

## **Archaeology of Northern Nigeria**

**Muhammad K. Aliyu,**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examines the history of the emergence of Archaeology as a discipline in Nigeria from the colonial era. The discipline began as a result of accidental discoveries across Nigeria of Archaeological materials. This paved the way for the introduction of professional Archaeological investigation and studies in Nigeria and Nigeria's Universities. The paper highlighted some notable archaeological and heritage sites in Nigeria like Ile-Ife, Benin, Sukur, Turunku, Igbo Ukwu, Daima, etc. The article eventually focuses more on archaeological works done in Northern Nigeria in especially Hausaland, Niger Area, Jos Plateau, Nok, Buachi and Lake Chad Area.*

**Keywords:** Igbo Ukwu, Ile-Ife, Hausaland, Nok, Turunku, Heritage, Northern Nigeria.

### **History of Archaeology in Nigeria**

Archaeology as a discipline developed slowly in Nigeria due to its late coming compared to other disciplines in Africa. Western education to the region came with curriculum in disciplines like English, Mathematics, History, etc, but Archaeology came to Nigeria in a rather accidental form. The history of the discipline in Nigeria goes back to the colonial era. The first Archaeological digging took place in the ancient Yoruba sacred city of Ile-Ife in 1910 by a German

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*Muhammad K. Aliyu,  
Department of Archaeology,  
Ahmadu Bello University,  
Zaria, Nigeria*

Anthropologist and Archaeologist, Leo Victor Frobenius (1873-1938). He was prompted by a report on the area he read in Timbuktu, Mali. He dug up ancient terracotta figurines and searched for artefacts related to the ancestral Yoruba deities. Later in 1928, there was the accidental discovery of terracotta figurines in the process of tin mining on the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria. The colonial government commissioned Bernard Fagg, an Archaeologist and colonial Assistant District Officer to conduct a rescue operation on the archaeological sites in 1939. Other accidental discoveries occurred in other parts of the country like Benin and Igbo Ukwu.

The continued accidental occurrence and discoveries of Archaeological material in Nigeria motivated the colonial administration to plan for the proper investigation of such sites for documentation. In 1939, the colonial Government was encouraged to set up a Nigerian Museum which later in 1943 resulted into the establishment of the Nigerian Department of Antiquities (Folorunso, 2011). The colonial government appointed professional archaeologists to take charge of the management of archaeological resources. That marked the beginning of professional archaeological practice in Nigeria.

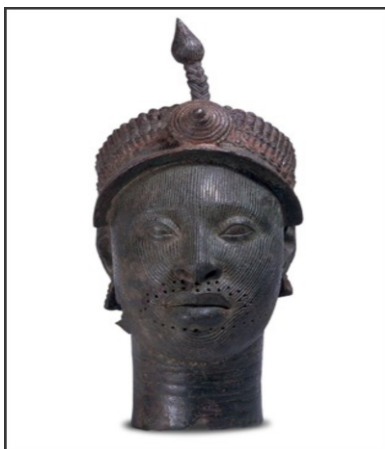
Today, statutory responsibility for archaeological activities rests with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and the universities. In the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 (Chapter 242), the National Commission for Museums and Monuments Act places the responsibility of research permits, control of excavations and the 'discovery of objects of archaeological importance' with the Commission. This body has been in existence since a legislative Act of 1979 dismantled the Antiquities Commission and the Federal Department of Antiquities then in existence, creating the NCMM in their place. A reorganisation of the NCMM some 25 years later paved the way for the creation of a separate Directorate of Research and Training, with the remit of handling the research responsibilities of the Commission. The Directorate is also solely responsible for the oversight of archaeological research in Nigeria on its behalf (Sule and Haour, 2014).

