

INTRODUCTION

Simbithi Eco-Estate Pty (Ltd) contracted the Institute for Cultural Resource Management to undertake archaeological excavations at previously recorded archaeological sites. These sites were regarded as having medium significance during the initial survey undertaken by the Institute for Cultural Resource Management in 2002.

Four sites required mitigation in terms of test-pit excavations, and one site needed to be re-analysed. The test-pit excavations were used to determine the full significance of a site prior to its destruction.

Three sites were excavated (BSE1, BSE2 and BSE9) while BSE5 and BSE7 were re-assessed and did not required further mitigation.

BSE1

BSE1 is located mostly in the saddle of two small hills. A total of nine 2 m x 2 m squares were excavated to approximately 50 cm below the surface (fig. 1).

The stratigraphy of the soil was very basic. The top soil varied between 10 and 20 cm in depth. Below this was a (Soft) Brown Sand ± 20 cm in depth, a Red Clay Sand or a shale layer. The Red Clay Sand and the shale layer was archaeologically sterile.

The artefacts include: pottery, bone, glass bead, stone, daga and slag.

The glass bead was a small blue bead with two grooves on it. The bone was not well preserved and tended to belong to domestic mammals such as cattle and/or goats. Only a few fragments of slag were recovered. The low density of the slag suggests that this area was for iron smithying, not smelting. The stone fragments tend to be from upper grinding stones. Only one square had hut floor daga fragments.

The pottery tends to be undecorated and only one sherd had two *amasumpa*.

Only one feature was excavated at BSE1. This feature came from Sq. 3, Spit 4. The feature is a small pit (23 cm deep) and contained 2 fragments of pottery.

The excavations at BSE1 are completed and no further mitigation is required.

DISCUSSION

The excavations at BSE1 lasted for 1.5 days, until I decided that there would be no value in continued excavations. There was no spatial information, and the artefactual content was poor.

The archaeological excavations for BSE9 are complete and no further mitigation is required.

BSE2

BSE2 is located on the top of a kidney-shaped hill. The hilltop is relatively flat, but not very wide. A total of 16 2 m x 2 m squares were excavated (fig. 2).

The stratigraphy from the site varied between squares. The western and southern part of the hill tends to be more shallow than the northern and eastern sides. The archaeological deposit can vary up to 70 cm in places, however most of the deposit occurred 30 cm – 50 cm below the surface.

FEATURES

Stone Feature 1 occurs in Sq. 1, Spit 3. This feature is a rough circle of stones. These stones are from quartz and/or shale, and one is a lower grindingstone fragment. It is \pm 50cm in diameter. A few rocks appear to have been cracked by fire.

Pit 1 is located in Square 7, spit 4. The pit is 28 cm deep and ± 40 cm in diameter. The pit consisted of mostly granary daga fragments, a few stones and some pottery.

Pit 2 is located in Sq. 12, Spit 5. The Pit is ± 25 cm deep and 60 cm in diameter. The soil surrounding the pit is grey-black in colour, and some sherds were recorded.

Pottery Concentration 1 occurs in Squares 4. This area has a high density of artefacts, of which pottery is the most common.

Pottery Concentration 2 occurs in Sq.'s 11 and 11A in Spits 5 to 6. This concentration is at the edge of the daga floor, and at least two near complete pots were found in association with the hut floor and pottery concentration.

Daga Concentrations occur in three squares at the site: Sq. 3, 11/11A and 13. These are probably the remains of hut floors. They tend to be poorly preserved and only portions remain. This is the first east coast site, from the Late Iron Age, that has produced definitive daga hut flooring. All floors were associated with high densities of pottery, some burnt daga, and a few fragments of stone. The one daga floor has reed impressions.

ARTEFACTS

Slag was found in a few isolated squares. The amount of slag on the site suggests that only smithing occurred here. A large piece of bowl-shaped slag was located in Sq. 14.

Most of the pottery is undecorated. A few sherds were decorated. One near complete pot has a decorated spout. The decorations are a double row of *amasumpa* extending from the spout onto the shoulder of the pot. Another decoration is the shell-edged lip (a 'wavy' lip). Lip notching and triangular lip notching also occurs.

Various types of stone artefacts were recorded. The most common stone artefact is an upper grinding stone. A few broken lower grindingstones were also excavated.

A few shell patches were recovered during the course of the excavations. The shell consists mainly of brown mussels, oysters and limpets. No large shell midden was recovered.

Faunal remains were scarce on this site. Most of the faunal remains are adiagnostic, however a few cow teeth were excavated.

DISCUSSION

BSE2 yeilded a variation of the normal coastal site spatial layout. Normal sites tend to have pattern of houses (semi-)surrounding a central cattle pen. The BSE2 houses tend to occur only on the eastern parts of the site, while the center-east tends to be a non-domestic working area.

