TYGER VILLAGE, 38 UN 213

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Introduction

In June, 1984, the U.S. Forest Service funded limited test excavations at a prehistoric site on the Tyger River (Elliott 1984, 1985). This site, dubbed the Tyger Village (38UN213), revealed a rare ceramic assemblage in association with a probable house and charcoal dating to the Fourteenth century or Fifteenth century A.D. The Tyger Village site, 38Un213, was first recorded early in 1984 by Tommy Charles of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology in Columbia (Charles 1984:29-30). Mr. Charles made a brief visit to the site with a local collector, Walt Garner, who had originally located the site. Initial examination of the site by Mr. Charles, in which he employed a bucket auger to test four different areas, indicated cultural deposits containing lithics, ceramics, freshwater mussel shell, and animal bone, extended 24 inches below surface in one portion of the site. This particular auger test was placed about 30 meters southwest of the USFS test excavation. Realizing the importance of this site, Mr. Charles notified the U.S. Forest Service archeologist (Daniel Elliott), who organized a small test excavation. The site covers at least 4.5 ha of woodlands, of which, only four square meters was systematically examined by the author. This report is a summary of the initial findings from the 1984 test excavation unit and three shovel test probes.

Tyger Village is located on an elevated terrace floodplain of the Tyger River, a tributary of the Santee River, which flows through portions of the Sumter National Forest in rural Union County in the inner piedmont of South Carolina (Figure 1). The archaeological site lies within the Tyger Ranger District, Sumter National Forest. The U.S. Forest Service manages the cultural resource as part of its broader mandate to inventory, assess and manage the resources on Federal property. The cultural resource management work that was undertaken in 1984 was documented in a technical report, which saw only limited public release (Elliott 1985). Photographs accompanying the report subsequently were lost (or misplaced) by the USFS. Elliott (1984) presented a brief summary of discoveries at Tyger Village at a professional meeting in 1984. Benson (2006) provided a summary assessment of the site in an overview of cultural resources for the Sumter National Forest.
Figure 1. Site Location.
Site 38Un213 was recorded by Tommy Charles, who made an initial exploration of the site in 1984. Mr. Charles excavated four auger tests across the site. A brief description of the site and his archaeological investigations was published by the South Carolina Institute for Archaeology and Anthropology (Charles 1984:29-30). Informal conversations between Mr. Charles and USFS archaeologist Daniel Elliott resulted in additional study of the site. That research effort was documented in a USFS Cultural Resource Report (Elliott 1985).

The USFS research team, which consisted of Elliott and two summer interns, excavated three shovel tests to gain a better understanding of the horizontal variability across this large site. The limits of the artifacts coincided with a natural topographic landform which jutted into the swampy floodplain of the Tyger River. On the surface there was considerable evidence of ground disturbance, presumably done by relic collectors.

The two meter by two meter test unit (Test Unit 1) was placed on the northeastern end of the site. This area contained recent collector disturbance and many lithic, bone and ceramic artifacts were visible on the surface of this otherwise wooded setting. This section of the site may have experienced considerable erosion as a result of farming in the late eighteenth century through early Twentieth century. While this area may occasionally flood, this probably happens only a few times each century. This test was dug in two levels, an upper plow-disturbed zone and a lower, more compact, plow-disturbed zone. Contents of the square were screened through one-quarter inch hardware cloth.

**FEATURES**

The plow zone deposit, which was quite rich in lithic and ceramic materials (with lesser amounts of bone), overlay eighteen intact subsurface features which became apparent at a depth of 20 centimeters below ground surface. These include five truncated basin pits, twelve post molds, and one feature possibly of natural origin. The pit features were oval shaped and contained a small amount of ceramics, lithics and bone.