### **Some Notable Archaeological and Heritage Sites in Nigeria**

Archaeological sites abound in Nigeria through which most of the history and cultures have been studied. Some of the major archaeological and Heritage sites in Nigeria are:

#### ***Ile-Ife***

The Ile-Ife site was first investigated by Leo Frobenius (1873—1938), the German Anthropologist, who made numerous expeditions to Africa. He was the first European to spread the news of the existence of a high civilization in Nigeria, although he did not believe that the culture is of indigenous origin to the area. In November 1910, Frobenius arrived at Ile-Ife, the sacred city of the Yoruba, about which he had heard during his previous expeditions to West Africa. He was particularly interested in learning about the image of the Yoruba god of seas and wealth, Ori Olokun, the equivalent of the Greek Poseidon and the Roman Neptune. He excavated the sacred grooves and collected terracotta and stone sculptures as well as bronze of Ori Olokun which he wanted so much to see. Frobenius was astounded by the quality of the Ife sculptures reminiscent of ancient Greece and proof that once upon a time, a race, according to him, far superior in strain to the Negro that had settled here. He therefore believed that the works were not of indigenous origin. (Folorunso, 2011). This site was later investigated by many other Nigerian archaeologists.



*Ife brass head (14th-15th Century (London Museum))*

***Benin***

Excavations and fieldwork in and around Benin City in the years 1961–1964 have established the outlines of an archaeological sequence. This sequence is based on radiocarbon dates for stratified deposits, on a statistical examination of pottery form and decoration, and on datable European imports. The sequence suggested by the evidence extends from about the thirteenth century A.D. to the present time, although the survival of locally found ground stone axes in Benin ritual object indicates that the area may well have been inhabited since Late Stone Age times. There is evidence for the artistic use of copper and its alloys from at least the thirteenth century onwards, but it is not known how long it had already been in use. Smithed and chased tin bronzes were found in a thirteenth-century context; whereas cast leaded brass was found in use in a nineteenth-century context. There is little evidence for lost-wax casting in Benin in early times. (Connah, 1981).



*Benin head*



*Head of a Benin King*

***Igbo Ukwu***

The Igbo-Ukwu site in Anambra State, Nigeria, revealed bronze artifacts dated to the 9th century A.D. which were initially discovered by Isiah Anozie in 1939 while digging a well in his compound in Igbo-Ukwu, an Igbo town in Anambra State, Nigeria. As a result of these finds, three archaeological sites were excavated in 1959 and 1964 by Thurstan Shaw which revealed more than 700 high quality artifacts of copper, bronze and iron, as well as about 165000 glass, carnelian and stone beads, pottery, textiles and ivory. They are the oldest bronze artifacts known in West African and were manufactured centuries before the emergence of other known bronze producing centers such as those of Ife and Benin. The bronzes include numerous ritual vessels, pendants, crowns, breastplates, staff ornaments, swords, and fly-whisk handles (Shaw, 1978)



*Intricate bronze ceremonial pot, 9th century, Igbo-Ukwu.*

## *Nok*

The Nok culture site was discovered in 1928 on the Jos Plateau during tin Mining. Lt-Colonel John Dent-Young, an Englishman, was leading mining operations in the Nigerian village of Nok. During these operations, one of the miners found a small terracotta of a monkey head. Other finds included a terracotta human head and a foot. The colonel, at a later date, had these artifacts placed in a museum in Jos. In 1932, a group of 11 statues in perfect condition were discovered near the city of Sokoto. Since that time, statues coming from the city of Katsina were brought to light. Although there are similarities to the classical Nok style, the connection between them is not clear yet. Later still, in 1943, near the village of Nok, in the center of Nigeria, a new series of clay figurines were discovered by accident during the same mining activities. A worker had found a head and had taken it back to his home for use as a scarecrow, a role that it filled (successfully) for a year in a yam field. It then drew the attention of the director of the mine who bought it. Later, new discoveries had been found in an increasingly larger area, including the Middle Niger Valley and the Lower Benue Valley. These discoveries paved way for several researches in the area by for example, Bernard Fagg, Joseph F. Jemkur and lately by Peter Bruenig.



*Area of the Nok Culture*

***Daima***

Daima is the name of a high mound about 10.5 metres high at the Nigeria-Cameroon border east of Dikwa, the old capital of the Bornu Kingdom. The mound was formed between the sixth century B.C. and the eleventh century A.D. An excavation of this mound by Graham Connah in 1965 and 1966 revealed that the earliest occupants of the site used stone and bone implements, as indicated by the presence of polished stone axes and bone fish harpoons. Later, these Stone Age people were succeeded by an iron-using people. The transition between stone-using and iron-using is placed, according to radiocarbon dating, between the fifth and sixth centuries AD. These stone, bone and iron users made clay figurines whose style seems to be homogeneous throughout all the occupation levels. However, the stone and bone users made representations only of humpless cows, while the iron users added models of humped cows, goats or sheep, human beings and wild animals.



