

## INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORTS

### REPORT ON FIELD-WORK AT BANDA AND WENCHI, 8-16 AUGUST, 1964

#### 1. Introduction

(a) The main object of the visit to Banda was to find caves with signs of early occupation, from which a cultural sequence for the area could be obtained by excavation. The search was unsuccessful; it was necessarily superficial, because, owing to the acute tyre shortage, travel and exploration had to be conducted by passenger lorry and on foot, and much time was wasted.

(b) However, some interesting information was obtained; this was largely through the kindness of Mr. C. E. Donkoh, M.P., of the Institute of Art and Culture. Work was also facilitated, in various ways, by Mr. R. B. Nunoo, of the Ghana Museum; Mr. Richardson, of the Fuel and Power Secretariat, Accra; Mr. Manu, of Ghana National Construction Company, Techiman; Mr. Sakumante and Mr. Dennis, of the Fuel and Power Secretariat, Bui; and Rev. P. Howard of Wenchii Secondary School.

(c) Catalogue numbers refer to the collections of the Institute of African Studies, and the objects may be identified through the card index in the Library.

#### 2. Banda

##### (a) The site of Old Bui

Fragments of pottery are scattered in an area about a mile across, centred on the present village; at some time, there would appear to have been a very large town here. In general character, the pottery is like that found in the ruins of BFu (Begho); no tobacco pipes were found, and it is unlikely that the town was occupied much after 1700. No mounds, nor

remains of other structures, were seen, and the area has probably been ploughed flat over the last two or three centuries. Though there is little evidence to go on the site probably dates from about A.D. 1400-1700.

On the Kasa path, half-way between Bui and the river, and on the edge of the old town, a stream has bared areas of sand, laterite and rock. In these, many microlithic flakes, of quartz and jasper, and a few pieces of pottery, were found; beside the bare patches similar pieces lay on the surface of the laterite, under a foot of barren soil. The pottery is very gritty, and very unlike the wares of Old Bui: the association of pottery and microliths is probably a true one. Only one sherd bore any decoration; this was collected (Cat. No. 164174). The decoration, impressed with a 'comb', is neolithic in style.

(b) Banda Cave

The only cave claimed to be known by the people of Banda is north of Jumbu Hill, facing north-westwards towards Felo (8°11'N; 2°22'W). It may be the same cave as the one pictured by Rattray (Ashanti Law and Constitution, 1929, frontispiece). Several tunnels, at least ten yards long, open into a rock shelter over a hundred feet wide and up to thirty feet deep; the floor of this is covered by much fallen rock, and the roof height varies between four and about fifteen feet.

In the shelter, and on the slope below it, there were no signs of early occupation. There was, however, much pottery, which was of a fairly recent design (Cat. No. 164.75).

(c) Notes on the sociology, etc. of Banda

Banda is ruled by two Nafana-speaking quarters: Banda itself, and Kabrunu, adjoining it to the south. The paramountcy rotates between the chiefs of the two quarters, and each has its own stool-room.

Banda stool-house has nine blackened stools (information from Mr. C. E. Donkoh, who attended the Yam Festival, August 10th, 1964). Of these, three are of a normal Akan type, but the other six are distinctively unusual: they are made in three pieces, front-board, back-board, and seat + handle - a composite form of the dufua type of stool. In the Ahemfie, there is a fine asipim chair.

### 3. Wenchi

#### (a) Mission House site

A 'Kintampo Neolithic' site at the Methodist Mission at Wenchi has been known for several years. No concentration of pottery, etc., has been found, and it is possible that the original site was on the top of the hill, now occupied by the buildings.

This site has produced many fragments of what Professor Oliver Davies calls 'terracotta cigars'. Rev. P. Howard has been told by several villagers in the area, as if it were common knowledge, that these objects were used for making pottery (cf. Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana VI, p. 117).

#### (b) Nineteenth century site

There is much rubbish, probably of the 19th Century, on the slope above the stream north of the Nkawkaw road, about two hundred yards west of the New Longoro road. No objects unquestionably of the 17th or 18th Centuries, such as tobacco pipes, have been found in Wenchi.

