Abstract: The formation of an ethnic or cultural identity involves the integration of internal mental states and external physical elements. These identities are usually made up of varying combinations of new, more or less constant, and borrowed components. Present Caribbean societies are no exception, where European, African and Amerindian cultural backgrounds are available for the formation process. In this paper we explore one aspect of current Puerto Rican and Dominican ethnic formation: the incorporation of certain past native visual symbols of expression—rock art—into their social identities.

Résumé: La formation d’une identité ethnique ou culturelle implique l’intégration des états mentaux internes et externes aussitôt que des éléments physiques externes. Ces identités sont généralement constituées des combinaisons variables des composants originaux plus ou moins constants et des composants empruntés. Les sociétés actuelles des Caraïbes ne font pas exception, où des milieux culturels européens, africains et amérindiens sont disponibles pour le processus de formation. Dans cet article, nous explorons un aspect actuel de formation ethnique portoricaine et dominicaine : l’incorporation de certains symboles d’expression visuelle indigène du passé - l’art rupestre - dans leurs identités sociales.

Resumen: La formación de una identidad étnica o cultural toca sobre la integración de estructuras mentales internas con indicaciones físicas externas. Estas identidades normalmente representan combinaciones diferentes de componentes nuevos, permanentes (más o menos) y prestados. Las sociedades del Caribe del presente son iguales, con herencias culturales africanas, europeas y nativas disponibles para este proceso de formación. En esta ponencia examinaremos un aspecto de la formación étnica de las poblaciones hoy día de Puerto Rico y La República Dominicana: la incorporación de ciertos símbolos de expresión visuales de indios pasados—arte rupestre—as part of their social identities.
Introduction

Boundaries exist in various forms: geographical, cultural, ethnic and ideational. For humans the physical world is not neutral; they imbue it with identities and beliefs that remake the natural environment into a cultural one. We live here, others live over there; this valley defines our territory, that valley does not; our ancestral spirits reside in the west, not the east.

Rock art represents one data source that can be employed to investigate these boundaries that exist, change or remain the same across time and space. In this presentation we examine the ethnogenesis of modern Puerto Rican and Dominican society that has drawn on living Spanish and African traditions, as well as a dead Amerindian legacy, but not in the case of Puerto Rico, a North American one. The area’s prehistoric rock art and present artisan traditions provide one means to view the process whereby elements of the native past are resurrected and incorporated into their ethnic identities. In effect, the past symbolic images carved into stone “crossover” a time boundary and become part of the symbols of the new resident island societies.

Ethnic Identity in Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology

Beginning in the 1960s a substantial body of social science literature has developed on ethnicity, both in sociology and in anthropology. Ethnicity is now recognized as one of the most important phenomenon of social structure and social organization in human societies (see for example Cohen 1978). The concept in modern anthropology can be considered to express the underlying principle of how humans constitute their societies that are made up of different groups. These groups are defined vis-à-vis at least one other division as in Americans versus non-Americans, or on the basis of both inclusion and exclusion. One is an American, but part of that definition also means that one is not a Mexican (dual citizenship provides an exception). Individuals may belong to more than one ethnic category were the groups vary in such characteristics as size, and degree of interaction with other ethnic and cultural divisions.

Ethnic affiliation or ethnicity, according to one recent definition, is a property of an ethnic group, “a named social category of people based on shared social experience or ancestry. Members of the ethnic group see themselves as sharing cultural traditions and history that distinguish them from other groups. Ethnic group identity has a strong psychological or emotional component that divides the people of the world into the categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Peoples and Bailey 2003:346). It is produced via a process of “ethnogenesis,” either through division of existing groups due to migration or isolation, or through the combining of several groups into one as a result of conquest, acculturation, disease or other factors (Peoples and Bailey 2003:349-350).

Key attributes of an ethnic group include an origin myth or legend, an ideological charter of the beginning of its uniqueness and superiority to others. These accounts may or may not contain elements of historically verifiable events and personages. Nonetheless, the ethnic members themselves believe these stories, with varying degrees of fervor. In modern nation states, for instance, the subject of history as taught in schools can be viewed as the collective origin myth of the group, so that American history becomes the story of the ethnic group “Americans” (Peoples and Bailey 2003:347-348). One or more ethnic groups may be dominate within a political entity such as a nation state, cross-cut political divisions like the Kurds found in Iraq and Turkey, or even form supra- national categories from related cultures as in the European people or civilization (Peoples and Bailey 2003:350-351).
Another key attribute is that ethnicity is situational in nature rather than absolute. It occurs because individuals belong to multiple groupings that can be hierarchically nested or ordered; however, their importance at any one time depends on the particular behavioral context or situation (Cohen 1978:387-389; Peoples and Bailey 2003:346-347). For instance, one can claim descent from German, English and Scottish ancestors that migrated to the United States. When one votes the critical ethnic group is the American/United States one; when one applies for membership in the German-American Society it is the German category.

