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RECENT AMERINDIAN FINDS ON ANGUILLA

It is now almost ten years since the first archaeological work was done on Anguilla. At the Xth International Congress for Caribbean Archaeology, held in Puerto Rico, I presented a paper on the Petroglyphs in Anguilla’s Fountain Cavern and mounted a poster display of finds from many of our island’s Amerindian sites. I was surprised to find that most of those attending the Congress were totally unaware of Anguilla’s rich archaeological potential. It would seem that archaeologists viewed Anguilla as having little of interest. Yet it is now an undisputed fact that our tiny island has evidence of Amerindian occupation for a period of nearly three thousand years, with over thirty recorded settlement sites and two ceremonial caverns intact with groups of petroglyphs (see Figure 1).

The territory of Anguilla, a British Crown colony, is located about 115 miles east of Puerto Rico and is the most northern of the Leeward Islands. Including the offshore cays of Dog Island, Scrub Island, Anguillita, Prickly Pear and Sombrero, the total land area is about 36 square miles. The main island of Anguilla is long and thin, "eel-like", and relatively flat, the highest point being just over 200 feet (65 meters) above sea level. St. Martin/St. Maarten, a combined French/Dutch territory is just eleven miles to the south, its mountainous peaks clearly visible. On clear days we can see Saba, St. Barths and St. Kitts. Strategically located as it is, at the northern end of the arc of Lesser Antilles islands, the last stopping off point before the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the Greater Antilles, Anguilla must surely have been visited by successive migrating Amerindian peoples. Some, it seems, decided to stay, perhaps attracted by the plentiful supply of marine resources to be found among our reefs and by our land which is ideally suited for the cultivation of cassava, corn and cotton. Our fine breezy climate and idyllic beaches must have made Anguilla seem like a little piece of Paradise, that place "towards the East" which was part of Amerindian mythology.

Our archaeological work on Anguilla has been simplified by the fact that this is a limestone island. Igneous artifacts such as flints and stone axes are clearly visible in our degraded limestone soil and there is little dense vegetation. Members of the Anguilla Archaeological and Historical Society initially focussed on collections from the surface, generally immediately after rainfall. By monitoring sites in this way a clear picture of the areas of occupancy was obtained for about thirty different Amerindian settlements.

Over the past three years our Society has been involved in a number of salvage digs, wherever sites have been exposed by developers. We have also been able to do some controlled excavations, resulting in the gathering of a mass of data and artifacts and a few carbon-14 dates which we have been able to relate to particular stratum. Unfortunately this Congress allows each participant a very limited time for the presentation of papers. I shall therefore limit myself to a slide-show and photos of important recent Amerindian finds from Anguilla’s sites, together with the carbon-14 results received thus far. My poster display, which has the same theme as this paper, will add more detailed information. Though much more archaeological work needs to be done on Anguilla, we have had an encouraging start.
THE ARCHAIC OR "PRE-CERAMIC" FINDS

One of the most interesting recent finds on Anguilla has been the recovery of artifacts from what appears to be an archaic or "pre-ceramic" site. This site is located close to the north eastern tip of Anguilla, near to a huge cave known as Ab-n-dam and with a commanding view of Scrub Island and St. Martin's Flat Island. There is absolutely no trace of any ceramic material on the surface but there is evidence of charcoal burning to one side of the site, clearly done during recent historical times.

Thus far we have only collected from the surface of the sandy soil, and from among the bushes. Long black flints (1), short yellow flint blades (2), shell vessels with the inner parts carefully cut out (3), and shell aces (4) have all been recovered in some quantities, together with the upper half of a well made "eared" axe of igneous stone (5) and a very enigmatic carved hard yellow stone (6) which is either a stylized face of perhaps had a functional purpose as a weight. This object is complete and had no signs of wear around its single perforation (see Figure 2).

A single sample taken from part of a well-made shell axe with a ground edge, produced a C-14 date of 3240 ± 80 B.P. (before 1950), equivalent to 1290 ± 80 B.C. (Beta Analytic # 21865-AAHS-08/87). We hope to do a controlled dig at this site in the not too distant future.

Other places on Anguilla where artifacts of clearly archaic type have been recovered are Crocus Bay, Maundays Bay and Lockrum, but ceramic material is also present at these other sites. Long black flints, large yellow and white flint blades and chipped black or red stone exes are among artifacts from these sites which appear to be archaic.

