

OBJECTIVITY IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GHANA

by

E. Kofi AGORSAH *

One of the desires of the majority of archaeologists is to obtain from their analyses an objective knowledge of the societies they study. However, the mere desire to obtain objectivity does not ensure its attainment especially where biases cannot be controlled. Added to this difficulty of obtaining objectivity is that not only is the subject matter of archaeology vast and varied, but also archaeologists disagree on directions of study and interpretations, and in many cases very few scholars attempt to put themselves at a standpoint from which to measure the inadequacies and unevenness of their interpretations. Fundamental to interpretations in archaeology is the definition of cultural entities as well as of their constituent elements and such interpretations are not acceptable by fiat.

Ghana, the country formerly known as the Gold Coast, is centrally located on the southern coast of the great bulge of West Africa, sharing borders with Togo, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso on the east, west and north respectively. These borders were the result of very recent accidents of history and political expediency rather than geographic or cultural considerations. This situation is not peculiar to Ghana or to West Africa. The point of emphasis, however, is that the focus of this paper, which is the geographic area known as Ghana, is discussed as an artificial or "an incomplete" cultural entity with a record of a past that cuts across its modern political boundaries.

Roughly rectangular in shape, Ghana measures approximately 680 km (420 miles) from south to north and averages about 430 km in width, thus providing a total area of approximately 238,000 sq.km (92,100 sq. mls), roughly the size of Great Britain. Archaeological activity within these borders developed only within the last century and, until recently, only as an appendage to amateur activities and European Archaeology (Posnansky 1982), although there had been an earlier awareness among the local societies of the significance of cultural material (Anquandah 1982). However, with a very limited number of professionals, many of them just passing through or spending brief periods in Ghana, considerable work has been undertaken that, put together, constitutes a good basis for reflecting upon interpretations of its cultural past.

This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to examine some selected crucial issues emerging from interpretations of the archaeological evidence relating to various stages of cultural development in Ghana and adjoining areas. The question is : do the interpretations of the prehistory and history

* University of the West Indies.

of Ghana provide us with an objective knowledge of the societies of the time and their ways of life ? If so where do we go from there ? If not, what are the weaknesses or unevenness in the evidence or interpretations that need to be redressed ?

These and related issues will be examined in the context of the archaeology of the general area as well as methodological dimensions gained by the discipline in recent years. Although there have been attempts by some scholars to recount the history of the development of Archaeology in Ghana (Anquandah 1982, Myles 1986, York Mathewson, Calvocoressi & Flight 1967), no critical assessment of the *objectivity in interpretation* of the archaeology of the area, as examined in this paper, has ever been undertaken. In addition, with the increase in the pace of research activity in the area as more qualified professionals are emerging, there is the ardent need to begin to bring together the various ramifications in theory, method and techniques that have been and continue to be utilized in the archaeology of the area. It is expected that this paper will identify issues the redressing of which will lead to a better understanding of the cultural development within the general geographical zone around Ghana.

EARLIEST TIMES AND INTERPRETATIONS

The archaeological interpretation of the cultural past of Ghana dates back to the end of the 17th century by European travellers such as Barbot (1732), who described what is known in Ghana as *nyame akuma* [polished stone axes], Bowdich (1819), who wrote about the spectacular *aggrey beads* of Ghana and John Lubbock in the 1880's (Anquandah 1982). But much of earliest works that touched on archaeology came from such geologists as Kitson (1916) and Junner (1940), both Directors of the Geological Survey of Ghana in the early 1900's. The former described objects now referred to as "cigars" and known to be associated with early food-producing societies of the Late Stone Age of Ghana, as well as grinding hollows and cisterns or wells of the same period and cultural traditions. Activities of scholars such as Junner and the successor of Kitson, Braunholtz of the British Museum, who visited West Africa in the 1930's, Captain P. Wild (1927) Inspector of Mines in Ghana also in the thirties, and Thurstan Shaw (1944), an archaeologist, first appointed curator of the then only museum in Ghana situated at Achimota near the present university at Legon are well outlined elsewhere (Anquandah 1982) and clearly indicate that long before systematic archaeological research in Ghana scholars had already begun to make speculations about its past using all kinds of evidence. Names that also count in these early efforts include A.W. Lawrence who published a book on European forts and castles along the coasts of Ghana (C. Lawrence 1963), H.D. Collings and R.B. Nunoo, associated with the establishment of the National Museum, the latter being its first Ghanaian Director, Peter Shinnie who initiated the teaching of archaeology at the University of Ghana, Paul Ozanne who first established a chronological scheme for Ghanaian archaeology using smoking pipes as a basis for his classification (Ozanne 1971), and last but not least, Oliver, Davies, a geologist who has the credit of having conducted the most extensive ever archaeological survey of Ghana, particularly of the Volta Basin. Davies was also the first person to attempt a reconstruction of the cultural development in the general West African region (Davies, 1964, 1967; York Mathewson, Calvocoressi & Flight 1967).

Although the Volta Basin rescue project generated considerable archaeological research (location of sites) the distribution of researched sites was geographically uneven and there were gaps in the chronological schemes afforded by the available evidence.

Scholars in other disciplines such as Linguistics, History, Museology and the natural sciences have also contributed considerably to early research efforts in the archaeological reconstruction in Ghana. Linguists have for example used the growth or development distribution of languages and their relationships to speculate about the movements of language or ethnic groups (Painter 1966, Dakubu 1976, 1982, Hall 1983, Steward 1960). Geological studies as well as those by botanists and allied subjects have similarly contributed to the archaeology of Ghana.