Normally readily observable markers are used to establish and maintain boundaries with other groups. These ethnic membership identifiers involve behavioral traits such as unique food taboos or preferences, dress, language, and religion (Peoples and Bailey 2003:348-349), as well as material cultural ones from pottery production methods to settlement layouts.

**Rock Art and Ethnicity in Contemporary Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic**

Roe (Roe and Hayward 2008) elsewhere has argued that rock art formed part of the ethnogenesis of prehistoric Puerto Rican internal identity and external differentiation. This relationship between rock art and ethnicity is also evident in the ethnographic Puerto Rican, as well as Dominican present.

Puerto Ricans and Dominicans share a common social or cultural experience that largely results from the convergence of three legacies or traditions: Taino, Spanish, and African. Puerto Ricans due to their political ties with the United States add a fourth or North American tradition. Various Taino groups (Rouse 1992) occupied the northern or Greater Antilles at the time of Spanish entry into the New World. They were organized into complex chiefdoms with stratified social structures and believed that the world was inhabited by spirits from god-like beings, to life forces to those of inanimate objects. Collectively these supernatural beings and forces were termed cemís with the word also referring to their physical manifestations. Stone, wood, bone, shell, pottery, and human skeletal remains were among the materials used to make such fitting receptacles as sculpted three-pointed stone objects and free-standing statues for the cemís. Taino groups and their immediate predecessors also produced abundant and at some locations large and complex assemblages of rock art distributed on Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in caves, along waterways and on stone slabs aligning ball courts. José Oliver (2005), in particular, has argued that petroglyphs also embodied the power or persona of cemís. Rock art in general is considered to have functioned in religious and ritual contexts, as well as the intersecting political-religious realms (see for example, Rouse 1992; Oliver 1998, 2005).

The Spanish colonization of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola (modern nation states of the Dominican Republic and Haiti) meant the eventual elimination of the Taino as an organized ethnic grouping through warfare, disease, forced labor and social disruption. In Puerto Rico, listings of Taino or Indio as a separate category in censuses end by the late 1790s; in official Dominican documents in far less time or by the mid-1500s. Disagreement exists among the general populace and researchers as to the nature and degree of native continuity afterwards. Individuals or groups from Puerto Rico’s mountainous interior are mentioned as being descendents of the Taino or as maintaining past native traditions, while arguments for continued Amerindian survival and the bequeathing of cultural elements from agricultural practices to food stuffs to words are made for Dominican society (Anderson-Córdova 1990; Dàvila 2001:36-37, 42-43; Ferbel 2002; Guitar 2002; Haslip-Viera 2001a:3, 2006:265; Morales Carrión 1983:6-8; Moya Pons 2006: 33-37; Vega 2007). The extent of native genetic survivorship within modern day Puerto Rican, in addition to Dominican
and Cuban populations is being debated between a relatively weak or more robust Amerindian contribution (Bonilla et al. 2004; Fernandez Cobo et al. 2001; Hanis et al. 1991; Haslip Viera 2006; Lalueza-Fox et al. 2003; Lalueza-Fox et al. 2001; Martinez Cruzado et al. 2005; Martinez Cruzado et al. 2001; Mendizabal et al. 2008).

Spain’s colonial policies frustrated and retarded Puerto Rico’s, as well as the general Spanish Caribbean’s socio-economic and political growth. For Puerto Rico, these exploitive conditions albeit with periods of reform, along with the early 1800s wars of independence in the remaining Spanish colonies, helped to foster a pro-independence movement that in 1869 broke out into an armed rebellion. The insurrection was quickly put down and Spain retained control over the island until the Spanish-American War of 1898 (Brás 2009; Morales Carrión 1983:25-125). Ethnic groups during this period included Spanish and other European-born residents on the island, a local elite of majority Spanish-descent, African slaves, and various mixed or mulatto categories such as Spanish-African and Spanish- or African-Indian. African slaves were brought in early with the first European settlers; their importance subsequently increased in part due to the demise of the native population, as well as labor demands in island industries and agriculture, especially sugar cane production (Brás 2009; Morales Carrión 1983:31-36). Despite their economic importance, their numerical representation remained lower than in other Caribbean areas: by the 1800s between 11 and 14 percent of the total population. In fact, free black and mulatto groups outnumbered the slaves, which were officially emancipated in 1873 (Morales Carrión 1983:105, 113-115).

