

Two Thousand Years in Dendi, Northern Benin

Archaeology, History and Memory

Edited by

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BRILL

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Tomboutou (TOU-14-S1)

Pascal Gnankpo Amoussou, Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Nicolas Nikis and Anne Haour

1 Location

Tomboutou is a contemporary village on the Niger river north of Guene. The test pit (S1) was located on a street in the oldest part of the village.

2 Geographical Coordinates

LAT: 11,855500 LONG: 3,287900 (WGS84)

3 Discovery

The site was identified by Anne Haour, Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Olivier Gosselain. It was excavated by Pascal Gnankpo Amoussou, on 6 February 2014.

4 Destruction Risks

The test pit is located on the verge of the street in the modern village. It is not under any specific threat and mitigation measures are not urgent.

5 Site

The test pit was situated in the oldest part of present-day Tomboutou according to oral history, close to a former wall of the *birni*. Survey in the wider vicinity of the modern village identified a series of mounds to its south (see Gazetteer).

6 Excavation

Tomboutou had never been excavated before. One test pit was excavated. It was 1 × 1 m in size and excavated by spits of 10 cm (except for the superficial layer which was excavated in one spit of 20 cm). Within each spit, archaeological contexts (i.e. distinct contexts) were separated, sieved and bagged separately. All the spits were sieved down to 5 mm. The test pit was completed at 110 cm into sterile yellow sandy soil.

7 Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy of TOU-14-S1 displays two major phases of occupation. Until about -40 cm, several layers of modern rubbish occur, such as plastic bags, plastic beads and modern glass. The layers are crossed by remains of modern masonry. The lower part of the test pit seems to represent an older occupation. It yielded glass fragments and cowrie shells but no plastic.

8 Finds

This investigation generated a huge number of small finds. Surface finds include mainly modern plastic and other refuse. A corroded French 5-centimes coin, issued likely in 1925, was recovered in the top layer, 0–20 cm (SF 2014-56) (S. Magnavita, this volume). Also from this layer was a glass fragment bearing the letters 'GDK', 'Gold', and 'ail Poli' (SF 2014-47), which is in all formal respects similar to a 7 ml bottle of nail polish by the Nigerian brand GDK which according to its website has operated for at least 20 years in Nigeria and 30 years in Côte d'Ivoire.

Two glass beads of Magnavita's Type 2 – one black, one cobalt blue – came from 40–50 cm (SF 2014-58 and 2014-62). There were four cowrie shells, one in each spit between 40 and 80 cm (SF 2014-17 to 2014-20). Four glass bracelet fragments were recovered – two green (SF 2014-40 and 2014-59), one black and white (SF 2014-41) and one silver white (SF 2014-60), all from layers above 50 cm (Figure AC.2). The unit also yielded multiple metal objects, including one of copper alloy (SF 2014-162). They can be attributed to recent periods. Finds include fragments of knife blades, connected to cooking activities; iron fittings such as a nut, two rings, five rods, a rivet and two nails; and a number of indeterminate objects (Anne Filippini, pers. comm.).

Ceramics were plentiful. Incisions dominate, followed by twisted cord roulette and painted motifs. A sherd with six parallel wavy lines at 30–40 cm is worthy of a mention as an unusual occurrence in the archaeology of the region.



FIGURE AC.1
TOU-14-SI, North section at completion

9 Interpretation and Cultural Attribution

The upper part of the test pit is clearly a witness of the present-day occupation of Tomboutou. The lower part represents an older occupation, probably nineteenth century judging by the presence of cowrie shells, glass fragments and glass beads.

TABLE AC.1 Desampling

Level	Number
0–20	25
20–30	62
30–40	69
40–50	27
50–60	50
60–70	48
70–80	35
80–90	11
90–100	4
100–110	2
Total	333

Analysis in the field by Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Pascal Gnankpo Amoussou, and at UEA by David Kay

TABLE AC.2 Category 4

Context	Undec	Illegible
0–20	8	2
20–30	8	
30–40	29	
40–50	32	2
50–60	17	
60–70	18	
70–80	8	
80–90	4	
90–100	1	
Total (129)	125	4

Analysis in the field by Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Pascal Gnankpo Amoussou, and at UEA by David Kay