As with the other excavated sites, very few artefacts were recovered from the site.

The archaeological excavations for BSE9 are complete and no further mitigation is required.

BSE5 and BSE7

These two sites were re-assessed during the course of the excavations, and after the cane had been cut. Both sites were regarded as having low significance, and thus do not require further mitigation.

BSE9

BSE9 is located on the eastern borders of the property development.. IT is on one of the taller hills and overlooks the bay. A total of 18 2m x 2m squares were excavated to varying depths. This square had better preserved shell middens, however, the organic remains were not as well preserved.

The stratigraphy of the site is similar to the other sites. There is a top soil, followed by a brown sand (which tends to have the archaeological material), then a hard red clay-like sand. The base tends to be stone/gravel. Fig.'s 4 – 9 indicate the varied depths of the deposit. Note the difference in depth in the main cultural horizons between the different squares. The center squares are clearly more shallow than the perimeter squares.

As with BSE2, BSE9 did not have a standard deposit. The squares along the outer parts of the hill tend to have a deeper archaeological deposit, as opposed to those in the middle of the site and to the east. These are also the areas that have more shell middens. This suggests that the hill was originally not as wide as it is at the moment.

FEATURES

Shell Midden 1 (SM1) is located in Sq. 7, spit 1. Parts of this midden were bulked for future research.

Shell Midden 21 (SM21) is located in Square 3, spit 2. Parts of this midden were bulked for future research. SM21 consisted of a compacted layer of mostly brown mussels, and some limpets and oysters.. Several pottery and stone fragments were observed in the midden, however, very few bones were excavated.

Shell Middens 11 – 12 are located in Sq. 2, spits 1 – 4. The midden is a very compacted shell midden of mostly brown mussel and some oyster. The thickest part of the midden is \pm 30 cm in depth. The shell lenses extended over half of the square and peter out along the southwestern corners. Parts of the midden were bulk sampled for future research while the others were sieved and sorted on site. As with the other large middens, there is a lot of pottery, however, very little bone. This is anomalous for shell middens of this time period in this geographical area. It appears that SM11 – 12 are two middens, separated by a thin brown sand lens, although they appear to be the

same midden at their edges. A total of 8 and 7 buckets of shell were removed for SM11 and SM12 respectively.

SM13 – SM14 occur in Sq. 14, Spits 1 – 4. These lenses are similar to SM11 – 12 in that it is a highly compacted shell lenses that extend over the entire and adjacent squares. There is a thin ashy lens between SM13 and SM14. This lens varies in thickness, is not visible in the sections, and contains burnt shell. A total of 49 and 31 buckets of shell were removed for SM13 and SM14 respectively.

SM21 – 22 is located in Sq. 3, Spits 2 – 4. It is similar in size, and content as the other large shell middens.

Fire Pit 1 is located in Sq. 7 spit 5. It is a small depression of shell below SM1. It is 11 cm deep and ± 40 cm in diameter. No other artefacts were observed in this fire pit.

FINDINGS

Pottery:

Most of the pottery is undecorated. However two main types of pottery decoration occurred on the site:

- Lip notching
- Lip with circular impressions on lip.
- Single row of circular impressions on the lip and shoulder

Daga

Fragments of daga were recorded in the shell middens. These are probably granary floor fragments.

Charcoal

Small fragments of charcoal were recovered from the shell middens. The sample size tends to be too small for radiocarbon dates, however large enough to undertake tree species identification.

Bone

Very few bone fragments were recovered. The few identifiable fragments belong to domestic bovids.

Shell

The most common shell is brown mussel, followed by oyster, and then limpets. Other shell species on the site are probably either for adornments or attached to the main food shells.

Slag

Only a few pieces of slag were recorded in the northern areas of the square. Small fragments of iron ore were also recovered.

DISCUSSION

BSE9 did not yield as much information as I thought it should have, from the initial assessment. While a very well defined spatial relationship exists on the site, the artefactual component is disappointing. The spatial component clearly shows a small settlement with shell middens demarcating the outer 'circle' of the site (except for the east), while little activity appears to have occurred in the center of the site. Iron working occurred at the north of the site. It is incongruous that so many shell middens, with such a high density of shells, yields so few bones, and shallow deposits (in the center of the site). This in itself makes the site interesting.

The archaeological excavations for BSE9 are complete and no further mitigation is required.

CONCLUSION

The Excavations at the Simbithi Eco-Estate occurred over a nine day period. All three sites yielded poor artefactual material, with a few exceptions. The main exception was the decorated vessel with a spout. The spatial components of the site were different to other excavated sites in the area, and this may be a redeeming factor for the each site's significance.

The archaeological mitigation for each site is complete and no further mitigation is required.