In 1898 as just noted Puerto Rico passes from Spanish colonial rule, which actually ended in a brief period of self-governance, to that of the United States. From then to now, Americanization has resulted in profound changes in island population, and socioeconomic and political institutions. Today Puerto Ricans hold U.S. citizenship; elect a local governor and legislature; and have experienced significant migration to the U.S. mainland. They are dependent economically and politically on the U.S., with an unresolved political status. Political parties are organized around the status issue: those for independence, Commonwealth or semi-autonomy and statehood (Morales Carrión 1983). Americans have been added to ethnic mix, as have other Caribbean groups including Cubans and Dominicans.

The Dominican Republic’s history, in common with Puerto Rico, begins under Spanish rule, but then diverges politically and ethno-racially. France, Haiti, Spain for a second and third time and the United States directly governed or indirectly controlled the country interspersed with periods of self-government. The latter have largely been characterized by strong-man politics with attendant political instability, economic elitism, civil unrest and open rebellion. Of particular interest in the current context is the long and troubled relationship with Haiti. Spanish forced resettlement led to the de-population of the island interior and northwest section that in part opened the western portion of Hispaniola to French settlement and eventual control beginning in the early 1600s. Haiti declares itself independent of the French in 1804. While cooperation between the two countries, as independent or foreign ruled political entities, is not unknown, relations even to the present have been more commonly marked by interference in each other’s affairs, mutual distrust, armed incursions, violence (for example, the massacre of thousands of Haitians by President/Strong-Man Rafael Trujillo in 1937), and a border dispute not settled until 1929 (Moya Pons 2006).

Under both the French and Spanish colonial administrations African slaves were imported early in the 1500s to replace the dwindling natives. They were put to work on sugar plantations on both sides of the island, as well as on ginger estates on the eastern side. The French sugar plantations took the early lead in colonial period production; the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic did not become a leading component of the economy until the late 1800s after the African
slaves had been emancipated (Castillo Pichardo 2007; Moya Pons 2006). This abolition occurred under Haitian domination (1822 to 1843) in 1822 (Deive 2007:107; Moya Pons 2006).

The ethnic and racial make-ups also differ between the two portions of the island: in Haiti a high percentage of African ancestry amid remaining frequencies of European, native and recent admixtures verses in the Dominican Republic a substantial majority of African descent but with a relatively higher proportion of past European ancestry. Beginning in the late 1800s and early 1900s significant changes in Dominican, like Puerto Rican society have occurred with the advent of modern forms of communication, transportation, industry and economic models, in addition to the in-migration of various groups from Cubans, to other Caribbean populations, to Arabs and of particular consequence Haitians (Castillo Pichardo 2007; Moya Pons 2006).

The construction or ethnogenesis of modern Puerto Rican and Dominican ethnic and cultural identity amid this multi-ethnicity, centers on the Spanish, native and African legacies, and in the case of Puerto Rico, to the exclusion of the American despite heavy United States influence. This specific mix or alternatively “the origin myth” has been particularly formalized and actively promoted by both island governments. In Puerto Rico, a prime visual example of this codification is the seal of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, the leading cultural entity on the island (Figure 1 top). A Spaniard in the center with a book in hand, flanked to the right by a Taino holding a cemi or three-pointed sculpture (a physical representation of a spiritual being), and flanked to the left by an African with machete and drum make up the three “roots” of Puerto Rican identity. The image is meant to convey that each root contributed equally to the formation process (Dàvila 2001:38; Duany 2001:73). The exclusion of the American impact results from this new, at times overtly negative (especially among mainland residents) reality within the larger United States culture (Haslip Viera 2001a; Jiménez Román 2001) providing a need or opportunity to define “us” Puerto Ricans from “those other” American groups.

Comparable imagery can be found in the selection of three statues that grace the entrance to the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, a prominent cultural institution in the Dominican Republic (Figure 1 bottom). The statues in this case represent actual personages: the Spaniard Bartolomé de las Casas, the native chief Enriquillo and the African slave Lemba. Again the images are explicitly or officially meant to symbolize the three ethnic roots or foundation heritages that “in fruitful symbiosis” formed contemporary Dominican society. These three individuals were chosen in part because they are viewed, each in his own way (through peaceful or violent means) as having struggled for human rights and dignity (Vega 1981).

