A000-Afr-Burkina Faso-Niger River Delta-Bura Terracotta Head-3rd to 11th century CE



Fig. 1Afr-Burkina Faso-Niger River Delta-Bura Terracotta Head-3rd to 11th century CE

**Case No.: 6**

**Accession No.**

**Formal Label:**

**Display Description:**

**Bura culture** refers to a set of Iron Age archaeological sites in the lower Niger River valley of [Niger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger) and [Burkina Faso](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burkina_Faso) which haves been radio-carbon dated as starting in the 3rd century CE and lasting until the 13th century. This culture was discovered in 1975 and it was not until 1983 that the first archaeological excavations were undertaken. Bura belongs to a set of sites in this part of the middle valley of the Niger which cross the west of the Republic of Niger for 450 km; On a course 250 km long and about 150 km wide between the Malian border and the meanders of the "W". The site of Bura is located in a circle about 1 km in diameter open towards the south-east and dominated by control mounds of the continental terminal 10 to 20 m high.

Bura includes 3 types of sites that are not always easy to distinguish from each other:  
 1) Sites with necropolis proper characterized by a particular kind of coffin jars or anthropomorphic funerary urns made up of pottery surmounted by heads of statuettes, placed upside down on the ground and containing human skeletons in Asinda-sikka. These sites include 2 distinct archaeological levels. This is the type of site from which the present head has come.   
 2) Sites of religious altars and ritual ceremonies characterized by piles of large blocks of stone form a sort of flattened tumulus or esplanades such as Asinda-Sikka, Karey-Tondi, Jajé-Tondi or Mebera-Tondi There are fragments of feet of tripod vases and fragments of pottery in the form of small painted cylinders.  
 3) Housing sites difficult to identify. But the discovery of fragments of tripod vases and sometimes of small piles and alignments of large blocks of stone testify to a human presence. Also on the site are quarrying wastes of quartzites or flint representing the site of arched framework and thin ceramic of Kosendo-gorizo ​​located to the west of necropolis, behind a hill.  
  
 The general articulation of the system of occupation of space sites in Bura seems to revolve around two poles, the necropolis and the religious altar. The necropolis is almost always located in protected places. In the necropolis, anthropomorphic terracotta coffins or anthropomorphic funerary urns were laid upside down on the original floor and were then covered by a remobilization of the wind after the 13th century.  
 Funerary urns are generally surmounted by heads of anthropoid statuettes presenting a generally anthropomorphic form. Three types of funerary urns can be distinguished:  
    1. Longiform or tabular vases 70 to 80 cm high and 10 to 30 cm in diameter, surmounted either by complete statuettes of a person or mounted rider. These vases serve as supports for statuettes and sometimes form their bodies.  
    2. Hemispheric vases 20 to 40 cm high and 10 to 30 cm in diameter generally topped by statuette heads. This is probably the origin of the current terra cotta head.   
    3. Semi-ovoid jars, approximately 50 to 70 cm in diameter and 40 to 60 cm in diameter, supporting either complete statuettes or statuette heads.

**LC Classification:**

**Date or Time Horizon:** 3rd to 11th century CE

**Geographical Area:**

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:**

**Cultural Affiliation:**

**Medium: terra cotta**

**Dimensions:**

**Weight:**

**Condition:**

**Provenance:**

**Discussion:**

**References:**

Miller, Duncan E. and N.J. Van Der Merwe. 1994. “Early Metal Working in Sub Saharan Africa,” *Journal of African History* 35: 1-36;

Stuiver, M. and van der Merwe, N.J., 1968. “Radiocarbon chronology of the Iron Age in sub-Saharan Africa,” *Current Anthropology*, *9*(1): 54-58.