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NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NOV 10 1992

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: **Caguana Ceremonial Ball Courts Site**

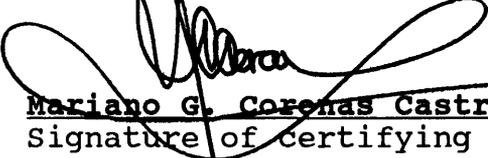
other names/site number:

2. Location

street & number: **State Road #111, Km. 12.3** not for publication  
city or town: **Utuaado** vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state: **Puerto Rico** code: **PR** county: **Utuaado** code: **141**  
zip code: **00761**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Mariano G. Coronas Castro**  
Signature of certifying official

**October 30, 1992**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification  
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	entered in the National Register	<u>Janet E. Townsend</u>	<u>12-17-92</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (explain): _____		
	_____	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action

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5. Classification  
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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>11</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>12</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not

part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion

Sub: Ceremonial Site, Ball Court

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Museum

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7. Description  
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)  
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8. Statement of Significance  
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance: Archeology / Prehistoric  
Religion  
Architecture

Period of Significance: Capa Phase

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Cultural Affiliation: Taino Indian

Architect/Builder: N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References  
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data  
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Acreeage of Property: 7 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>19</u>	<u>734475</u>	<u>2024345</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	_____ See continuation sheet.					

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title: Dr. Mark Barnes, Sr. Archeologist, S.E.R.O./ Mr. José E. Marull, State Historian, P.R.S.H.P.O.

organization: P.R.S.P.O. date: March 7, 1992

street & number: San Jose St. #109 telephone: (809) 721-3737

city or town: San Juan state: PR zip code: 00901

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Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage  
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name: Institute of Puertorrican Culture

street & number: P.O. Box 4184 telephone: (809) 724-0700

city or town: San Juan state: PR zip code: 00902

=====  
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Caguana Ceremonial Ball Courts Site  
Utuaado, Puerto Rico

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Site Type:

The Caguana Site, is a large ceremonial site with multiple bateyes or ball courts outlined in stone, of the Capa Phase (1200-1500 AD). The site was constructed during the late prehistoric period and occupied by the Taino Indians up through contact with the Spanish. The site consists of ten ball courts, making this the largest ceremonial site of its type not only in Puerto Rico, but the entire West Indies.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

The Caguana Site is located on a small triangularly-shaped terrace on the east side of the Tanama River, in Barrio Caguanas, in the municipality of Utuaado, on the island of Puerto Rico. The physical setting of the site was described by one of the original excavators Dr. J. Alden Mason as follows:

From the [Tanama] river two ravines extend inward which are dry in rainless seasons but carry off the surplus water in times of rain. Though probably a quarter mile apart at their mouths, the upper reaches of the ravines converge until, at a point about a quarter mile from the river, they leave between them a narrow deck of land not more than 30 feet in width at the top and gently sloping to the bottom of the ravines some 40 feet below. A roughly triangular piece of land is thus nearly circumscribed, enclosing about 6 or 7 acres on nearly level ground, at a height of possibly 80 feet above the river. On practically every side the descent is steep (Mason 1941:212-213).

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The Tanama River Valley is in the Rainy West Central Mountains physiographic region of west central Puerto Rico. This region marks the geological juncture of a 10-mile-wide large limestone formation, which borders the northern coast of Puerto Rico and the igneous mountains in the interior of the island (Mason 1941: 212; Pico 1950: 176; Alegria 1983:66).

The Tanama River in combination with the heavy rainfall in the region (100+ inches/year) has eroded a substantial river valley where the two formations meet. North of the Caguana Site rise steep and precipitous crags of limestone while to the south of the site the slopes are more gentle and rolling (Mason 1941:212; Pico 1950:176).

**Archeological Investigations:**

In the summer of 1915, a group of anthropologists under the direction of Dr. Franz Boas were conducting extensive scientific studies on Puerto Rican prehistory and culture for the New York Academy of Sciences when the Caguana Site was brought to their

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attention by local coffee planters in the region of Utuaado. Drs. Robert T. Aitken and J. Alden Mason were assigned the task of investigating the site between July 2 and December 11, 1925. Because of the number of capa trees (*Cordia alliodora*) in the vicinity, (Mason 1941:211-212), they called it the Capa Site.

According to Mason,

...the site had not been under cultivation for some years and was merely covered with a valueless growth of bush. More fortunately yet, it was completely bare of tree growth, and the few stumps encountered indicated that apparently it had not been forested since its abandonment by the native population. Although surrounded by a dense forest shielding coffee bushes, the trees had encroached upon the architectural features at only a few points and no felling was necessary. Consequently a few days work with a large group of men with machetes served to clear the site and to bring to view its full extent. After the clearing it was evident at once that the place was unusually large and important, and that the short time remaining at our disposal would permit of no intensive excavation but that our efforts would have to be devoted exclusively to uncovering the structure. When the underbrush had been removed a series of courts was uncovered, and several lines of large limestone slabs set one edge and others of great boulders were evident, but in addition to these, throughout the four or five acres in the central part of the area, the tops of smaller stones were encountered barely projecting above the surface of the earth or hidden in the grass. The greater part of the month was spent in the uncovering of these lines of stones and of others completely buried. Machetes and trowels were the principal implements employed; occasionally hoes were used but never spades or picks (1941:211-212).

Mason and Aitken uncovered some fourteen stone features during their six months of work at the Caguanas Site. The description of the features and their investigations in 1915 are as follows:

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**Feature A** - This feature referred to as the "Quadrangular Plaza A" by Mason, was found to be a "level depressed court about one hundred and twenty feet in width from east to west and one hundred and sixty feet in length from north to south" (Mason 1941:217).

There is a slope to the terrace on which the Caguana Site is situated that inclines downward from east to west. This would have required the Indians to excavate out a level plaza on three sides - north, east, and south (Alegria 1983:67). The west side of the plaza "was probably excavated slightly if at all and was nearly even with the original level of the surface" (Mason 1941:217). In order to maintain the level surface of this plaza the Taino Indians would have dug into the slope to a depth of almost six feet as this feature was excavated to the east (Mason 1941:217).