Despite the projected view of a homogenized ethnic mix, the actual situation is different on both islands. For Puerto Rico, tensions exist or conflicting emotions are present at the individual and societal level when attempting to reconcile both positive and negative aspects of the separate traditions within the larger American culture. Nor is the contribution of each tradition promoted or viewed equally with the relative ordering of importance from Spanish to Taino to African unreflective of their real numerical or historic contribution. Cultural and government institutions heavily promote Puerto Rico’s Spanish heritage through the establishment of museums, sponsoring of research, and support of regularly held artisan fairs and the popular arts—carved wooden statues of saints being a prime example of the latter category (Figure 2). In contrast, the African tradition in constructing ethnic identity is under-utilized, or as has been argued consciously ignored and accompanied by underlying racial prejudice. This is the case even though people of African-descent account for a significant proportion of the present day population (Dàvila 2001; Duany 2001; Jiménez Román 2001).
The disconnect between the official and concrete view of the relative contribution of Spanish, Native and African traditions to Dominican identity is even more conflict-ridden than in Puerto Rico. Cultural forces and the state again overemphasize the Spanish (white, Catholic) contribution, elevate the native and denigrate the African (black-skinned, pagan). The majority mixed European/African or mulatto Dominicans tend to view themselves as “white” or “light-skinned” or “indio/native” rather than truly “black or African” like “those Haitians”. Such a collective self-defined difference served early on to form an integral part of “Dominicanism”, which under the Trujillo administration was transformed into an effective and pervasive national policy of anti-Haitianismo. Racial prejudice and discrimination against Dominican “blacks” and especially Haitians (within and without the country) even today remain deeply ingrained within Dominican society as evidenced by the discriminatory impact of certain migration and citizenship regulations and arbitrary deportations (Deive 1981; Diène and McDougall 2008; Dobal 2007; Fuller 2009; Paulino 2002; Sagás 2009).

The Taíno component of the Puerto Rican and Dominican ethnic story or origin myth has rarely been under-utilized and in an idealized, romanticized form now serves as the, or certainly a central symbol of local island ethnic and cultural identity (Figure 3). Especially since 1990 a number of Taíno groups, tribes and organizations have been formally organized, complete with newsletters and websites. This native revival movement has been strongest among the United States mainland Puerto Rican/Hispanic population, however the Jatibonicu Taíno Tribal Nation of Borikén (the native term for the island of Puerto Rico) was formed in 1970 with a claimed tribal territory located in Puerto Rico’s central mountain region (Dàvila 2001; Haslip-Viera 2001a; Jiménez Román 2001; Jatibonicu Tribal website 2009; Vega 1987).

While one aim of this disparate movement is to recreate a living Taíno culture (language, religion, music), or as some claim rediscover it, the native past has been acknowledged and integrated into local Puerto Rican and Dominican culture for some time. Elements include the use of native-designed hammocks; the eating of yuca or sweet manioc; the presence of abundant Taíno toponyms; the incorporation of indigenous themes in literature; the use of Taíno chiefs on stamps and coins; and making use of native images or words to sell products from crackers to beer (Ferbel 2002; Vega 2007). Recreations of native festivals, such as the one at Jayuya in the western mountain range of Puerto Rico, reenact Taíno areytos or feasts with various activities and costumed participants. They serve as island affirmations of ethnicity, as well as occasions for enjoyment and tourism (see also Jiménez Román 2001:112 on Jayuya festival).

Taíno petroglyphs and pictographs grace all manner of popular artisan material and appear in prominent public murals and civic sculpture. The covers and pages of publications from works on native culture to cookbooks include Taíno rock art designs. Petroglyphs have been incorporated into free-standing sculptures as in this example from Puerto Rico (Figure 4 left), or in this fiber-decorated cloth hanging from the Dominican Republic (Figure 4 right), as well as emulating other Taíno artifacts or themes. A primary focus of the large and wide-spread artisan trade is the reproduction, sometimes with less-than-accurate results, of native artifacts including ceramics and cemis, and in particular on Puerto Rico petroglyphs in different forms and media from jewelry to clothing to civic logos.

If the Taíno has become the, or a central symbol of Puerto Rican and Dominican ethnic and cultural identity, then their rock art has been taken as a common symbol or ethnic boundary marker. A particular exemplary of this symbolic convergence is the depiction in the following figure (Figure 5) of petroglyphs in between two Puerto Rican flags. The upper flag is the one designed for the later 1800s independence movement noted above and the lower one is a stylized version of the current
flag. The petroglyphs are in this case reasonable representations with photographs of the actual designs at their respective sides of the figure for comparison. The left reproduction is based on a petroglyph commonly referred to as the Jayuya Sun glyph, while the one on the right represents the very frequently used anthropomorphic female figure from the multi-ball court site at Caguana, not infrequently identified as the Taíno earth goddess Attabiera.

