



## **PALYNOLOGICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF LAND USE BY THE OWU PEOPLE IN MOTAKO, SOUTHERN NIGERIA**

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Owu is one of the oldest and most important Yoruba speaking societies in Nigeria. There are about 43 Owu communities, Motako is one of them. This site is located in the Osun State, southwestern part of Nigeria. Family farming, hunting, and oil palm production are the main economic activities. This site was studied within a palynological, archaeological, and chemical set of studies aimed at understanding the human influence on the landscape over time. Twelve soil samples collected from different layers of the northern wall of an excavated refuse mound of 120cm depth were subjected to standard pollen preparation treatment. Pollen and spores were counted alongside charcoal particles. The phosphate content of the samples was also determined. Five pollen zones were established according to the pollen, lithological and archaeological data. Zone I (120-85 cm) - lower phosphate content, coupled with few objects and organic remains found, mainly hammer stones and palm kernels, and the low pollen diversity indicates that the area was likely to be used for activities related to palm oil production. Zone II (85-70 cm) - we suspected that the deposit is gradually turning into a refuse mound as indicated by the increase in organic matter content which corresponds to the increased concentration of phosphate and other cultural materials, in addition to the increase of pollen grains percentages of ruderal species. Zone III (70-45 cm) - the refuse mound is fully established with high activity as reflected in the peak in phosphate content, increased diversity of kitchen wares, organic remains and pollen of ethnobotanical significance. Zone IV (45-25 cm) - probably the refuse mound is beginning to be deactivated and/or used for another activity such as gardening for the cultivation of plants with several domestic purposes. Zone V (25-0 cm) - there was a reduction of both organic and inorganic materials. However, a further increase was noted in the frequency of the unbroken palm kernel which got to its peak in this horizon, a possible indication of decreasing palm kernel breaking activity in the area and a signal of abandonment of the mound as a refuse dump site. Comparing the results of the evaluated site we suppose the management and land use were different from time to time.

Key-words: Archaeopalynology , Anthropocene, Human Influence

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