Discussion of objectivity in interpretation of archaeological material could be conducted in three ways. The first approach is to examine individual scholars, their particular studies and how their interpretations relate to those of other scholars in the same field. This obviously means the discussion would be limited to a few selected archaeologists. This is because it would be practically impossible to examine the numerous scholars that have been involved in one way or another with archaeological research in Ghana and adjoining areas. The second approach is the one that could discuss emerging issues or themes that are crucial to the interpretation of the archaeology of Ghana. In this approach only some crucial issues would be selected. Besides, there is the possibility of a discussion that could easily ignore the temporal and spatial contexts of the archaeological evidence under discussion. The third approach is one that could discuss the material and studies related to specific periods beginning from the earliest to the more recent. Resort to this chronological approach will not only permit a discussion that would involve such considerations as environmental changes, cultural adaptation and transformation over time but would also afford comparative analysis that could allow cross-cultural considerations, and analysis of recent advances in archaeological method and theory in the area. Although this third scheme may not initially emphasise specific themes, it is expected that some crucial related issues will emerge that would then form the basis of the dialogue that this paper is expected to generate.

INTERPRETATION OF THE EARLY STONE AGE

In Ghana and indeed the whole of West Africa there is a dearth of evidence regarding early man. What is known about man's origins is based on limited evidence and speculations about cultural material. If we are to accept the stone tool finds designated as belonging to the general African type described as Oldewan, Acheulean and Sangoan, some dating to as early as 50,000 B.C. (Davies 1967), then we can speculate that human societies were adapting to and exploiting the environment and resources of Ghana in those early times. In spite of the paucity of evidence scholars in various fields have attempted studies that somehow provide a picture of those earliest times in Ghana and adjoining areas that provide an interpretative framework.

However, much of the interpretative framework lacked objectivity. For example, Davies (1964, 1967) attempted a reconstruction of the Stone Age in Ghana dating as far back as 50,000 years ago in the context of the general West Africa area. Using evidence of changes based on European climatic nomenclature and geological sequences based on raised beaches, past river terraces and soil sections in Ghana, Davies speculated about very early stone age traditions

though not as early as those of Eastern Africa. Many of the Stone Age sites discussed by Davies (1964) appear to be located in the northern Volta Basin. Although features of the period are noted in coastal areas particularly in valleys around the south of the modern power station about 100 km north of Accra. The weaknesses in Davies' speculation stem firstly from the application of a European terminology and climatic classification to an African situation and secondly because the speculations were based mainly on surface material.

Andah (1979) has strongly criticized the philosophy behind Davies' chronological scheme considering it as inappropriate. Further, Andah argues, and quite rightly, that the use of such Kamasian pluvials dating in Europe to around 50,000 years ago was too arbitrary to be acceptable as a scientific analysis. Studies conducted at the coastal site of Asokrochona near Accra also reveal more of the lack of objectivity in Davies' interpretations. For example it has been argued (Andah 1979, Nygaard and Talbot 1976) that much of what Davies describes as Sangoan (Middle Stone Age) tools may in fact have been a variant of Acheulian (Early Stone Age) material. The excavations at Asokrochona constituted the initial reaction to and the curiosity of scholars towards ascertaining not only the subjective interpretations of Davies but also his diffusionist propositions.

Considerable debate on the suggestion that the earliest cultural traditions in Ghana came from the north, outside its modern territory, had until recently dominated the interpretation of the archaeology of the area. The main reason was that not much had been studied in the south that suggested the antiquity that Davies had assigned to the northern cultural traditions. In order to reassess the confusion that Davies propositions had created Andah conducted a detailed analysis of the Asokrochona material and presented a chronological framework that was more objective. Owing to its significance for the Stone Age in Ghana a brief summary of it is provided.

Andah and Nygaard set out to ascertain the stratigraphic picture claimed by Davies and "to delimit the character of the industries at Asokrochona and their environmental setting" (Andah 1979). Two cultural levels, identified and designated as Asokrochona I and II, provided a lead to the establishment of a general chronological scheme for the site. Andah adopted an approach in his artifact analysis that was a departure from those formally dependent upon systems worked out by use of European terminology for Eastern Africa. Andah referred to his Sakumo I as Oldowan chronologically equivalent to what is known in Eastern Africa. One significant point to note that makes Andah's approach much more objective is his acceptance of the typology as a framework or model for interpretation. Secondly, also objective is his basis of overall identification of morphological differences and methods of manufacture of tools. However, he needs to demonstrate in a much more convincing way the relevance of his metrical analyses because they do not demonstrate how the differences or similarities can be related to variations in related activities. Would one need to take into consideration consistent availability of raw material over time in a continuous fashion, how do we relate Sakumo I to II in terms of the wider variation observed with Sakumo II? One tends to see Sakumo II as indicating ecological adaptation geared towards the exploitation of a wider variety of resources over a possibly wider area. It thus probably represents a transformation to a later period somehow similar to the range of equipment used by the early users of Bosumpra Cave excavated by C.T. Shaw (Shaw 1949) although in a different environmental resource area. A final issue with Andah's study of the Early Stone Age, in Ghana by way of the Asokrochona excavation and analysis is its cross-cultural applicability. This appears to be the most outstanding achievement over Davies' study. The

importance of the cross-cultural implications of the Asokrochona study unfortunately has been the only one known since Davies. Other studies have only examined the peripherals of the issue working on the dying period of the Stone Age, particularly the transitional period between the Stone and Iron Ages in Ghana. Despite the fact that Acheulean and later microlithic material from other sites such as Asokrochona (Andah 1979), Bosumpra (Shaw 1949), Apreku and Tetewabuor (Anquandah 1982) suggest a date around 50,000 years ago, the date cannot be generalized to depict similar cultural materials of the basin. Apart from the Asokrochona material there is the need to examine evidence from other sites researched in the basin. These include rolled pebble tools (choppers) from the site of Kadengben, Mamata and Yapei; quartz pebbles from Akroso Amanfoso; tortoise cores from Asukawkaw and broken Acheulean handaxes from Otisu and Apasu. Many so-called Middle Stone Age sites have also been recorded near Kete-Krachi. An examination of the range of material recovered from the basin and adjoining areas should provide some clues to the debate generated by Davies' interpretation.