*Some of the Daima terracotta figurines*

### ***Turunku***

Turunku traces its history back to the Bayajida, legend of Daura. Bawo, the son of Bayajida gave birth to Gunguma who left Daura and settled first at Kanawuri. From Kanawuri he moved to Rikoci, then to Kargi and then Wuchichchiri where he became a great hunter before finally moving to Turunku where he became the Sarki (King). In the line of descend of Gunguma's children came Bakwa. Bakwa had two daughters, Amina and Zaria. Amina, according to oral traditions, became a troop commander and moved about Kasar Zazzau (Zazzau Territory) and beyond conquering creating cities and settlements respectively. Zaria on the other hand took over the rulership from her father and moved to Kufena. From Kufena, she finally moved to create the present-day Zaria City. Amina was the eldest and her name is linked to the original wall which has a length of about 25km round the city of Zaria. Zaria was the youngest and gave birth to the name of the modern emirate and its capital. Bakwa himself died in Turunku and to date his tomb is at Turunku, visibly one of the important monuments around. Bakwa's memory is revered as a great ruler, who freed his country from the terrors of the Kwarrarrafa (Jukun) invasions. The Emirs palace in Zaria is sometimes called 'Gidan Bakwa' (Bakwa's house).

Bakwa is indeed given a lot of credit in the historical evolution of Turunku and Zazzau Emirate. It is said that he consolidated neighboring territories in the region thus bringing about a strong geopolitical entity that became Kasar Zazzau (Zazzau Emirate). Apart from consolidating Kasar Zazzau, Bakwa is said to have initiated the construction of Turunku walls, the largest so far in the whole of Hausa land. It was for these achievements that Bakwa was given a befitting burial as a result of which we have the tomb. Amina was said to be a great warrior, conquering many parts of Hausa land stretching to as far as Bauchi in the East and extending to as far as the River Niger in the South, building walled towns where ever she conquered, such that the people of Katsina paid tribute to her and the men of Kano. For this reason therefore, ancient town walls in Zazzau Emirate and other parts of the Hausa States are always referred to as 'Ganuwar Amina' (i.e. Amina's Walls). In this way Zazzau became the most extensive of all the Hausa states because many of the towns of Bauchi were



included in it. According to some oral account, Amina is said to later died in Attagara, around the middle Nigerian territory near Idah now in Kogi State, Nigeria.



*Remnant of a section of the fallen defensive walls of Turunku*



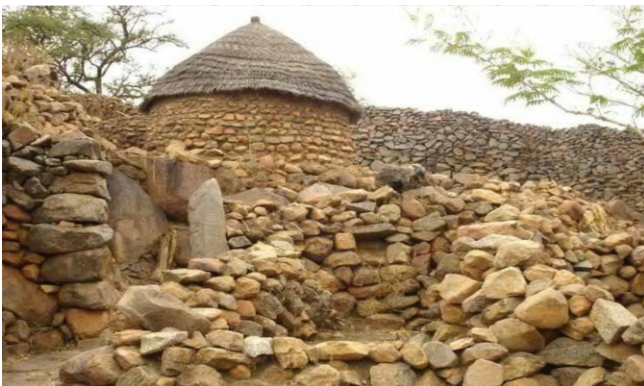
*Inside the Turunku Archaeological Site*

***Sukur***

Sukur site is located in Madagal Local Government area of Adamawa State in Nigeria along the Nigeria-Cameroun border. It is about 290 km from Yola, the Adamawa State capital in North-eastern Nigeria. It is a hilltop settlement which stood at an elevation of 1045m. The total land area covered by the site is 1942.50 ha. The site is an ancient settlement with evidence of a palace, iron smelting technology and strong political institution dating back to the 16th century. The site was designated world heritage in 1999. It is the first landscapes in Africa that has received such recognition. It is a testimony of a continuing spiritual and cultural tradition that has endured for centuries (David, 1998).



