

Two Thousand Years in Dendi, Northern Benin

Archaeology, History and Memory

Edited by

Anne Haour



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Acknowledgments | XI |
| List of Figures and Tables | XIII |
| List of Maps | XVIII |

PART 1

- 1 Introduction 3
Anne Haour
- 2 Crossing Archaeology and Oral Tradition: Approaching Dendi History from Sites of Memory 6
Olivier Gosselain and Lucie Smolderen
- 3 Palaeoenvironmental Data on Dendi, in the Last 3000 Years 20
Anne Haour
- 4 The Archaeology of the Eastern Niger Valley 23
Anne Haour and Didier N'Dah
- 5 An Archaeological and Ethnographic Approach to a Site and Its Region 26
Anne Haour, Olivier Gosselain, Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Sam Nixon and Didier N'Dah

PART 2

- 6 Landforms, Hydrography, and Vegetation 31
Raoul Laibi, Didier N'Dah and Paul Adderley
- 7 The Archaeological Landscape: Survey and Settlement 41
Nadia Khalaf, Anne Haour, Didier N'Dah and Alexandre Livingstone Smith

PART 3

- 8 Ethnographic Methods 53
Olivier Gosselain, Lucie Smolderen, Victor Brunfaut, Jean-François Pinet and Alexandre Livingstone Smith
- 9 Architecture and Settlements Today 58
Victor Brunfaut and Jean-François Pinet
- 10 Textile Production in Dendi: An Ethnographic and Historical Study of a Chain of Production 73
Lucie Smolderen

PART 4

- 11 Excavation Strategies and Methods: Approaching an Archaeological Terra Incognita 85
Anne Haour, Didier N'Dah, Carlos Magnavita, Sam Nixon and Alexandre Livingstone Smith
- 12 The Mound of *Tombo*: Introduction to the Site 92
Didier N'Dah, Carlos Magnavita, Sam Nixon, Anne Haour and Alexandre Livingstone Smith
- 13 The Geophysical Prospection of Birnin Lafiya 96
Carlos Magnavita
- 14 The Pavements at *Tombo* Birnin Lafiya 103
Didier N'Dah and Barpougouni Mardjoua
- 15 Pavements and Other Architectural Features 112
Sam Nixon
- 16 Stratigraphy and Dating: Excavation Units and Associated Dates 132
Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Louis Champion, Nicolas Nikis and Anne Haour
- 17 The Pottery 139
Anne Haour, Sam Nixon, Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Nicolas Nikis and David K. Kay
- 18 Ironworking 174
Caroline Robion-Brunner
- 19 Metal Objects and Slag from Birnin Lafiya 193
Anne Filippini
- 20 Beads and Pendants 199
Sonja Magnavita
- 21 The Cowrie Shells 205
Annalisa Christie and Anne Haour
- 22 Figurines and Terracotta Objects 211
Romuald Tchibozo
- 23 Archaeobotanical Remains 216
Louis Champion and Dorian Fuller
- 24 Wood Charcoal 234
Barbara Eichhorn

25 Animal Remains 240
Veerle Linseele and Wim Wouters

26 Human Skeletal Material 254
Ronika K. Power and Anne Haour

PART 5

27 Birnin Lafiya within West African Archaeology 283
Anne Haour and Sam Nixon

28 The Site within West African Political and Craft History 294
Olivier Gosselain and Anne Haour

PART 6

Catalogue of Trench Descriptions

A Pekinga (PEK) 307
Abubakar Sule Sani

B Toutokayeri (TTO-14-SI, II & III) 316
Nicolas Nikis, Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Anne Haour

C Kompa Dune (KOD) 325
Anne Haour and Nadia Khalaf

D Torouwey (TRO-14-SI) 333
Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Olivier Gosselain

E Kompanti (PTI-14-SI) 336
Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Nicolas Nikis

F Tin Tin Kanza 339
Louis Champion, Nadia Khalaf and Anne Haour

G Boyeri (BOY-14-SI & II) 359
Nicolas Nikis, Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Olivier Gosselain

H Bogo Bogo (GOG-14-SI) 366
Nicolas Nikis and Alexandre Livingstone Smith

I Kwara zeno (KAZ-14-SI & II) 373
Pascal Gnankpo Amoussou, Inès Corolin Amoussou, Nicolas Nikis, Olivier Gosselain and Alexandre Livingstone Smith

