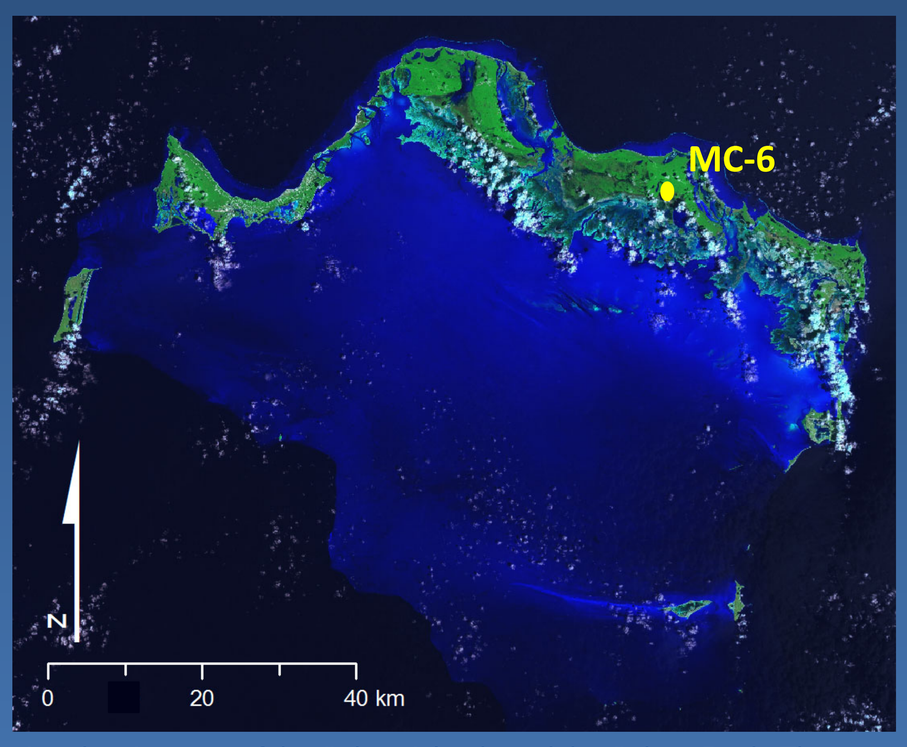
Spatial Differentiation in Archaeological Faunal

A comparison between deposits from a midden area and a building at MC-6, Middle Caicos, Turks & Caicos Islands

Joost Morsink
joostmorsink@gmail.com

Introduction

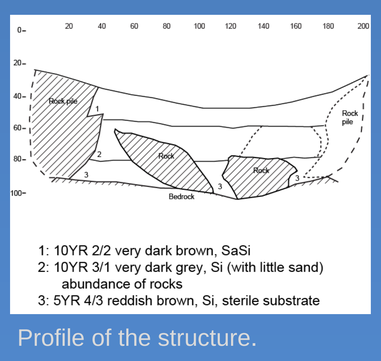
Faunal materials from MC-6, an archaeological site located on the south-eastern edge of Middle Caicos, Turks & Caicos Islands, indicate that locations within this site were categorically distinguished from each other. At this site, conical stone structures were built into elevated midden areas (Keegan 2007, Sullivan 1981). In 2010, a FLMNH team conducted a six-week excavation project funded by NSF, specifically targeting these structures and middens to understand the internal dynamics of this village and how these structures related to the midden area (Morsink 2010). Zooarchaeological data from both contexts is presented here.



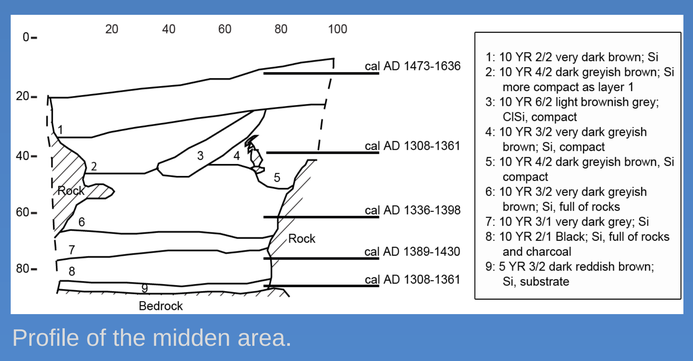
Landsat Imagery of the Caicos Islands and the Caicos Bank. The shallow waters, the light blue in the image, were the primary location where prehistoric people living at MC-6 fished and hunted for other marine resources.

Methods

For this analysis, zooarchaeological remains from one 1x1 m excavation unit within structure IV are compared to remains from one 1x1 m unit in an adjacent midden area. Archaeo-logical deposits were sieved through 3.25 mm mesh on site. Zooarchaeological analysis was conducted in Environmental Archaeology (EA) at FLMNH (see LeFebvre, this exhibit).



Profile of the structure.

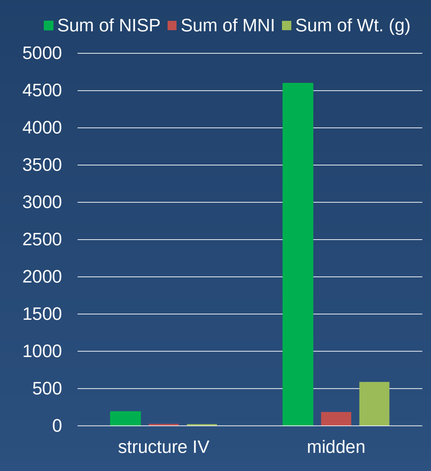


Profile of the midden area.