*Sukur Cultural Site*



*Remains of a hut and defensive walls at the Sukur Cultural Landscape*

### ***Oshogbo***

The dense forest of the Osun Sacred Grove, on the outskirts of the city of Oshogbo, is one of the last remnants of primary high forest in southern Nigeria. Regarded as the abode of the goddess of fertility Osun, one of the pantheons of Yoruba gods, the landscape of the grove and its meandering river is dotted with sanctuaries and shrines, sculptures and art works in honour of Osun and other deities. The sacred grove, which is now seen as a symbol of identity for all Yoruba people, is probably the last in Yoruba culture. It testifies to the once widespread practice of establishing sacred groves outside all settlements. A century ago there were many sacred groves in Yorubaland: every town had one. Most of these groves have now been abandoned or have shrunk to quite small areas. Osun-Osogbo is in the heart of Osogbo, the capital of Osun State; founded some 400 years ago in the southwest Nigeria, at a distance of 250 km from Lagos. It is regarded as the largest sacred grove to have survived and one that is still revered.



*Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove*

### **Practice of Archaeology in Nigeria**

The practice of professional Archaeology began in 1943 with the first scientific excavations carried out in Ife. The excavations were carried out by John Godwin of the University of Cape Town, Bernard Fagg and Kenneth Murray from the Nigerian Department of Antiquities. As regards professional training, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) manages the only specialised Institute for Archaeology and Museum Studies, based in Jos, which awards a postgraduate diploma in Field Archaeology and Museology. This institution provides practical training that licenses a trainee's capacity to independently conduct excavations. This diploma, or alternatively a minimum of a Master's degree in archaeology from a higher education institution, certifies formal competence to secure excavation permits and to direct excavation in any part of Nigeria. While any project involving an international partner requires a permit issued by the NCMM, excavations conducted under the auspices of archaeology departments within accredited national universities have typically operated without the need for these.

As for institutions for teaching and research, only four federally funded universities (out of a total of 36) possessed departments awarding degrees in archaeology: the University of Ibadan in the south (established in 1971), the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in the southeast (established in 1981), Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in the north (established in 2006) even though has been awarding degrees as Archaeology Unit under Department of History and the University of Jos in north-central Nigeria.

The archaeological projects conducted soon after independence in 1960, and the development of Nigerian archaeologists as late Bassey Andah, in collaboration with expatriate archaeologists such as the late Thurstan Shaw, is credited primarily to Ibadan. The Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, had deep-rooted research interests on themes and sites related to Stone Age periods, and hosted the *West African Journal of Archaeology* (WAJA) through which was published the majority of the research of Ibadan's archaeologists.

The Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria Department of Archaeology (the Archaeology Unit, History Department) in Kaduna State had collaborated with the defunct Centre for Nigerian Cultural

Studies (CNCS), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; championing collaborative research projects with its fellows since the early 1970s, and saw the work of Graham Connah in the Chad Basin. Expatriates and Nigerian Lecturers have also played great role in the Development of the Zaria Archaeological School. Such expatriates included the late Kwaku Effah-Gymfi, Boachie Ansah and John Sutton. The Archaeology Department in Zaria has focused on providing training in field techniques and ensures that second to fourth year undergraduates spend up to two weeks on fieldwork annually. Its lecturers and postgraduate students are expected to demonstrate their field skills in reconnaissance, survey, excavations and the conduct of ethnographic studies and collection of oral traditions. The focus is more on Historical Archaeology. Several field schools within the past two decades have taken place at the walled site of ancient Turunku, which is located 40 km south of Zaria. It is said to be the origin of present Zaria City. Field works have been arranged in several other sites in Northern Nigeria such as Kargi, Tsauni, Samaru West and Kufena (all in Kaduna State), Zungeru (in Niger State), Bocos (in Plateau State), Gozaki, Dayi, Karofi, Wurma, Birchi, Tandama, Faskari, Rimaye, Karfi, Mahuta, Yaribori, Dabai and Radda (all in Katsina State), Kwatarkwashi and “Yandoto ( in Zamfara State), Surame (in Sokoto State), Shikam, Mkar and Ushongo (in Benue State), etc. This has made the Zaria Field School Program the best in the country. The Zaria Archeological School is credited with the journal, *Zaria Archaeology Papers* (ZAP), which serves as an outlet for most of Archaeology Field Research Reports in Northern Nigeria and beyond.