J Gorouberi (GOB-13-SII) 379
Caroline Robion-Brunner

- K Gorouberi (GOB-14-SI & II) 390
Nicolas Nikis, Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Anne Filippini and Anne Haour
- L Karimama (KAR-14-SI) 395
Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Nicolas Nikis
- M Kusulabu (KUS-14-SI & SII) 399
Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Nicolas Nikis and Barpougouni Mardjoua
- N Kozungu (KOZ-14-SI) 405
Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Nicolas Nikis
- O Tondo windi (TOW-14-SI) 416
Louis Champion and Anne Haour
- P Bokorobu (BOK) 421
Franck N'Po Takpara
- Q Birnin Lafiya (S1) 427
Anne Haour
- R Birnin Lafiya (S4) 434
Anne Haour and Barpougouni Mardjoua
- S Birnin Lafiya (S5) 450
Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Nicolas Nikis, Louis Champion and Anne Haour
- T Birnin Lafiya (S8) 460
Richard Lee
- U Birnin Lafiya (S9) 467
Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Nicolas Nikis
- V Birnin Lafiya (S3/10) 485
Sam Nixon
- W Birnin Lafiya (S11) 498
Richard Lee
- X Birnin Lafiya (S13) 519
Jennifer Wexler and Nestor Labiyi
- Y Kargui (KGI-14-SI) 526
Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Anne Filippini
- Z Alibori I 532
Didier N'Dah
- AA Alibori Site 2 536
Didier N'Dah

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|---|
| AB | Molla (MOL-14-SI) | 541 | <i>Inès Corolin Amoussou, Nicolas Nikis, Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Anne Haour</i> |
| AC | Tomboutou (TOU-14-SI) | 546 | <i>Pascal Gnankpo Amoussou, Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Nicolas Nikis and Anne Haour</i> |
| AD | Kantoro (KRO-14) | 551 | <i>Louis Champion, Anne Haour and Anne Filippini</i> |
| AE | Garou (GAR-14-SI) | 575 | <i>Alexandre Livingstone Smith</i> |
| AF | Guene zeno (ENE-14-SI & II) | 579 | <i>Alexandre Livingstone Smith</i> |
| AG | Guene (GUE-14-SI) | 582 | <i>Alexandre Livingstone Smith</i> |
| AH | Kouboukourou (ROU-14-SI) | 585 | <i>Alexandre Livingstone Smith</i> |
| AI | Madekali (KLI-14-SI & RCI) | 590 | <i>Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Louis Champion and Nicolas Nikis</i> |
| | Pottery Plates | 601 | |
| | Catalogue of Small Finds | 640 | |
| | Radiocarbon Dates | 696 | |
| | Gazetteer | 710 | |
| | References | 755 | |
| | Maps | 779 | |
| | Index | 786 | |

Kusulabu (KUS-14-SI & SII)

Alexandre Livingstone Smith, Nicolas Nikis and Barpougouni Mardjoua

1 Location

Kusulabu is a settlement mound located west of Karimama. It was first surveyed by Mardjoua (2013: 63) in April 2013; he records it as KAR-13-33 and estimated its size at 1.29 ha. It is known locally as the oldest historical Gourma settlement of Karimama, known as *Kusu Gourma*. According to informants, a smallpox epidemic forced the inhabitants to leave (Mardjoua 2013). A sanctuary is located 500 m east of the site: it is materialised by a pierced baobab (Mardjoua 2013: 66).

2 Geographical Coordinates

LAT: 12,06132296 LONG: 3,169889012 (WGS84)

3 Discovery

The site was identified by Barpougouni Mardjoua in April 2013, who carried out a surface collection of pottery and studied it as part of his Masters thesis (Mardjoua 2013: 148–153). The site was subsequently test pitted by Alexandre Livingstone Smith and Nicolas Nikis on 4 February 2014.

4 Destruction Risks

The site is in a field. It is ploughed regularly. The site is near a river called “Goru” and its water runoff affects certain parts of the site.

5 Excavation

Kusulabu had never been excavated. Two 1 × 1 m test-pits were 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 units) were

separated, sieved and bagged separately. All spits were sieved down to 5 mm. The excavation was ended respectively at 30 cm (SI) and 45 cm (SII) in the natural substrate.

6 Site

Kusulabu is a low intensity settlement mound complex. It consists of several very low settlement mounds surrounding a higher rock outcrop. The test-pits were located on the slope leading north from the rock outcrop to a little watershed flowing east. The initial survey yielded some ceramic material (mainly pottery decorated with folded strip roulette).

