

Plantation Historical Museum

The Tequesta Indians of South Florida

A Report for

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by

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Introduction and Origins:

Around 1500 B.C., the ancestors of the Tequesta Indians began migrating from northern Florida to South Florida.¹ By 500 B.C., small groups of Native Americans joined together into a confederation that came to be known as the Tequesta Indians.² For most of their history, the Tequesta confederation did not have a name; rather, the name “Tequesta” was imposed on them for classification purposes by the Spanish after their arrival in the Americas.³ This name was taken from the Tequesta cacique, or chief, who resided at the mouth of the Miami River, and was applied universally to symbolize all of the people under his control. The chief, known to his people as Tekesta or Tequesta, was similar to a king in that he was believed to be a descendent of one of their gods, the sun god.⁴ With a population of 800, as documented by the Spanish, the Tequesta stretched north to south from Pompano Beach in Broward County to Cape Sable and the Florida Keys.⁵ Westward, their territory stretched across the Everglades to places like, Weston, Pine Island Ridge, and Miramar.⁶

While they controlled this vast territory, their central village was strategically located at the mouth of the Miami River on Biscayne Bay. According to journalist Nicole Brochu, the Tequesta lived near the banks of rivers, bays and waterways so that they could get an “unobstructed view of incoming weather, unfettered access to food sources and instant transportation routes.”⁷ The Miami River connected them to the interior Everglades, the coastal upland ridge, Biscayne Bay, and to the barrier islands.⁸

Food:

The Tequesta were hunters and gatherers who used food, tools, and weapons that were native to South Florida in order to sustain their civilization.⁹ Heavily abundant for their enjoyment were fish, shellfish, nuts, and berries. In order to attract this wildlife, the Tequesta set forest fires that would cultivate the land.¹⁰ Through this method, they caught snakes, deer, bears, wild boar, raccoons, possum, and rabbits that they used for food.¹¹ Large animals, such as black bears, were caught “with a massive trap called a deadfall, a contraption whereby a large, flat rock was held up by wooden limbs and triggered to fall when an animal crossed a taut rope.”¹² In order to get food from waterways, like the Everglades and Biscayne Bay, historian Charlton Tebeau explains, “They used ropes and stakes harpoon-fashion to catch manatees, sharks, sailfish, porpoises, stingrays, and small fish.”¹³

Tools:

In order to create tools and other essentials, the Tequesta used remaining animal bones and skins from their food that they could not eat. For example, shark skins were usually used as sandpaper for finishing woods and shells, while its teeth were used for drilling, stabbing, cutting, and sharpening.”¹⁴ Fatty meat was also put to use by grounding it into “a fine powder.”¹⁵ They also used shells and sharks’ teeth to create tools, including hammers, chisels, fishhooks, drinking cups, and spearheads. Sharks’ teeth were also essential in order to “carve out logs that were used to make canoes.”¹⁶ Other animal bones were used for arrowheads and some of which had a fine point on each side were even used as hairpins.¹⁷

Gender Roles:

On average, Tequesta men were about 5 feet, 8 inches tall and they wore loincloths that were made out of deer hide. Women, who were only 5 feet, 3 inches tall, wore skirts that were made out of moss.¹⁸ Both genders had different roles within society. Men were responsible for the hunting and fishing, while women gathered food such as clams, conchs, oysters, and turtle eggs. Women also cooked the food that the men brought home and they were involved in craft-making, including rope and weaving baskets that could be used to store food, or for cooking pots and other essentials.¹⁹ Their baskets were not designed for beauty and they were “gritty and hard,” but they served their purpose. Tebeau explains, “a few lines of incising near the vessel rim or some punctuations served to decorate the cooking pots.”²⁰ Luckily for archaeologists, Tequesta women used the same designs for long periods of time so that different time periods could be determined. Early storage pots could not keep food fresh for very long, but as their technology improved, they were able to store the food that they cooked over an open fire for longer periods of time.²¹

Indian Mounds:

