

DJM

Key Vaca Indian History

May 19, 1996

Dr. Eugene Lyon
St. Augustine

via John Viele

Dr. Lyon,

Attached is a copy of a portion of a document dated 1677 discovered in Spain by Jack Haskins. The document is on microfilm in the Haskins Collection, Monroe County Public Library, Islamorada Branch, on roll #3, page #29 of Contaduria 1155, Archivo General de Indies. It shows "Cayo de Bacas".

Your reference in "Utilization of Marine Resources in the Keys and Coastal Indians of the Pre-Contact and Contact Periods" in *Conference on Florida's Maritime Heritage*, Barbara A. Purdy, Ed., (1980) is Contaduria 1155, "piece 7". From your article, "At the Bocas, on Key Biscayne, the Spaniard went to the mainland and made an agreement with Cacique Don Joseph for divers and an Indian fisherman".

I am wondering if you mistook the word "bacas" for "bocas". If so, then we would actually have the name of a cacique, Don Joseph, on Key Vaca!

I realize that the Bocas de Miguel Mora (Tequesta), a more substantial Indian settlement than that of the Key Vacas, is more of a probability, but I am holding out some hope until you say otherwise.

Jim Clupper and I have found that John Hann made such a mistake:

From the testimony of crewman Sebastian Sanchez, translated by John Hann in *Missions to the Calusa*,

"...three months ago the deponent departed from this port [of Havana] in a sloop that was going to the Keys, and that Francisco Romero went in it as pilot and that they spent a month on the Key of Cows."

Another deposition, p.201

"And that two Indians having come from the mouths (vocas) [Footnote #31] they made smoke signals..And when they had been there for twelve days, at the end of them Indian men and Indian women came from the mouths on some rafts and gave the news that the Ensign Francisco Romero, pilot, was there and that he would come there the following day.

Footenote #31. The identity of these vacas is not indicated. This term was used for underwater rocks. "

It is plain to Jim & I that Romero was at Cayo de Vacas and that the Indians came from the Vacas, not Vocas, on the rafts.

Please let John Viele know your thoughts on this vacas/vocas stuff.

Gail Swanson
Cayo de Vacas