Probably the most impressive aspect of this plaza was the construction on the eastern edge. According to Mason:

When first seen, the plaza was limited on the east by a short but steep slope from the high ground above, at the base of which on the plaza floor were four large limestone slabs set on edge in a line. One of these bore a large carved face and several of the others showed traces of similar faces, now eroded. Excavation brought to light a complete line of slabs, most of them fallen forward into the plaza on account of the pressure from the washing-down of the terrace above. It would seem that wherever on the site limestone slabs were placed on edge,

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they were not imbedded deeply enough or braced strongly enough, and in all but a few cases fell into the courts which they surround and were buried by earth. Some twenty-five of these buried slabs were thus uncovered here, all very much eroded and broken. The weathered remains of pictographs are discernible on some of them, and it is probable that every one originally contained some incised or carved face or other design. Circular holes some six inches in diameter, apparently drilled, are observed on several. The slabs average six inches in thickness and some have a length a breadth of six feet or more. When in their original place and position, they must have presented an impressive sight. These slabs appear to have been placed by the same method as other similar ones on the site, by digging a trench and placing the slabs in position, then placing smaller stones at their bases to brace them and filling the trench with earth (Mason 1941:218).

At the north and south edges of the plaza were double lines of river bed stones which bounded the plaza (Mason 1941:218). These lines of stones set about "a foot or so higher than that of the plaza" floor, and the double lines were about four feet apart (Mason 1941:219; Alegria 1983:69). No artifacts were noted in the open plaza excavations, leading Mason to believe that the area "may have been a kind of open parade ground for the performance of 'areitos' [ceremonial dances] and other religious and ceremonial functions" (Mason 1941:67).

**Feature B** - The second largest feature found was "The Large Long Court B".

According to Mason:

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It is situated in the northeastern part of the site and runs at a slightly different angle from the majority of the other structures, a few degrees northwest and southeast instead of practically north and south as seems to be the general plan (Mason 1941:223).

Feature B, as uncovered, consisted of "a long level space roughly two hundred feet in length by fifty-five in width bounded on each side by a semicircular wall with flat capstones, on each side by a semicircular wall with flat capstones, and on the southern end by a low double line of small stones set on edge" (Mason 1941:332). Feature B, like Feature A, was created by excavating into the sloping ground of the terrace to produce a level space. On the western side little excavation was required, while on the eastern side as much as a foot and a half was removed in order to create a level surface (Alegria 1983 :72).

Following the levelling process, a trench eighteen inches width and twelve inches in depth was excavated along the eastern and western edges of the court (Feature B), to receive limestone slabs.

According to Mason:

Rough slabs of limestone, some of them nine feet in length by six in width and eight inches in thickness, were then set on edge in these trenches, and river stones set against their bases on either side to brace them and the interment and strengthening were not firm enough and the majority of the slabs have fallen, at present [1915] only some thirteen remaining upright (Mason 1941:224).

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The northern edge of Feature B was composed of a double row of river stones set in an arc, while the southern edge of the feature consisted of a straight line of limestone rocks. At the southeastern edge of this feature was a group of three very large limestone slabs (Mason 1941:225). No artifacts were noted in the excavations. Mason believed that Feature B, like Feature A, "was a flat space for the performance of ceremonies, dances, and games, and contained no superstructures" (Alegria 1983:72).

**Feature C** - Oval shaped and outlined by a ring of limestone slabs and river stones it measured fifty feet in diameter east to west by forty feet north to south (Mason 1941:242). Under the natural humus layer, developed after the site was abandoned, was a stratum twelve to eighteen inches in thickness of clay, charcoal, and numerous artifacts. The artifacts consisted of "well-decorated aboriginal potsherds" (Mason 1941:242), as well as "several very well-made celts [stone axes], and a portion of a stone 'collar'" (Mason 1941:243). Stone Collars were apparently worn as part of the costumes of the ball players or the dancers. Mason also found in

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the center of Feature C "a large unworked reddish boulder which may have served as a base for an altar" (Alegria 1983:73).

**Feature D** - Just to the south of Feature C, and west of Feature A, is the rectangularly shaped "House Area D". The feature measured 75 feet north to south and 50 feet east to west. According to Mason:

The southern part of this space was occupied by a low mound of possibly two feet in height composed of earth and many stones of good size; this was entirely excavated. Several of the large spherical stone balls which are frequently found on ball-courts and which are popularly supposed to have been the balls used in playing were found in this mound as well as a small celt, a piece of coral rock, and several stones of peculiar shapes. The northern half of the space was evidently occupied by a large house, or possibly several successive ones, the posts of which were found here...a fine amulet of a "zemi" [Indian figurine of a god] of carved stone somewhat resembling a turtle was found here, also a crudely carved stone, and many pottery handles to vessels in the form of heads (Mason 1941:244-245).

Some twenty-nine post holes were found in the area of Feature D, excavated to an average depth of five feet into the subsoil of the terrace. In one of the post holes at a depth of one meter was found a fragment of European iron (Alegria 1983:73). Although these post holes probably defined a significant structure, its construction pattern could not be ascertained (Mason 1941:246-247).

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**Feature E** - This feature consisted of a rectangular ball court, or batey seventy-five feet long on its north to south axis and twenty-five feet wide on its east to west axis (Mason 1941:247).

The boundary for Feature E was made up of "rows of flattish river stones, imbedded on edge" (Mason 1941:248). The excavation report noted that the north and south rows of stone "were very much disrupted and the court full of scattered stones" (Mason 1941:248). No artifacts were noted in the excavation.

**Feature F** - This feature consisted of an earth mound, approximately fifty feet in diameter, possibly formed "of earth removed from the adjacent features during their construction" (Mason 1941:248). Mason stated that it was "reasonably certain that no superstructure was erected upon it" [Feature F] (1941:248). The mound, about four feet in height was completely excavated in 1915, "but nothing of interest was discovered" (Mason 1941:248). Some artifacts of decorated potsherds were noted in the excavations. Mason's interpretation of this feature was a "central point of observation from which all activities were observed or directed" (1941:248).

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**Feature G** - This feature was rectangular court, twenty-seven feet wide on its north to south axis, and seventy-two feet long on its east to west axis (Mason 1941:249). The main aspect of this feature were two long parallel lines of stones, which extended along the length of the structure, set on their edges (Mason 1941:250). The eastern end of the feature was obscured, but Mason believed "that there were originally three stairs or terraces with facings and cap-stones, and three levels of slight width at the base of the large mound F" (1941:250). In the western half of Feature G, "midway, between and parallel to these two lines, there was a pavement of flat stones extending from the western line about 6 meters eastward; these rest as caps on upright stones" (Mason 1941:250). A fragment of a stone collar was found near the western end of this feature (Alegria 1983:74).

