

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF OLD BIRNIN GWARI

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Mother for believing in me.

CERTIFICATION

This thesis has been examined and found worthy as partial fulfillment for the award of masters degree (M.A) in Archaeology.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEACH AT OLD BIRNIN GWARI

Archaeological work in North western Nigeria in the last six to seven decades has exposed many archaeological sites going back to the Stone Age. Prominent sites include, Nok (Fagg 1968, Shaw 1981), Yelwa (Soper 1963, Priddy 1970), Samaru (Sutton 1976, Effah-Gyamfi 1980), Kufena (Sutton 1977), Turunku (Mortimore 1970, Effah-Gyamfi 1986), Maleh (Obayemi 1970, Sutton 1975), Soro (Obayemi 1972, Sutton 1975), Takusheyi (Gronenborn 2003) and others. These sites have revealed abundant archaeological materials related to different phases of human development in this area from the Early Stone Age.

The current research is focused on old Birnin Gwari where despite its significance as one of the ancient political centers of the Gbagyi (Ibrahim 1992) no detailed archaeological work has been done. Amber recently attempted a site description of the abandoned hilltop settlement. She conducted an archaeological reconnaissance of the site identifying and describing various features found on the site. She gave a report based on surface collections of pottery describing pottery types, vessel forms and decorative motifs (Amber 2008). The present study is a buildup on Amber's work, seeking to provide more archaeological details on the abandoned settlement.

Old Birnin Gwari (11° 00"-11° 01"N and 6° 46"-6° 47"E), is about 200 km north- west of Kaduna city. The site is an abandoned walled settlement that shares boundaries with

many villages including; Kwianbana from the north, Gayyam and Childago from the south, Raku and Kazeggi from east, Bassawa and Gwaran Dutse from west. The site can be said to be an abandoned urban settlement because of its size and complexity, which can be seen in form of archaeological features such as, furnaces, dye pits, the palace as well as the walling system.

Today the royal seat of power is no longer in the old Birnin Gwari. It is now in the new Birnin Gwari which was founded in 1957 (Grant 1967, Ibrahim 1992). The new Birnin Gwari is about 57 kms south of the abandoned settlement. According to tradition, the then Emir Alhaji Abubakar Mai Gwari (I) vacated the old palace with a large followership to the new Birnin Gwari. This development was attributed to the need to link the emirate with important routes of communication with other parts of the north (Grant 1967, Ibrahim 1992).

1.2 **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

As mentioned earlier our knowledge of the archaeology of old Birnin Gwari is very rudimentary. Also oral tradition is very limited in its coverage of the human occupation of the site. This is a common trend as oral tradition related to early forms of urbanization in Nigeria is scanty and reflects mostly the economic aspect (Okpoko 1998). This implies that there is a gap or vacuum that needs to be filled in order to have a clear picture of the history of the site. The current study is aimed at a detailed mapping and description of the abandoned site as a foundation for a more in-depth research work on the site.

1.3 **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this research is to articulate the archaeological potentials of the site for further archaeological investigations in the area.

Specific objectives include:

- i. Identification, description and documentation of settlement evidence on the site.
- ii. Mapping of settlement features, including the walling system.

1.4 **JUSTIFICATION**

The justification for the choice of this site for study is two fold;

- i. Our current work underscores the archaeological potentials of the site, first recognized by Effah-Gyamfi (1986). It is also hoped that the work will throw more light on the nature of the settlement in the context of early political development of the Gbagyi people.
- ii. The project is also a follow up on Amber's preliminary work on the site

1.5 **SCOPE**

The research is designed to conduct detailed archaeological reconnaissance of the site with the aim of identifying, mapping and describing settlement evidence and relating this to available oral traditions.

1.6 **METHODOLOGY**

Our methodology is a three pronged approach involving oral tradition, reconnaissance and documentation.

1.6.1 **ORAL TRADITION**

Oral traditions have many uses in archaeology including the location of sites and the explanation of features and other finds. The general use of oral tradition in many West African archaeological sites has been beneficial to various archaeological investigations. It has been used in locating sites, in analyzing and dating of the cultural materials recovered, and for the interpretation of the excavation results (Agbontaen 1995). Despite its usefulness in archaeological investigation, the validity of the use of oral tradition in archaeological investigation has been questioned by scholars. One of the grounds is that people can recite two or more versions of the same tradition; and those in the society that held the tradition can suffer memory loss (Effah-Gyamfi 1986). However with all its shortcoming oral tradition remains one of the major sources for the reconstruction of history of the African region (Boachie-Ansah 1984).

