

Assemblage Analysis of Collapsed Gallery Square A. Sharing the archaeology of S.E. Cape York Peninsula: The Agayrr Bamangay Milbi Project.

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Abstract: Collapsed Gallery is a sandstone rock art, rock shelter located approximately 35km northeast of the town of Laura, Cape York Peninsula. The excavation of a 1 x 1 meter square near the back wall of the shelter (SQA) produced an assemblage that included lithics, faunal bone, shell, charcoal and a range of other organic materials such as pig hair and dingo scat, indicating both human and animal habitation. Analysis of the cultural material from two different phases of occupation – dating to 2000 BP (Phase 1) and 200 BP (Phase 2) respectively demonstrated changes in artefact raw material procurement and greater intensity of site use between the two phases. Overall, the cultural assemblage largely mirrors late Holocene assemblages recorded elsewhere in Laura region sites.

Excavation: Excavated in July 2022, Collapsed Gallery is located in a sandstone escarpment in the Laura valley Cape York Peninsula Northern Queensland. The site gets its name from the significant roof fall which covers much of the site. The excavation square was a 1 x 1 meter square against the back wall at the western end of the shelter and reached a depth of 75cm.

Dating: Radiocarbon dates indicate two separate short-lived periods of occupation separated by extensive roof fall, with the pre roof fall dating to 2000 BP (Phase 1), and post roof fall dating to 200 BP with possible older dates underneath the large amounts of roof fall.



Lithics: Total artefacts in the assemblage numbered 164, with an increase in discard from 24 (14.6%) in Phase 1 to 140 (85.3%) in Phase 2. The majority of the assemblage consisted of small flaked pieces numbering 92 (56%) followed by complete flakes numbering 47 (28.6%) and broken flakes numbering 18 (10.9%). Seven (4.2%) cores were also present. Quartz and Chert were the main raw material types with 113 and 49 respectively, with only 2 each of silcrete and basalt present found only in Phase 2. Overall, the average size of the artefacts was small, with a large percentage of lithics at tertiary and secondary decortication stages and evidence of platform preparation as well as a high number of feather terminations demonstrating careful curation of raw material and artefact manufacture.

Fauna: The Bone assemblage was initially sorted into identifiable elements as to species were possible, a NSIP count carried out and then sorted into categories of burnt, unburnt and calcined bone. Most of the bone assemblage was too fragmented or burnt to unequivocally identify the species, however common fauna present were Kangaroo – most likely *Macropus Giganteus*, possum, shell, rodent and snake. Highly fragmented shell from freshwater mussel (genus *Velesunio*) was present throughout both phases with greatest densities of discard in Phase 2. The total NSIP count was 1316 individual elements of which 693 (52.6%) were unburnt, 320 were calcined (24.3%) with burnt bone numbering 303 (23.3%).

Other Organics: There were a range of other organic materials in the assemblage including charcoal with a total weight of 3765.8g with 221.8g, in Phase 1 and 3544g in Phase 2. Pig hair, dingo scat, wood, burnt pandanus and *Echidna* quill were also identified all from the Phase assemblage.

Discussion: From the sequence of dates, it is clear that both phases were short lived, occupation events reflective of changes to how this particular area of the shelter was used in relation to extensive roof fall in this part of the site. It seems as if use of this part of the shelter at 2000 BP was disrupted by extensive roof fall only becoming suitable to reuse after some 1800 years at 200 BP. It is likely that other areas of the extensive shelter continued to be occupied and that older deposits may exist elsewhere in this site. Analysis of cultural material demonstrates greater intensity of site use in the later Phase 2 and a broader suite of cultural activities than Phase 1. Overall, the assemblage closely mirrors late Holocene sequences documented elsewhere in the Laura region and southeastern Cape York generally (Morwood et al 1995 & David 1998).

References:

David, B 1998, 'Rock Art of Southeast Cape York Peninsula: Bonney Glenn Station', *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 127-136.
Morwood, M & Hobb, D.R 1995, *Quinkan Prehistory the archaeology of Aboriginal art in S.E. Cape York Peninsula*, Anthropology Museum The University of Queensland, St Lucia, Brisbane.

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SQ	XU	SU	Material	Depth cm	Code	Date	D ¹⁴ C	F ¹⁴ C %	Cal BP 95.4%
PHASE 2									
A	3	1	Charcoal	3.0	Wk-57360	144±13	-17.8	98.2	60-120
A	3	1	Charcoal	5.5	Wk-57351	210±13	-25.9	97.4	150-210
A	8	1	Charcoal	11.3	Wk-57362	200±13	-24.6	97.5	140-220
PHASE 1									
A	13	2	Charcoal	39.9	Wk-57363	2029±13	-223.2	77.7	1920-2000
A	14	2	Shell	41.2	Wk-57365	1990±16	-219.4	78.1	1870-1990
A	14	2	Charcoal	48.0	Wk-57364	2077±13	-227.9	77.2	1990-2110

