LATE PRE-CONTACT ERA TAÍNO SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY AND DIET:
ZOOARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM MAIMA

Abstract
Taino peoples, the Indigenous population of Jamaica, were all but eradicated by Spanish colonization through the first half of the 16th century, with few historic accounts to document their culture and lifeways. Taino subsistence economy in Jamaica has been studied intermittently by archaeologists/zooarchaeologists over the past four decades. Archaeological excavations at the Taino village of Maima on the north coast of Jamaica in 2014 and 2015 provide additional data to expand this endeavor. Beyond a context for Maima and Taino research across the Caribbean more generally, the dissertation presents the results of the faunal analysis first for shellfish faunas and then the invertebrate remains recovered from excavations. These data are examined for spatial differences between households, for temporal variation in archaeological deposits and for the diversity of habitats represented in Taino exploitation patterns. The dissertation subsequently undertakes a Caribbean-wide comparative analysis of the Maima invertebrate fauna employing data from 22 other sites dating to the temporal interval 200 to 1500 A.D. This meta-analysis explores differences in Taino subsistence strategies related to landscape, island location and culture group variation, the latter including the Classic, Western, and Lucayan Taino. Variation in subsistence pursuits, with one exception, relate only to a site’s distance from the coast and locally available resources. The results of this analysis contribute to contemporary knowledge of the Jamaican Taino with implications for understanding variation or lack thereof across the Caribbean.

Keywords: Jamaica, Caribbean, Zooarchaeology, Pre-contact