

7. LOOKING AT THE ARTIFACTS

Artifact analysis can help archæologists interpret the lives of people who lived on the site

Artifact analyses are generally undertaken for two reasons. The first reason is to determine when the site was occupied. The second is to determine how the site was used. Projectile points and ceramics provide the most reliable indications for estimating when a site was in use, because they vary in appearance through time. The dates assigned to different projectile point or ceramic types have been determined by radiocarbon dating charcoal that has been recovered in association with examples of a particular point or ceramic type. Projectile points, ceramics, and a wide variety of other tools contribute to determining how a site was used.

PROJECTILE POINTS

Eight projectile points were recovered that included the base. Other fragments were tips or mid-sections that could not be classified.

Two of the points recovered had contracting stems with pointed or rounded bases (Unit 40, level 2, Unit 59, level 2b). The point in Unit 59 is associated with the "pot drop". These points belong to a group of points that have been variously classified as Poplar Island (Witthoft 1959) or Rossville (Ritchie 1971:46). Custer (1996) indicates that points in this category are most likely to date after 2500 BCE and before 1000 CE, with larger

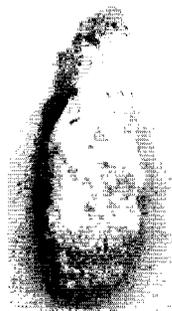


Figure 49:
Contracting stem
point from Unit
59, level 2b

examples more likely to be earlier, and smaller examples more likely to be later. Others see these point types as chronologically distinct, with the larger Poplar Island representing the earlier, late Archaic to early Woodland I time period,



Figure 50: Broken heat-treated jasper stemmed point from Unit 7, level 1

and the smaller Rossville type representing a time period from perhaps 500 BCE to as late as 1000 CE. Both of the projectile points assigned to this category that were recovered from the Beech Ridge Site are of the smaller, Rossville style.

A third projectile point, from Unit 41, level 3, also has a contracting stem, but with a straight base. This point can be classified as a Piney Island point (Kent 1970; Custer 1996), another point style of long duration. Custer indicates that such points are most likely to date between 3000 BCE and 500 CE, with the smaller examples later in the sequence.

Three projectile points (Unit 7, Level 1; Unit 19, Level 4; Unit 26 Level 1) have straight stems with straight bases, and

can be classified as Bare Island points (Kinsey 1959; Custer 1996). Again, this is a point style of long duration, with the smaller points tending to be later in the sequence. Custer defines the most likely time range as 3000 BCE to 500 CE.

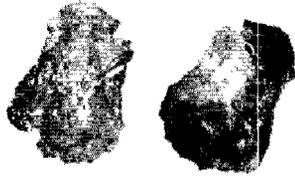


Figure 51: Thumbnail scraper, Unit 63, level 1.

A seventh projectile point (Unit 45, Level 1) is highly distinctive, but cannot be placed into a specific projectile point type. It has an unusually long stem in proportion to both the width of the stem and the length of the blade. It is possible, however, that the blade has been reworked.

Only the eighth projectile point (Unit 43, Level 2) can be assigned to a point type that has a restricted period of use. This point is a Fox Creek point with the tip broken off. This point style was in use between 400 CE and 900 CE. The example from the Beech Ridge Site is unusual because it was made from

material from the Newark Jasper Complex, rather than the rhyolite or argillite that was most commonly used for this point style.

Although the projectile points, for the most part, can be assigned to styles that were in use for at least 4000 years, between 3000 BCE and 1000 CE, their relatively small sizes suggest that all or most of them were made within the last half of that time period.

CERAMICS

Very few ceramic sherds were found in the Phase I and Phase II testing at the Beech Ridge Site. The earliest type may be the sand-tempered pot that was dropped and lay virtually undisturbed until we excavated it. The cord-marking on the interior as well as the exterior suggests that this vessel is related to early ceramic types such as Vinette I (Ritchie 1969) and Coulbourn (Artusy 1976). A formal description for this vessel has been prepared so that other researchers can compare it with sand-tempered ceramics they are studying.

FORMAL DESCRIPTION SAND-TEMPERED CERAMICS

N= 49 (all but one sherd probably from the same vessel)

Paste

Temper: The temper of sherds in this group is a medium to coarse sand, well dispersed through the paste, and comprising perhaps 5% of the paste. Small particles of what appears to be red ochre are also found. Larger pebbles are occasionally found.

Texture: The paste is fairly smooth. Breaks are moderately even, but only occasionally follow coil lines. Surfaces are slightly gritty because of the sand included in the paste.

Color

Exterior: Munsell: 5YR 6/4 light reddish brown

Core: Munsell: 5YR 5/2 reddish grey

Interior: Munsell 5YR 6/4 light reddish brown

Surface Treatment

Exterior: Most of the sherds are cordmarked on the exterior. Cords are 2-ply 2 - 3 mm thick and moderately S-twisted.

Interior: Sherds are most frequently smoothed on the interior, but some cord-marking is present.

Form

Lip: Tapered, with cordmarking extending from body onto lip

Rim: Straight

Body: Vessel appears to be conoidal in shape. Body sherds are 7 - 10 mm thick, thinning toward the lip.

Base: No data.

Comments

These sherds resemble Ware Group I as defined for the Puncheon Run Site by Blume and Walls, where it is suggested that they may be related to Coulbourn Ware.