The Tequesta Indians did not have any trouble discarding remains from their food, including animal and fish bones. They simply threw them on the ground wherever they were and they went on with their lives. In order to tidy-up their environment, they tossed a layer of dirt, sand, or shells on top of their garbage and a new layer was added to that when the garbage became overwhelming again.²² These layers of dirt, known as mounds, were created over a period of several hundred years.²³ As nomads, the Tequesta could not take many things with them when they left an area. This left them with a major

clean-up job once they returned to the site. After they returned to a site, they buried everything that they left behind from their previous settlement in the area with a new layer of dirt.²⁴ On top of these mounds, the Indians built their homes. Mounds that were used for residential purposes were referred to as kitchen middens, or middle middens. Historian Squires explains that all “Indians of pre-Columbian times lived on and about large mounds. This custom, however, was not theirs alone. In various and widely separated parts of the world these mounds of long departed and perhaps unknown and forgotten races remain as monuments to a past civilization.”²⁵

In addition to residential mounds, there were also burial mounds that were used for human remains. Tequestans allowed birds to pick apart the majority of a deceased body for food before covering the remaining parts with sand or dirt. Mounds were also used for ceremonial purposes. Ceremonial mounds made of sand were over 25 feet high and spanned hundreds of feet in length.²⁶ Additionally, Tequestans were not different from the way modern society treats its leaders. Historian Karl Squires explains, “The local chief, called the *cacique*, had his dwelling on the center of the mound. Grouped about were the houses of the principal men. Other members of the community placed their houses about the mound on the flat surrounding land.”²⁷

Traveling:

The Tequesta were nomads who traveled around their territory, but usually not outside of it. They ventured through their land by foot and on waterways with canoes that they constructed.²⁸ Historian Robert McNicoll believes that since their canoes were “fairly seaworthy,” some Tequestas may have reached the Bahamas.²⁹ While McNicoll ponders what may have been, historian John Goggin only accepts hard facts. Goggin

argues against the previously conceived idea that the Tequesta may have interacted with visiting Mayans in the Florida Keys. He contends that “there is absolutely no concrete evidence of such relationships. The stone mound on Key Largo Site No. 3 does not resemble any Mayan structure and the pottery in the area is in no way similar to Mayan ceramics as has been claimed.”³⁰

If this analysis is indeed true, it does not leave room for the possibility that Mayan ceramics could still be found. Just as likely is the possibility that Mayans may have traveled to, but not stayed in Tequesta territory for very long. There could also be a lack of Mayan remains if the newcomers chose to or were forced to assimilate with the group. Based on the remains of a man and a woman which were unearthed on the Plantation Golf Club, it seems that the Tequesta were not fond of strangers. Consequently, if Mayan migrants did in fact wander into Tequesta territory, there is a strong possibility that they may have quickly assimilated with Tequesta customs or possibly even killed by the Tequesta if they were short on food. Then again, there is the possibility that Goggin is correct and that the Mayans did not interact with the Tequesta. At this point, the questions of whether the Mayans interacted with the Tequesta or whether the Tequesta traveled to the Bahamas remain pure speculation.

There is evidence, however, that the Tequesta may have interacted with Indians from northern Florida, namely in Tampa Bay. This possibility is based on a comb that was excavated from The Coral Spring Site, a Tequesta burial and living ground, which closely resembles one that was used by Tampa’s aboriginal Indians. Archaeologist Wilma Williams raises some interesting questions about this discovery. “Does this discovery indicate aboriginal trade with that area or was it brought to this site as a result

of a raid? Or were such combs fairly common and our belief in their uniqueness the result of insufficient excavation in the right places?”³¹

Peace Among Neighbors:

In order to create peace with their neighbors, especially with the more-powerful and more populous Calusa tribe that was northwest, west, and south of the Tequesta, political marriages were arranged. Communication between these two tribes was done verbally since neither of them had a written language. Tequesta officials arranged for women in their tribe to marry high-ranking officials in the Calusa tribe as a way to form a bond between the two tribes.³² In addition to their political alliance with the Calusa, limited contact with other tribes, like the Ais and the Jaega to the North, and the Okeechobee to the Northwest helped to ensure peace in South Florida until the arrival of the Spanish in the 1500s.³³

Religion:

The Tequesta were a religious people. Since nature gave them all of the food, clothing, and supplies they needed, they worshipped animals and the sun. Giving great importance to the sun god, they aligned “their holiest temples with the solstices so they could determine where the sun would rise at the beginning of summer” and when winter would begin. As a reward for providing them with warmth and light, the Tequesta sacrificed whole animals in honor of their sun god and buried the animal remains in their temples.³⁴

