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Rediscovering the Links between the Earthen Pyramids of West Africa and Ancient Nubia: Restoring William Leo Hansberry's Vision of Ancient Kush and Sudanic Africa

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Abstract
William Leo Hansberry, a pioneer and founder of African studies in the United States, proposed in 1921 that the origins of Egyptian pyramids were in Central Africa. Hansberry's analysis was based upon the discovery of earthen pyramids (mounds/tumuli) in the Inland Niger Delta in the modern country of Mali. This paper provides an overview of key West African tumuli sites as a preliminary discussion for future research for scholars to advance a new comparative approach, both archaeologically and anthropologically for understanding the design, function, and purpose of tumuli in both West Africa and the Middle Nile Valley. Hansberry's research presents a model for transdisciplinary engagement which includes the disciplines of Nubiology, Egyptology, Africanist scholarship, and Africana studies.

William Leo Hansberry: Earthen Pyramids in Kush and the Western Sudan

William Leo Hansberry published the article "The Material Culture of Ancient Nigeria" in the *Journal of Negro History* in 1921[1] after studying ancient and medieval African history, the ethnology of Africa, and African and Egyptian archaeology at Harvard University for nearly four years under the mentorship of Dr. Ernest A. Hooten, curator of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.[2] A year in prior, in 1920, the twenty-six-year old Hansberry had begun his collegiate teaching career at Straight College (now Dillard University), a historically Black college and university (HBCU) in New Orleans, where he founded the Negro History Department. He established courses in anthropology and African archaeology and focused on the history of dynastic civilization of Ethiopia (Nubia), "the negro civilizations of Yorubaland," and the ancient medieval Sudan.[3] He was the first scholar in the United States to propose an African studies program at an American university, an academic blueprint that he would bring into full maturation as a professor in the history department at Howard University in 1923. In the autumn of 1921, a couple of months after his article "The Material Culture of Ancient Nigeria" was published, Hansberry returned to Harvard University as a fellow at the graduate school of anthropology. It was during this time he met the Rev. Dr. Jesse Moorland and was invited to teach at Howard University. Dr. Moorland was an avid bibliophile and book collector, and his

Figure 1: Map of the Niger River Basin in West Africa/Inland Niger Delta within the frame; location of the tumuli of Koï Gourrey and El Oualadji in the lakes region (Golitzen et al. 2005).

collection would become the foundation for the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, the second-largest repository and archive on the history of Africa and the African diaspora in the world, after the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City.

In the article "The Material Culture of Ancient Nigeria," the toponym "Nigeria" refers not to the modern nation of Nigeria, but the plateau regions of the Niger River basin in West Africa, covering the modern nations of Guinea, Mali, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria and its major tributary, the Benue River. Hansberry was in dialogue with the leading European ethnologists, Egyptologists, and African explorers of his time, such as the French soldier-ethnologist Lieutenant Louis Desplagnes,[4] the German explorer-ethnologist Leo Frobenius,[5] and the British Egyptologist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, with the aim of assessing "the materials of a more or less archaeological character, that is, to the architecture, tombs and the arts and crafts of a small section of this ancient land."[6] "This ancient land" for Hansberry was the culture and history of Central Africa and the pivotal role it played in the development of West Africa and Sudanic civilization. Therefore, Hansberry underscored in his article recent archaeological and anthropological research of Benin City, Yorubaland. and the architectural and funerary practices of western Sudan. Hansberry sought to utilize "objects and evidences of achievement" to demonstrate that ancient and medieval African civilizations were on the same plane and in some cases even surpassed contemporary civilizations in Europe and America.[7] In his discussion of the "Sudan," referring to western Sudan, Hansberry describes the tombs—that is, the tumuli—of the Niger River basin as those "strange and most interesting structures of the Sudan." Hansberry commented on the presence of these monumental mounds throughout the Sudanic corridor:

> All through the Sudan, and especially in Nigeria, are to be found great conical dome-shaped structures of baked clay ranging in size from six-teen feet in height and sixty-six feet in basal diameter to seventy feet in height and two hundred and twenty feet in basal diameter.[8]

Hansberry had engaged in deep study of Louis Desplagnes's work, *Le plateau central Nigérien: une mission archéologique et ethnographique au Soudan français*, and Leo Frobenius's *Voice of Africa,* volume 1. In the former, Desplagnes devoted a section of the book entitled "Tumuli soudanais" ("Sudanese Tumuli") to a discussion of the numerous tumuli within a 125-mile stretch along the Niger River (Inland Niger Delta) between Lake Debo and the city of Timbuktu in the modern nation of Mali (Fig. 1).

Among the most prominent—and one of the largest—mounds that Desplagnes describes was the tumulus of El Oualedji, located on the banks of the Niger River at the confluence of the Bara Lisa and Issa Baris rivers.[9] Desplagnes described the tumulus of El Oualedji, which he excavated in 1904, as a massive and imposing structure 17 meters in height and 100 square meters in area. The tumulus contained within its lower compartment an oval burial chamber. Very similar to mounds excavated elsewhere in the savanna zone, such as in the Middle Nile Valley and northern Ghana, the tumulus included human skeletal remains, bones of sacrificed animals, weaponry, pottery, jewelry, and food bowls, among other items.[10] The El Oualedji tumulus

dated to the early 11th century CE and was an elite burial tomb for "Sudan chiefs" that functioned also as a ritual center and ancestral shrine.[11] Taking his lead from Desplagnes, Frobenius also traveled to the Niger Plateau in 1911 to explore the monumental tumuli there. In his book *The Voice of Africa* volume 1, he presented a reconstruction of the tumulus of El Oualedji based upon the measurements provided by Desplagnes. It is noteworthy that although both Desplagnes and Frobenius referred to the Niger tumuli as mounds, they also described these superstructures as "pyramids." Desplagnes stated that the Niger tumuli took the shape of a "truncated pyramid,"[12] and Frobenius described the mounds as the "monumental pyramids of Songai."[13]

Hansberry was keenly aware of the significance of Desplagnes's and Frobenius's findings in establishing links between the tumuli in the Niger Valley and those in the Nile Valley. He recognized that the tumuli of the Nigerien plateau were very similar to the pyramids of early Egypt and to the royal mounds of the Kerma and Noubadian civilizations in ancient Kush and Nubia. Hansberry proposed that the origins of Egyptian pyramids were in Central Africa:

> The veteran Egyptologist, Flinders Petrie, in the great mass of evidence adduced by him to show the African origin of the spirit and substratum of early dynastic Egyptian culture, points out that there is a very close connection between the subterranean structures of these tombs and many of those of the Egyptian pyramids, the inference being that the idea of the pyramids, very probably had its origin in Central Africa.[14]

William M. Flinders Petrie in 1894, the year that Hansberry was born, had excavated two thousand pre-dynastic graves at Naqada in Upper Egypt, and to his amazement he believed he had discovered a "new race" in Egypt. The graves were unusual relative to what he expected was "normative" for Egyptian dynastic civilization. Petrie had unearthed pre-dynastic mound burials in Upper Egypt.[15]

British Egyptologist Toby Wilkinson more recently excavated a First Dynasty royal tomb, substantiating that the construction of tumuli was not an irregularity in Early Dynastic Egypt. Wilkinson comments on the significance of the mound architecture:

> The superstructures of the mid- and later First Dynasty tombs (from the reign of Djet onwards) apparently comprised two elements: a hidden tumulus over the burial chamber and a larger mound covering the whole tomb. The hidden tumulus was entirely contained within the grave pit, and was itself covered by the large grave mound. Consequently, it can have fulfilled no architectural purpose and must, therefore, have had a symbolic function. The provision of not one but two tumuli suggests that the symbol of the mound had great importance for the deceased; it may eventually have been regarded as essential for the resurrection of the dead in the grave. As a highly symbolic feature, the hidden tumulus also found its way into the contemporary mastabas at North Saqqara.[16]

Early Dynastic Egypt was, at least in terms of the construction of royal mound tumuli, wholly within the Sudanic-Sahelian tradition, and therefore the later triangular pyramids for which ancient Egypt is popularly known represented a divergent practice from its Sudanic and Sahelian roots—an architectural innovation inspired by the earlier construction of mound tumuli. The links between Sudanic-Sahelian tumuli and Nile Valley pyramids is very apparent and it is also important to reiterate Rachael J. Dann's assertion that "the tradition of tumulus burial was earlier than the pyramid and stretched back into the mortuary practices of the Sudan."[17] The tumulus burial was the predecessor to the pyramid.

