



EDITORIAL

Dear readership,

Despite the unfortunate delay of the publication of the December 2018 volume (90), its content represents an interesting geographical coverage with the five papers representing West Africa, the Horn of Africa and Central Africa. Articles also cover diverse chronological periods. For example, the focus of two papers at the southern margins of the Central African rainforest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is on the later first millennium BC. Two other papers look at sites dated to the second millennium AD. These concern the Loropeni ruins in northern Burkina Faso and the ancient structures in the Awdal region in Somaliland. The fifth paper examines tethering stones in northern Sudan in relation to reconstructing ways of handling animals since the mid-Holocene.

The two papers on the DRC are both connected to the BantuFirst project (<https://www.bantufirst.ugent.be/>) that continues the organization and interdisciplinarity of the KongoKing research project on which the team has reported in several papers in *Nyame Akuma* between 2013 and 2015. In this volume Clist, Bigohe, Mambu and Bostoën briefly present the project, and give the preliminary results of fieldwork in the Kongo Central Province. Excavations on six new and four previously documented sites as well as surveys on 73 localities offer new insights on Early Iron Age farmers from around 1900 years ago, and possibly also on the hunter-gatherers present at that time and earlier. In the second article, Seidensticker, Jungnickel, Mambu, Yogoelolo, Kidebua and Bostoën first explain how they approached research in a little-studied area to the east of Kinshasa, in the Kwango, Kwilu and Mai-Ndombe Provinces. They combine analysis of archives of the ancient excavations at the Mukila site with new fieldwork in order to understand and date the previously reported stone industries and pottery. The site is of interest because of the archaeological focus on the material remains of the earliest pottery producing communities. From their surveys in the Bandundu region and between

Bandundu and Kinshasa, they infer that the area has high potential not only for Holocene but also for Late Pleistocene archaeology.

Farma's article describes his fieldwork in a 2 km perimeter surrounding the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Loropeni in Burkina Faso. These intriguing large rectangular ruins were in use between the 11th and 18th centuries and have attracted worldwide scientific and public interest. Farma's goal is to study the social context of these enigmatic buildings. Surveys in the vicinity of the ruins yielded 135 stone built structures and 19 sites related to iron production activities. The surface of the sites varies between 4 and 600 m². Most of the walls have collapsed and stone foundations rarely exceed 1 m in height. In this article, he gives the preliminary results of the excavations on six of these sites.

de Torres, González-Ruibal, Antonio Franco and Dualeh Jama report on the 2018 survey of the Incipit-CSIC Archaeological Mission in Somaliland which concentrates on the role of the region in the trade networks that connected the Horn of Africa with the broader world. A preliminary report on the ancient history of the colonial town of Bulhar was published in volume 87 of this Bulletin. This time they document four towns or villages, and a religious center at Dameraqad. All studied sites so far seem to have been abandoned by the late 16th–early 17th centuries and are unlikely to be older than the 13th–14th centuries.

For interpreting the tethering stones that Hamdeen documented in the Wadi Gorgod, the author combines sources from excavated contexts, experimental archaeology, imagery in rock art, and paintings in royal tombs. The stones may have been used as parts of traps for capturing wild animals in order to tame them, export them alive, or simply hunt them. Finally, they were likely used in animal husbandry and pastoral settings to prevent domestic animals from straying.

At the end of this volume we look at the future of our field and you will find a contribution by the SAfA 2020 Organizing Committee and their Organizing Secretary, Peter Mitchell. The 25th biannual SAfA meeting will take place in Oxford and aims to foreground the challenges of 2020 with respect to the social role and interdisciplinary nature of our research.

Looking at the future of *Nyame Akuma*, I would like to welcome Liza Gijanto who has agreed to serve as the English editor from volume 91 onwards. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Dores Cruz, who served as the English editor for volumes 86-89, for her professional collaboration, enthusiasm and commitment to editing *Nyame Akuma*, as well as Katharina Hemingway for all her efforts in the layout of volumes 86-88. Her careful templates and Dores' investment in the guidelines, copyediting and proofreading greatly facilitated the work of the Publications Service of the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

In conclusion, volume 90 would not have been possible without the contributing authors, whom I thank, as well as all the collaborators of volume 90: Katharina Hemingway, Elisabeth Hildebrand, and Gabriele Franke for their assistance in English proofreading; Nadine Devleeschouwer for the French proofreading; and the Publications Service for layout and final copyediting. A special word of thanks goes to our current SAfA President, Elisabeth Hildebrand, for her continued support for and attention to *Nyame Akuma*.

Els Cornelissen