From the site of Rim adjoining Burkina Faso, have for example been identified sites that flank the main stretches of the valley of the upper portion of the Volta. Of the three phases identified by Andah, the first one was characterized by a late Stone Age lithic industry, dated by radiocarbon and geomorphological features to between 12,000 and 5,000 B.P. This first phase contained artifacts similar to the types found at some of the sites located by Davies in the Volta Basin. The second phase has been dated to between 3,600 and 2,900 B.P., while the third is dated to between 1,500 and 1,000 B.P. These last two phases contain lithic material that indicate continuity with the Iron Age that followed. The transition to food production explains the transformation observed in the changes in the tool kit in response to changes in the ecology. The evidence from Rim and those from various parts of the Volta basin thus seem to be what can be used at present to speculate that there certainly were human occupations in parts of Ghana and adjoining areas in Quaternary times.

THE LATE STONE AGE

Available evidence indicates that by at least 4000 years ago, or most probably earlier, some parts of the Volta Basin and coastal areas of Ghana were inhabited by Late Stone Age food-production societies. The site of Ntereso in northern Ghana and Chukoto on the west bank of the Black Volta are the best known in the basin. The former dates to the early part of the second millennium B.C., and evinces early food production that may have involved fishing and farming. Bones of dwarf goats or sheep as well as polished stone axes, bone harpoons and fish-hooks and terracotta objects referred to as "cigars" were recovered (Agorsah 1976, 1985). A main feature was wattle and daub house structures (Davies 1973). The site of Chukoto contained pottery with heavy rolled rims.

The late Stone Age cultural tradition of Ghana has been referred to as Kintampo after the village in northern Ghana where it was first recognized and where several sites are located (Fig. 2). Davies at first referred to the tradition as Neolithic (Davies 1962). The Kintampo cultural tradition is associated with the earliest known houses. They are therefore considered the pioneers of village life in Ghana. Evidence from such sites as Nsesrekeseso and Mumute Bonoase, Boyase and Kintampo include terra-cotta figurines, grinding hollows, bifacially ground stone axes and stone beads, as well as faunal and floral remains (Stahl 1985) which indicate activities

related to food production and settlement (Agorsah 1976, Dombrowski 1976, Newton and Woodal 1976, Stahl 1985).

Recent settlement pattern analysis in the Volta basin seems to provide evidence that enhances our knowledge of late Stone Age societies (Agorsah 1988 a & b). It is observed that settlement patterning within the Volta basin operated within a framework of environmental and culturally determined parameters. For example evidence suggests that the preferred areas of habitation were terraces and local hill lands or slightly raised areas overlooking valleys. Further it is observed that the location and distribution of settlements indicate that many of the early settlements in the northern Volta basin developed in valleys, flood plains, fans, confluences, and pediments with soils that are periodically revived by alluvial and colluvial deposits. Sites on higher grounds may have been good in time of flooding and for game. The sites of Ntereso and Kintaupo mentioned above indicate that early settlers within the basin took advantage of such locations from the beginning of the Stone Age (Davies 1973). Flight (1967) doubts the objectivity in this interpretation of the presence of human habitation of the floodable zones. Evidence from Ntereso also clearly suggests dependence on aquatic floods (Carter and Flight 1972).

Evidence for reconstructing the Late Stone Age in Ghana and its interpretation has seen much more resolution in recent years. The controversy about the use of the term "Neolithic" seems to be dying out as the term has somehow disappeared from the literature in recent years. Still unresolved, however, are the questions of the actual distribution of late Stone Age cultural traditions as well as whether they were indigenous or derived from outside as Davies claimed. In relation to this claim is the question of human movements in the general area of Ghana and neighbouring territories. Linguistic studies have generally enhanced the objectivity in interpretation and the quality of archaeological reconstruction in Ghana as is the case in other parts of Africa (Ehret & Posnansky 1982). The chronological dimensions of the settlement history of the Volta Basin as indicated by archaeological and ethnographic evidence (Agorsah 1986, 1988, Andah 1979, Davies 1967, 1971), as well as linguistic speculations (Dakubu 1982, Painter 1966, Stewar 1960), certainly extend human colonization of the basin into the Stone Age. Both types of evidence indicate that within the past 10 to 12 millennia there has been a gradual increase in the occupation of the basin right from its sources in Burkina Faso. It is now established that the first wave of settlements in Ghana probably occurred in the Stone Age within the area of the confluence of the White and Black Volta. This area coincides with the area of the greatest concentration of Stone Age sites (Agorsah 1988). To enhance the adequacy of explanation of the early traditions, this first wave of settlement has been considered alongside evidence for environmental change that occurred in the whole Sahel-Sahara belt of West Africa some 10-12 millennia ago (Andah 1979) which may have caused the selection of sites overlooking streams and river valleys. If similarity in cultural equipment means anything to the archaeologists, then the evidence can be considered as pointing to connections with cultural traditions outside the general area of Ghana as Davies claims. In addition to this, the linguistic evidence regarding the break-up of the Niger-Congo language family supports the claim of an outside connection, even if it did not come from the Sahara as Davies claims (Davies 1961).