Feature 1 was a large basin-shaped pit that proved to be the most informative feature of the 18 features discovered in Test Unit 1 (Figures 2 and 3). It measured 75 cm by 65 cm and extended to 47 cm below datum. The feature fill was a dark brown sandy loam. Feature 1 contained the most artifacts of any feature including check stamped, cord-marked, bold incised/stamped, rectangular complicated-stamped and plain sherds. One quartz biface fragment, possibly a broken, small triangular point preform, was also contained in Feature 1. A charcoal sample recovered from Feature 1 was submitted to Beta Analytic Inc., of Coral Gables, Florida and yielded a Carbon-14 date of 550 +/- 80 B.P., or approximately A.D. 1400 +/- 80 years (Beta-10056). This means the charcoal could date between A.D. 1320 and A.D. 1480, a period prior to European contact (Beta Analytic, Inc. 1984). It is tenuous to base the age of the site on one radiometric date. However, this single date does whet the intellectual appetite of archeologists with an interest in southeastern manifestations in the Mississippian time period. The ceramics recovered from this feature were typical of the ceramic assemblage recovered from the plow
zone levels, and the dated charcoal sample may be indicative of the age of this ceramic occupation.

Feature 2 was a large basin-shaped pit. It measured 80 cm by 65 cm and extended to 69 cm below datum. The feature fill was a dark brown sandy loam. This feature intruded into Feature 3. Feature 2 was intruded by Feature 6 (a post mold).

Feature 3 was a basin-shaped pit. It measured a minimum of 50 cm by 45 cm. The feature fill was a brown sandy loam. It was truncated by Feature 2.

Feature 4 was a basin-shaped pit. It measured 65 cm by 55 cm and extended to 61 cm below datum. The feature fill was a dark brown sandy loam.

Feature 16 measured a minimum of 45 cm by 25 cm and it extended to 65 cm below datum. This was an elongated, possible pit feature. It extended beyond the limits of Test Unit 1. This feature may not be cultural but may be a natural disturbance.

Feature 17 was a basin-shaped pit. It measured a minimum of 50 cm by 47 cm and extended to 68 cm below datum. The feature fill was a mottled red clay and dark brown sandy loam. It extended beyond the limits of Test Unit 1. Feature 17 was intruded by Feature 15 (a post mold).

Twelve post mold features were located in Test Unit 1 (Features 5-15 and 18). Ten post molds form an alignment of two parallel rows of posts representative of a section of rebuilt rectangular house wall. The other two post molds may also be associated with this structure. These two rows of post molds are oriented north-south and were situated in the western half of the test unit. The fill of the post molds was a light brown sandy loam that was lighter and less compact than the surrounding soil matrix. The post molds contained no artifacts that were useful in dating the age of this structure.
Figure 2. Excavated View of Test Unit 1, 38UN213, Facing West.

Figure 3. Plan View of Test Unit 1, 38UN213.
A total of 1,933 ceramic sherds was recovered from the 1984 investigations at 38Un213. Unfortunately as a result of farming and other destructive processes, 1,141 of these were either too fragmentary or too eroded to permit detailed analysis. The remaining 792 sherds formed the basis for the ceramic analysis. Ceramics constitute a major aspect of the information potential contained at 38Un213. While more than one ceramic component may be represented in this assemblage, most of the sherds are the result of one occupation. This determination is based on similarity in temper, color, thickness, and general execution of the design elements. The ceramic collection from 38Un213, while controlled, is of mixed provenience.

Plain sherds, which constitute the vast majority (81.8%) of the assemblage were well smoothed or roughened plain in appearance. Cord-marked designs were the next most common represented by 5.1 percent of the collection. Check-stamping was observed on 3.9 percent of the collection, followed by incising (2.5%), simple-stamped (2.2%), curvilinear complicated stamped (1.3 percent), punctating (0.9%), complicated paddle-stamping and incising (0.7%), and rectilinear complicated-stamping (0.6%), and, fabric-marking (0.4%) and a minor amount of other decorations. Excavators recovered two small ceramic pipe fragments and a stylized clay vessel adorno.