**Feature H** - This feature consists of a long open ended batey, or ball court, lined with stones set on edge in the ground. The major architectural features were two parallel lines of stones, approximately one hundred and thirty feet long on the north to

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south axis and twenty-four feet wide on the east to west axis  
(Mason 1941:252).

The only artifacts found in these investigations were scattered pot  
sherds. Mason interpreted this feature as an open ended ball court  
used as a dance ground or place where ball games were played  
(Alegria 1983:75).

**Feature I** - This ball court feature, located to the south of  
Feature H, was not excavated, but only cleared of vegetation. It  
measured one hundred and ten feet long and thirty-eight feet wide.  
Most of the boundary stones on the east and west side of the court  
were in place, but stones forming the southern and northern ends  
of the court were "much disrupted" (Mason 1941:259). No artifacts  
were noted in the excavations.

**Feature J** - Another court feature, east of Feature B, was not  
excavated, but only cleared of vegetation. Its measurements were  
eighty feet long and twenty-five feet wide.

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Most of the boundary stones on the east and west sides of the court were in place, but the stones forming the southern and northern ends of the court were "much disrupted" (Mason 1941:259). No artifacts were noted.

**Feature K** - Southeast of the Great Plaza (Feature A) was Feature K. It was cleared of vegetation to determine its length of eighty-five feet and width of forty feet. Mason noted that the boundary stones of the court were "well preserved as it had been dug more deeply and later the stones had been covered with eroded earth" (1941:260). No artifacts were noted.

**Feature L** - Fifty feet northeast of Feature K, Mason found Feature L a single row of stones. Mason noted the "stones of the solitary line were much disrupted" (1941:260). No artifacts were noted.

**Feature M** - At the far southern end of the site, close to the edge of the southern ravine is Feature M.

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This consists of two parallel lines of stones some eighty-five feet in length (east to west) but only eight feet in width (north to south) (Mason 1941:260). No artifacts were noted.

**Feature N** - Southwest of the Great Plaza (Feature A), and near the edge of the ravine, a large pile of stones was encountered. Workmen told Mason that this was the site of an old Spanish house constructed of stones from the site. No artifacts were noted (Mason 1941:261).

**House Site Between Features A and B** - One of the more interesting features encountered was a series of post holes between Feature A and Feature B which delineated a circular wooden structure, approximately fifty-five feet in diameter. Excavation within the structure uncovered not only eighteen post holes, but also a carved stone "zemi" (small three pointed stone idol), decorated potsherds, and two fire hearth (Mason 1941:238-241).

Mason recovered from undisturbed contexts two feet below the surface of the ground "a piece of Spanish glazed pottery," in association with Taino Indian artifacts (1941:241).

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Mason summarized his findings Caguana the Site as six long courts with parallel lines of stones and open ends (Features E, H, I, J, K, L); one large long court with parallel side lines of slabs and closed ends (Feature B); one long narrow structure of parallel lines of stones (Feature M); one large boulder, and two double lines of stone (Feature A); one oval plaza bounded by a ring of stones (Feature C; one smaller structure of parallel and transverse lines of stones (Feature G); and one large earth mound (Feature F), and two areas containing structural remains (Area Between Features A and B, and Feature D) (Alegria 1983:76).

Mason believed that the entire site was probably the ceremonial center of a large village or populated area, and the "ten stone-bounded enclosures were used for the performances of ceremonial dances, games and other rites" (1941:261). Mason further believed that the Caguana Site dated from the immediate pre-conquest period, and that it may have been destroyed by the Spaniards in the first decades of the sixteenth century.

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The excavator, using Jesse W. Fewkes' historical reconstruction of Puerto Rican Indian chiefdoms at the time of European contact, concluded this site was the capital and main ceremonial center for Cacique (Chief) Guarionex who had controlled the Utuaado area (Mason 1941:264; Alegria 1983:76).

When Dr. Mason published the results of his 1915 excavations at the Caguana Site in 1941, Dr. Irving Rouse supplied an appendix to the Mason report describing the artifact collection. The collection included 112 artifacts, of which two are early Spanish colonial or European sherds, 107 are Indian potsherds, 1 is a figurine, and 2 are bone counters. The Indian potsherds are what Rouse referred to at the time as Types B and C and subsequently, renamed Ostiones and Capa styles respectively (Rouse 1952:336-354).

None of the stone collar fragments, zemis, or stone balls noted in Mason's excavations were in the collection seen by Rouse (Alegria 1983:77).

The Ostiones-style sherds (Type B) were 23 in number. They were reddish or purplish brown in color, only two were red slipped.

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Sixteen sherds were decorated with incised lines on the rim and shoulders of the vessels. Some sherds showed decorated lugs of bat heads, human heads, and geometric shapes (Alegria 1983:76-77). These styles of sherds date from the Ostiones Period IIIb (AD 700-1000) (Alegria 1983:150).

The Capa-Style sherds (Type C) were 84 in number. They were brick red to brown in color, and tempered with sand particles. The Capa-style sherds exhibited many different types of decoration. The most common decoration technique was incising, which was sometimes combined with punctuation. A combination of affixation, modeling, incision, and punctuation was also present (Alegria 1983:77). The styles of sherds date from the Capa Period IVa (AD1000 - 1500 or contact) (Alegria 1983: 150).

In July 1938, Rouse excavated two test pits near the edge of the terrace south of Plaza A. These excavations "revealed potsherds mixed with humus in several concentrations which suggested house sites; the depth of the deposit was 50 cm" (Alegria 1983:78).

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The test pits produced 29 Ostiones and 62 Capa style-sherds similar to those found earlier by Mason. Rouse's work also produced five fragmentary ceramic griddles, used to process cassava roots into food; two lumps of clay daub; and a stone polisher. Rouse also collected two complete and three fragmentary stone celts and three pieces of stone collars (Alegria 1983:78).

According to Ricardo E. Alegria,

Rouse agrees with Mason in identifying the site as the ceremonial center of cacique Guarionex. He disagrees, however, that the site had a ceremonial-religious purpose and was not a village. According to Rouse the material collected at Capa [in 1983] was identical with that obtained from village sites. He mentions the presence of griddles as proof that the site had a utilitarian as well as ceremonial significance (1983:78)

In 1949, Dr. Ricardo E. Alegria, then Director of the Archeological Research Center of the University of Puerto Rico, undertook a four month re-examination of the site. This work was to determine whether the site should be developed as a interpreted park open to the public. Alegria's work was conducted the following manner.