TABLE AC.3 Category 3

Context	#	Burnish	Dec1	Dec2	Dec3
0–20	1	int			
	2	ext			
	1	ext	sl-2		
	1		sl-4		
	1	int	st	sl-1	rc-1a
	1	ext/int	peig el-9		
	1	ext	indis		
20–30	5	int			
	1	ext			



FIGURE AC.2 Glass bracelets from Dendi sites. The Tomboutou (TOU) items are SF 2014-40 (bottom, fourth from left), SF 2014-59 (top, first from left), SF 2014-60 (top, third from left), SF 2014-41 (top, fourth from left). Other items featured in this photo are, from left to right and top to bottom, from Kargui (SF 2014-29), Bogo Bogo (SF 2014-11), Kargui (SF 2014-27), Molla (SF 2014-34), Tondo windi (SF 2014-45), Bogo Bogo (SF 2014-19), Bogo Bogo (SF 2014-38), Bogo Bogo (SF 2014-20)

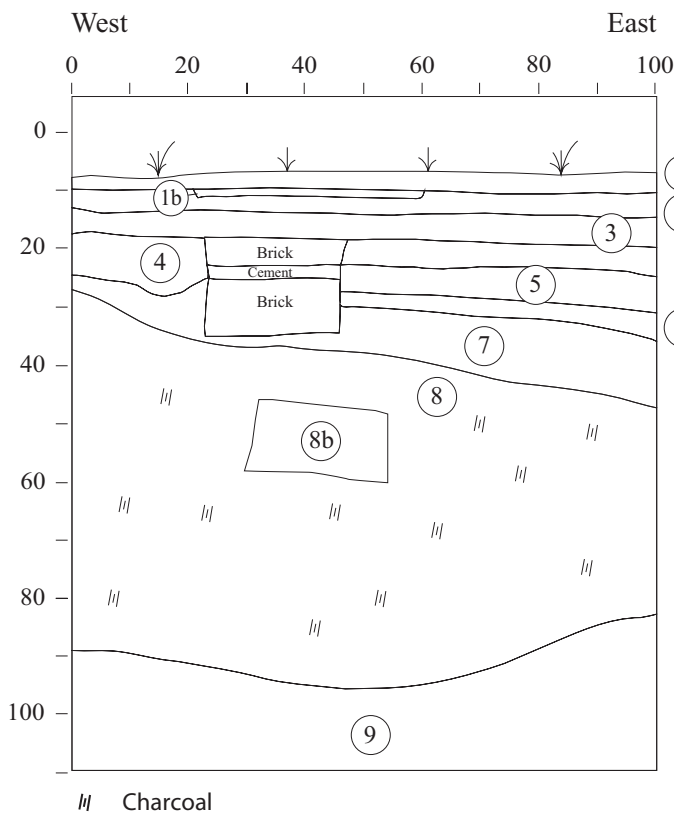


FIGURE AC.3 TOU-14-S1, North section
 1 Top soil (street)
 1b Thin compact ashy layer with glass and plastic remains
 2 Compact sandy layer with glass and plastic remains
 3 Compact sandy layer with gravels and glass and plastic remains
 4 Compact sandy layer with laterite gravels
 5 Loose grey sandy layer
 6 Loose yellow sandy layer
 7 Loose grey sandy layer with plastic beads and glass remains
 8 Loose yellow sandy layer with charcoal and a loose darker sandy area (8b) with glass remains
 9 Compact yellow sand (natural substratum)

TABLE AC.3 Category 3 (cont.)