#### (c) Ahwene Koko

An ancient Wenchi town was visited with Mr. C. E. Donkoh, Rev. P. Howard, and the brother of the Wenchihene. This is known as Ahwene Koko, 'red beads' - the red bead is said to be the emblem of the state. The Ahemfie is said to have been at the spot now occupied by the village of Ahwene ( $7^{\circ}29'N$ ;  $2^{\circ}12'W$ ), which is about fifteen years old. In the village there is much rubbish; various objects were collected (Cat. No's. 1 64. 1-12), including a fragment of brass (1 64. 9), which Professor Roy Sieber believes is part of a North African bowl: if so, it is the first trans-Saharan import to be found in an archaeological context. Tobacco pipes found are of 17th Century type.

A large midden stands a few yards west of the village, just south of the road, to a height of six feet; the villagers, however, claimed to be ignorant of any mounds.

A large area at Bronosu, two miles west-north-west of Ahwene,

is bare of vegetation, apart from small tufts of grass growing in cracks in the laterite crust. This is said to have been the place of assembly. On the southern edge, there is a shallow hollow in rock, which is said to have been the pond in which the blackened stools of the state were washed, and other ceremonies conducted. Two etymologies of Bronosu were given: that it meant 'on the road', and that the pond is called Brono.

Occupation debris was seen in many parts between Ahwene and Bronosu. The town is said to have had, originally, 177 quarters, which were later reduced to 7. The market place for the town was a place called Adjwedie, 6 miles north-east of Ahwene; it is somewhere east of the Wenchi-Sunyani road, at mile 10 from Wenchi.

The pottery of Ahwene Koko is very like that of Bi<sup>C</sup>u, and different from Ashanti styles. One common form, however, is a shouldered bowl which is an obvious prototype of a later Ashanti design. A note on Ahwene Koko will shortly be published in Ghana Notes and Queries, No. 8.

(d) Wenchi Cave

The Wenchis are said to have come out of the ground from a hole just above the source of the Aiyesu ('on the brass vessels') stream which separates Wenchi from Techiman (7°37'N; 2°05'30"W). The hole is funnel-shaped, and about twenty feet deep; from its bottom a large cave leads off. Mr. Donkoh went inside it twenty years ago, and saw two large chambers with passages to other galleries. Ropes, light, and air would be needed for proper exploration. It may be an ancient gold-mine, but the entrance to the cave showed no signs of tool-marks.

The area to the north-east of the cave is said to have been occupied by the Wenchis after they came out of the ground, and before going to Ahwene Koko. There are a few mounds, but no pottery was seen; the area seems to be deeply covered by leaf-mould.

4. Nsawkaw and Bi<sup>C</sup>u (Begho)

(a) Nsawkaw bronze vessel

Mr. Donkoh elicited support from the Nsawkawhene, in the presence of his subordinate chiefs, for the suggestion that the North African inscribed bronze

bowl of Nsawkaw should be sent abroad for preservative treatment, and should then be placed under some form of shelter.

(b) Nsawkaw 2-ended whistles

Rev. Howard asked one of his pupil teachers to enquire at Nsawkaw about the unusual type of whistle found there - a tobacco pipe stem, with a slit cut across it, played like a flute with the ends sealed by the thumbs. He was told that children still use such whistles, and are remarkably clever at cutting the slit at the right spot, to give a particular tone. Nothing was known about the history of this instrument.

(c) Structures near Hani

Rev. Howard has been shown in the 'Muslim' quarter of Bi<sup>C</sup>u, near Hani, a collapsed wall, alleged to have been part of the town walls. Only a very small part was seen: this was a wide, low bank, crowned by the lower part of a wall.

(d) Hani cave

Rev. Howard, when he asked to see the caves from which the Hani people came out of the ground, was shown holes which were obviously no more than fairly-recent animal burrows.

Paul Ozanne

PORTUGUESE ARCHIVES

During October, 1964, I was able to spend a week in Lisbon in order to ascertain what Arabic material relevant to the history of Africa south of the Sahara might be found there. I visited the Torre do Tombo (Portuguese National Archives), Instituto Historico Ultramarino (Institute for Overseas History) and the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library). Shortage of time prevented me from visiting the important Biblioteca de Ajuda, which contains more than 30,000 diplomatic manuscripts.

The Torre de Tombo contains very few Arabic manuscripts, but two letters