

# Two Thousand Years in Dendi, Northern Benin

*Archaeology, History and Memory*

*Edited by*

Anne Haour



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

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## Karimama (KAR-14-SI)

*Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Nicolas Nikis*

### 1 Location

Karimama is a modern town on the Niger River and the regional district capital. We located our test pit in the part of town that our informant identified as the oldest Gourmantche area of Karimama, located inside the former *birni*.

### 2 Geographical Coordinates

LAT: 12,067614 LONG: 3,183170976 (WGS84)

### 3 Discovery

The site was identified and excavated by Nicolas Nikis and Alexandre Livingstone Smith on 5 February 2014.

### 4 Destruction Risks

The site of KAR-14-SI is a contemporary settlement but it is not under any specific threat, and mitigation measures are not considered.

### 5 Excavation

Karimama had never been excavated before. One test pit was excavated. It was 1 × 1 m in size and dug 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 units) were separated, sieved and bagged separately. All spits were sieved down to 5 mm. The test pit was completed at 70 cm into sterile yellow sandy soil.

### 6 Site

KAR-14-SI is situated in a compound in the city of Karimama. It said to be the oldest Gourmantche *windi* of the old *birni* of Karimama. Some ceramics potsherds showed on the surface.

### 7 Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy displays under the compact top soil (Context 1) a first layer of a heterogeneous compact sandy sediments (Context 3) with fragmented artefacts and ecofacts (slag, pottery and animal bones). A pit (Context 2) had been dug into this layer. It was filled in with grey silty sand sediment with stone fragments, gravels and ceramics. A fourth unit is a layer of loose yellowish sandy sediment (Context 4) mixed with charcoal and ceramics fragments. A thin red compact ashy layer (Context 5) occurred within Context 4, perhaps evidence of a fire. A darker yellow loose sandy sediment layer (Context 6) with a larger amount of charcoal than the context above is likely related to the preceding context. The last unit above the natural yellowish clayey substratum is a brown grey compact sandy sediment, with few artefacts or charcoal.

### 8 Finds

Surface finds include potsherds displaying *blepharis* roulette and double twisted cord roulette decoration, but the excavations yielded a new type pottery (black polished, red painted decorations and everted rims). The occurrence of *blepharis* roulette is common in the excavated layers. The only two small finds were two metal items (SF 2014-78 and 2014-79), the latter a copper alloy piece that was possibly a chain ring or earring (see Filippini, this volume, Figure 19.1).

### 9 Interpretation and Cultural Attribution

The excavation has yielded new types of pottery (i.e. those not found on the mounds of medieval date). As the upper part of the stratigraphy is a modern compound one may reason that the pottery is post-medieval. A layer of ash may possibly be related to a destruction episode often mentioned by oral traditions. The only date available is associated with a layer before that, but it is not the earliest occupation at the site.



FIGURE L.1 Site under excavation



FIGURE L.2 KAR-14-SI, West section at completion



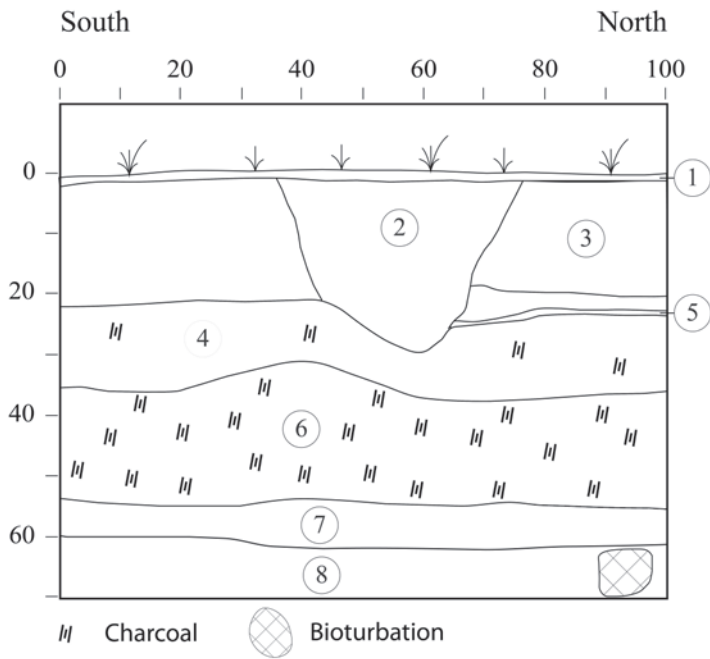


FIGURE L.3

KAR-14-S1, West section

- 1 Compact sandy sediment. Top soil disturbed by domestic activity
- 2 Pit dug into layer 3. Grey silty sand sediment with stones and ceramics fragment and gravels
- 3 Compact yellow grey sandy sediment with fragment of ceramics, slags and animal bones
- 4 loose yellowish sandy sediment with pottery and abundant charcoal
- 5 thin compact ashy red line in layer 4
- 6 loose yellow brown sandy sediment with pottery and abundant charcoal
- 7 Compact grey brown sediment
- 8 Compact brown-yellow clay (natural substratum)

10 Radiocarbon Dates

Beta- 417598	100	30	KAR 14 SI, 50-60	Phase 5
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TABLE L.1 Desampling

Level	Number
0-20	107
20-30	39
30-40	51
40-50	133
50-60	41
60-70	5
70-80	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>

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

TABLE L.2 Category 4

Context	Undecorated	Illegible
0-20	30	2
20-30	8	
30-40	10	
40-50	42	
50-60	7	
60-70	1	
70-80	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>3</b>

Analysis by David Kay and Anne Haour

TABLE L.3 Category 3

Context	#	Burnish	Dec1	Dec2	Dec3
0-20	14	ext			
	1		mch-2	undec	ch
	1		pnt-bl-c	pnt-r-b	pnt-r-c
	1		undec	blepharis	
	6	ext			
20-30	3	ext			
	1	ext/int			

TABLE L.3 Category 3 (cont.)

Context	#	Burnish	Dec1	Dec2	Dec3
30-40	1		undec	blepharis	
	5	ext			
	2	ext/int			
	1	ext	undec	blepharis	indis
	1	ext/int	undec	sh-10	
40-50	1	ext/int	undec	rc-1a	pnt-r
	1	ext/int	roul	indis	
	1	int			
	8	ext			
	1		undec	sl-1	
50-60	1	ext	undec	sl-1	
	2	ext			
	1	ext/int	perf	undec	
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>				

Analysis by David Kay

TABLE L.4 Rims

Context	#	R.Type	Brn	Dec1	L1	Dec2	L2	Ang	Diam	Mx thick
0-20	1	S1	ext/int					2	24	0.9
	1	S1	ext	undec	u	blepharis	u	3	25	0.5
	1	S4						4		0.5
20-30	1	E37						5		1.1
	1	E40	ext					4	24	0.8
30-40	1	E21						3	33	0.7
40-50	1	S1						4		0.6
	1	S1	ext/int							0.8
	1	S1						4		0.5
	1	E26						5		0.6
	1	E26						4		0.6
	1	E16	ext					4	30	0.7
	1	E2						4		0.9
50-60	1	E37								0.9
	1	E37						5		1.1
	1	E37								1.0
	1	E22						4		0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>								

Analysis by David Kay