

Two Thousand Years in Dendi, Northern Benin

Archaeology, History and Memory

Edited by

Anne Haour



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

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Boyeri (BOY-14-SI & II)

Nicolas Nikis, Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Olivier Gosselain

1 Location

Boyeri (Bwayeri) is a former settlement located a few kilometres southwest of Kompanti (PTI), of which it is said to have been a predecessor site. Boyeri is said to have been destroyed by the *Saka* of Kandi towards the end of the nineteenth century (Gosselain & Haour, this volume). It is located on a small rocky eminence. One of the striking features of the site is a large white ashy deposit (c. 15–20m in diameter) related to the dyeing pits which made the place famous – and caused its destruction as it is said that it is precisely the wealth of the dyers which attracted the wrath of Kandi (Gosselain & Smolderen, 2016).

2 Geographical Coordinates

LAT: 12,111542969942 LONG: 3,01247402094304 (WGS84)

3 Discovery

The site was identified and excavated by Nicolas Nikis, Olivier Gosselain and Alexandre Livingstone Smith on 26 January 2014.

4 Destruction Risks

The site is ploughed. It is not under any specific threat and mitigation measures are not urgent.

5 Site

Boyeri is a former village. It is located on a low eminence inland from the Niger, near a seasonal water source – a gully. The initial survey yielded a lot of ceramic material (among which no folded strip roulette decoration, but much undecorated material and some *blepharis* roulette decorated pottery). The extent of the site is unknown, but it is at least 200 by 300 m.

6 Excavation

Boyeri had never been excavated before. Two test pits were excavated. Both were 1 × 1 m and dug in 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 units) were separated, sieved and bagged separately. All spits were sieved down to 5 mm. Test pit S1 was interrupted at 80 cm, 15 cm into sterile yellow sandy soil. Test pit S11 reached natural substrate at 40 cm, but was dug to 80 cm to investigate a pit structure dug into said substrate.

7 Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy of S1 displays a thick layer of destruction with several layers of grey to white ash mixed with chunks of burnt earth. This stratigraphy may be related with oral traditions mentioning the destruction of Boyeri by the *Saka* of Kandi. The lower unit of compact brown sand may be related to Unit 3 in S11.

The stratigraphy of S11, located some 20 meters north of S1, is more classic. It consists of three contexts below the plough layer (Unit 1). A first context (2) is a layer of grey loose sand with abundant charcoal fragments and artefacts fragments (pottery). This Context 2 overlays a unit of brown to light brown loose to compact sand (Context 4). A pit (Context 3) is dug into that layer. The upper part of its filling shows laminations typically related to rain and stagnation in the stabilisation level of the pit.

8 Finds

Surface finds include potsherds displaying tamper marks on their internal surface, as well as pottery displaying *blepharis* roulette decoration. Two metal items (SF 2014-76 and 77) were recovered: an unidentified iron object, discovered in the upper part of the trench, and an open ring bracelet of 9.5 cm diameter. The site yielded two cowrie shells (SF 2014-01 and -02a) (Christie & Haour, this volume).