It is for this reason that the author uses the term "earthen pyramids" in the title of this article to convey that the tumulus should also be understood as a "proto-pyramid" in relation to the pyramids in Egypt and Meroitic Kush. Yet this paper is not about the origins of Nile Valley pyramids. This paper seeks to provide an overview of key West African tumuli sites as a preliminary discussion for future archaeological and anthropological research by scholars in Nubiology, Egyptology, Africana studies, and Africanist research. Archaeological research on both West African and Middle Nile Valley tumuli has been well reported since Hansberry's observations in the early 20th century. Cheikh Anta Diop, in his classic work *African Origins of Civilizations: Myth or Reality*, notes that pyramids

were discovered on Lake Debo in the Inland Niger Delta of Mali and were "dubbed mounds" in an attempt to disparage their connection to similar structures in the Nile Valley.[18] More recently, Kevin McDonald has identified affinities between ancient Kerma tumuli and Sahelian tumuli in West Africa.[19] I am unaware of any research since then that has studied them comparatively or viewed them as part of a Sahelian continuum. Nubian archaeology and even Egyptology are silent regarding the Sudanic-Sahelian earthen pyramids, and, conversely, scholars of West African archaeology have excavated savanna tumuli without any mention of ancient Kush or late-antique Nubia. My goals are modest in that I seek to reintroduce an arena of scholarship that Hansberry proposed a century ago and is now today, I believe, ripe for transdisciplinary engagement. I will provide a summation of the archaeological research on West African tumuli in Senegambia,[20] Mali,[21] northern Ghana,[22] and northern Nigeria,[23] to advance a new comparative approach, both archaeologically and anthropologically, for understanding the design, function, and purpose of tumuli in Kerma, Napatan-Meroitic Kush, and late-antique Nubia. The Middle Nile Valley tumuli may also reciprocally inform and clarify the methods, cultural practices and ritual apparatus utilized in constructing their Niger Valley counterparts (Fig. 2).

The necessity of situating ancient Kush and the Middle Nile region within the historical and cultural development of Sudanic Africa has been recommended by Nubian-studies scholars such as David Edwards when he demonstrates that Meroitic Kush's political development had more in common with later Sudanic states during the medieval period than the riverine polity of ancient Egypt.[24] Edwards highlights what he describes as "material power bases" shared between Meroitic Kush and Sudanic Africa, such as control of long-distance trade, nomadic pastoralism, military supremacy and the expansion of royal power through alliances and economic integration. In connecting the Middle Nile Valley with the rest of Sudanic Africa Edwards states, "we may begin to reintegrate the history of Meroe and Kush into that of Sudanic Africa."[25] He suggests that Meroitic Kush is the forerunner of later Sudanic kingdoms such as Kanem-Bornu, Ghana, and Mali. Nubiologists and Egyptologists have been incessantly Egyptocentric in prioritizing ancient Nubia's relationship with Egypt, while ignoring the east-west Sudanic axis that figured so prominently in shaping Nubia's cultural development. An examination of trans-Sahelian tumuli may provide a gateway into a new field in both Nubian studies and Egyptology that resituates the Nile Valley within its interconnections to Central and West Africa. The Senegalese Africanist archaeologist Ibrahima

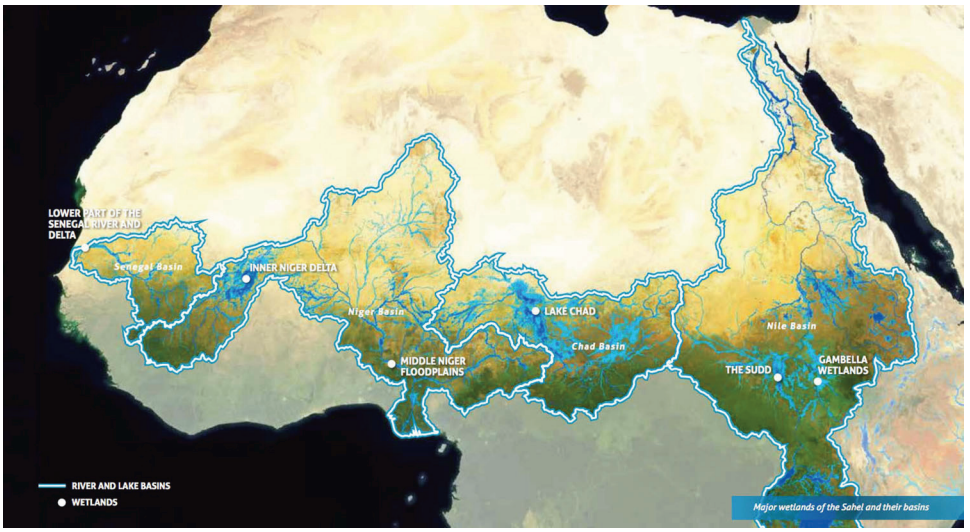

Figure 2: Map of major wetlands, Sahel region in Africa (Pearce 2017; courtesy of Wetlands International).

Thiaw undoubtedly concurs that a comparative approach to studying tumuli across the African savanna is fundamentally sound.[26] Such an endeavor would encourage transdisciplinary engagement between Africanists and specialists in Nubiology and Egyptology and could conceivably prompt the convening of Nubian and Meroitic studies conferences, as well as the International Congress of Egyptology, to host their meetings not only in Europe and occasionally Egypt and Sudan, but in the West African cities of Dakar, Senegal, Accra, Ghana, and Lagos, Nigeria.

The Noubadian Tumuli of Late-Antique Nubia

The most unanticipated and fascinating discovery in researching my book *The Roots of Nubian Christianity Uncovered* was the monumental Noubadian royal tumuli of Ballana and Qustul discovered by W. B. Emery and L. P. Kirwan during the Second Archaeological Survey of Nubia, 1929–1934.[27] It was my research of the tumuli at Ballana and Qustul that laid the foundation for my explorations of these structures in Sudanic and West Africa. As I indicated in the *Roots of Nubian Christianity*, my travels to northern Ghana among the Kassena people in 2005 brought me face-to-face with the royal mounds of the Kassena culture.[28] I was enthralled by the royal mound that was located adjacent to the Paga Pio's (Kassena king's) palace and the unique Sahelian-style mud-brick architecture that was characteristic of the domestic residences of the region. I suspected that the Kassena mounds represented burial practices that reached into the remotest period of African antiquity. I raised the question "Are the Kassena royal mounds a variation of the ancient Sahelian mound culture that I had discovered in my research of ancient Kush and the Noubadian kingdom discovered at Qustul and Ballana in Lower Nubia?" It is possible that Hansberry, too, would have posed such questions, considering that he requested participation in an archaeological expedition to the Sudan while at Oxford University. Hansberry received a fellowship to study at Oxford University during 1937–1938. He frequented the School of Anthropology at the University of Cambridge and conferred with A. J. Arkell regarding his work in the Sudan.[29] His advisor was L. P. Kirwan, and while at Oxford University he inquired about joining Kirwan in an expedition to the Sudan but was rejected because of his views concerning the "black African" character of Nubian civilization. Hansberry's goal in pursuing admission into the Sudan Expedition was to develop a "historical reinterpretation of archaeological work in Ethiopia and Nubia between the eighth century BC and sixth century AD" and to challenge the accepted notions that ancient Nubia was a feeble reflection of Egypt and most definitely not a "Negro" civilization.[30] Hansberry would eventually travel to Egypt and Sudan in 1953 on a Fulbright Fellowship, and while in the Sudan he was hosted by the Sudan Antiquity Services. Hansberry, during his time in the Sudan, was able to pursue his interests in documenting Nubian culture and history, and had he been permitted to participate in the Kirwan expedition he would have obtained firsthand archaeological knowledge regarding late-antique Nubia and the Noubadian kingdom. One may even speculate that he most likely would have observed the connections and similarities between the mounds on the Niger plateau he had written about in 1921 and the Noubadian tumuli that were discovered by Emery and Kirwan in the 1930s.