Another unresolved issue in the archaeology of the late Stone Age in Ghana is the significance of the artifacts referred to as "cigars" or "rasps". Although it is one of the diagnostic artifacts of the Kintampo cultural tradition there is a lack of agreement on explanations given for given for their use, or their significance in the tradition as a whole. In fact, "cigars" remain one

of the most controversial artifacts in African archaeology. The cigars are generally cylindrical, oval in section, some measuring about 15-22 cm long and 3-5 cm wide in the middle section. The majority have geometric scorings and have been observed to have been worn down through use (Agorsah 1986). The interpretation of "cigars" is one of the least understood aspects in the archaeology of Ghana. This lack of explanation of the cigars demonstrates how archaeologists are limited in achieving an objective interpretation without ethnographic data.

The use of ethnographic data to build models for the interpretation of archaeological data has continued to attract a large following mainly because of the central role occupied by the logic of analogy. Ethnoarchaeology, as this approach has come to be referred to, has its roots in the need to identify a body of generalizations or inferences beyond mere date. Also ethnographic data has provided a means for initiating an approach towards objective interpretation, that is based on well articulated theoretical and methodological frameworks (Phillipson, 1985, Brown 1963). The use of ethnographic research as espoused in Ethnoarchaeology should, however, be considered as a means to an end (Agorsah 1990).

THE IRON AGE

Like speculations about the Stone Age traditions, interpretation of the Iron Age has lacked objectivity because of its connection with diffusionist concepts. In the whole of the West African region metal working has been considered to have marked an important advance in technology but its beginnings have been attributed to outside cultural traditions. These diffusionist ideas have usually been linked to the general West African area. Scholars such as Mauny (1952), Tylecote (1975), Arkell (1953) and Shinnie (1971) suggested that iron technology was derived from Carthage, Meroe, Egypt or some other area outside the West African area. The background to all these speculations was the notion that no technological development of the magnitude known for the Iron Age could develop from West Africa. While some unobjectively based their speculations on furnace types (Williams 1969) others based them on known dates and chronologies as well as on Eurocentric ideas. Recently, Andah in his analysis of these subjective speculations has emphasized the uncritical way in which the question of the origin and the development of iron has been examined. Andah states that "their conclusions have also been based on the untested assumption that where the conditions expected are not in fact met with, then such an area must have been backward, and not capable of independent discovery" (Andah 1979 : 140). Lack of objectivity in these early speculations which in the early history of the archaeology of Ghana plagued interpretations is demonstrated by later evidence.

As indicated in the early part of this paper, the chronological divisions of Ghana's past into Stone Age – Iron Age are only for analytical purposes and convenience. Evidence for the transition from the late Stone Age food-producing traditions to the introduction of metal technology is fragmentary and unevenly distributed in Ghana as a whole. Where the evidence exists it is sometimes flimsy and unreliable. From the site of Ntereso for example, iron was present in levels the temporal association of which is not definitely known. Buipe, the area currently occupied by the Gonja ethnic group, provides archaeological evidence of the transition. The first of three phases at New Buipe (York & Calvocoressi 1967) manifests an early Kintampo food-producing tradition C¹⁴ dated to 915 ± 27 B.C. Following closely is an eighth century

A.D. date which marks the second cultural phase which also contains evidence of an iron technology (Anquandah 1982).

The onset of metal technology in Ghana is best discussed in the context of the General West African area (Davies 1967, Andah 1979). The determination of how early the technology was in West Africa as well as lack of data on the process of its development are problems that are related to early attempts to reconstruct the history of the development of the technology. Many of the dates are not only misleading but have gaps in reason. Evidence from Nok in Nigeria dates to 500 B.C. (Shinnie 1967), while the Chad area north of Nigeria provides dates of 2000 years ago (Andah 1979). Clearly the dates from Ghana do not fall within a close range of these dates.

One significant development in the archaeology of the Iron Age, in West Africa, even in the face of the fragmentary evidence is the demise of diffusionist theories. Considerable ethnological evidence exists in Ghana that explains variation in the technological practice in recent times (Pole 1974, Andah 1979, Wertime & Muhly 1980).

Evidence from the Volta Basin of Ghana seems to confirm that the distribution of iron sites suggest that the greater part of the basin had been occupied by the last centuries before the Christian era, and that some were comparatively large settlements. According to Davies (1971), population within the gallery forest areas of the Volta Basin was quite dense. Unfortunately, however, the evidence of an increase in the number of settlements during the Iron Age is not complemented by chronological data that can be used to demonstrate the developmental stages of the settlements. Another area that has seen much study is the reconstruction of the iron working process mainly using furnace types and the ethnographic evidence (Pole 1974, Goucher 1981). Recently studies carried out by Goucher demonstrate the impact of metal working traditions on the environment (Goucher 1984). The study draws attention to the fact that many studies have ignored the examination of the "intermediary refinery (foundry) operation" (Goucher 1989). This draws attention to the fact that each process of metal technology should be studied as a system in itself because that is the only way to obtain an objective view of the process as a whole. This also applies to the study of other metal technological traditions such as those of gold, copper and brass industries. But with the accompanying rise of states and kingdoms speculations have seen much more objectivity with availability of evidence.

