

# Pre-Columbian Archaeology:

## Is there a connection between habitation sites and nearby cays?

### Introduction

The pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Bahamas were a group of people called the Lucayan Tainos (Keegan, 1997). Although the Lucayans inhabited the Bahamas for nearly 700 years, very little research has been conducted to learn about these people. The primary research focusing on the Bahamas comes from William F. Keegan and Shaun D. Sullivan. These studies were directed towards habitation sites of the Lucayans, specialized sites were not explored or researched.

The purpose of this semester's study was to explore the relationship between nearby cays and habitation sites. The intended project area was located at Broad Creek Cay. Past research suggested that habitation sites were not present on cays. Seeking to uncover an unfamiliar component of the Lucayans' life, the team hypothesized that a specialized site, specifically ceremonial, would be found on the cay.

### Methods

The survey method used by the archaeology team was a type of pedestrian walkover developed by Keegan called meandering transect. This involves each team member walking down a corridor, scanning the surface for material.

### Results Overview

- 229 pieces of Palmetto ware, two hearths
- Variety of shell tools

| Pottery Types    | Sullivan % | BCC % |
|------------------|------------|-------|
| Plain            | 95.4       | 98.1  |
| Punctate Incised | 0.2        | 0.75  |
| Molded Applique  | 0.5        | 0.37  |
| Mat Marked       | 3.7        | 0.75  |

Figure 1: Chart comparing Sullivan's habitation site findings to the findings on Broad Creek Cay

### Discussion

On Broad Creek Cay, one or two sites were discovered. The concentrations of material situated on either end of the cay separated by a gap suggest two separate habitation sites, called hamlets. The second prospect is that the cay contains one large village site. There is significantly less erosion in the gap, opening up the possibility that the scatter of material continues throughout the gap, making the cay a continuous site.

Regardless of the number of sites, the evidence on the cay strongly suggests it was used for habitation. For instance:

- variety of shell tools
- two hearths
- conch midden
- Palmetto ware thicknesses typical of eating and cooking (Fig. 2)
- large amount of Palmetto Plain (Fig. 1)

Although our hypothesis was refuted, this discovery is exciting. It contradicts the existing theories of Lucayan settlement patterns in the Bahamas by being the first large-scale habitation site discovered on an offshore cay.

Figure 8: Three pieces of Palmetto ware that fit together; found in situ on the northern end of the cay



Figure 10: A hearth found on the northern end of the cay



Figure 9: Ecofacts (hole-punched conch and fire-cracked rock) found on the northern end of the cay in the conch midden



The Fall 2009 Archaeology Research Team

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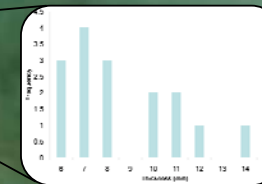


Figure 3: Chart displaying varying thicknesses of pottery shards found in the northern concentration of material – there are significant spikes at 7 and 10 mm



Figure 7: View of east coast of Broad Creek Cay from southern end

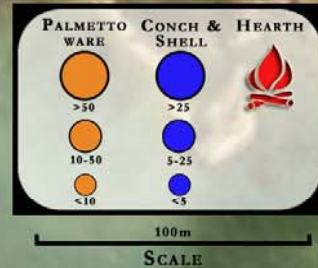


Figure 4: Rim pieces found on the southern end of the cay

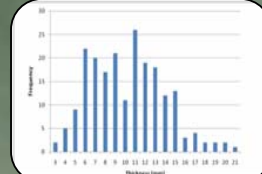


Figure 2: Chart displaying varying thicknesses of pottery shards found in the southern concentration of material – there are significant spikes at 6 and 11 mm



Figure 5: A collection of pottery shards found on the southeast coast of the cay



Figure 6: Modified conch, potential tools

### Works Cited

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