The Archaeology Programme in the Department of Archaeology and Tourism, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, was developed largely by Nigerian Archaeologists, Notable among them were late Fredrick Anozie, Alex Ikechukwu Okpoko and Edwin Okafor. The department had ventured into giving a link between Archaeology and tourism. The new Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies in University of Jos, Plateau State, is tied to Heritage Management. There were some attempts in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU) Lapai, Niger State, Taraba State University and Bauchi State University, to open some Departments of Archaeology but for lack of man-power they could

not materialise. What exists today in all Nigerian Universities is the inclusion as part of History curriculum some introductory Archaeological courses meant to introduce Archaeology as a discipline and as a great source of History.

### **Archaeology of Northern Nigeria**

Archaeology has contributed immensely to the reconstruction of the history of Northern Nigeria. Northern Nigeria comprise of 19 out of the 36 States making up Nigeria.



This part of the country is the home to over 300 ethnic groups speaking about the same number of languages. Some the ethnic groups are the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv, Igala, Idoma, Ebira, Birom, etc. Most of these groups have archaeological evidence related to their past. Even though oral tradition is a valid source of their history, archaeological evidence has helped to complement it immensely.

Northern Nigeria is a vast area to be adequately and extensively covered in a presentation of this nature. An attempt here will be made to only look at some major areas that some greater level of archaeological work has been conducted. These areas will include, the Hausaland, the Niger River area, the Jos-Bauchi area and the Lake Chad region.

### a. Archaeology of Hausa land

Hausa land refers to the area largely occupied by Hausa speaking people in Northern Nigeria covering up to 7 out of the 19 Northern States. The Hausa people are largely in Nigeria, but some can be found across the border in Niger Republic. In search for the history of the Hausa people, some Archaeologists like Haour, 2003 (*Ethnoarchaeology in the Zinder Region, Republic of Niger: The Site of Kufan Kanawa*) and 2010 Haour, 2010 (“Kufan Kanawa: the former Kano? The archaeology of a 600-year old site in Niger.” In *Being and Becoming Hausa: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by A. Haour and B. Rossi, 141–163) 2010, have gone across the border to the Republic of Niger in trying to trace the origin of the Hausa people and cultures. Some Hausa speakers in Nigeria could trace their origin to that area.

Several other Archaeologists and Historians like Gronenborn, D. (ed.). 2011 (*Gold (Slaves and Ivory: Medieval Empires in Northern Nigeria)*, Gronenborn, Adderley, Ameje, Banerjee, Fenn, Liesgang, Haase, Usman, and Patscher, 2012 (“Durbi Takusheyi: A high-status burial site in the Western Central Bilād Al-Sūdān.” *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 47: 256–271), (Sutton, 1976a (“Kebbi Valley preliminary survey 1975.” *Zaria Archaeology Papers* 5: 1–17) and Obayemi, 1977 (Archaeology and the history of Western Hausaland: An Introductory Contribution. *Ahmadu Bello University Northern History Research Scheme. Fourth Interim Report (1971–1976)*, 72–82) and so on, have looked within the Northern Nigeria for the understanding of the Hausa History and cultures (Sani and Haour, 2014). There are recent works by many other Archaeologists like Aliyu, 2004 (*A Historical Archaeology of Faskari Abandoned Settlement in Kastina State*), Aliyu, 2007 (“Factors and Processes for Urbanization in Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of Faskari and Kogo Archaeological Sites” in *Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts*), Mangut and Aliyu, 2008 (“Turunku in the History of Zazzau: An Archaeological Consideration”), Aliyu et al, 2015 (The Legendary Queen Amina: Some Archaeological Considerations) and Aliyu and Isa 2017 (“Location of Settlements and their Features in Turunku, Northern Nigeria – An Archaeological Perspective” in *Archaeological Contributions in Honour of Peter Breunig Winds of*

*Change*. Edited by Rupp, Christina, Franke & Wendt, 2017) have looked at some factors that led to the urbanization of some prominent Hausa cities like Katsina and Zaria. The factors have led to the emergence of several Hausa settlements even though many remained at the level of small towns.

