdoms. By providing additional information from archaeology and recent ethnography, he builds a rich context within which to understand the Taino and their responses to the Europeans. The Taino are especially important in a New World context because they represent a society undergoing rapid sociopolitical change and becoming more complex through time. The early contact period on Hispaniola gives us a rich ethnohistorical glimpse of the political processes of a complex New World society before and during its destruction brought about by the arrival of the Europeans.

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Customer Reviews

A great depth analysis of the relationship between the Spaniard and the Taino chiefdom in the early

Colombian contact period. Hispaniola was the center of much early recorded history. Taino society was complex. In fact, the Taino society was evolving from a chiefdom into a State when Columbus first arrived on the shores of the Bahamas Islands. Nevertheless, the Spaniards did not understand the Taino culture nor their chiefdoms. There are great chapters on Columbus' early voyages and Taino cultural responses and reactions toward the Spaniards. It is a concise book and easy to read. Great bibliography. I recommended it.

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