The Noubadian kingdom, at times described by scholars as "post-Meroitic" and the "X-Group" culture, emerged between the 4th and 6th centuries CE and was situated in Lower Nubia, between what is today southern Egypt and northern Sudan, roughly stretching from Aswan to Khartoum in the heart of the Nubian Nile Valley. Emery and Kirwan excavated the royal tombs of Ballana and Qustul in Lower Nubia—tombs that were initially believed to have been natural mound formations but were later discovered to be ancient Sudanic superstructures like the tumuli built during the Kushite and Kerma periods as well as Early Dynastic Egypt. Emery and Kirwan excavated sixty-one royal tombs at Qustul on the east bank of the Nile River and 122 royal tombs at Ballana, located on the west bank.[31] The Qustul royal tombs were dated circa 360 CE to 420 CE, and the Ballana royal tombs spanned the entire fifth century up until the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the early to middle 6th century CE.[32]

The Ballana tombs were not simply residences for dead monarchs but sacralized spaces where elaborate rituals were enacted to maintain connections between the ancestral and living communities. The Ballana tumuli were distinct from Qustul in the sense that most of the tombs uncovered contained the remains of royalty—mostly middle-aged adults—whereas at Qustul, in the earlier of the

tombs the average age of the humans remains was twenty and younger. Buried alongside the kings and queens of Ballana was an entourage of royal courtiers, relatives, attendants, servants, and, in some instances, horses. The bodies of the monarchs, both female and male, were adorned with silver crowns and an abundance of jewelry worn as necklaces, bracelets, pectorals, anklets, earrings, nose rings and toe rings—all found in situ on the bodies of the interred monarchs. The Noubadian tumuli were not unique in the Middle Nile Valley during this period. Similar mounds of comparable size have been excavated in the tumulus cemetery of el-Zuma in Upper Nubia. in the region of the kingdom of Makuria,[33] as well as sites of the Tanqasi culture in the vicinity of Meroe City.[34] The early Makurian tumuli at el-Zuma, situated between the third and fourth cataracts in the Dongola Reach in Upper Nubia, were very similar to the royal tumuli of Ballana and Qustul. These tombs evidenced jewelry and royal regalia and a diverse range of personal adornments including beads, pendants, earrings, chains, and crosses, and even ivory gaming pieces.

These colossal funerary structures pointed to an astonishing revelation beyond their own local provenance. The Noubadian tumuli illustrated two important considerations for our understanding of the Middle Nile Valley in relation to Sudanic-Sahelian Africa, especially western Sudanic civilizations. The Noubadian tumuli represented the longevity of this ancient Sudanic architectural tradition by revealing the continuity between Kerma and late-antique Nubia. Furthermore, the royal tombs of Ballana and Qustul displayed signature Sudanic cultural traditions such as the custom of the monarch's court accompanying him in death via retainer "sacrifice," the presence of animal interment, and the exhibition of weaponry. What we see in the Noubadian tumuli is a reemergence of classical Sudanese funerary traditions rooted in the ritual cult of ancestral veneration in late antiquity. Although the Noubadian kingdom represented the last pharaonic culture of the Nile Valley, their practice of building royal tumuli was a very ancient custom rooted in the classical Sudanese traditions of both the Middle Nile region and the Sahelian belt of West Africa. The mound tumulus was the first architectural symbol of the sovereign's return and reunification with the primordial mound upon his death. Derek Welsby, in analyzing the continuities between Noubadian and Kushite culture, comments on the mound tumuli as a distinguishing feature of the Ballana monarchs dating back to the Kerma period:

> Many of the discontinuities are in actual fact a re-emergence of very ancient local traditions. The most obvious of these is the use of tumuli as royal funerary monuments. This is the type of royal funerary monument we see at Kerma in the cemetery of the Kerma kings, and at el-Kurru in the burials of early Kushite rulers. The presence of sacrificial victims, both human and animal, was a very prevalent feature of the Kerma period, which continued throughout the Kushite period, and was spectacularly revealed by the excavations at Ballana and Qustul in the 1930s.[35]

These same features, as I will demonstrate below, were also prevalent in the tumuli of West Africa. No doubt the discovery of retainer "sacrifices" in the Ballana tombs, as well as royal tumuli in Mali, Northern Ghana, and Northern Nigeria, attest to their expectation of postmortem resurrection. Is this not why the royal interments required coregents, servants, food, weapons, and horses in the afterlife? The royal courtier and family served their monarchs in life and in death. Recent studies of this practice among Asante monarchs in the 19th century have shown that this custom was not about propitiating or placating the gods with blood but reinforcing an eschatology of immortality in which death was viewed as a continuation of life in the spirit world.[36] In Akan tradition it was expected that the royal court of the king would voluntarily commit themselves to this post-mortem duty, whereas malefactors, traitors, and prisoners of war were forcibly enlisted. It is reasonable suspect that a similar protocol was followed in both Middle Nile Valley and Sahelian funerary traditions. The various items and provisions discovered in Nubian and West African tumuli suggest a highly developed corporate ritual in which the family members of the deceased brought various items as offerings and tribute to the ancestors.[37] The tumuli served as immense shrines of spiritual power for the populace to ritualize and remember their connection to the ancestral lineage as consecrated in the royal tomb.

sPaving the Way: Neolithic Saharan-Sahelian Ceramics

The royal tumuli of Noubadia and early Makuria typified both ancient Nile Valley cultures and classical Sudanic-Sahelian traditions. This was not unique to the "post-Meroitic" period. The Middle Nile Valley had served as a crossroads for savanna pastoralists and riverine agriculturalists beginning from the 8th to the 4th millennia BCE. This is most reflected in the excavation of wavy-line and dotted wavy-line pottery, ceramic wares discovered in Upper Nubia in modern-day Sudan, situated in between the sixth cataract and the confluence of the Blue and White Niles. A. J. Arkell in the 1940s pioneered the discovery of these distinctive ceramic styles in the Central Nile sites of Khartoum Hospital (Early Khartoum), Khartoum Shaheinab, and el-Qoz. The first site was revealed to be of the Mesolithic period, and the latter two sites were dated to the Neolithic era. In recent decades, the Sudanese scholars Abbas S. Mohammed-Ali and Abdel-Rahim M. Khabir have expanded upon Arkell's work and conducted additional excavations identifying ceramic wares (wavy line) dated as early as the 8th millennium BCE in northern Sudan.[38] The ceramics retrieved from these sites, including both wavy-line and dotted wavy-line ornamentation, represented the material foundation of Mesolithic–Neolithic cultural traditions. Remarkably, these wares provide a window into understanding the extent to which the production of ceramics in the Central Nile and Saharan-Sahel belt served as a forerunner for the emergence of tumuli during the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. The wavy-line and dotted wavy-line designs are broadly dispersed geographically and across considerable periods of time. Mohammed-Ali and Khabir indicate that "they cover the area from the Red Sea to Mauritania and from the eastern Sahara to the savanna, an area of ca. 5300 km (east–west) and 1500 km (north– south)."[39] The pottery ranges from the 8th millennium to the 3rd millennium BCE and confirms that the Middle Nile Valley and the Sudanic-Sahel zones were interconnected via cultural exchange, trade, material culture, and climatic environment for three thousand years before the rise of Kerma Kush and dynastic Egypt.