One of the most significant contributions of archaeological research in Ghana has been the provision of evidence that explains the origin and development of towns, kingdoms and civilizations in the area. The Volta Basin, particularly the northern section, has been identified as one of the crucial areas in the development of early towns and traditions such as those of the Guang, Dagomba and Gonja (Agorsah 1986, 1988, Aquandah 1982, Kense 1985). Owing to the good environmental conditions and the trans-Saharan trade that linked such trade centres as Damongo, Buipe, Yeji, Salaga (Anquandah 1982) and one of the largest trade centers of the day, Begho (Posnansky 1971, 1975, 1976), the period, mainly around the beginning of the second millennium A.D. seems to have witnessed not only increased trade activities (Posnansky 1973) but global movements of populations, generated by the rise of large political entities (Daaku & van Dantzig 1966, Effah-Gyamfi 1979, Boachie-Ansah 1985, Fy 1975). Using oral traditions and archaeological evidence Effah-Gyamfi (1979) has established the rise of the state of Bnomanso as a strong force in West central Ghana and even compared it to the greatness of the ancient capital of the Sudanic empire of Ghana (Effah-Gyamfi 1979). The gold trade centred

on the Begho area (Posnansky 1973, 1975), as well as viable local mining, pottery making, ivory carving, textile, brass and iron manufacturing industries as depicted by archaeological evidence, seem to have provided support to the development of the Bonomanso and adjoining areas in the later part of the Iron Age. Oral tradition, Arabic documents and limited archaeological evidence also reveal the rise of the Gonja Kingdom in Northern Ghana as well as the Dagomba, Mamprusi Wala, Mossi and others, many of whom developed through Islamic connections.

In the southern portions of Ghana, many Kingdoms sprang up with those of the Akan standing out prominently. The Akyem, Asante and Adansi were the more prominent ones in the forest zones while nearer the coast developed the Ga and Dangme who are said to have migrated into the area. Our knowledge of the later kingdoms comes more from historical than archaeological evidence and has been summarized by Anquandah (1982). The kingdoms of Efutu and Ahanta, Elmina, Kommenda and others also sprang up along the coast and were still viable up to and including the arrival of the first Europeans on the coast of Ghana. Excavations have been conducted at Efutu (Agorsah 1986), Elmina (Decorse 1987a & b, 1988), Fort Ruychaver (Posnansky & Van Dantzig 1976) and various studies carried out on the Forts and Castles along the coast (Lawrence 1963, Van Dantzig 1978, 1980). These afford us evidence on pre-and European context, but illustrate the limited Historical Archaeology that has been carried out in Ghana. Although evidence of the period involved has documentary support there still exist areas of controversy that cast doubts on objectivity in interpretations which need to be examined in the same way as those of the preceding periods.

The picture that we see about Ghana's past generally is that the archaeological evidence covers a period that spans some 50,000 years with gaps in it. Although a sequence can be proposed for this period of time it cannot be strongly suggested that it provides a basis for making strong generalizations coherent enough to be considered objective. However, the fact of this lack of a clear objectivity does not mean a complete lack of meaning in the interpretations. Discussion of certain issues may help to elaborate further on these states of interpretation of the archaeology of Ghana.

EMERGING ISSUES

1. Chronology

One of the most important issues that come up for discussion is that of the chronological framework used for interpretations of cultural traditions. The earliest real attempt at a chronological scheme comes from extensive studies carried out by Oliver Davies (1964, 1967). The first problem of Davies' chronology is the fact that a considerable portion of his evidence was derived from surface collection, thus lacking stratigraphic correlations. Analyses of his framework, which gives the impression of a diffusion of much of the earliest cultural traditions in Ghana, by the later scholars such as Andah (1979), Sutton (1980), Nygaard and Talbot (1976), have streamlined the subjective aspects of his scheme. For example as Sutton (1980) has pointed out the unclear dating of geological features as well as relating the sequences to the affinities of the artifacts, suggests that faulty typologies are used which suggest traditions from other parts of Africa that do not properly apply to the material from Ghana. This lack of objectivity has also been emphasized by Andah (1979) and Talbot who have, like Sutton,

suggested the abandonment of the use of Stone Age terminologies, such as "Aterian", "Kalinian", "Lupemban" and similar ones that apply to regional traditions of Northern and Eastern Africa, as well as alien concepts and typologies in the Archaeology of Ghana. The chronological framework seems to go back some 50,000 years for the earliest known and dated Stone Age material from Ghana and continues through a series of microlithic industries to a Late Stone Age early food-producing cultural tradition dating to about 4000 years ago. This latter period merges into the Iron Age beginning about two thousand years ago and leading into the historical period over half a millennium ago when the first Europeans set foot on the coast of Ghana. Prior to these existed the Trans-Saharan trade contact. The above chronology is quite generalized. It is the details that raise several issues of terminology, analyses, and methodology. For more recent periods chronological schemes have been based on certain dated artifacts such as smoking pipes (Ozanne 1971). The issue of chronology thus becomes directly linked to methodology.

