

The Creation Taíno Myth

In the beginning, Atabei created the heavens, the Earth and other celestial bodies. Atabei had always existed. Atabei was the original mother. Atabei was the powerful creator. But there was no life. There was no light. Everything existed as in a deep sleep. And so it was for a long time. Atabei finally realized that something was missing. She had two sons whom she crafted out of magical, invisible elements. The two sons were named Yucajú and Guacar.

Yucajú was preoccupied with the absence of light and life. Atabei was content because Yucajú could now finish what she had started. And Yucajú created the sun and the moon to illuminate the earth. He took precious stones from the earth and placed them in the sky. These stones helped the moon illuminate the night. The earth was fertile, and from it grew plants and trees. Yucajú then created animals and birds to live among the plants and trees. Then Yucajú decided to create something new, something different, a cross between an animal and a god. In this way, the first man and soul was created. He called the first man Locuo.

Locuo was happy on earth, with all the beauty that surrounded him. He knelt before Yucajú to offer thanks. Guacar looked with envy at all his brother had created. He stole away to a secluded place and did nothing for awhile. But his envy overcame him, and he began to taint the creations of his brother. He changed his name, becoming the terrible god of evil, Juracán. Juracán carried the winds. Sometimes he carried them with such force that they destroyed what Yucajú had created. He uprooted trees and killed animals. Locuo's happiness turned to fear.

He could no longer enjoy the beauty of nature. In addition to sending powerful winds, Juracán made the earth tremble. This was one of his favorite games. During one of the most powerful quakes, the American continent divided in two. This is how the Antilles came to be. But Locuo continued living on earth, and Yucajú created other gods to help him. Locuo learned to create images of these gods, which he called "cemíes."

Yucaj  presented Locuo with fire and he learned to cook his own food. He learned to make casava from yucca. But Locuo lived alone on earth. One day, inspired by so much natural beauty, he pried open his belly button and gave way to two beings in his likeness: a man and a woman. The man was named Guaguyona and the woman Yaya. The descendants of these two people populated the earth. But the descendants of Guaguyona and Yaya suffered immensely with the floods and strong winds that Jurac n sent. And he sent evil spirits that caused problems in the lives of the people.

The spirits destroyed the canoes in the river, threw stones upon homes and hid the ball with which the people were playing. They also brought illness and strife to the people.

That is how the Ta nos explained natural phenomena and the origin of good and evil. The Caribs, who arrived from islands southeast of Puerto Rico, were evil. They were fierce warriors who destroyed entire villages and kidnapped the women. The Caribs were considered messengers of Jurac n. And if Jurac n sent the Caribs, perhaps Yucaj  sent good people to help expel the Caribs. Therefore, when the Spaniards arrived in Puerto Rico, the Ta nos no doubt thought they were sent by Yucaj . They were wrong.