THE PETROGLYPH SITES

The petroglyphs in Anguilla's Fountain Cavern were, until recently, believed to be the only examples on our island. Since my paper on this subject, delivered at the Xiith Congress, considerable work has been done at this important ceremonial site, with three archaeological test pits excavated within the cavern, supervised by Dr David Watters, and three dates of 420 ± 140 A.D., from a very small carbon sample (Beta Analytic # 15824, March 1986), and 730 ± 70 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 15485, January 1986) and 820 ± 80 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 15486, January 1986) from two shell samples. These dates were from material recovered immediately below the main carved "Jocahu" stalagmite.

The petroglyphs in The Fountain have been examined by several other visiting archaeologists and specialists, including Dr C. Dubelaar, Dr H. Petit-Jean Roget, Dr J. Havisier and Dr A. Jiménez, all of whom have remarked on the remarkable state of preservation of this site, which the Government of Anguilla has scheduled to be developed as a show cave and National Park by 1992. Tremendous quantities of broken ceramic vessels of many different types have been recovered from within the cavern, including some obviously imported ceramics.

Recently another petroglyph cave has been located on Anguilla, at Big Spring, Island Harbour. Though the Big Spring carvings are not as well preserved as those at the Fountain, they are more numerous and are also located close to an important water source. At least 28 different petroglyphs are visible at Big Spring, and it seems that rock falls may have covered others. One large oblong "work stone" in this site has a large man-made basin-like depression in it. A similar find was made recently at the
Lockrum site, near the spring, where three basin-like depressions are visible in the rock. Similar basin-like depressions have recently been recorded at Hope Estate and at the Moho, in St. Martin.

At Anguilla’s Big Spring “goggle” eyes and "ancestor" faces of several different types predominate; there is also a carved stalagmite, smaller than but rather similar to the enormous one in The Fountain. The Big Spring petroglyphs face west and are clearly visible in the late afternoon, whereas those at The Fountain all have an easternly orientation and are lit by the rays of the morning sun (see Figure 3).

It is expected that Big Spring will be excavated, restored and included in Anguilla’s National Parks system. Further archaeological work will undoubtedly be done at The Fountain, before it is opened as a show cave.

"THREE-POINTER" STONES

Anguilla’s sites have produced enormous quantities of "three-pointer" stones of the type often referred to as "fertility zemis". Almost all are well made from very hard imported conglomerate igneous rock, of a type supposedly found on Saba. We know that many were made on Anguilla, as evidenced by considerable quantities of debitage flakes of this material found at almost every Anguillian site, and by many half-finished or roughed out three-pointers. Most finished Anguillian three-pointers have a grooved underneath, occasionally with a "lip"; several have "chevron" or "feathered" motifs deeply incised at either side of the apex.

Three-pointer stones found in Anguilla thus far are of four distinct types (see Figure 4):
I Simple "pyramidical" stones, quite regular, without any base grooves or markings.
II Very well made completely regular stone carvings with grooved bases, some with "chevron" or "feathered" markings deeply incises.
III Roughly made irregular stone carvings coming to a point but without any grooves in the base.
IV Large well made irregular stone carvings, generally not of conglomerate stone, with a depression in the base and with an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic face at one end.

A three-pointer stone of type II, found in an archaeological pit at the Rendezvous Bay site was in context with carbon dated at 540 ± 60 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 21858, July 1987), see Figure 4. Part of an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic stone of type IV, found in an archaeological pit at the Sandy Hill site was in context with carbon dated at 1070 ± 90 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 21862, July 1987). Interestingly in all of Anguilla’s sites, only one very small three-pointer done in shell had been recovered. It was found in the Shoal Bay site.

CARVINGS IN SHELL, BONE AND CRYSTAL

Important Amerindian carvings in shell, bone and crystal have been recovered from several different sites on Anguilla. The Sandy Hill site had produced a remarkably fine and complete "Zemi Head", carved from a single small conch shell (see Figure 5 (8). The mouth grins, the eyes are goggle-like and a series of "folded frog leg" motifs rise to a point at the apex. Traces of mineral pitch remain in the wide eyes and two holes for suspension or for tying, are on the reverse. Carbon recovered from the
same stratum of this find was dated at 1070 ± 90 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 21862, July 1987) and 1010 ± 80 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 21863, July 1987).