The remains that have been considered by archaeologists in Hausa land can be grouped into: hill settlements (inselbergs), large-scale plains occupation sites (sometimes walled) and iron-working sites. The first group of remains is made up of settlements built on top of small and bigger hills or inselbergs that served as protection for the inhabitants. There are hundreds of such settlement remains in Hausa land. Examples of such hill sites are Turunku (Aliyu and Isah, 2017), Dutesnwai (Aliyu, 1991), Dumbi, Kufena, Kwatarkwashi (Aliyu, 2007), Faskari (Aliyu, 2004) and so on. The second group is made up of large and small settlements on plain land meant for occupation. These are exemplified by the large walled Hausa cities of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Daura, Surame, and many others. There are also remains of other smaller settlements like Gozaki, Gimba, etc. These walled settlements were developed through years of expansion. The walls were built for protection against external invasions. Some cities like Turunku have combined city walls and hill settlements. Turunku developed walls within walls to expand the city due to population growth. The third group is made up of Iron working sites in Hausa land. Many of the sites among the first and the second group have developed the technology of iron working. Iron was smelted and smithed for the production of household implements, farming tools and war arsenals. Some of the iron working sites in Hausa land are Samaru West, Tsauni (Aliyu, et al, 2009 and 2013), Pantaki, Tandama, Tureta area in Sokoto State, etc.

#### **b. Archaeology of the Niger River Area**

The Niger River area here refers to between the Niger-Nigeria-Bénin border and Kainji Lake. The most prominent archaeological enquiry is a cluster of sites around Yelwa, investigated in the 1960s as part of an international archaeological salvage project and subsequently, in the 1980s, by Nigerian archaeologists. (Sule and Haour, 2014).



Kainji Lake was created in 1968 by the construction of Kainji Dam and covers an area of 1300 km<sup>2</sup>. After a first survey in the early 1960s by Robert Soper on behalf of the Federal Department of Antiquities, a three-year plan was drawn up and the Kainji Rescue Archaeological Project (KRAP) was established, leading to the excavation of about twenty sites over a 100 km stretch between Bussa and Yelwa. At least three separate teams were involved. Among these prominent sites are Baha Mound and Yelwa RS 63/32.

Baha Mound, surveyed and excavated by Hartle in 1968, is described as the most spectacular and the largest of 23 such sites identified by project (Shaw, 1978). The artefacts recovered have not been the subject of detailed publications, but an overall summary by (Nzewunwa, 1983). Hammer stones and grinders, stone beads and bracelets, iron points, hoes, jewellery, fish hooks, slag, glass crucible fragments, terracotta figurines and clay smoking pipes are part of the materials found. There are tens of thousands of sherds including painted, rouletted, incised and burnished wares. Architectural structures (granary foundations, fallen house walls, floors and burnt clay ditches) and burials with associated beads, iron bracelets, hoes, quartz ear and lip plugs and a bronze anklet have also been recovered. Five radiocarbon dates (Hartle, 1972) are available; four fall within a narrow period 1335-925 BP but a fifth [N-824], at a depth of 460-480, is considerably older, at 2140 ± 110 BP, and initial occupation seems to have begun even earlier since 140 cm of occupational remains lay below this (Sule and Haour, 2014).

Another key site in the Niger River Area is the mound of Yelwa RS 63/32, just four kilometres away and on the opposite (west) bank of the River Niger which was excavated in 1966 by A.J. Priddy. This mound provided evidence for an occupation spanning the period 1965-1145 BP. (Shaw, 1969). This site yielded evidence of burnt clay and potsherd pavements, iron implements, body adornment items and terracotta figurines. There were also four burials chambers with grave goods including pottery vessels, ivory and iron bracelets (Fagan, 1969). The later archaeological examination of the region through rescue operations on ethnographically significant shrine sites, confirms its archaeological value. Those excavations revealed a rich assemblage including a group of red-slipped vessels interpreted

as offertory bowls, scattered iron rings and bracelets, a small bronze statuette of a seated human figure, iron artefacts, four nested pottery vessels, an assortment of cobbles, offertory vessels and lamps and iron anklets (Breternitz, 1975).

