Beyond the Myth of Extinction

Cuban Indigeneity at the Dawn of the 21st Century
“Snout of the Caiman”: easternmost Cuba
Indocuban (Taino) core family of the Ramírez-Rojas clan, one of several of the Cuban indigenous-rooted gens.

Baracoa, Cuba.
1999
Panchito: La Ranchería, Guantánamo. 1995
This 1987 article describes the work of Dr. Manuel Rivero de la Calle, which did not focus on orality or culture, only analyzing physical attributes. The headline is driven by the presumption of extinction. Thus, the study is seen as, “an epitaph for the Amerindians ...”
This 1949 article by Dr. Antonio Núñez Jimenez, published in the popular national magazine, *Bohemia*, raised brief recognition of *Indocuban* cultural persistence.

Headline translates: “With the last Indians of Cuba.”
“A group that most conserves pure aboriginal characteristics, and is most numerous, lives in the Yateras Municipality, in Guantánamo Province, calculated at more than one thousand ... present ... characteristics of our primitive aborigines. They are known as “indios,” and no one around them doubts who they are.”

Dr. Manuel Rivero de la Calle, 1966
Comunidad Autóctona
La Rancheria
Caridad de los Índios
Panchito Ramírez and Reina Rojas, elders at La Ranchería
Panchito’s altar, in his home bohío: two güamo conch flank rompesaragüey leaf (*vernonia mentipholia*), fertility stones, herbal extracts and the ever-present Cuban Santo of poor people, San Lázaro ...
Bohio roof tied with vine – “bejuco.” Spanish chronicler, Fernandez de Oviedo (c. 1530) noted the method’s capacity to resist hurricanes.
Hurricane Shelter – “bajareque”
Herbal medicine – traditional remedies for many ailments ...
Reyna Mongo, (1940?- 2008). Herbalist and master “sobadora” of La Ranchería, is a well-remembered elder.
Clinic – Caridad de los Indios, 2001. Local herbal extracts on the shelves.
The canoe did not disappear
Photo by M.R. Harrington.
Toa River, Baracoa
Cuba, (c. 1921)