Results

A grand total of 50 different taxonomic vertebrate and crab identifications are present between Structure IV and the midden. In sum, 4,788 individual vertebrate and crab specimens were analyzed, producing a minimum of 210 individual animals and a combined weight of 611.30 g. Samples from both Structure IV and the midden are dominated by bony fish.

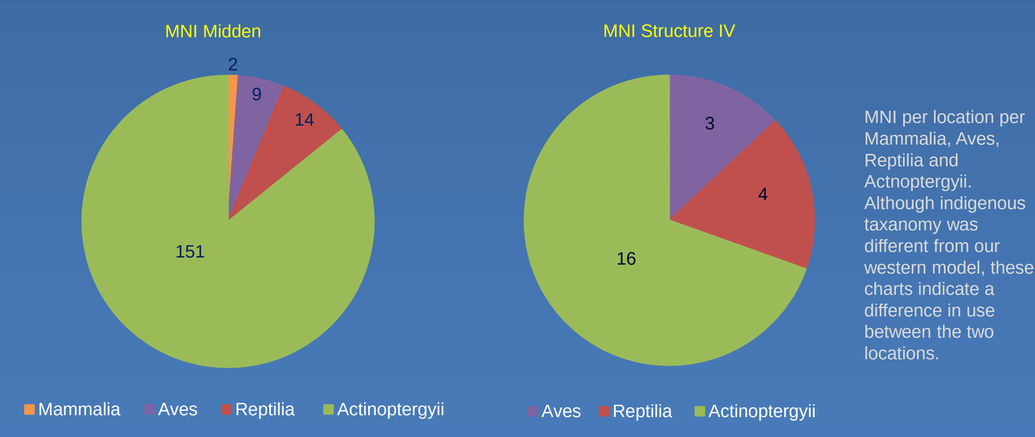
Taxa	NISP Str. IV	NISP Midden	Total NISP
Actinopterygii	86	2607	2693
Albula vulpes	53	1129	1182
Cheloniidae	4	145	149
Vertebrata	5	87	92
Lutjanidae	1	73	74
Haemulidae		61	61
Haemulon sp.	1	48	49
Aves	9	34	43
Lutjanus sp.		38	38
Cyclura carinata	4	33	37
cf. Haemulidae		34	34
Sphyraena barracuda	2	32	34
Gecarcinidae cf. Cardisoma sp.		29	29
Sparisoma sp.	1	23	24
Scarus sp.	1	22	23
Carangidae		17	17
Acanthurus sp.	1	14	15
Belonidae	1	14	15
Scaridae	2	13	15
Decapoda cf. Brachyura sp.		14	14
cf. Lutjanidae		12	12
cf. Aves		11	11
Caranx sp.		8	8
Epicrates chrysogaster	8		8
Ostraciidae		8	8
Serranidae		8	8
Total	179	4514	4693



Left: Abbreviated list of identified specimens per context in order of decreasing abundance to illustrate differences between the two locations.

Above: Total NISP, MNI and Weight per context, clearly indicating that, compared to the midden, structure IV was kept relatively clean.

Ten fish families are present in Structure IV, with only one family not present in the midden (Belonidae). Of the seventeen families present in the midden samples, seven are exclusive to the midden (Labridae, Ostraciidae, Exocoetidae, Sparidae, Diodontidae, Sciaenidae, and Scombridae). *Epicrates chrysogaster*, the Turks Island Boa, is only found within structure IV. Cheloniidae remains in the midden appear to be from juvenile individuals and in several cases hatchlings. Birds are a minority in both contexts. The six mammal specimens identified are from the midden exclusively.



MNI per location per Mammalia, Aves, Reptilia and Actnoptergyii. Although indigenous taxanomy was different from our western model, these charts indicate a difference in use between the two locations.

The above two charts show that Actinoptergyii is most common in both locations. However, despite the absence of Mammalia inside the structure, the percentage of non-Actinoptergyii is higher. For example, the reptilian category inside the structure consists of the Turks Island Boa and the Turks and Caicos Iguana (*Cyclura carinata*). The deposition, and possible consumption, of these island specific animals could have been related to the creation of an island specific identity.

Conclusion

The results presented here show significant differences between samples from within structure IV and the midden area. People living at MC-6 spatially differentiated food procurement, preparation, and consumption practices. This differentiation in practices induced, through its performance, meanings of place and associations with these places. This study shows the high potential of zooarchaeological analysis in relation to anthropological questions of place (cf. Jones 1998). People use different locations in the landscape in structurally dissimilar manners, materializing and spatializing social relations between people, between people and animals and between people places.

References
Jones, A. 1998 Where Eagles Dare: Landscape, Animals, and the Neolithic of Orkney. Journal of Material Culture 3(3):301-324.
Keegan, W. F. 2007 *Taíno Indian myth and practice: the arrival of the stranger king*. University of Florida Press, Gainesville.
Morsink, J. 2012: The Power of Salt. Ph.D Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida.
Sullivan, S. D. 1981 Prehistoric Patterns of Exploitation and Colonization in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Ph.D., Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.