In our study of the site, we collected traditions from people currently living in the vicinity of the abandoned settlement and others in the new Birnin Gwari, Gayyam, Kaguru, Kazaggi and Gwauron Dutse. These people are from both the Gbagyi and Hausa ethnic groups. Altogether, we interviewed on a one-on-one basis 25 persons (9 Hausa & 16 Gbagyi) from the old and new Birnin Gwari, Raku, Chidago, Bassawa, Gayam, Kaguru and Kwaga who in terms of age and status are sufficiently knowledgeable about the abandoned settlement.

In these interviews (see question guide), we explored issues bordering on the origin of the abandoned settlement, its growth and abandonment as well as its place in the socio-politics of the Gbagyi people.

1.6.2 **RECONNAISSANCE**

Archaeological reconnaissance involves walking around usually guided by oral information through which archaeological sites are identified and investigated. It also includes moving around the site so as to determine not just its content but also to take measurements and recording of the finds and features found on the site. Photographs were equally taken in order to have a proper documentation of all cultural materials found on the site. In addition to the above archaeological reconnaissance also includes the establishment of boundaries of the site by setting corner markers or monuments, to ascertain coordinates of these corners, and to obtain boundary and site information required for plotting map.

Through reconnaissance, features on the old Birnin Gwari site were identified, described and documented. Old Birnin Gwari is an abandoned walled settlement. A complete ground survey of the inner and outer walls was carried out, through walking and traversing, using Garmin 12XL hand held G.P.S device. This work was carried out between 22nd and 23rd June 2009.

The GPS device was used to determine the coordinates and elevation of the various stations identified on the walls and other archaeological evidences on the site. Through

this exercise the shape and size of the site was mapped and position of archaeological features identified.

Considering the size/expanse of the site, we engaged the services of a trained surveyor who aided us in carrying out this detailed reconnaissance of the site. Photographs were also taken during this exercise in order to have a proper documentation of the natural and cultural features on the site. Fortunately we were in the dry season and the vegetation on the site did not constitute any obstacle.

1.6.3 DOCUMENTATION

Literature relevant to the research work was reviewed. This provided the researcher with the relevant background information and created the path to follow in order to achieve our set objectives. The materials consulted included books and journals in archaeology, history, geology and geography; and unpublished thesis and also pamphlets published by the Ministry of Information and Culture of Kaduna State Government. Archival materials were also consulted.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concentration of people into urban centers marks one of the fundamental changes in human development. What were formerly agrarian village societies evolved into towns and eventually cities. This process involved much more than just an increase in

communities, it is also associated with marked changes in the way people interacted; in people's relationship with the environment and the way people structured their societies (Redman 2008).

There is no universally accepted definition of the term, urbanism. Scholars' views are mostly influenced by their experiences and goals (Okpoko 1998). For those who share eurocentric views, one essential element in any definition of urbanism is the existence of writing (Connah 1987). Gordon Childe outlined ten indices for determining an urban site which include among others; political organization, social stratification, literate elite, monumental architecture, trading network, surplus food production, craft specialization, army, cemeteries (Childe cited in Andah 1976).

These criteria were clearly influenced by the circumstances of city development and state formation in South-west Asia, as such have limited value in other parts of the world (Connah 1987). Views like that of Childe that see the origin of urbanization as the origin of European culture are fast dying out following archaeological studies (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984, Holl & Lasina 2000), indicating clearly that the development of cities and towns took place without outside influence in West Africa.

There are scholars who argue that the development of cities and towns is not the exclusive preserve of any particular part of the world, nor is it easy to classify settlements from only one stand point (Wheatley 1972, Effah-Gyamfi 1986). Based on the independent school, the criteria to be used in identifying urban settlements should

include, function, social structure, population size, extent of area covered, scale of economic activities and more recently, the verbal usage or attitude of mind by the local population (Effah-Gyamfi 1986). Each of these criteria has its weaknesses if used alone particularly when dealing with ancient settlements. Thus Effah- Gyamfi (1986) defined an urban area for the purpose of archaeological study to mean a city or town as distinct (though sometimes overlapping) from a village or rural area. He went further to explain that an urban site in comparison with other neighboring settlements shows a relatively extensive area of occupation, increased population (e.g walls extensions), evidence of increased social stratification and craft specialization.

