

Banda in the 15th to 17th Centuries

Village Life in the Period of Early Atlantic Trade (AD 1400-1650)

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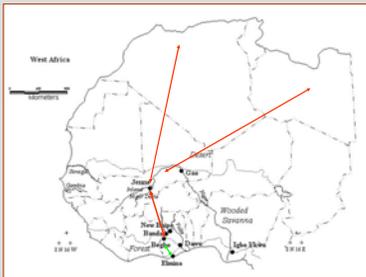
Events

Before 1650: Begho attacked from north by Jakpa to reclaim trade; Jakpa later moved north of the Volta River and expanded the Gonja state.

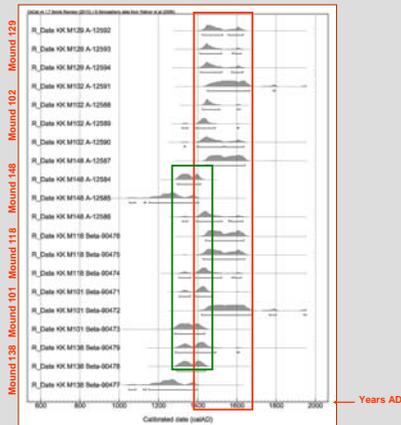
1637: Dutch captured Elmina castle from Portuguese.

1482: Portuguese established trade fort at Elmina.

Before 1400: Begho and Old Bima emerged as transit markets. Caravans from the Niger River brought copper and salt which was traded for forest products (kola and gold) and probably also slaves.

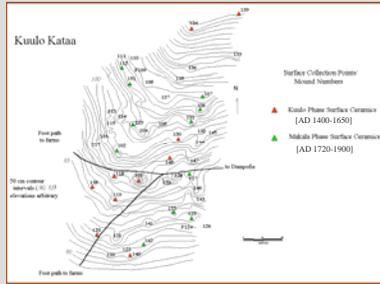


From at least AD 1000 people in the Banda area traded with people to the north, along the Niger River and beyond (red arrows). Beginning around 1500, trade with the south increased as European trade via the Atlantic Ocean grew (green arrow).



Historical records in this time are few, so we study the age of sites using radiocarbon dating. Radiocarbon dates are not exact. Instead, they tell us the age of a site within a 100 to 200 year span. The chart above shows dates from Kuulo Kataa, where radiocarbon dates suggest that some areas of the site are earlier (green box; AD 1300-1450) than others (red box; AD 1400-1650).

Craft Production at Kuulo Kataa



Many layers of refuse built up over the centuries during which people lived at Kuulo Kataa. Top: mound 130; Right: mound 102



Cluster of 5 dog jaw bones, Kuulo Kataa

The site of Kuulo Kataa was occupied for centuries. The people who lived here began to experiment with new crops introduced through the Atlantic Ocean trade. Maize and tobacco were plants that did not grow in Africa before Europeans brought them from North and South America. Seeds of both plants have been identified at Kuulo Kataa.

Iron & Copper Metal Working



Base of a forge or furnace, mound 138, Kuulo Kataa



Crucible used to melt copper



Copper alloy ornaments



Figurative "gold weights" notable for their similar appearance. These are the earliest figurative weights known in Ghana

The people who lived at Kuulo Kataa were skilled metal workers.

They made **iron** from local iron ores through **smelting** ("cooking" ore with charcoal at high temperatures in a furnace). Archaeologists find furnace features used to smelt metals and **slag** (the waste product left by smelting). Iron smiths fashioned iron into tools and ornaments (right).

Copper ore is not found in Ghana. The copper used to make decorative objects by people at Kuulo Kataa probably came from the Sahara. Imported copper was heated and shaped into wire. **Crucibles** show that copper was melted and used to make **lost wax cast** objects like the figurative "gold weights" from Kuulo Kataa pictured to the right. The object was made in wax, then coated with clay to form a mold. Hot metal poured from a crucible replaced the wax in the mold. The metal took the shape of the wax when it cooled.



Iron ornaments (bangles, rings) and tools from Kuulo Kataa



Pottery Making

And they were **skilled potters**.



Potters at this time added **slag**, a waste product of iron making, to their clays. This tells us that iron making and pottery making were happening in the same place. Most of this production seems to have taken place on the east side of the Banda Hills.

Wild & Domestic Animals

Past people used both wild and domestic animals.

Domestic animals are ones that people take of (like sheep, goat, cattle & dog). People at Kuulo Kataa kept some cattle, sheep and goat, but they also hunted a wide range of animals, including lion, leopard, hippo, warthog, as well as hare, tortoise and a variety of monkeys. A small number of horse bones suggest connections to the north where horses were common. Dog was important to people at Kuulo Kataa. Dogs were probably important in hunting, but they were also used as sacrifices and their bones incorporated into shrines.



Ivory from elephant and hippos was made into ornaments like the "pins" (left) and the bangles (left) above. Unfinished pieces like the one at the bottom left suggest that ivory ornaments were produced on the site.

New Objects & Practices



Beads were valued by people at Kuulo Kataa. Some beads came through the Saharan trade, but others came through the Atlantic Ocean trade (like the red and blue ones above). But people still valued their locally made beads like those (above, right) from Kuulo Kataa.

Smoking pipes were new objects for people of this time. Tobacco was first grown by North American Indians. European sailors introduced tobacco smoking to Africans. The practice spread quickly. The pipes pictured on right were made locally. Tobacco may have been imported.



Acknowledgements

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