Most startling in this ceramic collection were the sherds exhibiting combined use of incising and paddle-stamping as a decorative technique. The combination of stamping with incising included:

Table 1. Feature Summary, 38Un213.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Length (cm)</th>
<th>Width (cm)</th>
<th>Basal Depth (below Datum)</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>75</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Post</td>
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CERAMICS
check-stamped and incised rims; check-stamped and incised body fragments; simple-stamped and incised body fragments; unidentifiable-stamped and incised rims; and unidentifiable-stamped and incised body fragments. Many of the check-stamped, simple-stamped and incised sherds possessing only one design element may also have been from vessels exhibiting both decorative techniques, but because of the small sherd size this was not evidenced on the individual sherd.

Incising was also used in combination with punctating. The punctations included both cane punctation and stick punctation. In some cases, the punctates were crudely jabbed and slightly trailed to one edge. Several of the sherds that had only punctated designs were quite small and may be fragments of vessels having other design elements. The incising ranged from fine-line to bold-line but bold incising was most common. There were absolutely no curvilinear incised design elements observed. All the incisions were horizontal, vertical or diagonal lines. These lines were usually a series of parallel lines, which intersected another series of parallel lines that were oriented a different direction. It appears that all of the incising occurred near the rim or on the neck of the vessels. There appeared to be no attempt to separate the incised design element from the paddle-stamped design element, rather these two signs were clearly juxtaposed with the incised design always overlying the stamped design. In several cases, the stamped designs were obscured by the subsequent incising. The execution of the incisions ranged from crude, haphazardly application to well-formed, evenly applied designs. Several examples of vessel rim lip decoration were observed. This lip decoration included stick and cane punctation, but, mostly paddle-stamping. The application of lip designs was always on the extreme lip and never on the side of the vessel rim.

Ceramic vessel form at Tyger Village can only be minimally defined since the small size of the sherds restricts the analysis. No reconstructable vessels were recovered. Judging from the available rim sherds the vessels include large, nearly vertical-walled Jars or large bowls. Some of the rims are slightly flared but only slightly. No cazuelas or bottle forms were found. Vessel bottoms are essentially unknown, but, no podal supports were found. While over 500 of the sherds were plain decorated, only 11 of these were rim sherds from a total sample of 31 rim sherds. This indicates that portions of most vessels may have had plain surfaces, but the areas near the rim and vessel neck were generally decorated. Decoration near the rim may have served a functional purpose, for gripping the vessel, in addition to its obvious aesthetic purpose.

No folded-pinched, folded-punctate, noded, or appliqué rims, characteristic of Lamar and Savannah pottery, were observed in the ceramic assemblage. The incised designs share little similarity with Lamar incised wares.

The collection is unlike the ceramics recovered from the Mulberry Mound site, near Camden. Only three other sites found as of 1984 in South Carolina display ceramic design combinations similar to those seen at Tyger Village. These are the Guernsey site, the Arants Field site and the Dunlap site.

The Guernsey site (or Cut-off Island site) ceramic assemblage was originally described briefly by Griffin based on a small collection donated to the University of Michigan (Griffin 1945:471-475). George Stuart (1975) in his dissertation on the Camden area, further described collections
from this site taken from the surface and he tentatively defined three ceramic types based on these collections, (Camden Incised, Camden Check Stamped and Camden Simple Stamped). The Arants Field site, located from the Guernsey site in the coastal plain, contained ceramics with design elements similar to the Guernsey material but the temper and thickness differed considerably. Arants Field was dug by George Teague of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology in 1972 (Teague 1972). No radiocarbon dates were obtained for either the Guernsey site or the Arants Field site. The Dunlap site, located on the Pee Dee drainage, was recorded by Tommy Charles as part of his statewide collections survey and test excavations were done there under the direction of Chester DePratter of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology. This site, upon initial surface investigation by Mr. Charles, yielded freshwater and marine shell, animal bone, human bone, small triangular points. A small collection of the ceramics recovered from the Dunlap site includes cord-marked, cane punctate, and incised check stamped sherds.