Both dotted wavy-line pottery and wavy-line pottery exhibited regional variation within their own pottery types and between the two ceramic styles themselves. For instance, wavy-line pottery displayed six distinct subtypes, and the former produced three subtypes. The earliest date for both pottery assemblages have been authenticated for the 8th millennium BCE at the site of Sagai in Northern Sudan and Sarurab in the vicinity of Omdurman. Wavy-line pottery, although primarily distributed in the Central Nile Region, has limited dispersion in the south, central, and eastern Sahara, at such sites as Adrar Madet in Niger, the Hoggar Mountains in southern Algeria, and Delibo Cave and Jebel Eghei in Tibesti, which are all located in Chad.[40] These pottery types have also been found as far north as Gilf Kebir[41] in the Egyptian Western Desert, confirming Stuart Tyson Smith's contention that central Sudan was connected to Egypt during the Saharan Neolithic era via eastern Saharan trade routes.[42] The key sites in the Egyptian and Sudanese Sahara from south to north were the Wadi Howar and its westward course to the Ennedi Plateau in Chad and then northward to the Uweinat mountain range at the Egyptian-Libyan-Sudanese tripoint—and finally continuing north to Gilf Kabir. Both wavy-line and dotted wavy-line ceramics have been discovered at all these sites, demonstrating the south-north axis of Middle Nile Valley cultural extension.[43] Dotted wavy-line pottery figured more prominently in the Sahara-Sahel, and it also appeared there earlier than its counterpart wavy-line pottery, extending as far as Niger and Mali. In fact, the excavation of these pottery assemblages along the Wadi Howar, Ennedi Plateau, and Niger Plateau point to the east-west axis that connects the Lake Chad basin and Benue-Niger River complex with the Middle Nile Valley (Fig. 3).

Chad and the Wadi Howar served as the crossroads between the Nile Valley and central West Africa. The Ennedi Plateau is approximately 565 miles northeast of Lake Chad, and therefore its proximity to the Lake Chad basin connects the Nile Valley with what are today Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The city of Katsina, the heart of the medieval Hausa kingdom in northern Nigeria, is nearly 1,200 miles west of the Ennedi Plateau, and its central location in the Sahel belt served as an entrepot that mediated the trans-Sahelian culture and trade that connected the Niger Valley to the Nile Valley.

By the late 4th millennium BCE, in the vicinity of the third cataract emerged the Sudanic-Sahelian

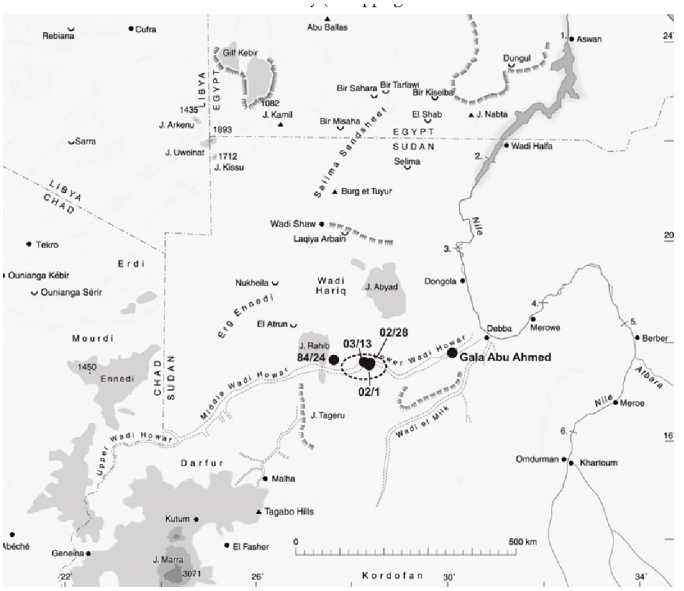

Figure 3: Map of Wadi Howar (Yellow Nile) in Chad and Sudan (Jesse 2006, 43 fig. 1).

kingdom of Kerma, an ancient Kushite culture that arose within what McDonald labels as a "Trans-Saharan Pastoral Technocomplex dating to between 3800 and 1000 BC."[44] Ancient Kerma and its northern counterpart, C-Group Nubia, existed in the Middle Nile region from about the mid-3rd to the mid-2nd millennium BCE and was contemporary with the Old and Middle Kingdoms of ancient Egypt. Yet, equally significant, the ancient kingdom of Kerma was also a part of a Sudanic-Sahelian tradition that extended from Sudan to Mauritania in West Africa. As much as ancient Kush was a "corridor to Africa" it is also served as a Sahelian corridor linking the Nile Valley with the Niger Valley, and this was most reflected in the presence of tumuli that spanned the entire Sahel zone.

Bilād as-Sūdān: The Making of Medieval Sudanic Tumuli

What is notable is that the successive kingdoms of ancient Nubia—including Kerma, Napata, Meroe, Noubadia, and early Makuria—built royal tumuli for their deceased monarchs, a practice that persisted in Sudan until the early 6th century CE and in Central and West Africa until the 14th century CE. This ancient Sahelian tradition of mound building is what I define as "Classical Sudanese," and it is important to note that this Classical Sudanese tradition was observed by Arab historians, scholars, and chroniclers prior to the Islamization of the Sahel belt and West Africa. Al-Ya'qūbī and al-Masʿūdī, two Arab historians writing in the 9th and 10th centuries CE, described what they perceived as the major kingdoms of Sahelian Africa—they called it *Bilād as-Sūdān*, "The Land of the Blacks." Despite employing a racialized geography that classified a diversity of African nations and ethnicities under the homogeneous construct of "blackness,"[45] their views also reflected the Arab encounter with trans-Sahelian polities and their cultural practices. Al-Ya'qūbī identifies the Nūba (Nubians), the Buja (Beja), the Ḥabasha (Abyssinia), and the Zanj as the "Sons of Kush" and the "Blacks" who inhabited the eastern Sahel and the kingdoms of the Zaghāwa, Hausa, Kawkaw (Gao), and Ghana who dwelt in the western savanna.[46] Al-Masʿūdī reiterates al-Ya'qūbī's geo-ethnic descriptions except for including the Kingdom of Kanem as one of the states in western Sudan.[47] In the 11th century CE, the Arab Andalusian historian al-Bakrī provides an account of the royal funeral practices surrounding the king of medieval Ghana. He highlights the tradition of royal *sati* burial and the erection of the sovereign's mound:

> Their religion is paganism and the worship of idols. When the king dies, they build a huge dome of wood over the burial place. Then they bring him on a bed lightly covered, and put him in inside the dome. At his side they place his ornaments, his arms and the vessels from which he used to eat and drink, filled with food and beverages. They bring in those men who used to serve his food and drink. Then they close the door of the dome and cover it with mats and other materials. People gather and pile earth over it until it becomes like a large mound. Then they dig a dish around it so that it can be reached only from one place. They sacrifice to their dead and make offerings of intoxicating drinks.[48]

The excavation of the tumulus of El Oualedji by the French lieutenant Louis Desplagnes confirmed al-Bakrī's ethnographic gaze on the Mandé-controlled Empire of Ghana. Al-Bakrī was implying that the rationale underlying the ritual and cultural practices of royal burial and mound building were embedded in the indigenous worldview of the people—something that was labeled as "paganism," according to Islam. For al-Bakrī, the construction of tumuli and the accompanying rituals was a religious endeavor that emanated from the other elements he described, such as sorcerers, sacred groves, idols, offerings to the dead, and the "tombs of their kings."[49] The constellation of practices surrounding the royal tumuli rituals described by al-Bakrī are startlingly analogous to the customs of mound burial in Early Dynastic Egypt, Kerma Kush, and the Ballana culture of the Noubades. Levtzion also recognized the cultural symmetry between mounds of Senegambia and Mali and ancient Nile Valley civilizations:

> This form of royal burial (reminiscent of the custom of ancient Egypt and known among other African peoples) is sometimes regarded as a trait of divine kingship. Excavations in two mounds near the lacustrine region of the Niger revealed tombs with burial rooms. In each grave there were two human skeletons with weapons, ornaments and beads. The tomb also contained other human skeletons and animals' bones. V. Fernandes describes similar burial among the Malinke of the Gambia. The king was buried in his own home together with his weapons. His senior wife and people of his entourage were also brought in. The tomb was then closed, and a big mound of earth was heaped over the tomb to the height of a house.[50]

Levtzion referenced the tumuli of the Inland Niger Delta, alluding to the mounds of El Oualedji and Koï Gourrey, which are dated from the 11th to the 13th century CE.[51] Within these tombs were discovered personal adornments such as bracelets, rings, and beads still worn by human remains—and nearby, the remains of horses with their ornamental trappings of harnesses, bells, and plaques. These Niger tumuli were more than 3,000 miles away from the Noubadian tombs of Ballana and Qustul, yet the cultural semblance between these two traditions in the eastern and western savanna point to common a trans-Sahelian heritage.

Levtzion also referred to the burial rites of the Malinke of the Gambia, underscoring the similarity between the monumental megaliths and tumuli of Senegambia and the mounds of the Inland Niger Delta. His assessment of West African royal tumuli as resonant with the practice in ancient Egypt and other African cultures is significant and instructional. He suggested that the burial practices were a "trait of divine kingship." As I have stated previously in this paper, divine kingship in Africa presupposes an ideology of postmortem resurrection. This ideology of resurrection also informed the burial rites and customs of tumuli building in the West African savanna. Considering that Nubian studies was founded as a discipline in 1972, only a year prior Levtzion's *Ancient Ghana and Mali,* scholars for nearly fifty years have neglected a promising field of research with tremendous transdisciplinary potential. By establishing disciplinary exchange between West African and Nile Valley archaeology, the explanatory power that could be gained through mutual dialogue is nothing short of extraordinary. For the remainder of this study, I will provide a synopsis of key tumuli sites in Senegambia, Mali, northern Ghana, and northern Nigeria with the aim establishing West African mounds as a repository of knowledge and cultural practices that illuminates both Nile Valley and western Sudanic traditions.

The Tumuli of Senegambia and Mali

The West African savanna from Chad to the Senegambian coast has a proliferation of stone and earthen mounds that range in date from the 5th millennium BCE to the 14th century CE.[52] Archaeologists have documented 10,000 tumuli in the tumulus zone of Senegal alone.[53] In the northern tumulus zone of Senegal, nearly 7,000 earthen tumuli were surveyed, all dating to the 2nd millennium CE. Tumuli in the southeastern region of Senegal bordering and surrounding the Gambia often described as the "megalith zone" contain 3,000 tumuli dating from 200 BCE to 100 CE.[54] The megaliths represent a distinct cultural heritage and archaeological enigma in this region of Senegal and the Gambia. Six hundred of the tumuli in the megalithic zone are either flanked, encircled, or implanted with stone megaliths. Megaliths indepen-

dent of tumuli range in date from the 1st to the 15th century CE.[55] What is of particular interest to this study are the megalith-circled mounds and the stone circle mounds that are common in southeastern Senegal and the Gambia. The megaliths present a variety of arrangements on various sites. Some are used as frontal stones for tumuli, and others are organized in parallel lines in between tumuli sites. The most intriguing for this investigation are the megaliths that are implanted in tumuli and those that encircle tumuli. Excavations of megaliths dated to the 12th and 13th century CE at Wanar, Senegal, included approximately twenty megalithic monuments and have substantiated "that the burials had preceded the erection of the standing stones, and at least two types of grave were identified: large pits sealed by a mound and deep pits with a narrow mouth, similar to storage pits."[56] Gallay also identified megalith-encircled tumuli in a 1980–1981 University of Geneva mission to Mbolop Tobé in Santhiou Kohel, of Sine-Saloum, Senegal, where the stratigraphic series of a monument labeled "circle 8" consisted of a large pit with a deep burial deposited on the floor, with a tumulus covering the deep burial. The mound was then installed with monoliths around its perimeter and even implanted within the mound itself.[57] Three individuals were recovered from the Mbolop Tobé mounds. This monumental megalith variation does not characterize all the structures in the megalith zone of Senegal and the Gambia, yet it is as prominent, and its distribution is as extensive as other megalith variations.

Scholars have proposed that the cultural origins of these structures may lie among the Sosse, a Mande people, and the Wolof, a Serer people. The practice, although not prevalent, continues to be practiced among the latter ethnic group up to the present time. Yet a trans-Sahelian perspective reveals that both the earthen tumulus and the megalith-circle tumuli of the Senegambian region share undeniable affinities with *Kerma ancien I* (mid-3rd millennium BCE) and C- Group Nubian burials of the same period in ancient Kush. Excavations led by Matthieu Honneger at the Kerma Eastern Cemetery has uncovered several tumulus burials that are encircled by steles.[58] Honneger states that the C-Group burial was a pit "covered with an earthen tumulus .... surrounded by steles."[59] These steles are in fact equivalent in function and arrangement to the megalith mound burials of Senegambia—and they also represent the earliest example of these monumental structures in the Sahel zone and throughout Africa. Honnegar describes:

> The presence of steles around a tumulus is indicative of the importance of the presence of the C-Group Culture in the Kerma cemetery. These steles are made from either sandstone shaped by piquetage and polished, or from the shaping of smaller plates of ferruginous sandstone, which last are most often present in Sector 28. The distribution-map of those steles found in situ, set around a tumulus, or in secondary positions (on the surface ofs the tumulus or the infill of the grave) shows that this practice is limited to Sectors 28, 27 and the Sector 1.[60]

The stele encircled mounds of C-Group Nubia coexisted with Kerma stone-circle tumuli in the Eastern Cemetery. A stone-circle tumulus has also been identified in the A-Group Nubian culture and dated to the mid-4th millennium BCE in the Eastern Desert, in the vicinity of Kom Ombo.[61] What is distinct about the A-Group stone tumulus discovered near Kom Ombo is that it also had planted within it a stele, therefore utilizing funerary practices later found in both Kerma and C-Group tumuli. I will demonstrate below that both the A-Group and Kerma stone-circle tumuli type has also been excavated in northern Ghana. It is interesting that by the *Kerma ancien II* period the stele-encircled tumuli disappeared and were entirely replaced by the Kerma earthen-mound type among C-Group Nubians.

In 1971, G. Thilmans and C. Descamps excavated the "Ndalane tumulus" in the Kaolack region of Senegal. One of the largest tumuli yet discovered in Senegal at 40 m by 2.5 m, it offers revealing insights about the earthen mounds in the western extension of the trans-Sahelian corridor. Uncovered from this superstructure were five to six individuals buried with their gold tubular and carnelian beads, as well as various copper and iron objects. The Ndalane tumulus approximates the earthen mounds from the *Kerma Classiqu*e period (mid-2nd millennium BCE) in the Middle Nile Valley. These Kerma mounds range from 30 to 90 meters in diameter. The Ndalane tumulus is not as large as the largest tumuli at Kerma, and neither it does have the complex internal mud-brick infrastructure and vast amounts of

bucrania on the outer perimeter, but it certainly adheres to the Sahelian tradition of the oldest earthen mounds in Africa. The Ndalane tumulus did reveal a peculiar range of dating. McIntosh indicated that charcoal from below the inhumation of the Ndalane earthen tumulus date as early as 4811 BP and 4770 BP, which places the structures during the Neolithic.[62] Yet charcoal from above the inhumation dated from 1157 BP, which starts the dating from the 2nd millennium CE. At the least the tumulus site was connected to the Neolithic Saharan ceramic tradition, which presupposes trans-Sahelian interactions for a period of 4,000 years.

