

# Caribbean Archaeology

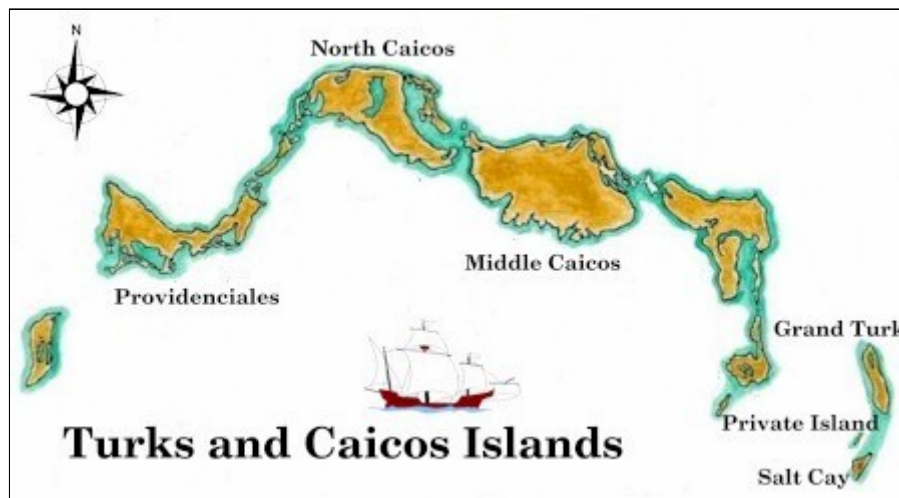
At the Florida Museum of Natural History

## Photos from the Field

### Middle Caicos, 1999

Page 1 of 4

From January 2<sup>nd</sup> until February 1<sup>st</sup>, and from February 15<sup>th</sup> through March 1<sup>st</sup>, we conducted archaeological excavations at two precolumbian sites on Middle Caicos, Turks and Caicos Islands. The two sites were MC-32 on the north coast (A.D. 1250-1500) and the ceremonial/trading center, MC-6, on the south coast (A.D. 1500). The work was undertaken with the assistance of two Earthwatch teams and other volunteers. A report is being prepared, but for now I offer a set of photographs illustrating our work.





June Taylor and Doris Sweet at the Vera Hamilton Primary School in Bambarra. The school, which is no longer used because there are so few school children in Bambarra, served as our dormitory and field station.



MC-32 is located on Farm Creek Pond.





Earthwatch volunteers clear the guinea grass from MC-32 as we prepare the excavation units. This area was selected for excavation because test excavations conducted in 1993 revealed a high density of artifacts in this area.



Excavating MC-32. Excavating an archaeological site is like reading a book and tearing out each page as you read it. We carefully remove the soil from around artifacts to reveal how they are associated with each other in the unit.



Brian Riggs, Manager of the Turks and Caicos National Museum, exposes pottery at MC-32.



For archaeologists, information about how artifacts are related to each other in the ground is more important than the artifacts themselves. Here, Betsy Carlson takes detailed notes on the location of artifacts in the site.





To interpret the relationships between artifacts their depth must be measured accurately. Michael Dion holds the stadia rod.



Betsy Carlson uses a builder's level to record the depth of artifacts.



June Taylor and Betsy Carlson screening at MC-32. Soils from the excavation are passed through sieves to collect fish bones and other small artifacts



Sofia Marquet drawing the stratigraphic profile of the north wall, MC-32. Unless there are later disturbances, older objects are below younger objects. The stratigraphy provides a history of soil and artifact deposition on the site that helps us to interpret changes through time.





Stratigraphic profile from MC-32.



Artifacts are placed in ziplock bags on which are printed the exact location that they came from. Collection units are then given field sample (FS) numbers for inventory control.



Ralph Pax and Sofia Marquet wash shells recovered from MC-32 prior to analysis. The shells need to be cleaned to remove excess dirt prior to weighing.



Robert Hoffman sorting shell. Shells from the sites were separated by species. Counts were made of the number of specimens and Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI), and the shells were weighed. These measurements provide information on the environments that were exploited and on the relative importance of different items in the diet.



Betsy Carlson (background) and Robert Hoffman count and weigh shells while Lindsay Keegan uses a Gateway 2000 laptop to enter the numbers in a spreadsheet.





Lindsay Keegan brushing pottery in our field station's dining and lab area. The locally made pottery, called Palmetto ware, is made from red sand that has blown in from the Sahara desert mixed with burned and crushed conch shell. The pottery is dry brushed to remove the dirt because washing it in water causes the sherds to crumble.



A selection of artifacts from MC-32 (clockwise from top): Coral abrader, limestone fishing-net weight, pottery "adorno" (bat face), shell inlay (the eye piece for a wooden statue), pottery adorno, and large pottery bowl fragment (center).



Archaeological site on Middle Caicos with two-plaza plan. At the center of Plaza 1 is a court which has stones aligned to track the summer solstice and other astronomical events.



Ralph Floyd and Warren Stortroen in the excavation units at MC-6.





Tiger shark tooth with a hole drilled at the top and a shark tooth drill that was broken during use. From MC-6.



Middle Caicos is known for its voracious mosquitos, which weren't too bad during our stay.



After a long day in the field it was fun to relax at night by playing domino at Hall's store.