FIGURE G.1
Site under excavation



FIGURE G.2
BOY-14-SI, West section at completion



FIGURE G.3
BOY-14-SII, North section at completion

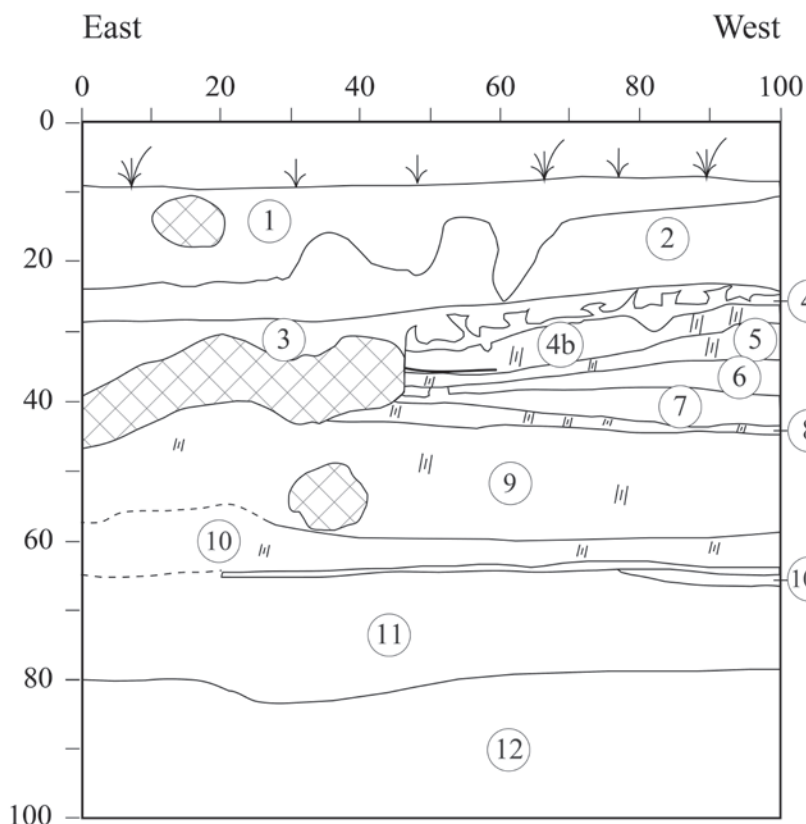


FIGURE G.4

BOY-14-SI, South section

- 1 loose grey ash/sand with slag fragments and pottery. Top is disturbed by ploughing
- 2 compact red-orange burnt earth
- 3 loose yellow brown sandy ash with pottery, charcoal and burnt earth fragments. This unit is separated from unit 2 by a thin compact red line
- 4 loose whitish grey ash with pottery and abundant charcoal. This unit is very thin
- 4b loose grey ash with pottery and abundant charcoal
- 5 loose grey ash with pottery and abundant charcoal. This unit is irregularly separated from the previous one by a thin level of red gravels and pottery fragments
- 6 compact bright red burnt earth with blocky burnt earth fragments
- 7 compact brown burnt earth
- 8 loose grey ash with pottery and abundant charcoal
- 9 red-brown sand with charcoal and burnt earth fragments. This unit is separated from the previous one by a thin line of loose white ash
- 10 compact grey ash with charcoal
- 10b compact grey ash with pottery, charcoals and burnt earth, separated from the previous one by a thin line of compact grey ash
- 11 compact brown-grey clayey loam with pottery and slag fragments (one iron bracelet)
- 12 compact brown-yellow clayey loam (natural substratum)

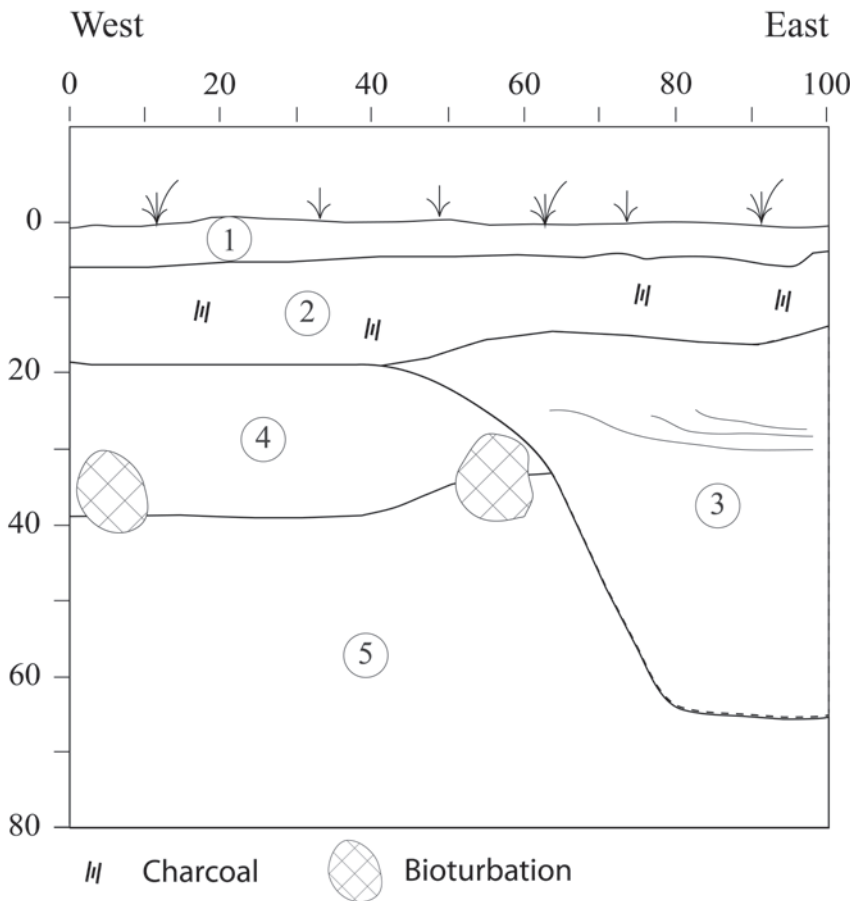


FIGURE G.5
BOY-14-SII, North section
1 loose grey ash/sand disturbed by ploughing
2 loose grey ash/sand with abundant charcoal and pottery
3 pit dug into layer 4. The upper part of its filling shows laminations typically related to rain and stagnation in the stabilisation level of the pit
4 brown to light brown loose to compact sand
5 compact brown-yellow clayey loam (natural substratum)

9 Interpretation and Cultural Attribution

We have no radiocarbon dates for the site. Oral testimonies, supported by the presence of new types of pottery and the absence of folded strip decorated pottery could indicate a post-thirteenth century occupation, probably concluding during the nineteenth century. The rather shallow deposits indicate a short span occupation (one or two generations?). The thick levels of destruction observed at BOY-14-SI are noteworthy. They echo oral traditions reporting the burning of the settlement by the *Saka* of Kandi. According to those, Boyeri, known as Bangou Yesa by the Zarma of Dendi, would have been founded after 1850 and destroyed in the 1880s. Informants in Kompanti and Loumbou Loumbou state that just two successive leaders ruled the town, which is consistent with a short occupation.