It is the tumuli in the Inland Niger Delta in Mali that evoke the character and size of their Kerma counterparts. K. C. McDonald recognizes the similarities between the two architectural traditions. He states, "Tumuli particularly of the Early Kerma (2500–2050 BC) and Middle Kerma (2050–1750 BC) periods have apparent affinities in size, and shape and construction with typical Saharan tumuli."[63] He also suggests that they are different due to the size and scale of grave goods in Early Kerma burials, especially as it pertains to sheep sacrifices, personal adornments, human sacrifices, and pottery. However, these differences are not as pronounced as McDonald implies because West African tumuli contain all these items, even if not the same proportion as Kerma tumuli. Desplagnes reports that the mound of El Oualedji contained oxen, sheep, various pottery containers, bones of two scattered human bodies, and various copper bracelets, rings, ornaments, and iron weapons, among other articles.[64] McDonald has also led excavations of the southern Gourma tumuli in the Middle Niger, between Timbuktu and Gao in Mali. He identified two tumuli fields in the region of Windé Koroji and Zampia. The latter site consisted of nine structures that ranged in size from 14 to 40 m in diameter.[65] McDonald states that the southern Gourma tumuli dated from 900 to 540 BCE are the earliest monuments in the Middle Niger Valley and possibly all Sub-Saharan West Africa.[66] These tumuli were also contemporary with the kingdom of Napatan Kush in the Middle Nile Valley. I realize my survey of a small selection of the Senegambian and Malian tumuli is hardly comprehensive or exhaustive. Given the limitations and goals of this article, I have simply offered a distillation of an extensive body of archaeological research on this topic. My aim, however, is to prompt serious, rigorous, transdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration as opposed to asserting a definitive argument. Therefore, I will conclude this paper with a survey of tumuli in northern Ghana and northern Nigeria.

The Tumuli of Komaland, Northern Ghana

It is not commonly known that the Volta River basin is shared between six countries in West Africa: Ghana, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo, and Mali. One of the major tributaries, the Black Volta, which flows along the border shared between Ghana and Ivory Coast, reaches upstream into the Niger River basin via Burkina Faso, the source of the Volta River system. It is the Sourou River in Burkina Faso, a tributary of the Black Volta that flows from a point in Mali, that connects the Inland Niger Delta with the Volta River basin. The Volta River system is the intermediary that links the Gulf of Guinea and the forest zone in West Africa with the Sahel. It was a highway for trade and the movement of people, ideas, and diverse ethnic cultural traditions. In northern Ghana, in the While Volta frontier, a former student of Peter Shinnie, Ghanaian archaeologist Professor James Anquandah conducted excavations in Komaland, a complex Iron Age site comprising 600 stone circle mounds.[67] The Komaland site is located at the convergence of the Sisili-Kulpawn basin, two tributaries of the White Volta. The basin is centrally located in a region that links the Sahelian and trans-Saharan trading entrepots of "Jenne and Gao with the states of Mossi, Dagomba, Mamprussi and Akanland." [68] Komaland is located only 250 to 310 miles from the Inland Niger Delta.[69]

Komaland consists of twenty-seven villages near the Sisili and Kulpawn rivers, and it is the villages of Yikpabongo East and Yikpabongo-Bakodeng where there is the greatest concentration of stone circle mounds. Anquandah mapped 105 mounds in Yikapabongo East and fully excavated two mounds in the region. More recent excavations have occurred since 2006 at the University of Ghana under the direction of Professor Benjamin Kankpeyeng, who has continued producing research on the mounds and the notable terracotta figurines that were ubiquitous throughout the tumuli.[70] This article, however, will focus on the findings of Anquandah's original excavations in the early 1980s. The stone circle mounds he diagramed ranged in size from 4 to 18 m in diameter, and their structural design and contents reflected cultural practices common to the Sudanic-Sahelian mound-building tradition and

specifically mound types unique to Kerma Kush and their contemporaries in the Niger and Senegambian basins.

The Komaland stone circle mounds are dated from the 6th to the 14th century CE, and the typical stratigraphy of the mounds consist of a half-meter pit serving as the substructure covered by an earthen mound superstructure. The mound is then surrounded by a circle of stones. This tumulus structural design, as I have already shown in my discussion of Senegambian megalith mound burials, finds its most ancient antecedent in the Sahel among the A-Group and the Kerma Kush stone circle tumuli of the 3rd millennium BCE. The ancient prototype for the Senegambian megalith mounds were stele-encircled mounds of C-Group Nubia. Ancient Kerma stone circle mounds are the prototype for the stone circle mounds of Komaland, Ghana. Honneger's description of the funerary practices underlying the Kerma stone circle mounds is elucidating, "The body was laid out in a pit approximately 2 metres deep, resting on his right side in a flexed or a fetal position, with his head to the east. The pit was covered with an earthen tumulus which was decorated with carefully arranged black and white stones in the Kerma Culture."[71] The stones were arranged in a circular fashion and pottery was placed around the tumuli. The human remains in the Kerma mound pits were placed on a bovine pelt and covered by one. The deceased were wearing beads, earrings, bracelets, and rings. During the *Kerma ancien II* period (late 3rd millennium BCE), the grave goods were expanded to include "bows and arrows in the male graves, a wooden stick in the female ones, utilitarian pots, and sacrificed sheep and/or dogs."[72]

Anquandah comments that the Komaland mound pits contained human and animal remains, pottery, cowries, grinding stones, brass castings, and terracotta sculptures. The human inhumation was very similar to the Kerma model. The orientation of the body positioned the head to the southeast, and pots were organized in the tomb near the deceased's head. Other pots were used to contain drink-offerings, and the near the corpse were sacrificed goat, pigs, and sheep. As in the Kerma mounds, in Noubadian tumuli and the tomb of El Oualedji in Mali, the bodies of the deceased were ornamented with number of adornments, such as brass or copper anklets, bracelets, and necklaces. The terracotta figurines dispersed among the Komaland stone circle tumuli have received a great deal of scholarly interest, even exceeding that devoted to the mound sites in which they were discovered. They have been variously interpreted as libation vessels, magico-medicinal items, ritual surrogates, and scapegoats representing either ancestors and clan deities or apotropaic devices to dispel malevolent forces. My initial thoughts regarding the Komaland terracotta figurines were that they functioned like shabtis in ancient Egyptian tombs. Shabti figurines symbolized the king's courtiers and entourage that served the deceased monarch in the afterlife upon his resurrection. This view is not necessarily incompatible with other perspectives, since in African indigenous cosmologies invocation of the ancestors and deities to accompany the deceased's travels in the spirit world is requisite for a safe passage. Likewise, "medicine" is necessary for psychic immunity against potential inimical forces that the deceased may encounter. It is not unusual that people of Komaland would have incorporated and synthesized all these practices. As I have previously stated, tumuli were ancestral shrines that supported familial and communal rituals—and even in Kerma and late-antique Nubia, chapels were constructed within or adjacent to mounds for this purpose. The Komaland mounds were no different in this regard.