**Feature A** - The open plaza area was excavated to its original clay floor under some 25 cm of humus. Several test pits were excavated within the plaza, "No potsherds, artifacts or other types of refuse

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were found," and no evidence of structures was found in the plaza area (Alegria 1983:79).

Numerous slabs of limestone, decorated with petroglyphs, were found along the east and west side of the plaza. The stone walkways along the north and south sides of Feature A were found to be intact. Excavation in the areas just outside the northeast and northwest corners of Feature A uncovered "a good number of potsherds," and a fragment of a stone collar (Alegria 1983:80).

**Feature B** - The long ball court was found to be missing its short southern line of stones. The rest of the north, west, and east alignment with its large limestone slabs were found to be still standing erect (Alegria 1983:81).

**Feature C** - This area was completely excavated. Although some were broken all of the limestone slabs that Mason mapped in 1915 were found. Alegria found 18 potsherds, a zemi, and two flint blades (1983:80-81).

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**Feature D** - Because the area had been completely excavated by Mason in 1915, therefore no excavations were conducted in 1949.

**Feature E.** - After this ball court was cleared of vegetation, it was found that the east side of court E was damaged, but the west side was in good shape. Several potsherds, flint chips, and two stone celts were found (Alegria 1983:81).

**Feature F.** - The earth mound once forming this feature had been completely excavated by Mason in 1915, therefore, no excavations were conducted in 1949.

**Feature G** - After this ball court was cleared of vegetation, it was found that the stone alignments were in good condition. The stone walkway described by Mason however, was not found (Alegria 1983:81).

**Feature H** - After this ball court was cleared of vegetation, it was found that the stone alignment on the west side had been disturbed.

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However, at the northeastern corner of Feature H a sidewalk of large flat stones, not observed by Mason in 1915, was uncovered (Alegria 1983:81).

**Feature I** - After this ball court was cleared of vegetation, it was found that the stone alignment on the western side had been slightly disturbed (Alegria 1983:81).

**Feature J** - Examination of this feature in 1949 demonstrated that this feature had been completely destroyed. Only a small pile of stones gave evidence of its previous existence (Alegria 1983:83).

**Feature K** - When this ball court was cleared of vegetation and excavated, it was discovered that the east end of the southern row of stones had been disturbed. The northern stone alignment was in good shape. Two large stone balls and several potsherds were found in this court (Alegria 1983:83).

**Feature L** - Mason had found just one alignment of stones at this location in 1915. After the vegetation was cleared from this

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feature, in 1949, a second parallel alignment of stones was found indicating a complete ball court existed at this location. This ball court was found to be in very good condition. A few potsherds and stone ball were found in this area (Alegria 1983:83).

**Feature M** - Mason had found two parallel alignments of stone only four feet apart at this location. After the vegetation was cleared from this feature in 1949, evidence of another row of stones six meters to the north were uncovered. According to Alegria,

This new row of stones undoubtedly formed the northern boundary of Court M. The rows of stones which Mason had found evidently formed a southern sidewalk

**Feature N** - No work was accomplished on this feature.

During the 1949 excavations, Alegria opened a 2 meter by 4 meter long trench on a rise north of Plaza A. He located a series of post holes with the remains of wooden posts still in their original positions which represented a large structure (1983:83).

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Test units were excavated on the terrace southeast of Plaza A; eight potsheads and a stone mano were recovered. (Alegria 1983:83-84).

During the 1949 excavations, 1680 Indians potsherds were recovered. They represented Ostiones Period IIIb and Capa Period IVa ceramics and had the same types of decoration noted on the material recovered in 1915 and 1938. Three Spanish colonial pottery sherds were found; one is lead glazed and the other two are olive jar fragments (Alegria 1983:84).

The other artifacts found included 5 fragments of stone collars, 2 small zemis, a stone earspool, 3 stone grinders, 27 flint flakes, 59 stone chips, 3 broken stone celts, 1 stone bead, and 1 stone mortar (Alegria 1983:84).

Dr. Alegria got a radiocarbon date of AD 1200+/-80 from a fragment of a wooden post excavated in 1949, indicating that the site was in use long before the arrival of the Spanish (1983:85). The Spanish colonial artifacts found in undisturbed contexts in the

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1915, 1938, and 1949 investigations which demonstrate the site was occupied into the contact period. Alegria, however, questioned whether the archaeological evidence was firm enough to identify this site as the capital of the chiefdom of Guarionex, the Cacique (Chief) of the Utuaado region at the time of the spanish conquest of Puerto Rico (1983:84).

Following the excavation of the above features, all of the ball courts and stone alignments were covered with loose earth to protect them until the features could be restored (Alegria 1983:84).

In Ricardo Alegria's assessment:

The Capa (Caguana) site is clearly ceremonial. Although non-ceremonial potsherds and other artifacts were found, they were scarce when compared to the number from village sites in other areas of Puerto Rico. The site was undoubtedly sparsely inhabited, except during special occasions when people from surrounding

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villages gathered for religious ceremonies in which the ball game was a very important activity. (1983:87).

**Site Integrity:** In 1955 the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture acquired the Caguana Site and instituted a program of restoration. Beginning with Feature A-the Great Plaza- the area was cleared of vegetation, and all of the alinement stones were again uncovered. The large limestone slabs that formed the east and west stone alignments were raised into their original positions. The south and north walls, forming stone sidewalks were stabilized in place Alegria 1983:85). According to Alegria, "no effort was made to restore the parts of the plaza in which the plan was not clear" (1983:86). Gaps in the alignments were left open.

Feature B was stabilized in the same manner as Feature A. The large limestone slabs forming the east side of the court were raised back to their original positions. The south stone alignment of Feature B, which had been disturbed after the 1915 excavations, was left untouched (Alegria 1983:86).

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The same type of restoration and stabilization methodology was accomplished at Features C, E, G, H, I, K, L, and M. Feature J had been completely destroyed and restoration was not attempted. No effort was made to reconstruct the earth mounds at Features D and F or to investigate Feature N (Alegria 1983:86-87). Following restoration, ground surfaces around the courts were planted in grass to prevent erosion. A small museum and parking lot were constructed just before the site. Both of these facilities which would be considered noncontributing properties, but are outside the boundary for the Caguana Site and are, thus not counted in the contributing /noncontributing totals.

