Introduction

The Institute for Cultural Resource Management was approached by Moreland Developments (Pty) Ltd. to undertake an archaeological survey of the land between the Mdloti and Ohlanga Rivers. A total of 27 archaeological sites were recorded during the initial survey (Anderson 1997), of which 18 required some form of mitigation. The land selected for the new Casino site impacts on only one archaeological site of medium significance, while the roads and other developments do not appear to directly affect the other medium to high significant sites.

The purpose of the mitigation was to excavate a few test pits over a four day period to determine the full potential of the site. A total of ten 2 m x 2 m squares were initially excavated as test pits. The excavations recovered many artefacts including decorated pottery, well preserved bones and a potential domestic area and cattle pen. I believed that further excavation was required in order to rescue further information from the site before it was damaged by the development. A further twelve squares were excavated over a four day period. This report is a compilation of the results from both excavations.

The study area is between the Mdloti and Tongati Rivers, and approximately 25 km north of Durban. The site is located along the second main sand dune from the Indian Ocean ranging from 116 m to 126 m above sea level. The dune is almost key-hole in shape with the highest density of artefacts along the northern side of the dune.

The vegetation has been described by Moll (1976) as being Coastal Forest and Palmveld, however it is currently used for sugar cane farming. The geology of this area includes the sand dunes on the Berea Formation. There are outcrops of the Pietermaritzburg (Lower Ecca) and Vryheid (Middle Ecca) Formations near the site, and these are important Formations for Iron Age metallurgy. The area has summer rainfall with an annual average of 1000 mm per annum.

The site, named CAS6, has high-medium archaeological significance since it has organic remains and a possible cultural horizon. In addition to this, few sites of this time period have been systematically excavated in KwaZulu-Natal (Anderson 1998; Davies 1971; Robey 1980). There was thus much research potential for this site. The aim of the

excavation was to understand the culture history of the site and area, and to obtain an understanding of the settlement organisation.

METHODOLOGY

The area was cleared of the sugar cane prior to excavations. This allowed me to determine areas of higher concentrations of artefacts, and thus devise an excavation strategy.

All squares were 2 m x 2 m, and between 50 cm and 70 cm in depth (fig. 1). CAS6 was excavated in 10 cm spits when there was no visible stratigraphy. As the excavation progressed I followed a general pattern by placing new squares in areas that appeared to have higher artefact densities as indicated in the excavations, and the surface scatters. Those areas with few, if any, artefacts on the surface were not excavated. However, excavated areas and those areas with high artefact densities were mapped.

STRATIGRAPHY

The cultural material is located between 20 cm to 60 cm below the surface. The highest density occurs between 35 cm to 45 cm below the current surface. The upper 20 cm included sugar cane (and roots), grass, and was mostly archaeologically sterile.

The soil in the upper 20 cm is mainly dark brown to black. There is a hardened light sandy brown layer at ±30 cm below the surface. This layer is mostly sterile and occurs in all squares except in square 8. Below this layer was the main cultural horizon that varied in thickness and density across the site. The colour of the cultural horizon gradually varied from dark to light brown and extended to a maximum depth of 60 cm. Several features were located within this layer. Below this horizon the soil was a light yellow sterile beach sand indicating the archaeologically sterile layer. This yellow sand was sometimes followed by a hard reddish-brown soil. Few artefacts were observed in these two horizons. Old and new termite mounds occurred on site, as well as several mole hills and holes. These areas were avoided as much as possible during the course of the excavations so as to avoid potential post-deposition disturbance.

While the excavations do extend for a depth of 60 cm, and the main cultural deposit is ±30 cm deep, I believe that there is only one Late Iron Age occupation at this site.

FEATURES

Two types of features were excavated at CAS6: a possible cattle pen and shell middens.

In the first feature, nine 2 m x 2 m squares were placed around Square 8 to a depth of ±50 cm below the surface. This square thus has a deeper deposit than other squares. Fragments of charcoal occurred from Spits 3 to 5 often in direct association with artefacts.

In the approximate center of Square 8 are the remains of a single animal (domestic cattle?), partially surrounded by small rocks (fig. 2). These remains occur from Spit 3 to Spit 5. The high density of faunal remains and depth of the deposit suggest that this feature is the cattle pen.

To the north-east of these faunal remains is a lump of black clay 30cm diameter and bulbuous in shape. This clay was probably used for making ceramics. Slightly further north-east is a fragmented shell midden. The iron spear was recovered from this midden. Square 8 also has a high density of decorated ceramics in comparison to other squares.

Several shell middens were located at CAS6. These middens varied in preservation and/or densities. Middens with high density of shells occurred in Squares 3 (Spit 2), 2 (Spits 5 and 6), 5 (Spit 3), 6-6a (Spits 3 and 4), 8e (Spits 3 and 4). These middens are probably the refuse dumps from houses, and thus indirectly indicate the location of huts.

ARTEFACTS

Stone:

Several lower and upper grindstones were recovered. The upper grindstones tend to be from quartz river pebbles, while the lower grindstones are from sandstone and shale.

Bone:

The bone is very well preserved and is mostly from domestic cattle and sheep/goats. The cattle bone is concentrated around Square 8 and consists of the vertebrae, ribs, legs, and a few cranial fragments. In other words, the remains of a single animal may be represented in this feature. Some of this bone had been burnt.