The ceramics at Tyger Village can tentatively be defined as Camden Incised, Camden Check-Stamped, and Camden Simple-Stamped (varieties-Tyger). The Camden ceramic description, as defined by Stuart (1975), has merit judging from the ceramic material recovered from Tyger Village. Larger collections with clearly dateable contexts need to be gathered before the definitive type description of these wares should be attempted. Tyger Village is a site where this type of information may remain buried. Future research at Tyger Village may prove instrumental in solving the riddle of Mississippian manifestations and the Woodland-Mississippian transition in South Carolina.

LITHICS

One-thousand, three hundred and sixty (1,360) lithic artifacts were recovered from Tyger Village. This includes 1,108 quartz pieces, 203 metavolcanic pieces, 40 dark chert pieces, seven light chert pieces one ortho-quartzite piece, and one soapstone vessel sherd. Not all these artifacts are contemporary with the ceramic occupation as Late Archaic, Middle Archaic, and possibly Early Archaic occupation was indicated. Items that can be assigned to the ceramic occupation include small triangular quartz and metavolcanic, and dark chert points most of the specimens of small triangular points were broken. These points were well made with flat bases, thin bodies and straight sides. No large Yadkin Badin or other large triangular points were found on the site. Judging from the debitage, these small triangular points were manufactured at Tyger Village. There were 339 lithic artifacts per square meter at 38Un213. The lithic raw materials used at Tyger Village indicate predominate dependence on local lithic sources (Quartz and metavolcanic) moderate use of dark chert (source of origin unknown but possible imported from the Valley and Ridge province), and very little contact with coastal plain resources (light chert and ortho-quartzite). More detailed study of the lithic raw materials used at Tyger Village may allow reconstruction of trade and exchange mechanisms in operation among this society.

The only other artifacts recovered during testing besides lithics and ceramics were animal bone, and daub. No floral material, with the exception the wood charcoal submitted for C-14 dating, was recovered. Soil samples from all features were floated and screened through window mesh in an attempt to recover small bones and floral remains. The recovered animal bone includes
deer, turtle, bird, and small mammals. This collection was small and a detailed analysis of these faunal remains has not been done since most of the bones came from the plow-disturbed levels. Interestingly, three of the pit features each contained one deer astragalus. Freshwater mussel shells, found by Mr. Charles in his initial auger test, were totally absent from the test excavation. No historic artifacts were found by the USFS investigation.
Summary

This report describes a first look at a very interesting and an extremely important site in the piedmont of South Carolina. The findings from one two meter by two meter test that was excavated in 1984 attest to the rich potential for research at Tyger Village. The U.S. Forest Service, which owns significant portions of the floodplain and terraces of the Tyger River watershed, have continued to inventory archaeological sites on their property (Benson 2006). In the decades since the site’s discovery, however, only a few potentially-related archaeological sites have been located by archaeological survey in the Tyger River watershed (Green and Bates 2003). Those that have been identified are known from survey and limited testing investigations. Bates (2000) tested the Padgetts Creek site (38UN844), which yielded a sherd assemblage similar to the Pisgah series, as well as ceramics similar to those found at the Tyger Village. The Padgetts Creek testing project was conducted in advance of a government land exchange.

Tyger Village site is a unique cultural resource in the region. Only a minute fraction of the site has been excavated. Green and Bates (2003) proposed that Tyger Village served as a socio-political center of a more dispersed population after the McCollum Mound site (38Cs2) on the Broad River was abandoned between A.D.1375-1450 (Ryan 1971:104-110). They further suggest that the dispersed population was perhaps a “refugee” population caught between the Cherokee to the northwest and people occupying the Wateree Valley to the east. Green and Bates ranked the Tyger Village as a Class II Mississippian site. To date, no mound architecture, a trait of their Class I sites, has been identified at Tyger Village. Definitive statements about how the Tyger Village settlement fits into the cultural sequence and socio-political network of the region must await more rigorous examination.
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