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Caguana (Capa) Site represents the largest and most complex ball court and ceremonial site in Puerto Rico, and indeed, in the entire West Indies. The Archaeological investigations of the site have demonstrated the sophistication of Taino Indian ceremonialism and organization during the Late Prehistoric and Early Contact Period of Puerto Rico. The excavations also provided the basis for defining the Capa Phase (AD 1200-1500), based on analysis of the archaeological material from this site.

**BALL GAME CEREMONIALISM IN TAINO INDIAN CULTURE:**

The discovery of caribbean islands of Europeans in the last decade of the fifteenth century produced the first historical literature on the island Indians and their customs. Customs strange to the Europeans such as head deformation, the use of tobacco, and their playing of a ball game, called **batey** on a specially prepared open space were noted in the early chronicles (Alegria 1983:1).

The first ethnohistoric account of this last activity dates from the first voyage of Columbus. He returned from the Carribbean in 1493 with a rubber ball "large as an olive jar" which was used by

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the Taino in their ball games (Las Casas 1909:159).

According to Las Casas:

In this Island of Hispaniola and the torrid lands grows a tree which not having looked for, I never saw, which when the trunk is wounded drips a kind of gum in large white drops; of these press many together which then clung to one another and turn black as pitch, and having made this gum into a wad as large as they will, they can make it smooth and round with a stone, commonly leaving it as large as one of our air bubbles. This turns into a substance resembling dough but not so hard and very heavy; this bounces as high as perhaps twice the height of our air balls and for a quarter of an hour it ceases not to bounce. Many of these were here and in all these islands and before I came hither I had seen one in Seville as large as an oil jar, taken thither by the old Admiral [Columbus] (1909:159).

**Batey** was a Taino word that referred to both the rubber ball, the ball court and the ball game itself (Alegria 1983:14).

According to Las Casas:

The towns in these islands were not arranged along their streets, save that the house of the king or lord of the town was built in the best place and upon the best site. In front of the royal residence there was a large clearing, better swept and smoother, more long than wide, which in the tongue of these islands they call batey, the penultimate syllable being long, which means the ball game. There were other houses too very near to this clearing, and if the town was a very large one there were the clearings or courts for the ball game which were of lesser size than the main one. (1909:121). The ball was called in their tongue batey the letter e being long, the game as well as the place where it was played was also named batey. (1909:538)

Based on the archaeological remains of actual ball courts and ethnohistorical accounts of early explorers, the playing of the batey ball game in the West Indies appears to have been limited to western Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and some of the Bahamanian and Virgin Islands. These areas were the traditional homeland of the Taino Indians and their culture at contact (Alegria

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1983:5).

Early accounts by Spanish explorers noted that the game was played by two teams equal in number, but with varying numbers of players. According to Las Casas, who observed the batey on Hispaniola:

Twenty or thirty stood at either end of the long enclosure. Those at one end would toss the ball to those at the opposite extreme and it was then smitten by whoever was nearest: with the shoulder, if the ball flew high, which made the ball return like lightning; and if it flew close to the ground, quickly putting their right hand to the ground and leaning on it, they would smite the ball with the point of a buttock which made the ball return more slowly. Those of the opposite side would likewise send it back with their buttocks, until one or the other side committed a fault according to the rules of the game (1909:538).

The objective of the game was:

those at one extreme [of the ball court] should make it pass to the other in front of their opponents, and that these should make it pass to the other in front of their opponents, and that these should pass it beyond the limits and positions of the former and they cease not until the ball rolls on the ground, whether because no player smote it betimes or that the ball did not bounce or because it was so far that none could reach it and it stopped of its own accord, and to make this victory one stroke is made. Then they who were served on the last round now serve the ball to the other group. After so many strokes have been marked, those among the who made certain wagers pay or receive the prize which among both parties was previously accorded (Oviedo 1851:166).

Various accounts of the early Spanish do not credit the Taino batey game as having ritual significance. Most early Spanish chroniclers

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did not realize the ceremonial importance of the batey ball game, but they did describe certain episodes during the conquest period that indicated that the Taino used the outcome of the game for making important decisions, such as going to war; and the prize was a sacrificial victim, granted to the winning team (Alegria 1983:4).

The earliest example of this is contained in a story told by a companion of Christopher Columbus, Diego Mendez, in his account of the Taino Indians of Jamaica, where he states:

and having finally arrived at this island, while waiting for the sea to grow calm that I might continue my voyage, many Indians gathered and decided to kill me and take the canoe and all that I had; and so my life was wagered at their ball game to see which of them it would befall to carry out the task (Fernandez de Navarrete 1825:470).

The chronicler Gonzalo Oviedo relates how in Puerto Rico the cacique Aymamon captured a young Spaniard, Pedro Suarez "and ordered his people to gamble for him at batey and that the winner of the game should kill him" (1851:471).

In another Puerto Rican incident Oviedo records:

It fell to Agueybana, who was the greatest lord of the island, to kill don Cristobal de Sotomayor, his owner, whom the cacique (chief) himself served and to whose share he had been allotted as I have already said, and in whose house he was; and they gambled for him at the ball game or what they call games of batey, which is the same thing (1871:472).

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Such incidents clearly demonstrate that the batey was more than just recreation, but that the victor was awarded the privilege of executing an important prisoner, who had been condemned to death. (Alegria 1983:12).

The archaeological remains of ball courts are found throughout the American Southwest, Mesoamerica, and much of South America, in addition to the West Indies. Ethnohistoric accounts from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries, indicate that a marked similarity in the ball game rules of these areas, and in the lay out of the ball courts (Alegria 1983). The earliest evidence of a ball court was found at the Olmec site San Lorenzo, in Mesoamerica and possible date back to 600-400 B.C., although clay figurines of ball players have been found in archaeological contexts in the olmec area dating from about 1500 B.C. (Alegria 1983:145). By the Pre-Classic Period (800-200 B.C.), ball courts are found as far north as the Valley of Mexico and they make their appearance in the Yucatan area by about A.D.400 (Alegria 1983:141).

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Around A.D.700, ball courts were being constructed at the Snakestown Site, in Arizona, which is contemporaneous with their first appearance in the West Indies on the island of Puerto Rico (Alegria 1983:150).

Based on the finding of stone "collars" and "elbow stones" found in both areas, it has been suggested that the batey game was introduced into Puerto Rico from Mesoamerica. Wearing of the "collars and "elbow stones" on their hips and elbows probably served to protect the players from the impact of the ball and to enhance the striking power of the players (Alegria 1983:150).

