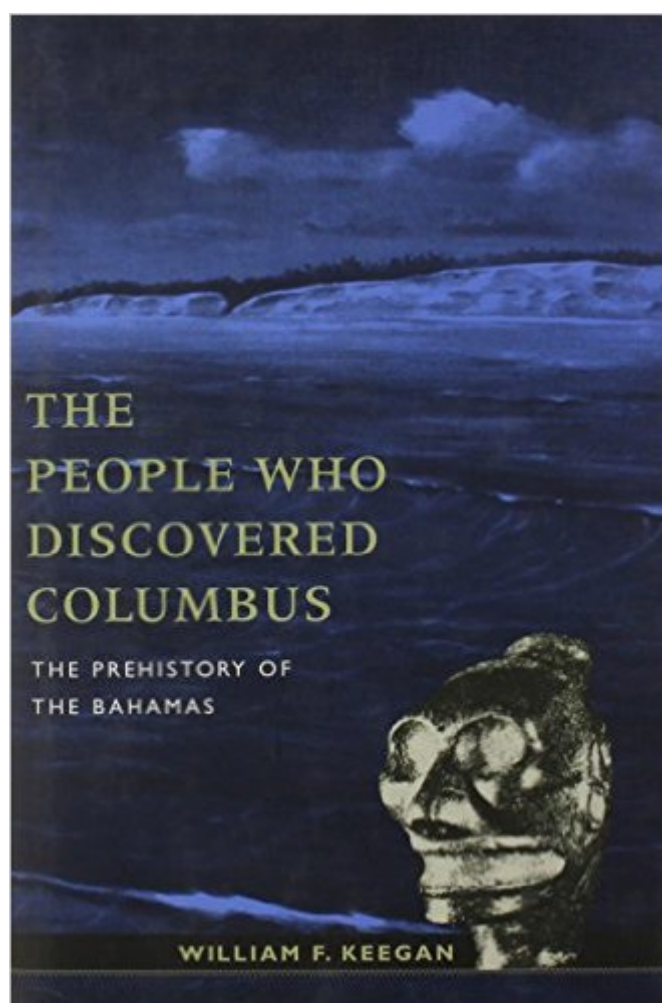


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The People Who Discovered Columbus: The Prehistory Of The Bahamas (Florida Museum Of Natural History: Ripley P. Bullen Series)



Synopsis

For the Lucayan Arawaks of the Caribbean, the year 1492 marked the beginning of the end: the first people contacted by Christopher Columbus were the first extinguished. Within thirty years, a population of perhaps 80,000 had declined to, at most, a few refugees. Clearing new ground in the study of prehistoric societies, Keegan argues that a different perspective on the past provides an accurate portrait of a culture that became extinct almost 500 years ago. Keegan terms his approach paleoethnography, developing a portrait of the past by linking archaeological field data and historical documents. The result, the first overview of the prehistory of the Bahamas, explains how and why the Bahamas were colonized by the Tainos almost 1,400 years ago. The portrait includes characteristics of the islands themselves, descriptions of how the Lucayans made their settlements, what they ate, how they organized in social groups, and how their population spread throughout the archipelago. Keegan reconstructs Columbus's voyage through the West Indies, raising questions about the explorer's motivations and presenting a controversial theory about where, exactly, Columbus landed. Offering new perspectives on Caribbean prehistory to both scholars and general readers, the book ends with the Spaniards' arrival and the Lucayans' demise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The People Who Discovered Columbus" is a well-researched account of those first peoples who actually discovered The Bahamas, where they came from, how they lived and why they

came. Keegan paints a vivid picture of the Bahama Island chain in those years prior to the arrival of the first human inhabitants, describing the lush, untouched landscape like a tropical Eden into which comes man, probably migrating from the south of the Bahamian archipelago. His theory about the motivation for this migration still holds true for tourists today: The Bahamas is just too attractive a location to pass up. This book is also a treasure for anyone interested in Caribbean archaeology. Although, since the book's publication, many more aboriginal sites have been discovered, this book lists, island by island, the number and types of sites that provide evidence of intense Lucayan habitation. From open air sites to caves, Keegan leads the reader through The Bahamas, walking in the footsteps of those ancient people. Reading this book, you begin to question, as Keegan does, whether Columbus' motivation for his 1492 voyage was to actually get to the Indies or the much more personal goal of territorial conquest. This book is a must read if you want to really experience the Bahama Islands of those centuries long before Columbus. I would recommend it unreservedly as a well written, well documented book that, in spite of its scholarly value, is quite easy and enjoyable to read. It certainly puts to shame the theory that Columbus could have discovered a whole nation of people - complete with customs, traditions and history - who were never lost in the first place!

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