Shipwrecked passenger Jonathan Dickenson documented some of their other public religious ceremonies in his journal in 1699. One ceremony Dickenson described

began by drinking a beverage called *caseena* that was made out of boiled plant leaves. Subsequently, the participants were led into a stomping dance by a medicine man until the point of exhaustion. This practice was repeated for three days. On the final day of the ceremony, women were not allowed to look at men or to leave their homes. If a woman had to leave her home, she had to be veiled and travel alongside a man.³⁵

The Tequesta also believed “that everything had its own spirit and that humans possessed three souls – in the pupil, the shadow and the reflection.”³⁶ Tequestans also felt that souls could live on even after an individual perished. However, they did not believe that all of these souls survived, only the pupil. This also shows that they had respect for the deceased. These spiritual beliefs made Tequestans believe that when someone became sick it was because he was missing one of his souls. Consequently, in order to heal a sick individual, Tequestans “commissioned a witch doctor to go to the woods to retrieve [their missing soul].”³⁷

Ponce de Leon and the Spanish Explore Florida:

Between 1500 and 1550 numerous Spanish shipwrecks presumably led to contact between Spanish explorers and the Tequesta Indians.³⁸ The first formal meeting, however, was not until 1513 when Juan Ponce De Leon set out to map the eastern coast of Florida and to find the fabled Fountain of Youth.³⁹ He called this new land he encountered, *La Florida* (Feast of Flowers) because of its beautiful trees and his Easter-time discovery of the land.⁴⁰ Initially landing in St. Augustine, Florida, he traveled south along Florida’s eastern coast, where he eventually came into contact with the Tequesta Indians during the course of his travels that year. Ponce de Leon’s journey through Florida ended abruptly in 1521 when he was fatally wounded by an Indian arrow during a

fight. As for what group he was fighting with when he was killed, that remains a mystery.⁴¹ Due to the subtropical climate of southern Florida, forty-four years passed before another explorer returned to La Florida.

The Spanish Return to Florida:

In 1565, Spanish explorer and missionary Pedro Menendez de Aviles returned to South Florida. The King of Spain sent him there to drive the French out of their Jacksonville, Florida colony.⁴² He wanted to get them out so that all of Florida would belong to the Spanish. Among Menendez's other goals were to establish a fort and to Christianize the native Tequesta and other Indians he encountered.⁴³ While these were some of his concerns, historians Hale Smith and Mark Gottlob believe that "the main purpose of all of these early Spanish explorations was economic—the search for gold, slaves, land, skins, and other commodities. Less important was the desire to convert the aborigines to Christianity."⁴⁴

Historian Robert McNicoll claims that Menendez focused on southern Florida because that was the location of many Spanish shipwrecks. He wanted to establish a "port of refuge" so that they would be welcomed when they came ashore.⁴⁵ The first two ports that he established were San Mateo and Santa Elena. Using these ports as a base, the Spanish were able to launch an offensive against the French and drive them out of Florida.⁴⁶

Tequesta Suspicions of the Spanish:

From the beginning, the Tequesta were suspicious of the Spanish. Despite these feelings, the Tequesta gradually traded with them before and especially after Menendez

made a strategic peace agreement with the largest Indian tribe in South Florida, the Calusa. Before this agreement, Spaniards who were shipwrecked and entered into Tequesta and Calusa territory, were either killed or taken prisoner. The new peace agreement with the Calusa also helped Menendez to establish a slightly warmer relationship with the Tequesta.⁴⁷ Gifts of cloth, knives, and rum from the Spanish allowed the Tequesta to be a little more receptive to them, but not much.⁴⁸ Like all of the South Florida Indians, the Tequesta were pleased with the new metals and tools that they were able to trade for with the Spanish.⁴⁹

Part of the Tequesta's suspicion stemmed from their fear of Spanish weaponry and military strength.⁵⁰ They may have also been suspicious because the Spanish viewed them as inferior. While the Spanish respected their hunting abilities, they did not like the natives' primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle.⁵¹ Journalist Nicole Brochu explains that the "Spanish were so derisive of Florida's native people's, in fact, that in the 16th century they asked the Vatican to decide whether killing an Indian really amounted to a sin."⁵² Despite the suspicion and dislike on both sides, they both stood to benefit from their relations with one another. The Spanish wanted control of the southeastern coast, believing that it would help them to control the whole of Florida, while the Tequesta used the Spanish as a shield to thwart any plans that warring Indian tribes to the north of them may have had of coming south.⁵³

Spanish Missionary Work:

