

Basic Detail Report

Vessel

Date

1200-1500 CE

Primary Maker

Taíno

Medium

Ceramic

Description

This ceramic vessel topped with a frog sculpture is from the Taíno culture in the Dominican Republic, made 1200-1500 CE. Frogs were symbols of fertility as well as transformation. They begin their existence as a water-based creature and metamorphose into one that is amphibious. Like frogs, shamans were believed capable of shape-shifting the form of their soul and traveling about in



other realms and dimensions of being. The figures likely represent transformed shamans possibly undergoing an initiation. The dual male-frog imagery is an allusion to a shamanic motif appearing in a significant portion of figurative Taíno pottery. The vast majority of Taíno art to survive the colonization of the Greater Antilles were objects that were either already used in caves as parts of rituals or were moved there following the arrival of Columbus to protect them. Dating as far back as the second century BCE, migrations of forerunners to the Taíno brought knowledge of pottery making to the Caribbean. Additional waves of migration served to further change the way that pottery was made until around 1000 CE, after which point the various cultures and groups are referred to by the umbrella term Taíno. The various subgroups that constituted the Taíno created a wealth of different pottery styles, though their earthenware can be characterized by commonly featuring abstracted anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures with much of the supplemental decoration done as high-relief geometric linework.

Dimensions

10 × 7 1/4 × 8 in. (25.4 × 18.4 × 20.3 cm)