The Tumuli of Durbi Takusheyi, Northern Nigeria

Nearly 500 miles west of Lake Chad sit the medieval towns of Katsina and Daura in northern Nigeria, the nucleus and birthplace of ancient Hausaland. Hausaland was situated in the Kebbi (Sokoto) River basin, a tributary of the Niger River and positioned in the center of the Kingdoms of Kanem-Bornu to the northeast and the Sokoto Caliphate, which emerged in the 19th century, to the southwest. Katsina and Daura has been described as the center of *bilād as-sūdān*, strategically located in the Sahel, linking the Lake Chad Basin to the Niger-Benue River complex.[73] Hausaland was also significant for trans-Saharan trade in the western savanna, connecting with the city of Gao, once a capital of the empires of Mali and Songhay, approximately 700 miles to the northwest, on the Niger Bend (Fig. 4).

Durbi Takusheyi, a Hausa village situated in between Katsina and Daura, is the home of eight tumuli, tombs believed to have signified the foundation of the Hausa kingdom. Durbi Takusheyi was a sacred burial site related to Daura, the most ancient town of Hausaland, which spawned the

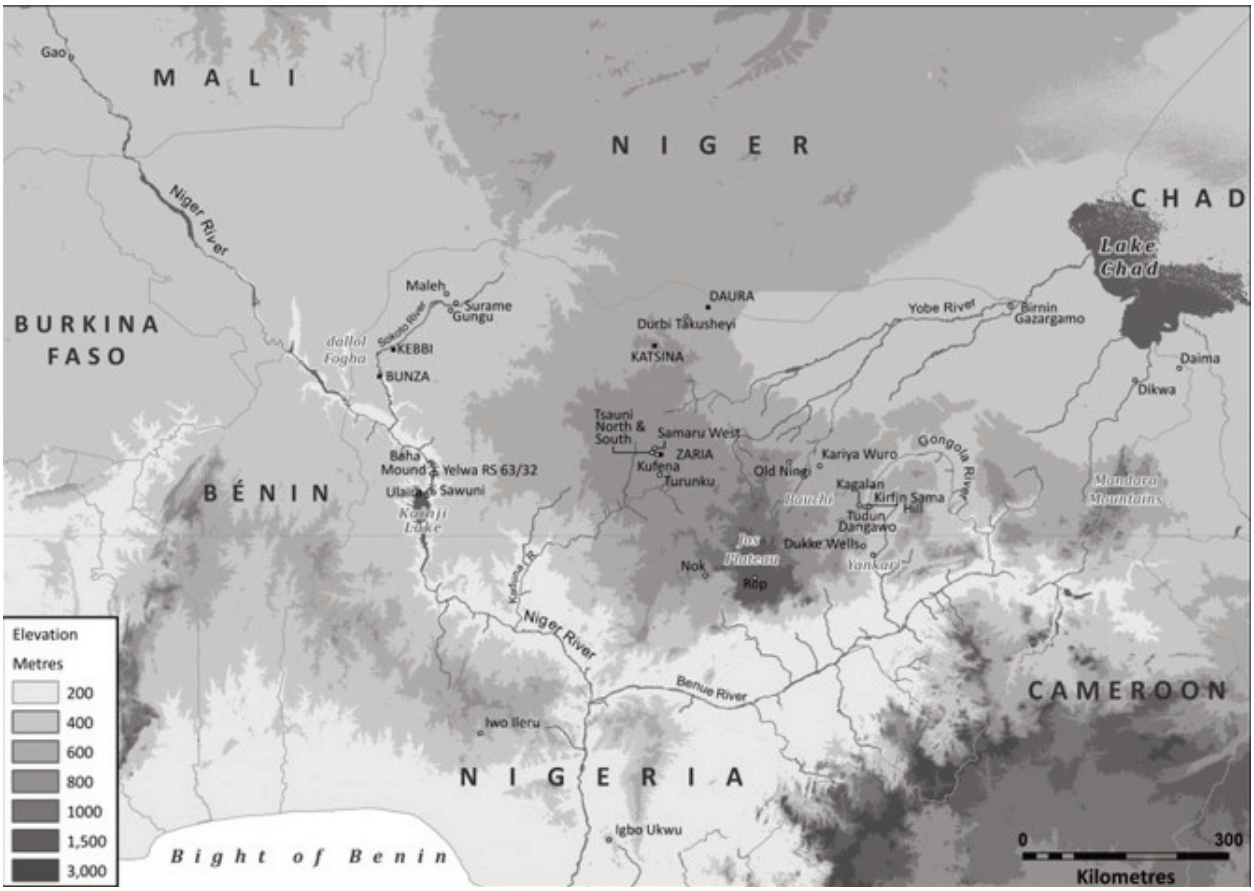

Figure 4: Map of West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin (Sule and Haour 2014, 3 fig. 1).

Hausa *bakwai,* the original seven Hausa city states. The legend of Bayajidda, an oral tradition preserved and written beginning in the 16th century, is the founding national epic of Hausaland. The story gives an account of a nobleman originally from Baghdad named Bayajidda, who fled his native country due to political turmoil and settled in the kingdom of Bornu. Unable to remain in Bornu because of conflict with the ruling sultan, he fled again to the town of Daura, where he found a land ruled by a line of female monarchs. The tradition as recorded by H. R. Palmer states that queen of Daura was preceded by nine other "heathen" queens.[74] Unfortunately, the city of Daura was held hostage by a snake named Sarki, who guarded a well and prevented the townspeople from drinking water except on Fridays. Bayajidda confronted the snake Sarki and cut his head off, liberating the town from his tyranny and control of the only water source. For his valor, the queen of Daura agreed to marry Bayajidda and share her kingdom with him. The two had a son name Bawo, and he gave birth to the founders of the original seven city states of Hausaland. This is a condensed version of the Hausa founding epic, yet it possibly reveals that the pre-Islamic rulers of Hausaland were a dynasty of female monarchs reminiscent of the *kandake* of Meroitic Kush. It is possible to infer that the categorization of "heathen" to refer to this dynasty of queens insinuates that their culture was rooted in African indigenous traditions,

and this may also extend to the practice of constructing royal ancestral tombs, the tumuli of Hausaland.

It was the British resident officer, Sir Herbert Richmond Palmer, who first excavated tumuli at Durbi Takusheyi, in 1907. In his article "Hausa Legend and Earth Pyramids in the Western and Central Sudan," he referred to Sahelian tumuli as "pyramids of earth."[75] Eight-five years would elapse before the German Research Council, led by Dierk Lange at Bayreuth University, launched a new excavation campaign of the Durbi Takusheyi mounds, in 1992. I will provide a synopsis of the findings of both excavations and discuss their significance in the context of Sahelian tumuli traditions as well the mounds of ancient Kush and late-antique Nubia. Palmer conveys that the folk tradition was that the tumuli of Durbi Takusheyi were royal tombs of the kings of Katsina, so the emir of Katsina authorized the first excavation under his direction. Palmer identified seven tumuli and stated that they occupied a territory that was covered with large granite boulders and trees. The vicinity of the tumuli covered a half square mile and in the center was a "circle of huge granite boulders" that he believed were natural formations. He also mentioned that each of the tumuli had a large baobab tree beside it.[76] Palmer does allude to importance of sacred trees and rocks among "pagan rites," without explicitly specifying that the Durbi Takusheyi mounds were sacred sanctuaries amid wooded groves. Yet from his description of the tumuli site, it is apparent that stones, rocks, and wooded areas are common elements in African indigenous shrines. The circle of huge granite boulders is also noteworthy and evocative of the Senegambian megaliths.

The largest of the mounds Palmer surveyed was 90 feet across the base and 25 to 30 feet high.[77] He stated that he eventually excavated two of the tumuli and the structure and contents of both mounds were the same.[78] Within the center of the mound was a circular mud-house, a central chamber called, according to Palmer, a *kudandam* in the Hausa language.[79] This chamber was at ground level roofed with straight rafters while its floor was a pit. Within the structure was a powdered skeleton of a human being whose remains had obviously decomposed. It appeared that the body was interred in an upright or semi-upright position.[80] In the second tumulus the body was interred upright as well and supported by a tree branch that was vertical to the spine of the occupant.[81] This image evokes the Osirian symbolism of the *djed* pillar, representing the spine or backbone of Osiris, which ensured the resurrection of the deceased king. This is speculation, but tumuli symbolized resurrection at least in their Middle Nile Valley context. The various objects found in the tumuli were bowls, water-jars, grinding stones, lamps, iron spears and the remains of sheep bones.[82] The deceased were given provisions to live in the afterlife—a common theme which spanned across diverse tumuli traditions throughout the Sahel.