On March 3, 1566, Menendez petitioned the Spanish government to send monks so that they could establish a mission in Florida. In response, he received three noteworthy men: Father Rogel, who was the leader of the Jesuit order, San Francisco de

Borja, and Brother Francisco Villareal.⁵⁴ Of these men, Menendez left Villareal with the Tequesta in order to establish a cordial relationship with them so that they would be persuaded to become Christians. He was also left with a group of soldiers, presumably in case things did not turn out as planned. In exchange for Villareal, the Tequesta chief, whose name was attributed to the tribe, allowed Menendez to send one of his nephews to Havana, Cuba to be educated as a Christian. The *cacique* also allowed Menendez to return to Spain with his brother and two other Indians in order to meet with the Spanish government.⁵⁵

The Tequesta chief welcomed Villareal. As a sign of peace and friendship, he allowed the Jesuit missionary to build a cross so that the Tequesta people could follow Christianity. Never did the *cacique* say, however, that his people would abandon their own religious beliefs in the spirits and constellations. Villareal was upset about this turn of events because Christianity preached that there was only one God. Villareal wanted fast results which he was not getting.⁵⁶ Historian Eugene Lyon, claims that “Under the influence of the charisma of Pedro Menendez’ driving personality and expose[d] to the power and technology of European civilization, the Indians had taken the first steps to Christianization.” He further adds that “Elimination of the old rites, ceremonies, and beliefs would imply a thoroughgoing change in Indian life. As [the Indians] sensed, it would, in fact, mean the total alteration of their culture. The enforcement of such change would be accomplished only through heavy and consistent pressure by the Spanish over a period of time.”⁵⁷

Villareal had the most success in convincing Tequesta children and some elders to convert to Christianity, but any good will towards this strange, new religion withered

away after a serious altercation in April 1568 that involved the soldiers left by Menendez. For a slight offense, the Spanish soldiers killed one of the chief's uncles. This resulted in the Tequesta burning down all of the Christian crosses and attacking the soldiers' garrison.⁵⁸ Hatred towards them was so great that when the soldiers went out in search of water, they were ambushed by the Tequesta. Consequently, the Spanish had to temporarily retreat from Tequesta territory in order to save their lives.⁵⁹

Before this altercation, there had been other troubles between the two sides. For instance, when the Spanish moved around from season to season, they did not bring many possessions with them. Consequently, the Indians did not have a large supply of food to share with the Spanish. In order for the Spanish to ensure that they received food from the Indians, Spanish troops abused members of the tribe.⁶⁰ In the midst of this friction, the killing of the Tequesta leader's uncle was the last straw – at least for the time being.

The very next year after the chief's uncle was murdered, in 1569, Father Juan Bautista de Segura traveled into Tequesta territory. He was welcomed as a friend because he came with the *cacique's* brother, who had traveled to Spain with Menendez. This brother was believed to be dead because he had not been seen or heard from in three years. His safe return resulted in the installation of new crosses around their territory. However, trouble between the two groups resurfaced the following year, so the Spanish abandoned their missionary work and withdrew their garrison.

Despite this withdrawal, the natives were still not safe. From their contact with the Spanish, the Tequesta were infected by common European illnesses, such as influenza, small pox, and the common cold. Without immunity to these diseases, since they were non-native diseases, the Tequesta began to die off in great numbers.⁶¹ By the

early 1700s, the Tequesta faced further problems. At this time, the English were trying to take control of Florida from the Spanish and they used their friends, the Lower Creeks and the Yemmassee, to help them do battle against the Tequesta. For their part, these invading Indians from Georgia and the Carolinas received “payment of guns, goods and other trade items provided by the English.”⁶² With all of these problems, the Tequesta realized that they could no longer occupy the land that their ancestors had occupied for over two thousand years before the arrival of the Spanish. In 1711, the remaining Indians asked and received permission from the Spanish government to begin to move to the island of Cuba. The Spaniards’ only mandate was that the natives had to accept Christianity, which they “claimed” to accept. By 1763, all of the Tequesta were gone from Florida and they subsequently ceased to be a confederation of tribes. The land they once occupied was taken over by the British and their Indian friends, the Seminoles.⁶³ Archaeologist Wilma Williams believes that the estimated eighty Tequesta families that fled to Cuba probably served as slaves for the Spanish.⁶⁴

Archaeological Problems and Preservation Efforts:

Remnants of Tequesta civilization still remain; however, rapid construction in South Florida continues to threaten the preservation of this history. In 1967, the Florida Preservation Act was passed to deal with this problem. This law required builders to contact Florida’s Department of Archives if they unearthed prehistoric artifacts while clearing land.⁶⁵ Coral Springs Author Lynne Armistead McKee believes that builders do not pay attention to the law because there is only a small fine for breaking it. She adds, “The small fine won’t replace that piece of history.”⁶⁶ Billy Cypress, executive director of the Anthathiki Museum of Seminole History in Hollywood, Florida maintains that

builders who find artifacts try to hide their findings to avoid having to spend money for a study of the area, as required by the Florida Preservation Act.⁶⁷ Former Broward Community College archaeology instructor John Fletemyer explains that because of the rapid construction in South Florida, archaeologists have to be ready to go into a site very quickly in order to search for Indian remains. Usually, they do not have much time to work on these sites before construction begins.⁶⁸

Attempts by archaeologists to preserve Tequesta sites are usually an uphill battle, but occasionally they receive cooperation from developers. Some preservation efforts have focused on Snake Warrior Island in Miramar, Peace Mound in Weston, and a mound in Plantation. At Snake Warrior Island in Miramar, developers planned to establish a housing community. After Archaeologist Bob Carr informed developers of this community that there were historic Indian mounds on their property, they agreed to preserve them and to work around them. Artifacts that were found at this site, include “drilled Shark teeth, pottery and pieces of axes, as well as a human leg bone, from about 500 B.C.”⁶⁹ Archaeologists also found a friend in the Arvida Corporation, which agreed to preserve Peace Mound in Weston, where 40 to 50 acres of land were set aside. Bill Brewer, director of development engineering for Arvida proudly asserted, “You lose some land and profit. But in the long run, it’s worth it.” Setting up the national award winning Peace Mound, however, cost the city of Weston \$4 million.⁷⁰

Whereas Indian remains were preserved on Snake Warrior Island and in Weston, a Tequesta mound in Plantation did not have the same luck. This mound was located under a large oak tree, just south of a Holiday Inn on University Drive in Plantation. It was believed to be a 1500 year-old residential mound, however some remains predate the

mound to around 2,000 years ago. Wilma Williams, the head of the Broward County Archaeological Society, estimates “the span of what we found as about 500 to 1,500 years ago, give or take a few years.” She also believes that this mound “may have been underwater for lengthy periods of time” and that is how it survived for as long as it has. As a result of fast-moving bulldozers, archaeologists did not have much time to work to excavate remains from this site, but at least their request to dig near the Holiday Inn spot was not turned down by the developers.⁷¹

Archaeologists may also face problems from city governments. This was the case for a former City of Miami archaeologist who claims she was fired for resisting developers’ efforts to destroy Indian remains. Before she was fired without the city citing an official cause for her termination, Allison Elgard-Berry tried to prevent hundreds of Indian burials from being destroyed. After contacting the National Park Service to get support for her cause, she was told by Miami’s Planning Department Director Ana Gelabert-Sanchez that the city “works with developers.” In defense of her action of going above the city to the National Park Service, Elgard-Berry maintains, “They did not understand that having an archaeologist on staff meant that if a development was going to destroy a significant archaeological site, I may object to it or, at the very least, try to get a developer to preserve part of the site.” The only comment that the city of Miami gave regarding Elgard-Berry’s termination was through spokeswoman Kelly Penton, who claimed that Elgard-Berry overstepped her boundaries. Penton explained that Elgard-Berry was not the city’s archaeologist, but rather a consultant for the city.⁷² This seems to indicate that the city wanted an archaeologist on its staff to act as a puppet to the archaeological community.

Archaeological Finds:

In Broward County, there are 146 archaeological sites that belong to prehistoric Indians, the Tequestas, or the Seminoles. Some of the Tequesta sites include Pine Island Ridge Area, Long Island area, Buzzard's Roost, Chapel Trail and Silver Lakes housing developments in Pembroke Pines, Oaks of Miramar, Margate-Blount Site, Pompano Beach Burial Ground, New River Sites, Peace Mound Park, Lost City, Holatee Burial Ground, and Plantation Preserve.⁷³ Many interesting things have been found in these areas that shed light on the Tequesta Civilization. For instance, at a large burial ground, known as Margate-Blount Site, "pieces of pottery, ornately carved pieces of stone and antler, the remains of snakes, alligators, fish and turtles" in addition to human remains have been found. Religious rituals were also conducted there.⁷⁴ Findings such as these, are exciting for archaeologists. Jean Reinhardt, a former teacher and librarian at Pioneer Middle School, and a member of the Broward County Archaeological Society "points out that what is now called the 'American brand of archaeology' places importance not on finds but on the reconstruction of cultures. There is a good reason for this since American digs rarely yield anything equivalent to the Egyptian tombs."⁷⁵ Since American archaeology concentrates on the reconstruction of cultures, there is a large amount of indifference by Americans towards their archaeological efforts. Only when a significant find, such as the Miami Circle was discovered at the mouth of the Miami River in September 1998, did the public get excited.⁷⁶ Despite public indifference, archaeologists eagerly continue their search for Tequesta remains.

Burial mounds or any other type of mounds are oftentimes found by chance. This is how The Coral Springs Site was found on 11 December 1966. Heavy rains resulted in

skeletal remains rising to the surface. Typical Tequesta sites uncover bones, shells, and ceramic fragments. After finds are made, they go through rigorous carbon and pollenology tests in order to determine an artifact's approximate age.⁷⁷ Archaeologists place the Tequesta Indians in the Glades time period, so the Tequesta are sometimes referred to as Glades Indians. Glades III are the most recent Tequesta remains all the way down to Glades I, which represents the earliest Tequesta settlements. As it relates to the Coral Springs site, Archaeologist Wilma Williams explains,

Examination of the pottery tables suggest that arbitrary Levels 1 and 2 [of the burial mound] belong in the Glades III time period while below a depth of 12 inches, Glades II times are represented...Lower layers...are lighter in color, and with depth, produced a smaller number of sherds. The lighter color probably indicates less intense, possibly more sporadic occupation. Layer 5 (bottom layer), consisting of gray dirt and an occasional rock, produce Glades Plain sherds in reasonable quantities. The lack of any decorated pottery in this layer for substantial vertical distances, strongly supports the assertion made by Goggin years ago (1947) that there was a Glades I period in south Florida during which pottery was undecorated.⁷⁸

Plantation:

In 1841 and 1866, U.S. engineers who conducted surveys of present-day Broward County were able to pinpoint over 100 Indian sites. According to Plantation Historical Museum Curator Shirley Schuler, "Plantation sites have been recorded as recently as 1919."⁷⁹ Plantation is home to several Indian mounds, including the site of a Holiday Inn on University Drive and on the Plantation Preserve Golf Course and Club. Since the Holiday Inn site was discussed earlier in the section on "Archaeological Problems and Preservation Efforts," this paper can proceed to discuss the findings at the Plantation Preserve Golf Course and Club. In the 1950s, while Plantation's first golf course (which preceded Plantation Preserve, but remains on the same property) was under construction,

an Indian burial mound was discovered there. Archaeologist Tom Granata claims that the finding was an accident and that “there is nothing there that tells you ‘Oh, this is a great site and you must dig.’” He explains that the Indian mound that was discovered on the golf course looks like “the rolling effect that the designer of the golf course would try to incorporate into the design to make you have a very bad day on the Links.”⁸⁰ While the mound has been excavated, there are still some remains are still buried near the 14th hole on the golf course. In honor of the findings, the 14th hole was given the name “Funee-Okko-Pokko,” which means Bone Heap Burial Mound.⁸¹

From February to July 1976, archaeologists were allowed to explore the Indian mound during the redesigning of the golf course. Archaeologist Wilma Williams, who headed the Broward Archaeological Group’s excavation effort, believes that the mound may have been a small campsite. On the golf course, archaeologists dug three small holes, where they found items dating back from 1000 to 1500 A.D.⁸² From one hole alone, archaeologists collected 40 bags of bones. Additionally, they found a lot of food scraps that the Tequestas discarded, including “apple snails, deer turtles, fish, shellfish, alligator, shark, oyster, macrocallista, lucine, strombus, and crab.” Other items found, include “a drinking cup made from a seashell, hundreds of potshards, and bone points the Indians used in hunting. But there were more pottery fragments than anything else.”⁸³

Most notably, though, was the discovery of human remains three feet below the surface. Archaeologist J. Fred Battson and the Broward County Archaeological Society discovered the remains of a man and a woman who were found “lying in a line, the female’s head by the male’s feet.” Except for having crushed skulls, they were remarkably intact.⁸⁴ The man was approximately 5’8 and 35 years old, while the woman

was about 5'4 and 28 years old. Another interesting point is that the man was found to have perfect teeth with no cavities.⁸⁵ Battson speculates that the two may have been interlopers because of the unusual way they were buried. If this was a small campsite with 10-12 people, Battson believes that the camp dwellers may have killed the two strangers because they could not afford to feed them. Archaeologist Tom Granata is frustrated that digging can no longer take place at the golf course because he feels that there is more that can be found there.