Surface collections on the Sandy Hill site produced a large part of a shark-shaped manatee-bone bifurcated snuffing tube, with traces of mineral pitch in the eyes and nostrils (see Figure 5 (9)). Part of another carved shell "Zemi Head" of an identical type to our complete example was also recovered from the surface (see Figure 5 (10)) and part of a third seemingly identical "Zemi Head" was excavated in a test pit dug by Colin Medhurst. We are awaiting analysis of finds from that dig. Additional items of shell, bone and crystal recovered from the surface of the Sandy Hill site include several broken pieces of carved conch, a piece of smoothly shaped turtle bone (see Figure 5 (11)) and a crystal "three-pointer" stone of irregular type.

A finely carved shell face, done from the lip of a conch, was recovered from the surface of Rendezvous Bay (see Figure 5 (12)). It has curious markings engraved into the face and the eyes appear to have been inlaid at one time. Several different types of hardstone beads, some of diorite, have been recovered from the surface of Rendezvous Bay.

Collections from the surface of the Sandy Ground site include a finely carved shell pendant in the form of a frog (see Figure 5 (13)), various shell discs (see Figure 5 (14)), unusual worked shell pieces (see Figure 5 (15) and (16)) and beads of both shell and crystal (see Figure 5 (17)).

The surface of the extensive Shoal Bay site has produced part of an unusual carved and engraved shell pendant (see Figure 5 (18)), the only "three-pointer" carved in shell (see Figure 5 (19)) and a small but complete "three-pointer" carved from crystal (see Figure 4 (20)).

Dog Island, one of Anguilla's large off-shore cays, has several known Amerindian sites and from the surface of one of them was recovered an unusual set of teeth, carved from a single piece of conch (see Figure 5 (21)). Probably this was once part of a wooden image, now rotted away.

CERAMIC FINDS, INCLUDING ADORNOS

Great quantities of ceramics have been recovered from the Rendezvous Bay and Sandy Hill sites, as well as from The Fountain (see Figure 6). White-on-Red and Buff-and-White-on-Red ceramic sherds were excavated from the lowest levels of the Rendezvous Bay dig but were not associated with sufficient carbon samples to enable accurate dating (see Figure 6 (22) and (23)). An unusual piece of Black-on-Red ware was also recovered at Rendezvous Bay (see Figure 6 (24)), at a level associated with carbon dated at 870 ± 90 A.D. (Beta Analytic # 21861-AAHS-04/87).

No samples of early-type White-on-Red ware were excavated at Sandy Hill, though a few almost complete vessels recovered carry "chevron" patterns done in White over a deep Red slip (see Figure 6 (25)). Fragments of White-on-Red ceramics have been recovered from Sandy Ground and from The Fountain but thus far little has been found in any archaeological context (see Figure 7).

Many different types and motifs of ceramic adornos have been recovered from Anguillian sites, from the surface and from excavation. Several of them are illustrated here (see Figure 7 (26), (27), (28), (29), (30) and (31)), from The Fountain ("snake", "manatee" & "snail"), Island Harbour ("bird") and Sandy Hill (a face, perhaps a "bat", and another face with "goggle" eyes). Hopefully more work will be able to be done with
our ceramic finds at a future time.

I hope this paper and its accompanying slide-show has indicated how interesting archaeology can be on Anguilla. We have of course only just "scratched the surface" and no doubt many more interesting discoveries will be made.

The Anguilla Archaeological and Historical Society welcomes help and participation from professionals and institutions interested in our island. It is our earnest desire to see on-going archaeological programs into the future. We extend an invitation to all delegates to come and see what we have and help us develop this interesting and important resource.

I would like to thank all those members of our Society who have helped make this presentation possible. I also thank my wife Penny for her drawings and photographs, which have made this more helpful and informative.
Fig. 1. Map of Anguilla, showing Amerindian Sites.
Fig. 2. Finds from Preceramic Site.
Fig. 3a. Petroglyphs in the Fountain, Anguilla.
3b. Petroglyphs in Big Spring, Anguilla.
Fig. 4. Three-pointer stones of different types.
Fig. 5. Carvings in shell, bone and crystal.
Fig. 6. Ceramic finds.
Fig. 7. Adornos.
Fig. 8. Zemi head from conch shell.