In 1992 Dierk Lange excavated three mounds at Durbi Takusheyi under the auspices of the German research project at Bayreuth University.[83] These three tombs were identified as T4, T5, and T7 to distinguish the tumuli from the ones Palmer excavated, which were labeled as T1 and T3 by the German team.[84] Each of the three mounds that were excavated had a single interment in the center of the mound, as well as several burial goods consisting of metals, stone, cowries, and cloths and hides.[85] The body interred within T4 was complemented by a metal rod and spiked anklets, and the right forearm were decorated with ivory rings.[86] The deceased seems to have donned a cap embroidered with cowrie shells. The tumulus was dated to the mid-13th century CE. The floor of the burial chamber was a grave pit, and in a very similar fashion as the stone circle mounds of Komaland and Kerma Kush, the designers of T4 erected a mound surrounded by stones to protect the chamber floor from damage.[87] The interment from tumulus 5 followed the same pattern as T4 and T7,[88] and this tomb also revealed an exceptional artifact, a metal bowl decorated with a frieze of an Arabic inscription, declaring that its purpose was to protect and serve the deceased in the afterlife.[89] The dates for the Durbi Takusheyi tumuli range from the 13th to the 16th century CE.[90] Considering their location in Central West Africa and their proximity to the Lake Chad and Benue-Niger River basins, their relationship to tumuli in the Middle Nile Valley, especially the Ballana and Makurian mounds of late-antique Nubia, is apparent and undeniable. Durbi Takusheyi was not the only tumuli site in the central Sahel zone. Tumuli burials have been discovered in the southern Lake Chad basin at the site of Daima, near the shared border of Nigeria and Cameroon, and the archaeological site of Kissi in Burkina Faso.[91] The trans-Sahelian

corridor, the crossroad that interconnects both the Middle Nile Valley and the Niger River basin attests to a common heritage rooted in Sahelian earthen pyramids—a tradition that we may now investigate as two aspects of a single continuum.

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Notes

1 Hansberry 1921.

2 Kamene 2016. See also Alford 2000.

3 Kamene 2016, p. 21.

4 Desplagnes 1907.

5 Frobenius 1913. Leo Frobenius originally published a German popular edition under the title *Und Afrika Sprach* (*Volksausgabe*), 2 vols. Berlin—Charlottenburg: Vita, Deutsches Verlagshaus, 19I2–13). He also published a scientifically extended edition which included 3 volumes. See Ita 1972.

6 Hansberry 1921, 265.

7 Hansberry1921, 266.

8 Hansberry 1921, 270.

9 Desplagnes 1907, 56–57.

10 Desplagnes 1907, 59–61.

11 McIntosh and McIntosh 1986; see also Connah 1987, 127. Neither Desplagnes nor Frobenius established scientific dates for the El Oualedji Tumulus.

12 Desplagnes 1907, 54

13 Frobenius 1913, 26

14 Hansberry 1921, 271.

15 Spencer 2011.

16 Wilkinson 2003, 233.

17 Dann 2009, 39.

18 Diop 1974, 157–158. See also Garenne-Marot and Polet 1997 for an illustration by Cheik Anta Diop (1960) of the tomb (tumulus) of a king of Ghana according to the texts of Al Bakri.

19 MacDonald 1998, p. 92.

20 McIntosh and McIntosh 1993; Magnavita and Thiaw 2015; Magnavita 2017. For a historical overview of this archaeological research, See Connah 1987. 108–130.

21 MacDonald 1998, 87–91.

22 Anquandah 1987.

23 Palmer 1922. For more recent excavations and research, see Gronenborn et al. 2012.

[24] Edwards 1998.

[25] Edwards 1998, 192.

[26] Ibrahima Thiaw, personal communicaation, 10 June 2019.

[27] Emery and Kirwan 1938.

[28] Faraji 2012, 33–37.

[29] Kamene 2016, 39

[30] Keita 2000,s 102.

[31] Emery 1948, 45, 57.

[32] L. P. Kirwan 2002, 2.

[33] Then-Obłuska 2016. See also Then-Obłuska 2017.

[34] Lenoble 1989; Wyżgoł 2018.

[35] Welsby 1996, 202.

[36] Wilks 1988.

[37] Dann 2009, 235.

[38] Mohammed-Ali and Khabir 2003.

[39] Mohammed-Ali, p. 36.

[40] Mohammed-Ali and Khabir 2003, 42.

[41] Mohammed-Ali and Khabir 2003, 42.

[42] Smith 2018.

[43] Mohammed-Ali and Khabir 2003, 45.

[44] McDonald 2003, 104.

[45] Gomez 2018, 43–57.

[46] Vantini 1975, 70–79.

[47] Vantini, 124–143.

[48] Levtzion 1973, 25–26.

[49] Levtzion 1973, 26.

[50] Levtzion 1973, 26.

[51] Marot and Mille 2007. The authors conducted elemental analysis of numerous copper-based objects from the tumuli of Koï Gourrey and El Oualadji artifacts. The artifacts were primarily iron and copper alloy and consisted of "personal ornaments—bracelets, rings, beads—all found with one of the two bodies lying in the burial chamber," as well as "horse harnesses and ornamental trappings: bells, plaques and harness parts."

[52] MacDonald 1998, 85. McDonald places the temporal range for West African savanna tumuli at "4000 BC to 500 AD." See Gronenborn et al. 2012 for the excavation of a 14th-century CE mound in northern Nigeria.

[53] McIntosh and McIntosh 1993, 75. See, Magnavita 2017, 101. These scholars reference the primary archaeological work, Becker and Martin 1982.

[54] McIntosh and McIntosh 1998, 75.

[55] Alain et al. 1982.

[56] Laporte et aal. 2012.

[57] Gallay et ala. 1982, 220. See also Thilmans et al. 1980.

[58] Honneger 2018.

[59] Honneger 2018, 29.

[60] Honneger 2018, 29.

[61] Gatto 2005.

[62] McIntosh and McIntosh1993, 75.

[63] MacDonald 1998, 92.

[64] Desplagnes 1907, 59.

[65] MacDonald 1998, 87.

[66] MacDonald 1998, 91.

[67] Anquandah 1997, 173. See also Posnansky 2017. Professor Anquandah was the very first university undergraduate to major in archaeology in an African university, and as a student he worked with Peter Shinnie in the Sudan.

[68] Anquandah 1997, 91.

[69] Anquandah 1997, 91.

[70] Kankpeyeng and Nkumbaan 2009. See also publication produced by the joint archaeological mission of the University of Manchester Museum and the University of Ghana, Insoll et al. 2013.

[71] Honneger 2018, 28–29. See also Bonnet and Honegger 2020.

[72] Honneger 2018, 29.

[73] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 257.

[74] Palmer 1922, 232.

[75] Palmer 1922.

[76] Palmer 1922, 226.

[77] Palmer 1922, 226.

[78] Palmer 1922, 226.

[79] Palmer 1922, 226.

[80] Palmer 1922, 226–227.

[81] Palmer 1922, 226.

[82] Palmer 1922, 227.

[83] Gronenborn et al. 2012.

[84] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 259–260.

[85] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 260.

[86] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 260–262.

[87] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 260.

[88] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 263.

[89] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 265.

[90] Gronenborn et al. 2012, 268.

[91] Maceachern 2019; Magnavita 2019.s