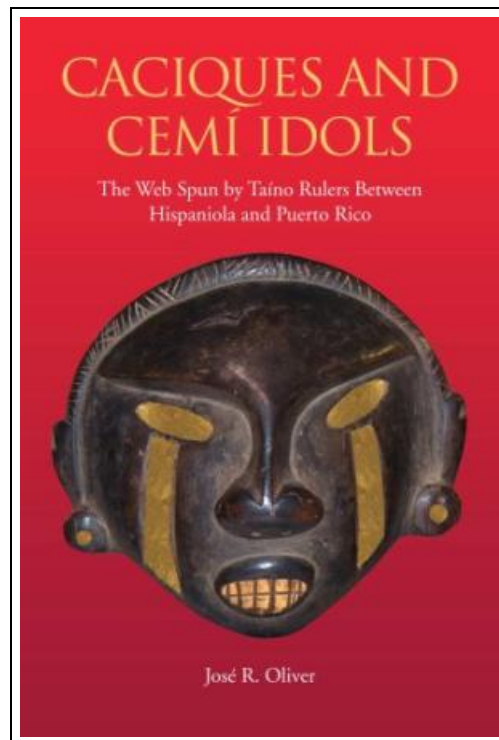


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The University of Alabama Press, United States, 2009. Paperback. Condition: New. 2nd ed.. Language: English . Brand New Book. Cemis are both portable artifacts and embodiments of persons or spirits, which the Tainos and other natives of the Greater Antilles (ca. AD 1000-1550) regarded as numinous beings with super-natural or magic powers. This volume takes a close look at the relationship between humans and other (non-human) beings that are imbued with cemi power, specifically within the Taino inter-island cultural sphere encompassing Puerto Rico and Hispaniola. The relationships address the important questions of identity and personhood of the cemi icons and their human owners and on the implications of cemi gift-giving and gift-taking that sustains a complex web of relationships between caciques (chiefs) of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola. Oliver provides a careful analysis of the four major forms of cemis - three-pointed stones, large stone heads, stone collars, and elbow stones - as well as face masks, which provide an interesting contrast to the stone heads. He finds evidence for his interpretation of human and cemi interactions from a critical review of sixteenth century Spanish ethnohistoric documents, especially the *Relacion Acerca de las Antiguedades de los Indios* written by Friar Ramon Pane in 1497-1498 under orders from Christopher Columbus. Buttressed by examples of native resistance and syncretism, the volume discusses the iconoclastic conflicts and the relationship between the icons and the human beings. Focusing on this and on the various contexts in which the relationships were enacted, Oliver reveals how the cemis were central to the exercise of native political power. Such cemis were considered a direct threat to the hegemony of the Spanish conquerors, as these potent objects were seen as allies in the native resistance to the onslaught of Christendom with its icons of saints and virgins.

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