10 BOY SI

TABLE G.1 Desampling

Context	#
0-20	64
20-30	23
Con.1 30-40	11
Con. 2 30-40	5
Con. 3 30-40	3
40-50	37
50-60	6
60-70	6
70-80	10
80-90	6
90-100	4
Total	175

Analysis in the field by Anne Haour and at UEA by David Kay

TABLE G.2 Category 4

Context	Undecorated	Illegible
0-20	12	1
20-30	6	0
Con. 1, 30-40	10	1
Con. 2, 30-40	1	0
Con. 3, 30-40	1	0
40-50	14	2
50-60	1	0
60-70	2	0
70-80	2	2
80-90	2	1
90-100	2	0
Total	53	7

Analysis by David Kay

TABLE G.3 Category 3

Context	#	Burn	Dec1	Dec2	Dec3
0-20	2	ext			
	1		ch	blepharis	indis
	1		blepharis	indis	
	1		sl-2	rc-1a	
Con. 2 30-40	4	ext			
Con. 3 30-40	1	int			
	1		undec	pnt-r-b	pnt-r-r
40-50	4	ext			
	1	ext/int			
	2	ext	undec	pnt-r-b	
50-60	1		pnt-r-c		
	1	ext/int			
60-70	1		rfp-1a		
70-80	1	ext			
	1		roul		
80-90	1		sl-5		
	1	ext			
90-100	1		rce-8		
Total	26				

Analysis by David Kay

TABLE G.4 Rims

Context	#	R. type	Brn	Dec1	L1	Ang	Dia	Mx. thick
0-20	1	S1	ext					0.5
Con. 1 30-40	1	S1	ext/int					0.7
40-50	1	S4				5		0.6
	1	E1	ext/int			4		0.6
70-80	1	E4	ext/int			3	19	0.7
Total	5							

Analysis by David Kay

11 BOY SII

TABLE G.5 Desampling

Level	Number
0-20	101
20-30	30
Con. 1, 30-40	5
Con. 1, 40-50	4
Con. 1, 50-60	3
Con. 2, 30-40	15

TABLE G.5 Desampling (*cont.*)

Level	Number
Con. 2, 40-50	5
Con. 2, 50-60	13
Con. 2, 60-70	2
Total	178

Analysis by Anne Haour in the field and David Kay at UEA

TABLE G.6 Category 4

Context/spit	Undecorated	Illegible
0-20	26	2
20-30	14	0
Con. 1, 40-50	1	0
Con. 1, 50-60	0	2
Con. 2, 40-50	1	0
Con. 2, 50-60	6	1
Con. 2, 60-70	2	0
Total	50	5

Analysis by David Kay

TABLE G.7 Category 3

Context	#	Burn	Dec 1	Dec 2	Dec 3	Dec 4
0-20	9	ext				
	2	ext/int				
	1	ext/int	sl-1			
	1	ext/int	sl-1	roul	erod	
	1		rc-1a			
	1	ext/int	undec	roul	sl-2	
	1		rbt			
20-30	4	ext				
	1	ext/int				
	1	ext/int	undec	sl-1	rc-1a	pnt-r
	1		undec	rbt	undec	
Con. 1, 40-50	1		pnt-r-l-5	pnt-bl-b-3	ont-or-b-1	
	1		sl-3	erod		
Con. 2, 40-50	2		roul	erod		
	6	ext				
Con. 2, 50-60	1		blepharis			
	1	int	erod			
Con. 2, 60-70	4	ext				
	1	ext/int	undec	sl-1	rc-1a	pnt-r
	1	ext	undec	pnt-r-b		
Con. 2, 60-70	3	ext				
	1	ext	blepharis	erod		
Total	45					

Analysis by David Kay

TABLE G.8 Rims

Context	#	R. type	Brn	Dec 1	L1	Dec 2	L2	Dec 3	L3	Ang	Dia	Mx. thick
0-20	1	S4								4		0.5
	1	E4								4		0.8
	1	E1								4		0.7
	1	E4								4		0.7
	1	E1										0.7
	1	E4										0.8
20-30	1	E4	int									0.5
	1	E18	ext/int	undec	U	sl-1	U	roul	U	5	27	1.0
	1	E26								4		0.7
C 1, 40-50	1	E4								4		1.0
	1	S1	ext/int	undec	U	erod	U			3	16	0.5
C 2, 40-50	1	E11								4		0.5
C 2, 50-60	1	E4	int							4		0.9
Total	13											

Analysis by David Kay