7 Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy of KUS-14-SI consists of settlement rubble, with a pavement recovered in SII, visible on the left side of the east section. Both test-pits displayed very shallow occupations.

8 Finds

The material excavated at Kusulabu is very fragmentary and consists mainly of pottery decorated with folded strip roulette. Knotted twisted cord features several times. A single metal object was retrieved, in SII. It is a fragment of a ring (SF 2014-127), almost certainly a bracelet fragment.

9 Interpretation and Cultural Attribution

Kusulabu was identified to us as a former Gourmantche settlement. The excavation revealed a low intensity, likely medieval, occupation. The presence of a pottery a pavement points to parallels with Birnin Lafiya and other sites of this type.



FIGURE M.1 Kusulabu site view



FIGURE M.2 Pavement recorded in KUS-14-SII



FIGURE M.3
Kusulabu SII east section at completion

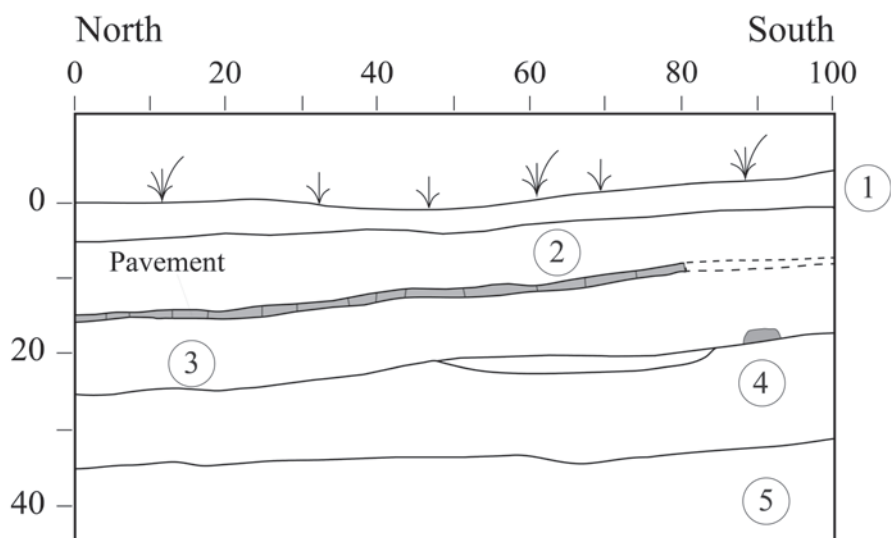


FIGURE M.4
KUS-14-SI, East section
1 Ploughed topsoil
2 Compact brown silty sand
3 Compact orange silt
4 Compact orange clayey silt
5 Orange clay (natural substratum)

10 KUS SI

TABLE M.1 Desampling

| Level | # |
|--------------|------------|
| 0-20 | 320 |
| 20-30 | 21 |
| Total | 341 |

Analysis in the field by Barpougouni Mardjoua and at UEA by Sam Nixon

TABLE M.2 Category 4

| Level | Undecorated | Illegible |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| 0-20 | 31 | 34 |
| 20-30 | 6 | 0 |
| Total | 37 | 34 |

Analysis by Sam Nixon and David Kay

TABLE M.3 Category 3

| Context | # | Burn | Dec1 | Dec2 | Dec3 | Dec4 | Dec5 |
|--------------|-----------|---------|--------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 0-20 | 6 | ext/int | | | | | |
| | 6 | ext | | | | | |
| | 9 | | rfp-1b | | | | |
| | 4 | | roul | ch | | | |
| | 1 | | sp1-l | sp1-l | sp1-l | sp1-l | sp1-l |
| | 1 | | rfp-1b | mch-2 | | | |
| | 1 | | rfp-1b | mch-2-t | | | |
| | 1 | | rfp-1c | | | | |
| | 2 | | rfp-1b | sl-2 | | | |
| | 1 | | rfp-1b | plain | | | |
| | 5 | | rfp-5 | | | | |
| | 2 | | rfp-5 | sl-2 | | | |
| | 6 | | roul | | | | |
| | 1 | | rc-1b | | | | |
| | 3 | ext/int | | | | | |
| | 1 | int | | | | | |
| | 20-30 | 2 | | rfp-5 | | | |
| 4 | | | roul | | | | |
| 1 | | int | plain | ch | sx-13 | | |
| Total | 57 | | | | | | |

