



Nyame Akuma volume 79 is one of the largest volumes of recent years with 12 contributions addressing West, East, Central and North Africa. These papers can be grouped into four thematic categories.

Seven papers share the theme of addressing the development and history of complex societies from the past 1500 years. Stéphan Pradines reports on a 2012 excavation of sections of Cairo's early city walls, a project that is contributing to the understanding of the history of Fatimid Cairo. Research has so far discovered three distinct defensive networks that date to the late 11th and late 12th centuries AD. The wall excavated in 2012 dates to AD 969-971 and is identified as the fortifications of Gawhar.

The KongoKing research group is investigating the poorly understood origins of the Kongo Kingdom. One aspect of this research is the identification and investigation of *mbanza* settlements, the larger urban centers that emerged with political and social complexity in the region. Bernard Clist and his colleagues report on preliminary survey and test excavations of two former provincial capital sites: Mbanza Nsundi and Mbanza Mbata. These excavations are intended to better understand early urbanism, reasons for site settlement, planning and development. The 2012 test excavations determined that both locations have stratified Late Iron Age sites dating from the 15th to 19th centuries as well as Stone Age material. Elite burials were the focus of excavation at Mbanza Nsundi. However, the center of these settlements was not located in the 2012 field season.

In West Africa, preliminary results from Anne Haour's "Crossroads of Empires" project

are reported in two papers addressing materials excavated at the Tin Tin Kanza site in Bénin. The purpose of the overall project is to inventory archaeological sites in the Niger Valley between Pékinga and Birnin Lafiya and to provide an understanding of the region's historic landscape. Nadia Khalaf and Anne Haour describe seven fine pottery pavements, wall stubs, building features, and ceramics from Tin Tin Kanza. The pottery pavements date from the late 9th to the early 13th centuries and have the potential to improve the understanding of pavement cultures in West Africa. Further excavation of this site is urgent because it is being impacted by a road project. Louis Champion and Anne Haour present the first study of ceramics and fauna excavated from part of a structure also uncovered at TinTin Kanza. They identified nine levels of distinct occupations including seven levels of ceramic pavements. There was a large proportion of diagnostic ceramics from the deepest level of this structure including fragments large enough to determine vessel profiles.

The fifth paper in this theme is James Boachie-Ansah's study of how archaeology can contribute to the history of the ancient Wenchi state in Ghana. Boachie-Ansah reports on recent excavations at Bonoso with the goal of improving upon its chronology and determining the ethnic origins of its settlers. Pottery from the two sites supports the origins of its settlers as Akan rather than immigrants from the Middle Niger. The author concludes that Bonoso was mainly occupied in the pre-Atlantic contact period and has the potential to contribute to knowledge of the early history of the Wenchi State.

Annalisa Christie reports on aspects of research that explores the socio-cultural context of maritime interactions in the Mafia archipelago. The study found evidence of boat building, coconut coir production and sea grass collection. Excavation produced evidence of local and imported pottery, and faunal remains of fish and shellfish that may provide information on changes to coastal

environments. Christie also addresses the results of excavations at Kua in regard to social status and the question of site settlement in the Mafia archipelago.

The last paper in this theme is that of Samuel Amartey, who examines problems in reconciling historic and oral traditions of the history of the Akwamu state in Ghana. Inconsistencies in these accounts include the location of the seat of the Akwamu government as either being at the top or at the bottom of Nyanao Hill, and the exact location of the capital of Akwamu. Amartey conducts an archaeological survey of Nyanao Hill and its immediate environs and concludes that the hilltop is too small to support an elaborate settlement. Furthermore, the materials collected from the hilltop are too recent in time to have come from the occupation of the Akwamu capital. Amartey suggests that it is more likely that the capital was one of the settlements identified at the bottom of the hill, although alternative scenarios that the hill was used for defensive or ritual purposes are offered.

The second category of papers shares the theme of examining spatial relationships. Yannick Fouda summarizes research on the spatial distribution of 14 ancient settlements relative to natural features in the Yoko subdivision of Cameroon. Samuel Ogundele and Esther Umoh investigate indigenous Abak settlement patterns and architecture in Nigeria in order to generate hypotheses for spatial archaeology for future studies. In particular, they present a description of the sexual division of labour, methods and steps involved in the construction of local indigenous wattle-and-daub architecture. They call for more investigation of site formation processes affecting indigenous architecture and other settlement features.

The third theme addresses problems of preservation of genetic material. The study by Vincent Francigny and colleagues describes tests to determine parameters of preservation of teeth and bone for DNA sampling in Sudanese Nubia.

Genetic studies of human remains from Nubia are relatively rare but could be used to investigate the origins, evolution and histories of populations that settled in the Nile Valley. The problem is: does aDNA preserve in Sudanese Nubia? The authors tested human bone and teeth samples from Nubia using on-site sampling but were unable to extract DNA despite the apparent good preservation of the tissues. The authors then tested the samples to determine parameters of preservation using UV autofluorescence, microscopic study and spectrometry. Despite good mineral and collagen preservation in the samples, DNA could not be successfully extracted. They conclude that despite good preservation of mineral and collagen in bone and teeth, DNA decays rapidly in very hot and very dry environments, but they do not rule out the possibility for successful DNA extraction from samples in areas of Sudan with better environmental conditions.

The fourth theme is the survey of virtually unknown areas to determine their archaeological potential. Els Cornelissen and her colleagues conducted an archaeological survey along the Lindi River area of northeast DRC. In their brief survey they found a variety of ceramic styles that represent two cultural phases (one relatively recent and the other from about 2000 years ago). The relatively recent pottery style is characterized by wooden roulette decoration that is not known in historic or contemporary production. The only pottery still in use in the study area was purchased from a production center 100km away at Banalya. The ancient style of ceramics included pots stacked together. Informants remembered similar pots being used in circumcision ceremonies in the past. Flaked quartz and polished stone tools similar to those used in the early 20th century were discovered.

Oula Seitsonen and colleagues conducted an archaeological survey in a poorly known area between northern Lakes Manyara and Engaruka, Tanzania. They found LSA and MSA lithic scatters as well as cairns similar to the burial cairns of

the Maasai. Test excavations further recovered ceramics that are contemporaneous with the coastal Tana and the Pastoral Neolithic traditions (c. 6th to 13th centuries AD). This suggests that it is possible that trade routes existed between the coast and inland locations at this time and indicates the archaeological potential of this region.

Thanks to all contributors for an excellent set of papers. The deadline for *Nyame Akuma* December issue is the first week of December. I draw future contributors' attention to a few ongoing editorial issues. Please make sure that you send digital images that are not embedded in word files. We require sharp original images in tiff or jpg format with a dpi (300-600 dpi) that will ensure good resolution on the web and printed format. Small images may look sharp in a tiny format, but they also must be sharp when they are enlarged on a computer screen. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission and/or citing the source of maps taken from web-based sources in order to meet copyright laws. Authors are also responsible for complete bibliographic referencing in the paper and all maps and line drawings should be digitally produced. In the case where map or figure originals are hand-drawn, all labeling must be crisp and equivalent to a 12pt font size. Please ensure that all tables and appendices are in the same font and font size as the text (Times New Roman 12 pt font). Attention to these details speeds up *NA*.

Dr. Diane Lyons
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