According to Alegria,

The association between stone yokes and the rubber ball game in Mesoamerica establishes a definite relationship between the Antillean stone collar and elbow stones and the aboriginal game. The two probably formed part of the player's paraphernalia. Chronologically, as well as stylistically, the stone collars and elbow stones are associated with the most elaborate zemis or three-pointed idols of the Taino (Alegria 1983:150-151).

The Antillean stone collar and elbow stones are most often found in Puerto Rico and appear to date from the Period IV (AD 1200-1500). However, the fact that they are not mentioned in the Spanish chronicles may indicate that their use had been discontinued by contact (Alegria 1983:151).

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As in Mesoamerica where certain sculptured stone objects were considered part of the ceremonial paraphernalia of the game, excavations at ball court sites, such as Caguana, have produced three-pointed stone zemi figurines, and round stone balls that possibly "had some symbolic meaning associated with the game" (Alegria 1983:151).

In addition, the numerous petroglyphs found on stones bordering the ball courts and plaza, "is another clear indication of the ceremonial nature of the activities held in these courts" (Alegria 1983:153).

According to Ricardo Alegria, the existence of ball courts is an indicator of several aspects of Taino culture in terms of societal organization, sophistication of technology, and sociopolitical development:

The rubber ball game of the Taino is also of great significance for establishing the level of cultural development achieved by them.

Competitive games between two teams are not present in all societies; their existence requires complex sociopolitical and technological development. They are a form of a challenge for young players, as well as a means of fulfilling their basic need for admiration and prestige.

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The game, as we are informed by historical sources, was very dangerous, for the players were likely to die on the court from being struck by the solid rubber ball. The competition between two teams of different villages or moieties in a way substituted for warfare, providing the victorious players with the prestige and honor that warriors obtained in battle against the enemy.

The construction of courts and ceremonial centers required a high degree of technical development, specialists to plan and design them, and a large labor force to work in the relocation of several tons of displaced earth and the transportation from distant river beds of huge boulders, sometimes weighing more than a ton.

This kind of work could be carried out only in a stratified society with a powerful chief to direct large numbers of workers, and with specialists with the authority and knowledge to design and supervise the construction of the court. Such a society would have to produce food above the subsistence level to feed the laborers, who in some cases were working outside their own villages and were not involved in the local production of food.

The rubber ball game of the Taino of the Greater Antilles, with its complex of traits, is a significant clue to understanding the cultural sophistication of these Indians, first to have contact with European invaders of aboriginal America. (1983:155-156).

THE CAPA PHASE

The Caguana Site is significant not only because it is the largest and most complex ceremonial site in the West Indies, but also because of its role in the history of archaeological research in Puerto Rico. Caguanas was the first site of its kind to be carefully investigated and have the results published (Mason 1941). This investigation, and subsequent work at the site, produced ceramic fragments of decorated and undecorated pottery, which were used to define the Capa ceramic style, characteristic of the late

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prehistoric and early contact periods in the western half of Puerto Rico (A.D. 1200-1500) (Rouse 1952:350-352).

Dr. Irving Rouse of Yale University, was the first to identify the ceramics from the Caguana Site as representing a distinctive style that was restricted in a temporal and geographic context. Stylistically the Capa ceramics "seem to have been basically hemispherical in structure," with characteristically narrow and incurving shoulders (Rouse 1952:351). Decoration was found on 60-70 percent of all ceramics recovered. Decoration consisted mainly of incised designs, although red slipping and representation of animals are present (Rouse 1952:351).

Rouse believed that the Capa Style was derived in the main from the preceding Ostiones Style, with which it shared many decorative elements including incised decorations. The analysis of the ceramics from the Caguana Site have been instrumental in the identification of late prehistoric and early contact period sites throughout western Puerto Rico and eastern Hispanola where the Capa ceramics are found.

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Without the development of this information there would be no relative chronology for the dating and differentiation of Taino Indian sites in Puerto Rico.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Caguana site is considered of national significance under National Historic Landmark Criterion 6 for providing information on ceremonial aspects of the Taino Indian Culture, and for defining the late prehistoric and early contact archaeological sequence of western Puerto Rico.

The Caguana Site falls under the Theme of Indigenous American Populations, Subtheme Prehistoric/Historic Archeology, and Topical Aspects of Religion, Ideology, and Ceremonialism, and Major Contributions to the Development of Culture Histories.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property is the triangularly-shaped terrace on which the Caguana Site is located. This terrace covers some 2.8 ha. or 7 acres. The central UTM reference point is: 19 7344 2024345.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the property has been defined by the archeological investigations of Mason (1941) and Alegria (1983) which demonstrate that the Caguana Site is restricted to just the 2.8 ha. (7 acre) terrace.

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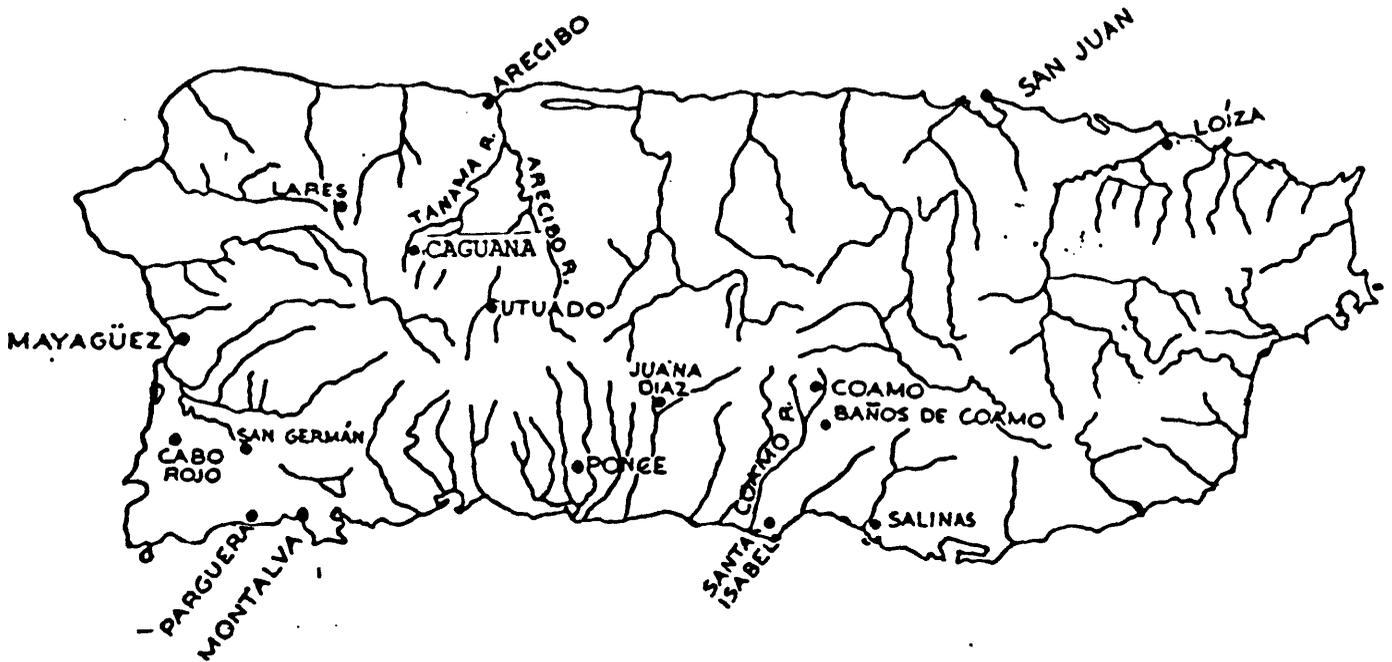
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Figure 1. Map of the island of Puerto Rico showing the location of the Caguana Ceremonial Ball Courts along the Tamana River in the west central mountains.