2. Methodology

The issue of methods of approach is one that has been crucial in the achievement of objectivity in the interpretation of the archaeology of Ghana. Instances of projects arising from chance factors are recorded now and again in the archaeology of Ghana and have constituted the determining factor of many significant studies. But the majority of archaeological studies have been determined by traditions within particular institutions or departments, grant requirements, a researcher's individual training and interest, as well as master-student relationships, the last two being the major factors in recent decades. A feature that seems to have characterized the archaeology of Ghana is the fact that the development of cultural traditions has been better explained only in the context of the general region. The origin of agriculture, for example, has been better explained in the context of evidence of the ecological zone of Ghana. Consequently in a new approach the earliest developments of the cultural traditions of the area have been linked with geomorphological and related conditions (Andah 1979). This approach has been recognized as much more objective because it takes cognizance of the fact that the boundaries of modern Ghana are only recent and did not exist in prehistoric times. It is for this reason that propositions such as the "invasion of Ghana" by early agricultural people as was proposed by Davies (1964, 1967) should never again arise at all. Other issues such as trade, rise of kingdoms and later historical developments have all been better understood in a wider ecological or geographical context. The Daboya Project (Kense 1983, 1985), the Volta Basin Archaeological Research Project (Agorsah 1983, 1986), the West African Trade Project (Posnansky 1973, 1975, 1976) are examples of projects that deal with zones rather than individual sites or areas. This is the strategy, whether intentional or mere accident, that has helped streamline the chronology and its related interpretations in the archaeology of Ghana.

3. Ethnoarchaeology

One concept of archaeological research in Ghana had been ethnoarchaeology, although only a few can boast of such studies in the true sense of the sub-discipline. The practice of referring to ethnographic study as ethnoarchaeological is quite common (Anquandah 1985) and has been one of the obstacles in archaeological interpretation in recent years. On record, however, are useful ethnoarchaeological studies such as those by Fletcher (1977) on the development of structural features in the historic village of Haui (McIntosh 1977) on decay patterns of mud-walls in the

Begho area. To this list may be added my own study of the relationship between construction processes and decay patterns of mud-wall structures in Ghana (McIntosh 1977, Agorsah 1985). These above-mentioned studies and a very few others somehow utilize the methods of ethnoarchaeological research procedure. The general practice among many other studies is to infer past archaeological behaviour directly from ethnographic or ethnohistorical data. This means that although the concept of "analogy" occupies a central position in archaeological interpretations in Ghana, it has been misused or totally ignored in several studies. As stated earlier ethnographic evidence should only be taken into account to formulate models for use in interpretations. They are means to an end. It is becoming clear in the Archaeology of Ghana that mere accumulation of ethnographic data and the provision of half-baked generalizations, which often unfortunately appeal to public hearing, with a cautionary note that "more needs to be done on this subject", are in effect obstructing objectivity. Frankly speaking, in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, ethnoarchaeology has its roots in ethnographic research but its use does not seem to have gone much farther than a mere accumulation of ethnographic data. Consequently many scholars working in Ghana who do ethnographic research and are able to make the most tenuous link between their material and archaeology, have enjoyed the liberty of claiming to have undertaken an ethnoarchaeological study. Hypothesis formulation also goes with assumptions and arguments of relevance and the proof of a hypothesis does not come by fiat or traditional practice but by controlling the study by use of test implications and testing the prediction to confirm or disconfirm them. This is basically how the relationship between modern behaviour patterns and prehistoric archaeological data should be. As has been pointed out, ethnoarchaeology, whether by "analogy" or "anomaly", should be considered as a means to an end in social scientific analysis in which it is considered that explanation, not mere description, is the highest form of knowledge.

4. Identifying populations

One area where archaeological research in Ghana has often run into difficulties regards ethnic identification. Even though traditions can be generally assigned to archaeological data it is difficult to establish clear continuities. It is here that ethnoarchaeology has been of use but also has often been misused by several scholars, especially by assuming direct connection between nuclear and prehistoric populations, forgetting that in very recent years populations have moved from place to place or become mixed.

The concept of ethnicity has been in the literature for the past half-century but the term remains elusive (du Toit 1978). Ethnic groups are normally considered as named, bonded units of people who identify themselves or others as different and may have similar or identifiable social behaviour patterns and value systems such as language and religious affiliations. The ethnic group may also display more or less distinctive patterns of economic and political organization. Linguistic evidence has been of considerable use in collaboration with archaeological evidence in speculations about the known ethnic groups of Ghana (Dakubu 1982, Painter 1966, Steward 1960, Agorsah 1988). The reconstruction of the settlement history of ethnic groups in the Volta Basin is one of the most recent such attempts at linking evidence from archaeology with defined populations. As such studies spread out into other parts of Ghana a new picture that will be obtained could shed light on the cultural past of specific groups beyond historical times.

5. Other related aspects

There are several areas of archaeological study in Ghana that have added to our understanding of its cultural past. These include settlement pattern analysis (Agorsah 1986, 1988), historical archaeology (Decorse 1986, 1988) and art history (Bellis 1972, Calvocoressi 1970, Nunoo 1970), as well as palaeoenvironmental studies (Talbot, 1983, Talbot & Delibraiss 1980). These cannot be discussed here. In fact the discussion of this paper cannot be considered as exhaustive of all the various features of the archaeology of Ghana that could have been examined. Although one may call for continuity in the efforts, it appears that what needs to be done now is a reorganization of the available data in order that further data collected may not leave doubts about their use in obtaining an objective knowledge of the cultural past. As has been remarked at the beginning of this paper a desire to obtain objectivity does not necessarily ensure its attainment.

