



## The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus

*By Irving Rouse*

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**The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus** By Irving Rouse

When Columbus arrived in the Americas, the first people he encountered were the Tainos, inhabitants of the islands of the northern Caribbean Sea. In this book a noted archeologist and anthropologist tells the story of the Tainos from their ancestral days on the South American continent to their rapid decline after contact with the Spanish explorers.

Drawing on archeological and ethno-historical evidence, Irving Rouse sketches a picture of the Tainos as they existed during the time of Columbus, contrasting their customs with those of their neighbors. He then moves backward in time to the ancestors of the Tainos—two successive groups who settled the West Indies and who are known to archeologists as the Saladoid peoples and the Ostionoid peoples. By reconstructing the development of these groups and studying their interaction with other groups during the centuries before Columbus, Rouse shows precisely who the Tainos were. He vividly recounts Columbus's four voyages, the events of the European contact, and the early Spanish views of the Tainos, particularly their art and religion. The narration shows that the Tainos did not long survive the advent of Columbus. Weakened by forced labor, malnutrition, and diseases introduced by the foreigners, and dispersed by migration and intermarriage, they ceased to exist as a separate population group. As Rouse discusses the Tainos' contributions to the Spaniards—from Indian corn, tobacco, and rubber balls to art, artifacts, and new words—we realize that their effect on Western civilization, brief through their contact, was an important and lasting one.

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About the Author

**Irving Rouse** is Charles J. MacCurdy Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University and Curator Emeritus of Anthropology at the Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University.

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