The other bone was collected in various squares throughout the site. These faunal remains included antelope the size of sheep/goats, a few bird bones, and two bones belonging to a large aquatic mammal (possibly an hippopotamus).

Pottery:

The pottery recovered varies in form and function. Several types of vessels were excavated including pots and bowls. The shards tend not be to be decorated, and those that are decorated are similar to decorated shards excavated at Blackburn.

1. The shards from CAS6 can be described as follows:

2. Lip:

- 2.1. flat
- 2.2. round
- 2.3. tapered

3. Rim:

- 3.1. straight
- 3.2. straight with external emphasis
- 3.3. tapered
- 3.4. everted
- 3.5. everted with small external emphasis
- 3.6. everted with large external emphasis
- 3.7. external emphasis

4. Decoration:

- 4.1. thin horizontal incisions on lip
- 4.2. thick horizontal incisions on lip
- 4.3. circular impressions on lip
- *4.4.* *iSumpa* - horizontal or vertical

4.5. *iSumpa* with double horizontal row of triangular impressions
4.6. elliptical impressions on a double horizontal row
4.7. conical perforation at base of rim
4.8. ovoid impressions on lip
4.9. ovoid impressions on rim
4.10. thick grooves on lip
4.11. horizontal incisions on lip with two horizontal grooves at base of rim
4.12. ovoid impressions on lip, with at least two horizontal rows of triangular impressions on the rim/neck
4.13. V-shaped impressions on outer lip with horizontal groove at base of rim
4.14. row of 9+ horizontal/vertical triangular impressions

5. Colour:

5.1. red-brown
5.2. orange-red
5.3. brown
5.4. black
5.5. red burnish
5.6. brown burnish

6. Shape:

6.1. Unable to determine since no refitting has taken place.

Shell

The shell remains recovered from the site are marine shell. The most abundant species present is the black mussel (*Perna perna*), followed by limpets (*Patella concolar, Patella barbara, Patella spp.)*, oyster and whelk.

The shell remains were concentrated mostly along the slopes of the hills in small isolated concentrations varying from 2 m to 4 m in diameter. These are either from the remains of rubbish dumps (or middens) from various dumpings episodes or they may indicate the edges of individual houses. I believe that the latter is the case.

Other:

Evidence for metal working activity was recovered mostly from Square 8. The artefacts included iron ore, slag and a spear.

Several fragments of daga were recovered. The daga was concentrated near Squares 3/3A and 8. The daga from the two areas differed in that those around Square 3/3A were smoothed on one side, suggesting that they are the remains of hut floors. Those from Square 8 tended to have been burnt.

DISCUSSION

Little is know about the Late Iron Age in KwaZulu-Natal, apart from a few excavations in the province (Anderson 1998; Davies 1971; Robey 1980). While Blackburn is only ±1 km southwest of CAS6, CAS6 appears to be different in terms of size and the density of occupation material. The difference may either be in terms of a time difference, and/or a difference in the status of the people who lived at each site. A more detailed comparison with Blackburn in the future may resolve these differences and is beyond the scope of this report.

Settlement Organisation at CAS6

No definite settlement organisation can be observed at CAS6 however there is a tendency for middens to be located on the outskirts of the site. The location of the shell middens suggest that there were houses either in front or behind of these middens. Most of the daga (used for hut floors) came from the areas associated with middens. The high density of animal bones in square 8 and the surrounding house and midden remains. This settlement pattern is in accordance with the Central Cattle Pattern seen at other Iron Age sites in southern Africa. This is a pattern of houses surrounding a central cattle pen, where the cattle pen is the foci of activity.

The culture history of CAS6

The decorated ceramics from CAS6 indicate an early Late Iron Age date. These decorated ceramics are similar to those recorded at Blackburn and other sites in Richards Bay dating from AD 1250 to AD 1450. This type of ceramic decoration is associated with early Nguni-speaking people. The ceramics from this site may be useful

in understanding the arrival of these Nguni speakers, especially when compared to other sites in the hinterland.

CONCLUSION

CAS6 was excavated as part of a salvage excavation for a proposed casino site on land to be developed by Moreland Properties Pty. (Ltd.). A total of fourteen 2 m x 2 m squares were excavated to determine the age and social organisation of the site. The decorated ceramics suggest an early Late Iron Age date between AD 1100 to AD 1400. The ceramics are similar to those of Blackburn approximately 1 km southwest of CAS6. However, CAS6 is not as densely occupied and well preserved as Blackburn. The settlement organisation suggests that there was a center cattle pen with the houses surrounding the pen.

No further mitigation is required at CAS6, however the development of the casino site should take cognizance that other archaeological sites of medium to high significance exist on the boundaries of the proposed development.

A final point to consider is that of the site of Blackburn. There is currently a trend in tourism, and the development of ecotourism and archaeaotourism, in KwaZulu-Natal. The site of Blackburn, and the material from other excavated sites in this area, has an opportunity to be developed into a tourist attraction. Not only can this be used as part of the tourist attraction for the casino site, but also as part of an historical tour of the Greater Durban Metropolitan Area.

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