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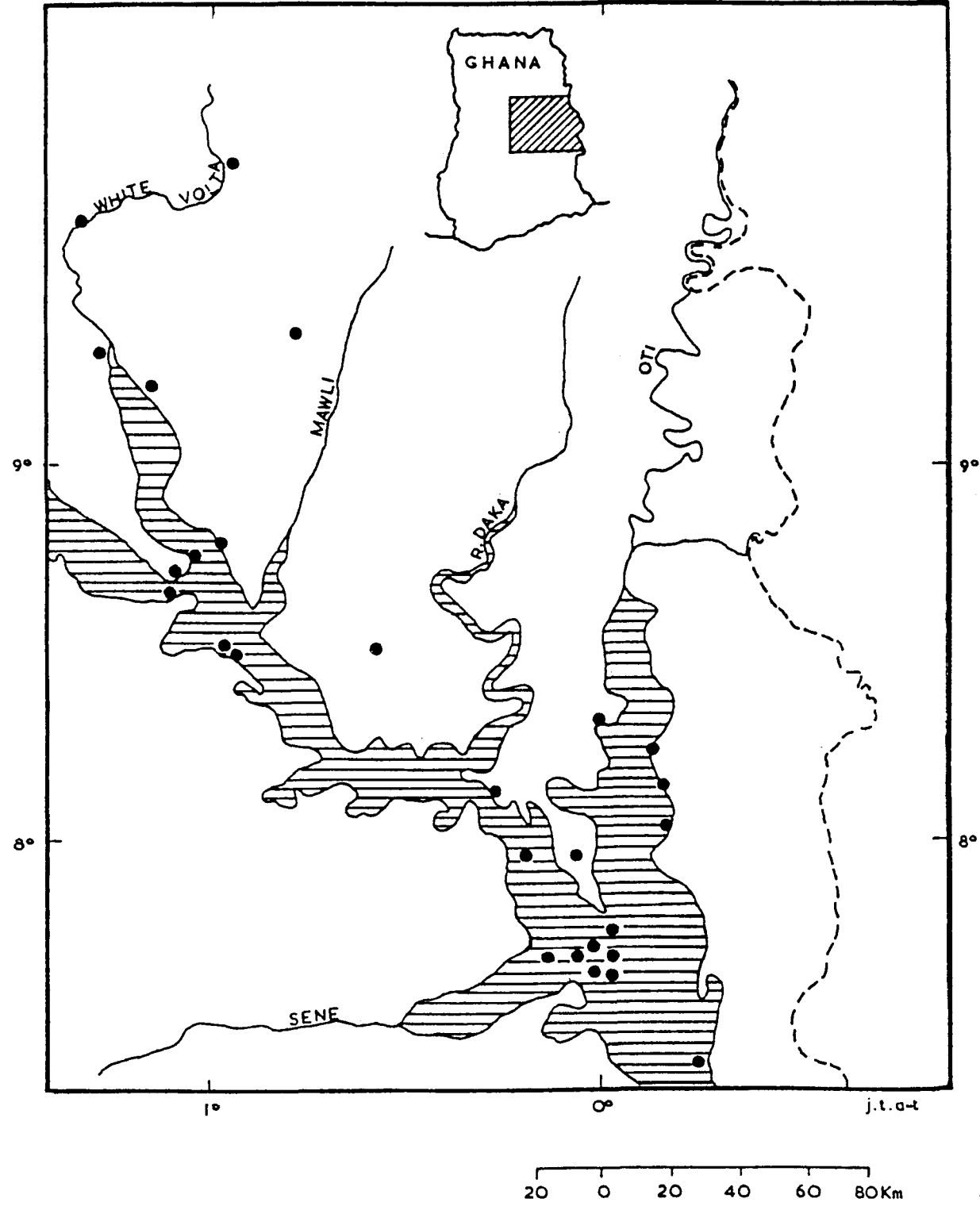


Fig. 1
Distribution of excavated archaeological sites in Ghana 1933-1990
(Calvocoressi, D.A. & York, R. 1972).