Further archaeological work in the Kainji region continued with the survey and testing in the 1980s of the sites of Ulaira and Sawuni on what had by then become the shores of a lake. The site were discovered accidentally and reported to archaeologists by the Emir of Yauri after objects were discovered eroding out of the lake shore and in 1980 six trenches was excavated.. A large number and great variety of domestic and agricultural iron tools, grindstones, pottery, weapons, ornaments, iron slag, cuprous rings, shell beads, clay figurines and floor pavements of laterite, shell, pebbles, were discovered from contexts that span across the mid-first to mid-second millennia AD (Nzewunwa, 1993).

According to some scholars, the finds at Yelwa RS 63/32 and Baha Mound suggest a long-distance route linking the Sahara and the coastal forests; however, due to insufficient analysis and publication of the material culture, the view for now remains a hypothesis. However the potential of the Niger River area is still largely untapped.

**c. Archaeology of the Jos-Bauchi and the Nok Culture Area**

The Jos Plateau certainly witnessed one of Nigeria's earliest controlled excavations, conducted by Bernard Fagg (Fagg, 1972) at Rop rock shelter and motivated by the need to rescue artefacts from destruction from tin mining (Folorunsho, 2012). But it is the Nok terracottas that have attained international fame, having received widespread attention from archaeologists, museums and private art collectors since Fagg's definition of the 'Nok Culture'.



*A Nok Terracotta (Courtesy Breunig, P)*

There was from the 1990s, a sustained archaeological investigation in the Jos Plateau by Mangut and Mangut in the Ron-Kulere area. Although a majority of the results remain unpublished, a particular strength of this research was the sustained use of ethnoarchaeological and historical archaeological methods. Archaeological correlates include hilltop occupations sites, standing monoliths, circular house foundations, stone benches, rock hollows, rock shelters have been dated by traditions to the past 200 years, as well as iron-smelting furnaces described as similar to those found at Samaru West (Mangut, 2011). At the outcome of the research, it was suggested that the region was populated in the last 500 years from the southern Bauchi area with historical linguistic evidence suggestion connections to the Chad Basin on a longer time-scale (Mangut, and Mangut, 2010). However, the occupation sequence remains hypothetical given the absence of any absolute dates. (Sule and Haour, 2014).

Unlike the Jos Plateau and the Nok area, the Bauchi region is not much popular in the area of archaeological report and has only just recently begun attracting increased research interests. Later Stone Age materials were already known there through the work of Allsworth-Jones around Kariya Wuro (Allsworth-Jones, Lowe, and Rosen, 1986). The Yankari National Park has also been archaeologically investigated by Aremu, David. This site is one of the

largest evidence of iron working in Nigeria (Aremu, 1999). He highlighted two iron-smelting clusters. A possible parallel nevertheless comes from a complex at recently investigated Kirfi sites, about 30 km north of Yankari, where iron-smelting remains and settlements have been studied (Sule, 2010). Other types of archaeological occurrence have been reported within the Yankari area, including former cave dwellings and rock art, as well as the abandoned Dukke wells, concerning which oral narratives mention slave raiding and Yankari's situation on slave-trading routes (Horlings, 2012).

Archaeological reconnaissance and surveys of abandoned settlements in Bauchi have shown the potential of the area in terms of its visible archaeology. For example, (Darling 2004) focuses on the historic period, documented standing remains at Old Ningi and combined this with historical sources to suggest that the town prospered out of its resistance to the nineteenth-century Jihad led out of Sokoto by Uthman ibn Fodio. That old Ningi possessed a cavalry force of up to 4000 strong horses that was used between 1846 and 1902 to wage war against neighbouring emirates in resistance to the social reforms brought forward by the Sokoto Jihad (Darling, 2004).

As suggested by some of the research discussed above relating to the Jos Plateau, the settlement histories of Jos and Bauchi may be linked. Many societies in the Jos region today state that their origins and routes of migration can be traced to the immediate southern Bauchi area. Wider connections still are possible; a number of oral and historical sources mention westerly migrations to the Jos Plateau from the Chad Basin through the southern Bauchi area, but empirically driven archaeological data are needed to examine this question convincingly.