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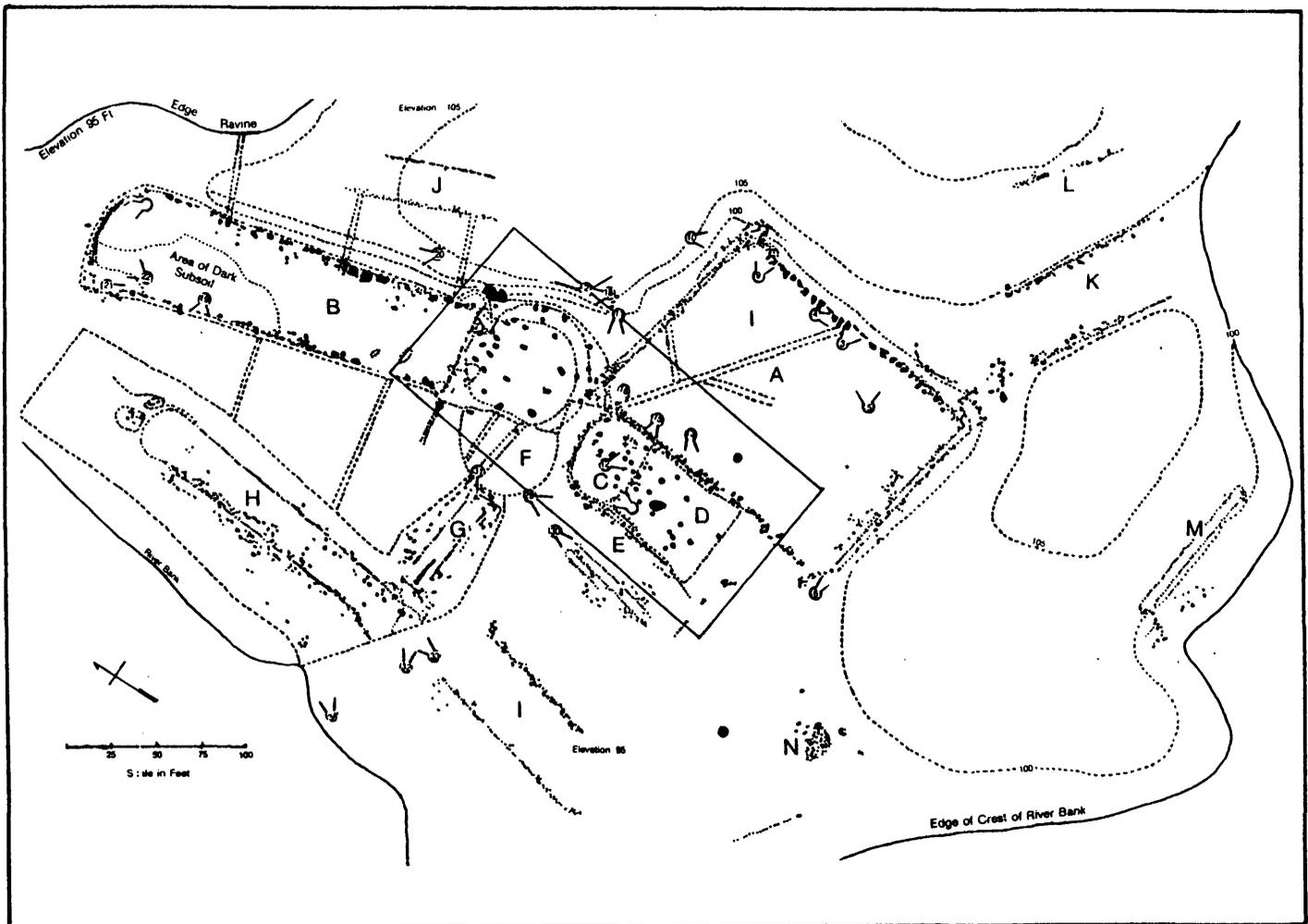
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Figure 2. Site plan showing the stone alignment features as uncovered in the 1915 New York Academy of Sciences excavation (Mason, 1941).



