

RADIOCARBON DATES FOR GHANA:
KINTAMPO SERIES

by Colin Flight

In the last but one issue of Research Review, a progress report was published (Flight, 1967) summarizing the results of recent work on the pre-history of the Kintampo area. Two successive cultures were recognized, sharply differentiated one from the other. For the earlier culture the term 'Buobini culture' was introduced; the other was described provisionally as the 'Stone Axe culture' but can now be identified with the Kintampo culture, or 'Kintampo-neolithic', as defined by Davies (1964: 239-46). The date of 1600 B.C. suggested there for the transition from the Buobini to the Kintampo culture needs to be revised in the light of radiocarbon dates received since that report was written.

During the 1966/67 season seven samples were collected for radiocarbon dating, three of which were submitted to Isotopes, Inc., and four to the Birmingham laboratory. All the results are now in. I am grateful to Professor F.W. Shotton of the Department of Geology, University of Birmingham, for accepting the samples from K6 and K8 (Birm-29 and -31), and to Philip Rahtz for allowing me to include in this list the two dates which he had processed for K1 (Birm-28 and -30).

Buobini Culture

Three dates are available for the Buobini culture, one for each of the sites where it was identified:

Birm-31:	1451	±	74 BC	K8 layer 2
1-2699:	1580	±	100 BC	K1 layer 9
Birm-29:	1620	±	84 BC	K6 layer 3

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When the pottery has been fully analysed it may be possible to distinguish different phases within the Buobini culture, and thus to check more precisely the consistency of these dates. It was not expected that Birm-29 would turn out to be the earliest of the three; in fact on stratigraphic grounds this sample was thought to date the very end of the Buobini culture at K6, just before the arrival of the Kintampo culture. It may be that K6 was abandoned for a time, and that the latest phases of the Buobini culture are not represented. No sign of an unconformity was seen in the 1967 test-pit, but this is a problem which will need to be investigated further in this year's excavations. On the whole, however, these three dates hang together fairly well. Provisionally the Buobini culture can be dated from around 1700 to 1400 BC. The burials described briefly in the previous report are of interest as the oldest human skeletons yet found in Ghana.

K1 layer 8

There are also three dates for layer 8 at the K1 rock-shelter, overlying the Buobini culture in layer 9.

1-2697:	1270 \pm 110 BC	from a hearth near the top of layer 8.
Birm-30:	1389 \pm 35 BC) from the rubble) at the base of
1-2698:	1610 \pm 100 BC) layer 8.

The discrepancy between these last two dates is such that at least one of them may well be unreliable. Considering the pattern of the dates as a whole, Birm-30 is acceptable and 1-2698 is not. Layer 8 can therefore be dated provisionally from 1400 to 1200 BC. There is still some doubt whether the material from this layer can be assigned to the Kintampo culture, but it has at least a general similarity as well as several specific features in common. Similar comments apply to the site excavated by Dr. Davies at Ntereso. All in all the Ntereso material probably differs less from the Kintampo culture than the published accounts would suggest, but it is certainly not identical. Three radiocarbon dates have been published recently (Davies, 1967: 117) for this site: 1240 \pm 120 BC for the earliest level, level 1, 1320 \pm 100 BC for level 2, and 1630 \pm 130 BC for level 3 (SR-61, -81, -52). Though they are not altogether satisfactory, a date of around

1300 BC seems least unlikely. No typical site of the Kintampo culture has yet been dated, but very probably it belongs in the second half of the second millennium.

The quern factory at K1

Only one date is available for the upper levels, layers 1 through 7, at K1.

Birm-28: 57 \pm 10 BC layer 5

So little pottery was found in these layers that the significance of the date is hard to assess. It would be as well if at least one more sample could be processed as a check on Birm-28.

References

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