

BOOK REVIEW

Dola Angèle Aguigah. *Archéologie et architecture traditionnelle en Afrique de l'Ouest: Le cas des revêtements de sols au Togo: Une étude comparée*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2018. 277 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. €31.00. E-book. ISBN: 978-2-343-15637-8.

Archéologie et architecture traditionnelle en Afrique de l'Ouest: Le cas des revêtements de sols au Togo: Une étude comparée by Dola Angèle Aguigah is an extract from Volume 2 of a doctoral thesis submitted to Université Paris I, France, in 1995. The book, which consists of five chapters, explores spatial organization in traditional architecture in Africa.

Aguigah believes that potsherd pavements and rammed floors have not received adequate research attention when compared to the study of the doors, posts, windows, and walls of houses. This study highlights the technological choices made by artisans, the functions or the place of pavements and rammed floors in the spatial organization of living spaces, their aesthetic function, and their protection of the ground in public places (courtyards, meeting rooms, and walkways) and worship places (tombs, shrines, and temples).

The first chapter describes field research in Togo, noting that Merrick Posnansky in 1979 indicated the presence of pavements made of quartz stones at Notsé. The archaeological research at Notsé from 1984 to 1986 documented the presence and the spatial distribution of these quartz pavements. The literature review describes the different types of floor pavements in the Gulf of Guinea, citing sites in Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo. Ancient and modern pavements are distinguished as two separate categories. This chapter also addresses the difficulties of the excavation and study of pavements, along with problems of chronology, methodology, and data collection.

The next chapter presents an analysis of the composition and decoration of the pavements and rammed floors, highlighting the materials used, the techniques, and the various modes of production. The decorations are geometric motifs, horizontal, vertical, or oblique forms, rectangles, and parallel lines. Sometimes they form one or two enclosing bands and, in other places, several oblique parallel bands converge toward the central part of the

pavement. Chronologically, the rammed floors either predate the pavements or they are contemporaneous with them. The oldest rammed floors date to the sixth century AD.

The third chapter describes the physicochemical and petrographic analyses of the ceramics. The laboratory analyses include the dating and characterization of ceramics through thin sectioning, establishing their firing temperature, and fluorescence X. The results are presented with illustrations, and the interpretation of the results leads to a discussion of the origin of the clay used for the production of pottery and the technical aspects of pottery production.

The fourth chapter discusses the socio-spatial organization of the pavements and rammed floors, highlighting how the methods of construction are related to their socio-spatial organization. This chapter also describes the types of floors associated with the various architectural forms, such as courtyards, streets, meeting rooms, and built-up areas, and it highlights the issue of whether certain compositions are specific to places of worship or reserved for royal residences, notables, or wealthy people. Finally, it discusses the materials and techniques employed in open and closed spaces, and the function of pavements in satisfying taste for decoration, or for prestige, or just for hygiene or cleanliness.

An ethnoarchaeological study of the processes of making pavements is the subject of the last chapter, and it comprises the technological choices and acquisition of raw materials, sources and choice of materials, the preparation of materials, and the morphology of materials, with irregular fragments laid flat and regular fragments laid on their edges. Then follows the consolidation of the pavement, threshing, application of decoction, drying, and washing. Last discussed is the conservation and revalorization of sites, particularly floors which by their nature are fragile and immovable, and the preservation of cultural heritage in an environment of rapid technological change.

The book is a very good resource for the physicochemical analyses of ceramics in archaeology. However, a few lapses noted in the book are due to poor copy editing. The description of the chapters of the book is found on pages 29 to 31 of Chapter 1, including Chapter 1 itself, all of which ought to be in the Introduction. The bibliography is full of errors, including wrong spelling of names, wrong rendering of names, wrong use of capital letters for names, wrong date for publication, muddling of references, inconsistent use of abbreviations for the same journal (W. Afr. Archaeol. Newsl. and W.A.A.N. for West African Archaeology Newsletter; J. Hist. Soc. Nigeria and J.H.S.N. for Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria; W. Afr. Archaeol., Waja, W.A.J.A. and WAJA for West African Journal of Archaeology) and haphazard use of “&” and the word “et.”

The book provides an account of the distribution of ancient rammed floors and potsherd pavements in the Gulf of Guinea and the analysis of their material compositions and decorations. The study of the potsherds includes physical and chemical analyses to provide information on provenance, while

the ethnoarchaeological study gives insight into the processes of producing the pavements.

Caleb Adebayo Folorunso 
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria
cafolorunso@gmail.com

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