#### **a. Archaeology of the Lake Chad Region.**

The Chad Basin is among the best archaeologically investigated area within Nigeria. The earliest work in the area began as early as 1857 with the explorations of Heinrich Barth, who identified archaeological mounds in the area that were later to attract the attentions of archaeologists (Garba, 1997). The extent of large-scale, potentially urban settlement of the area was established later, notably

through field surveys around Lake Chad by Bivar and Shinnie (Bivar, and Shinnie, 1962). In 1957 Rosman and Cohen excavated at the site of Birnin Gazargamo, described as a former Kanem-Borno capital (Connah, 1976).

Graham Connah's research that culminated in to the book titled '*Three Thousand Years in Africa*' is what truly laid the foundations for the understanding of the archaeology of the Chad Region. The main site was mound at Daima, where Connah exposed over 10m of deposits, providing a chronological sequence for the Chad Basin as a whole. Following the earliest layers known as Daima I and II, the Daima III phase is tentatively dated to AD 700–1150 (Fagan, 1967). The finds included smoking pipes, clay beads, pottery, clay animal figurines and cowry shells (Connah, 1981). Features recovered included daub remains, hard-baked clay floors, burials, potsherd pavements and pits. The pits were probably dug as borrow-pits for building materials or grain storage, a phenomenon also noted widely in the Yobe Valley (Garba, 1999 as cited by Sule and Haour, 2014).

The Daima sequence stimulated a sustained research interest in the Chad Basin with the aim of understanding the region's cultural and environmental dynamics. From the early 1990s onwards, research into the settlement systems and palaeoecological conditions that influenced human occupation here was expanded through multidisciplinary research efforts sponsored by the University of Frankfurt in collaboration with the University of Maiduguri. The focus of this work was on food production, artefact specialisation, ceramic characterisations and evidence of settlement preferences across the longer term. (Breunig 2009 as cited by Sule and Haour, 2014).

One of the prominent features of the Chad Basin as a whole is the existence of historical records, including, from the sixteenth century, internal sources, which can be married with archaeology. Relating to the recent period, one can cite the investigation at Dikwa at the supposed palace of Rabeḥ Fadl Allah, who seized power in 1893 and caused the collapse of the Borno Empire. A daub pit for the preparation of plaster was discovered nearby, the function of which was argued to relate to activities of the French army after their defeat of Rabeḥ (Gronenborn, and Magnavita, 2000).

Birnin Gazargamo has also received sustained attention from archaeologists, paralleling its repeated coverage in historical texts where it is referred to as a former capital of Kanem-Borno, believed to have been founded in 1472 and to have existed until its destruction by Fulani troops in 1808. The site is surrounded by an earthen enclosure about six kilometres long, within which are a series of occupation mounds and several baked brick building foundations, including, at the centre, a complex said to have been the 'palace site'(Connah, 1981). These surveys have covered an area of 100,000 m<sup>2</sup> and have encompassed both the palace ruins and their immediate vicinity. They revealed the presence of a number of wide courtyards and corridors, possible circular house floors and what seems to have been a mosque with a massive minaret (Magnavita, 2011). The report sets these findings against the descriptions of the town made by Barth in the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Conclusion**

Archaeology in Nigeria has attracted a lot of enthusiasm by scholars and the public alike. The later is out of curiosity to understand the mission and the vision of the discipline and the role it can play in Nation building. Whereas the former, are largely motivated by the idea of advancing the frontiers of knowledge; especially to debunk an earlier notion about the non existence of history in the region. Archaeology is therefore playing its great role for providing evidence on the history and cultures of the Nigerian region. There still remain the challenges of adequate archaeological laboratories for analysis and interpretations. Dating laboratories are absent. Samples have to be shipped for dating in either Europe or Japan. Many of the sites in Northern Nigeria have not been dated due to such challenges. There is the need therefore for collaborations between archaeologist in Nigeria and other parts of the world to assist put such sites in proper contexts and also explore more sites in order to understand more of the people of Northern Nigeria and Nigeria in general.

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