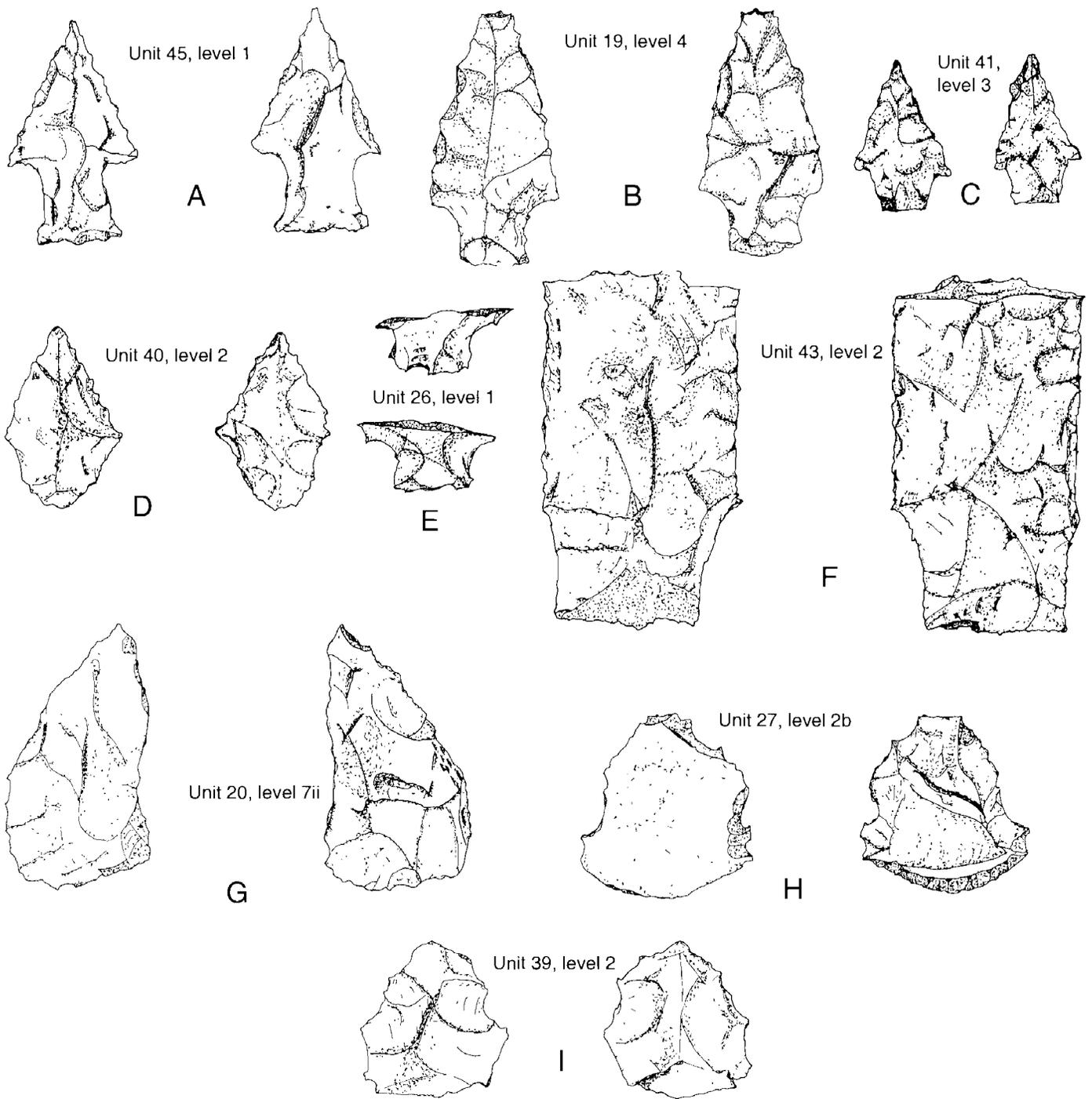


Figure 52: Stone artifacts from the Beech Ridge site

A very few fragments of Coulbourn net-impressed ceramics were recovered from Unit 25, Levels 1

and 2a, and a single Mockley sherd was recovered from Unit 28, Level 1.

These three groups of ceramics suggest that the site was occupied sporadically during the 1500 year time period from about 500 BCE to about 1000 CE. This is the same time period suggested by the projectile points.

A fourth ceramic group consisting of two related ceramic types, is also found at the site, dating to the Woodland II period. Townsend Ware (Blaker 1963) is a shell-tempered, fabric impressed ceramic that may have incised or cord-wrapped stick impressed decoration at the rim. Killens Pond ceramics (Wise 1984) are similar, but have sand or grit and red ochre included in the paste. Sherds attributable to both types were found in one of the two pit features excavated at



Figure 53

(above) Sherd of Townsend pottery from Unit 12, level 1, impressed with a cord-wrapped stick

(below) Quartz scraper from Unit 25, level 1

the site (the eastern pit), and a single sherd was found in the uppermost deposit of the western pit. Only two sherds of these types were found outside the two pit features.

OTHER TOOLS

A small number of flaked stone tools were recovered from the excavations. All appear to be general purpose cutting or scraping tools. Only one, an ovate knife, was recovered from a pit feature (Unit 20, Level 7II).

Overall, the artifact assemblage from the Beech Ridge Site suggests a series of short-term procurement occupations through the latter half of the Woodland I Period and the Woodland II Period. The tools recovered are not specialized enough to suggest specific activities.