Analysis by Sam Nixon and David Kay

TABLE M.4 Rims

| Context | # | R. Type | Brn | Dec1 | Loc1 | Ang. | Diam. | Mx. thick |
|--------------|----------|---------|---------|------|------|------|-------|-----------|
| SI 0-20 | 1 | S4 | | | | 5 | | 0.7 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | 4 | | 0.9 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | 4 | | 0.8 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | | | 0.9 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | 4 | | 0.7 |
| | 1 | E38 | ext/int | | | | | |
| SI 20-30 | 1 | S1 | ext | | | 2 | | 0.4 |
| Total | 7 | | | | | | | |

Analysis by David Kay

11 KUS SII

TABLE M.5 Desampling

| Level | Number |
|--------------|-------------|
| 0-20 | 1188 |
| 20-30 | 112 |
| 30-40 | 14 |
| 40-50 | 2 |
| Total | 1316 |

Analysis in the field by Barpougouni Mardjoua and at UEA by Sam Nixon

TABLE M.6 Category 4

| Level | Undecorated | Illegible |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| 0-20 | 73 | 39 |
| 20-30 | 7 | 11 |
| 30-40 | 2 | 1 |
| 40-50 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 82 | 51 |

Analysis by Sam Nixon

TABLE M.7 Category 3

| Context | # | Burn | Dec1 | Dec2 | Dec3 | Dec4 | Dec5 |
|---------|-------|---------|-----------|--------|------|-------|------|
| 0-20 | 12 | ext/int | | | | | |
| | 16 | ext | | | | | |
| | 1 | int | | | | | |
| | 8 | | roul | | | | |
| | 2 | | indis | sl-1 | | | |
| | 1 | ext | indis | sl-1 | | | |
| | 1 | int | rc-3 | | | | |
| | 1 | | rc-3 | | | | |
| | 2 | | rc-1b | | | | |
| | 1 | | rfp-1b | indis | | | |
| | 1 | | plain | sp1-l | sl-4 | sp1-l | sl-1 |
| | 1 | ext | sl-2 | | | | |
| | 1 | | indis | | | | |
| | 1 | | peigEL-5+ | | | | |
| | 16 | | rfp-1b | | | | |
| | 1 | | rfp-5 | sl-1 | | | |
| | 10 | | rfp-5 | | | | |
| | 1 | int | perf | roul | | | |
| | 1 | | rfp-5 | sl-3 | | | |
| | 20-30 | 3 | ext/int | | | | |
| 1 | | int | | | | | |
| 1 | | | rc-3 | rfp-1b | | | |
| 1 | | int | roul | | | | |
| 4 | | | roul | | | | |
| 1 | | ext | roul | ch | rc-3 | | |
| 1 | | | sl-2 | | | | |
| 1 | | | sl-3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | rfp-1b | | | | |
| 3 | | | rfp-5 | | | | |

TABLE M.7 Category 3 (*cont.*)

| Context | # | Burn | Dec1 | Dec2 | Dec3 | Dec4 | Dec5 |
|--------------|------------|---------|-------|------|------|------|------|
| 30-40 | 2 | ext/int | | | | | |
| | 1 | ext | | | | | |
| 40-50 | 1 | | rfp-5 | | | | |
| Total | 102 | | | | | | |

Analysis by Sam Nixon and Anne Haour

TABLE M.8 Rims

| Context | # | R. Type | Brn | Dec 1 | L1 | Ang | Diam | Mx. Thick |
|--------------|-----------|---------|---------|-------|----|-----|------|-----------|
| 0-20 | 1 | S1 | | | | 2 | | 0.6 |
| | 1 | S1 | | | | 4 | | 1.0 |
| | 1 | S1 | ext/int | | | | | 0.7 |
| | 1 | S4 | ext | | | | | 0.8 |
| | 1 | E4 | ext/int | | | | | 0.9 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | 4 | | 1.0 |
| | 1 | E4 | ext/int | | | 4 | | 0.8 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | | | 0.7 |
| | 1 | E4 | | | | 4 | | 0.8 |
| 20-30 | 1 | E4 | | | | 4 | | 1.2 |
| | 1 | E4 | ext/int | | | 4 | | 0.9 |
| | 1 | S2 | | | | | | 0.7 |
| Total | 12 | | | | | | | |

Analysis by David Kay