We suggest, as have Roe and Hayward (2008:74), that the often employed rock art symbols for the Taíno relates to the lack of any monumental structures, apart from ball courts that are frequently aligned with petroglyph adorned boulders, coupled with the relative plainness of their ceramics. As already discussed their rock art is abundant and a readily visible and available inspirational source. Large and well-carved cemís were also a hallmark of the Taíno that additionally have been used to symbolize or to associate with the Taíno. This use of prehistoric rock art to help define modern day Puerto Rican and Dominican ethnicity does not mean that the interpretations or meanings of the images have also been carried forward. In fact they may be deliberately different. For instance, the Jatibonicu Taino Tribal Nation of Borikén has taken as its Great Seal another Taíno petroglyph (Figure 6). In the explanation of the meaning of the Great Seal, the website commentary notes that the seal “does not represent the image of the Sun (Jatibonicu Tribal website 2009)”, a common interpretation of designs with continuous rays around a central motif. We add it is not at all clear that in fact these designs do represent the Sun, since many figures appear with rays above and/or below human-like facial images that in other contexts do not appear to be sun motifs.

The commentary goes on to explain, “The etched symbols represent the twenty-four (24) Cohoba leaves [prehistorically cohoba referred to an hallucinogen taken on ritual occasions] encircling, one (1) outer Sun circle, one (1) inner Moon circle, the three (3) stem points of the Cohoba Snuff Pipe and the three (3) spiritual central cardinal points of the great Cemí, the totem of the sacred mountain of Cauta. Cauta is known as the great sacred Mountain of the two caves of Cacibajagua and Amayauna from which is said that all humankind had come from in the dawn of time (Jatibonicu Tribal website 2009).”

Conclusion

Collective and individual ethnic identity formation involves establishing relationships between internal ideas and needs and external indicators that are conditioned by past historical experiences and present realities. It is an ongoing and fluid process. Not only is the why part of identity construction important, but also the how part: what thoughts, expressions, symbols and material elements are used to produce “I” and “our group”. Contemporary Puerto Rican and Dominican societies have both chosen to self-identify (at the moment) with an unequal emphasis on their Spanish, Native and African heritages for some of the reasons outlined above. The native component has proven to be especially malleable due to the Amerindian’s early complete demise or perhaps subsequent, but marginal presence. Their rock art and other large-scale sculptures represent arresting and readily available visual cultural elements. Petroglyphs and pictographs undoubtedly served multiple-functions from being focal points in private rituals, to projecting political-religious influence to conveying ethnicity. Rock art presents a contrast between images that are relatively immovable yet full of life and of continued relevance. Even though the past and present specific meanings of the rock art differ, the images still remain vital to island individual and collective identities.
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Figure 1 (top) Official Seal of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (http://www.icp.gobierno.pr. Accessed April 16, 2009; Partial lightened traced image by Alexander G. Schieppati); (bottom) Statues of the African slave Lemba, the Spaniard Bartolomé de las Casas, and the native chief Enriquillo in front of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano (photographs provided by Adolfo López Belando 2009).
Figure 2 Puerto Rican artisan booth and carved wooden santos or saints (Michele H. Hayward 2007 and Michael A. Cinquino 2007).
Figure 3 Idealized Tainos in the poster *La buena herencia* or the Good Legacy (Photograph provided by Arlene Dávila from *Taino Revival* edited by Gabriel Haslip Viera 2001b, used with permission).
Figure 4 (left) Free-standing monument with local artisan-interpreted prehistoric petroglyphs, Puerto Rico (Peter G. Roe 2001, used with permission); (right) Fiber-decorated cloth hanging, Dominican Republic (Vega 1987:37, redrawn by Alexander G. Schieppati).

Figure 5 Symbolic ethnic convergence: (middle) Prehistoric petroglyphs in between Puerto Rican flags (Oliver 2005:Figure 7.28, used with permission); (left) the Jayuya Sun Petroglyph from Jayuya, Puerto Rico (Garcia Goyco 1984:Figure 160, used with permission)(right) female anthropomorphic petroglyph from Caguana, Puerto Rico (Oliver 1998:Figure 49, used with permission).
Figure 6 The Great Seal, Jatibonicu Taino Tribal Nation of Boriken (Jatibonicu Tribal web site, Accessed April 15, 2009; redrawn by Alexander G. Schieppati).