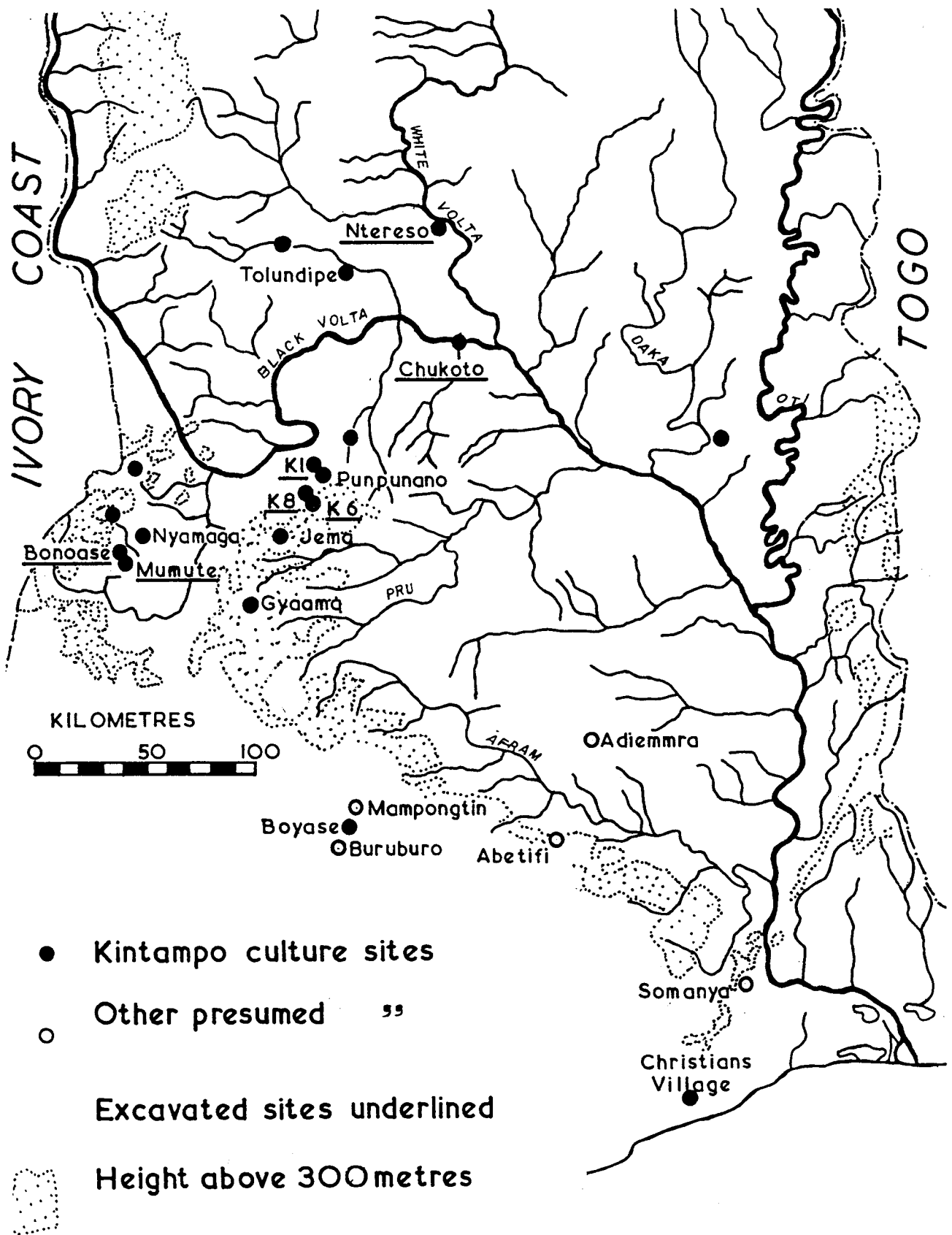


Fig. 2
Sites of Kintampo cultural traditions.

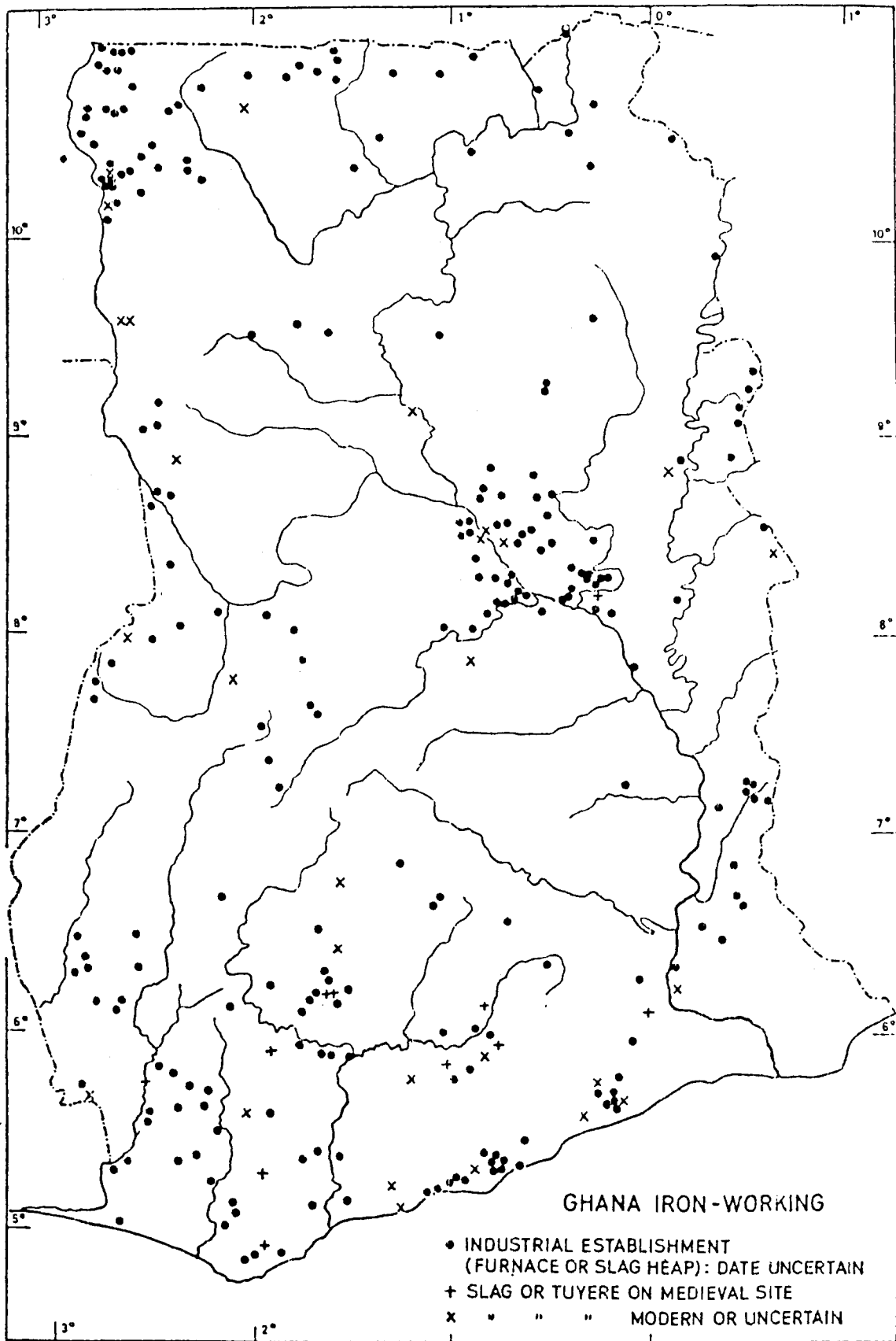


Fig. 3
Distribution of Iron Age sites (O. Davies, 1967).