Miami Circle:

In 1998, a 50-year old apartment building was torn down at the Brickell Point site near the mouth of the Miami River. Shortly afterwards, construction crews began work on its replacement, a new commercial high-rise. Before this new building project took off, archaeologists investigated the site as part of a pre-development examination, while construction crews waited for building permits.⁸⁶ After some very productive digging, Archaeologist Bob Carr and five other scientists “uncovered an unusual, intricately carved [symmetrical] circle in the limestone bedrock.”⁸⁷ Archaeologists have dated the circle to approximately 1100, but they believe that the site was lived on for at least 2,000 years. Small holes of various shapes and sizes were found all around the circle. Field Director of the excavation John Riciak claims, “The directions of north, south, east, and west appear to be marked on three of the four points by a cavity resembling an eye. Inside each, a stone suggests an iris.”⁸⁸

The circle’s discovery created a lot of excitement around Miami. Archaeologist Bob Carr proclaimed, “This is it...This is the chance I’ve been waiting for all my life—to get to the center of the Tequesta civilization, right here in the village that’s under these

parking lots.⁸⁹ Some people speculated that the circle may have been a celestial calendar or possibly proof of Mayan migration to Florida.⁹⁰ Another theory is that the holes surrounding the large circle were support holes for the building that was torn down. Archaeologists have also pondered whether the large symmetrical circle was a trading post or a place of worship.⁹¹ The discovery of the Miami Circle also raises important questions about the level of Tequesta sophistication. Contrary to the longstanding narrative about the Tequesta, Journalist Pacenti claims that the discovery of tools and stones near the circle indicates that the Tequesta were indeed involved in trade.⁹² Other findings include beads, shells, and a shark that was buried intact. Could the shark's well-preserved state mean that it was a sacrifice to one of their gods or was the presence of these items a sign of a garbage dump?⁹³

Due to popular support and pressure from archaeologists, Miami-Dade County fought developers for over a year in order to preserve the land where the circle was found. In November 1999, the county acquired the land from the high-rise developer for \$26.7 million.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, the artifact's future remains in doubt. Within a few years of its discovery, exposure to sun and rain has caused immense deterioration to the circle. According to Jorge Zamanillo, an archaeologist and curator at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, "The limestone is flaking. It's losing its characteristics. It's changing color. A lot of the sharp edges are rounding off." To slow down this process, archaeologists re-covered the circle with a half-ton of gravel. Hopefully, this will minimize deterioration while archaeologists figure out how to properly display the circle.⁹⁵

Conclusion:

From all of their digging, archaeologists have determined that the entire South Florida area was underwater, except for small rises. On these rises, the Tequesta built mounds for living on, to conduct religious ceremonies and burials, and also as hunting camps. Archaeologists continue digging for Tequesta remains in order to understand the life and culture they left behind. While their civilization is gone, archaeologist Bob Carr believes that their ancestral roots live on in some mixed-blood Cubans. He realizes, however, that modern-day Cubans would have no way to determine who was a descendant of the Tequesta Civilization. Archaeologist Nicole Brochu puts it nicely, stating that “these Tequesta descendants would hold something inside of them that has been lacking in South Florida for too long – a direct link to a distant and long – forgotten past.”⁹⁶

Notes

¹ Nicole Sterghos Brochu, "Quest for the Tequesta," *Sunshine: Magazine of the Sun-Sentinel*, 23 April 2000, 15.

² John M. Goggin, "Archaeological Investigations On The Upper Florida Keys," *Tequesta: The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida* 4 (1944) : 13; Nicole Brochu, "Quest for the Tequesta," 16.

³ Plantation Historical Museum Archives, Tom Granata, "Excerpts From Program Given By Tom Granata Of The Broward County Archaeological Society to the Plantation Historical Society Regarding Exhibit Constructed By Him Which Program Was Given November 20, 1980," 10.

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