An Archeological Study of Pre-Columbian Lucayan Inhabitation Near an Eleuthera Blue Hole


Introduction
In October 1492, Columbus made landfall on North America. Historians are not able to conclude the exact area as there is no clearly reliable written record of the time. What historians do know is that the islands which he came across were home to an unbelievable culture: the Lucayan Indians. The roots of this culture have been traced back to the banks of the Orinoco River in Venezuela. Archaeologists have been able to trace Lucayan migration from their point of origin all the way to the Islands of the Bahamas. The Lucayans are now known as having been an advanced civilization for their time. Eventually, with the arrival of the Spaniards, the entirety of the Lucayan population had been enslaved or died off. The remains of the Lucayan people were swept away by storms and the tides, covered over by windblown sand, and buried under plantations and dune ridges. It was not until the past forty years that archaeologists started to uncover this forgotten culture.

Methods I
The meandering transect is a method of surface survey in which researchers are placed five meters apart and meander in a corridor parallel to shore. The point is to see all of the ground surface in the area of the transect.

Methods II
A gridline was established in the heart of the site with datum points in intervals of 5 meters. Test pits of 50cm diameters were dug (see figure 8) at three of the datum points. Findings were then sifted through a quarter inch screen (see figure 7) and recorded.

Rationale
Blue holes (see figure 1) are known to have served spiritual importance to the Lucayan community as an entrance to the “otherworld”. The focus of the research was to establish a greater understanding as to whether Lucayans valued blue holes when creating settlements.

Hypothesis
Lucayans formed large permanent settlements in close proximity to blue holes.

Results
The majority of results found at the Broad Creek Blue Hole site included large quantities of hole-punched Queen conch (see figure 2), Palmetto ware (see figure 3), a scattering of shell material, a variety of tools (see figures 4 & 5), and other ecofacts and artifacts. Possibly the most exciting discovery was that of a Lucayan bead (see figure 6) made of conch found in a test pit, which is significant of a living area.

Discussion
Based upon the findings it can be concluded that a site was indeed discovered that was used by the Lucayans as a living area. The results show two significant areas of interest. The first is towards the beginning of the project area (see figure 9) laden with hole-punched conch as well as two conch hammers. It has been concluded to be a resource procurement area. The second is almost directly adjacent to the blue hole on a point (see figure 10) where the large majority of the Palmetto ware was found along with a Missouri. These results are supportive of a living area. The conch bead as well as foreign rocks that were found at the project area are suggestive of trade with other groups of people. It is suggested that future archeological research be conducted with further excavations along the established grid line. An investigation of the blue hole for signs of Lucayan interaction is also an interesting possibility that should be explored.

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Images and Graphs:
- Figure 1: Blue holes, such as the one shown, are known to have served spiritual importance to the Lucayan community.
- Figure 2: Conch shells are commonly found in Lucayan sites.
- Figure 3: Palmetto ware is a distinctly made artifact which is created by scraping the bark off of trees.
- Figure 4: Shaft abrader is a tool that was used to scrape the bark off of trees.
- Figure 5: Conch hammers due to use wear on the spire of the conch.
- Figure 6: Bead made of conch shell.
- Figure 7: Blue hole with surrounding area.
- Figure 8: Test pit, which is used to excavate the site of interest.
- Figure 9: Queen Conch
- Figure 10: Palmetto Ware by Type

Graphs:
- Frequency Histogram of Palmetto Ware Thickness
- Thickness (mm)
- Number of Pieces