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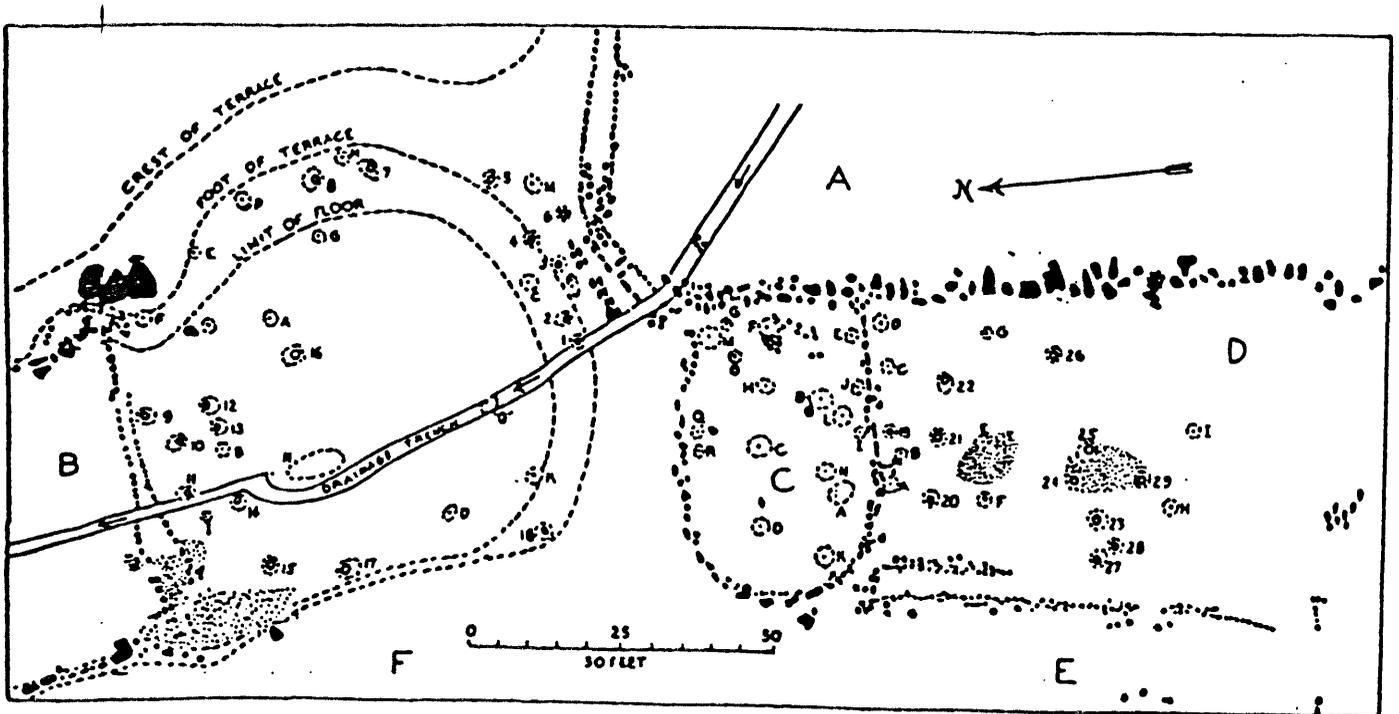
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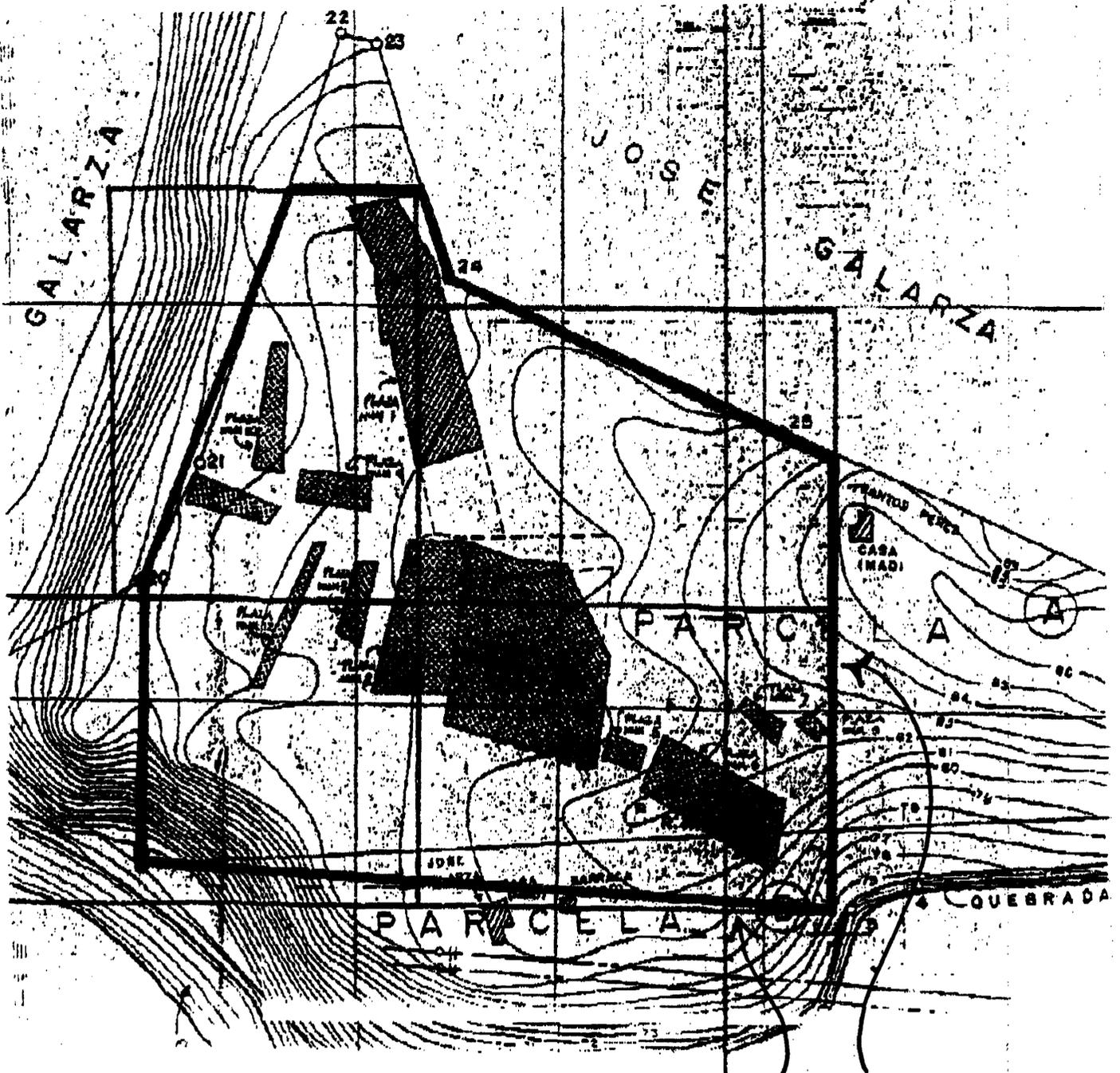
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Figure 3. Central area including parts of features A to F, showing locations of house posts and other subsoil disturbances. Posts are indicated by small broken circels enclosing solid circles, other shafts by small broken circles. Stippled areas indicate large disturbances in the subsoil. (Mason, 1941)





Site Boundary = Thick Black Line

Caguana Ceremonial Ball Courts Nomination