Context	#	Burnish	Dec1	Dec2	Dec3
	1	ext/int	sl-2		
	1	ext	sl-2	indis	
	1	ext	sl-1	rc-1a	plain
	1	ext/int	rc-1b	plain	
	1	ext/int	sl-1		
	1	ext	plain	sl-2	indis
	1		plain	pnt-rl-1	
30-40	6	ext			
	4	int			
	3	ext/int			
	1	ext/int	plain	st	rc-1a
	1		plain	peigEW-6	peigEW-6
	1	ext	sl-1	rc-1a	plain
	2	ext	indis		
	1	ext/int	sl-6		
	1	ext/int	indis		
	1		sl-2		
	1		rc-1a		
	1		pnt-rc	plain	
	1		pnt-rc	pnt-bl-b	plain
	1	ext	sl-3	roul	plain
40-50	5	int			
	3	ext/int			
	11	ext			
	1	ext/int	indis		
	1	ext/int	sl-2		
	1	ext	plain	indis	
	1	ext	sl-3		
	1		sl-1		
	1	ext/int	sl-1	sl-1 (int)	
	1		sl-2		
	1	ext	sl-2		
	1	ext/int	sl-1	indis	
	1	int	indis		
	1	ext/int	sl-3	sl-1	
	1	ext	sp1-14		
	1		peigEL7		
50-60	8	ext/int			
	3	ext			
	1	int	rc-1a	indis	
	1		rc-1a		
	1		pnt-r-b	plain	pnt-r-b
	1	ext/int	st-3	sl-1	rc-1a
	1	ext	sl-2	indis	
	3	ext/int	roul		

TABLE AC.3 Category 3 (cont.)

Context	#	Burnish	Dec1	Dec2	Dec3
60-70	5	int			
	10	ext/int			
	9	ext			
	1	int	plain	indis	pnt-r
	1		sl-1		
	1	ext/int	plain	rc-1a	
	1	ext/int	sc-1	rc-1a	pnt-r
	1	ext/int	sl-1	roul	pnt-r
	1	ext/int	sl-1		
	1	ext	sl-2		
	1	ext/int	indis	pnt-r	
	1	ext	plain	pnt-rc	
	1	ext	plain	perforated	
70-80	4	int			
	6	ext/int			
	6	ext			
	1	ext	plain	rc-1a	
	1	ext	plain	rc-1a	plain
	1	ext/int	sl-1	rc-1a	indis
	1	ext/int	plain	sl-2	rc-1a
	1		plain	pnt-rb	
80-90	1	ext			
	1		sl-2	sl-1	indis
	1		sl-1	rc-1a	pnt-r
	2	int			
90-100	1		rc-1b		
100-110	1	ext/int			
Total	159				

Analysis by David Kay

TABLE AC.4 Rims

Context	#	R.Type	Brn	Dec1	L1	Dec2	L2	Dec3	L3	Dec 4	L4	Ang.	Diam.	Mx. thick
0-20	1	S1	ext/int	plain	u	sl-4	u					3	10	0.9
	1	E19	ext/int											0.9
	1	E7	ext/int									4	11	0.7
20-30	1	S1	ext/int	sl-1	l	plain	u	indis	u			2	14	0.8
	1	E4												0.7
	1	E4		sp-6	l							4		0.6
	1	E36	ext/int									4		0.9
30-40	1	S1	ext	plain	u	sl-3	u	indis	u	sl-1	U	2	19	0.8
	1	S1										4		0.8
	1	S1	ext									2		0.9
	1	S1												0.8
	1	S1										3	14	0.6
	1	E4												0.5
40-50	1	E1										5		0.9
	1	S1	ext/int									3	24	0.7
	1	S6										3		1.0
	1	E11	ext/int									4		0.7
	1	E4			plain	c	pnt-rc	c				4		0.6
	1	E4												0.6
	1	E9	ext											0.5
	1	E29										4		1.2
50-60	1	E10	ext/int									4		0.6
	1	S1	ext									2		0.7
	1	S1	int									5		0.6
	1	S1	int									3	13	0.5
	1	E1										4		0.8
	1	E37	ext/int									4		0.6
	1	B3												
60-70	1	S1	ext/int	pnt-r	l	sl-1	u	plain	u					0.9
	1	S1	ext/int									4		0.7
	1	S1	int	sp-6	l									0.6
	1	S1		plain	u	ch	u					4		0.8
	1	S1	ext											1.0
	1	E4										4		0.8
	1	E26	ext/int									4		0.6
	1	E19	ext/int	plain	c	plain	u	roul	u					0.7
	1	E19	ext/int	plain	c	plain	u	pnt-rl-1	u			4		0.9
	2	E31	ext/int											1.0
70-80	1	E37										4		0.9
	1	S1	ext/int									4		0.6
	1	E11	ext/int	plain	c	plain	u	roul	u	pnt-r	U	4		0.9
Total	42													

Analysis by David Kay