NEW DIRECTION IN URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY

The concept of urbanism in Nigeria (or West Africa) is shifting from the city- centric approach where only evidence of monumental architecture and other archaeological data attesting and supplementing colonial historiography are investigated; to the dynamic consideration of the city's function within a wider settlement hierarchy (Andah 1976, McIntosh & McIntosh 1984, Effah-Gyamfi 1986, Okpoko 1998). These theoretical positions are based on two different paradigms, while the former relies on static, historical reconstruction of the past; the later leans towards analyses concerned with understanding the dynamics of change in past systems (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). Both theories operate on different methodologies which we are going to examine here.

CITY-CENTRIC APPROACH

The early paradigm of urbanization in West Africa was based on the historical school of archaeology which has been particularistic in scope and descriptive in intent (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). Researchers guided by this concept are usually concerned with the town site as their principal if not the only focus of investigation. The town, based on the city-centric approach, has been regarded as a self-contained object of analysis. This implies that the town can be a subject of study exclusively without paying any attention to its surrounding settlements. This approach is not particular to archaeology, it has a long history in sociology, anthropology and history (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). Scholars in these disciplines saw the city as a special type of human community, whose essential character can be explicated in terms of data from the city itself. This assumption based on western experiences ignores the fact that it was only with increased food production (resulting in food surplus) and improved distributive network that urban centers in most parts of Nigeria (and Africa) began to concentrate on either technological or socio-political activities (see Andah 1976, Okpoko 1998).

Researchers guided by this narrow understanding of what an urban area is, usually framed their questions based on descriptive account of African towns provided by Arab chronicles and travelers (Andah 1976, McIntosh & McIntosh 1984).

Exotic trade goods were carefully collected and described in details and interpreted as evidence of the region's participation in international trade as outlined by the early chroniclers (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). Also charcoal samples for C14 dating found in association with medieval ceramics or architecture were similarly given attention

(McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). On the other hand, samples from lower levels that are likely to indicate indigenous development are mostly ignored or given little attention (Mukhtar 1981, McIntosh & McIntosh 1984, Effah-Gyamfi 1986).

Some of the African urban archaeological sites have been described by the accounts of Arab travelers and historians. These sites include the various towns and capitals of the great empires of western Sudan like; Ghana, Mali and Songhai (Andah 1976). Excavations conducted on sites in most of these empires have been designed to prove the consistency of oral traditions and Arab chronicles (McIntosh & McIntosh 1981) instead of inquiring into the “town” or “city” in its entire context.

In 1914, a site in Koumbi-Saleh (ancient capital of Ghana) was excavated by Bonnel de Meziers (Mukhtar 1981), burial mounds and five houses were uncovered. Two decades later, another excavation was conducted (Mukhtar 1981). During this excavation, many materials were unearthed some of which were, painted pottery, small discs, schist plaques with Arabic inscription and Qur’anic texts on tablets. Other finds include, grinding stones reminiscent of the Saharan and Moroccan types, hoes, spades, cutlasses, blade, sickle, a pair of scissors, glass beads and glass weights from Egypt (Mukhtar 1981).

This research method was designed to focus on the urban nuclei so that; most of the finds from these excavations were collected to demonstrate contemporarity of the site with its proposed historical analogue.

THE REGIONAL APPROACH

The concept of regional approach in the study of ancient settlements was adopted in archaeology from geography (Okpoko 1998). There seem to be a consensus among geographers working in various parts of the world that a consistent relationship exists between the ranks and sizes of settlement in an urban settlement (McIntosh & McIntosh 1992, Okpoko 1998). This implies that the city or town is a unit of settlement which performs specialized functions in relation to a broader hinterland (Trigger 1972). “This relationship has been observed so frequently that it is accepted as an empirical regularity (McIntosh & McIntosh 1992).

This approach seeks to ‘undo the conceptual separation of town and villages and reunite the town with its larger environment’ (McIntosh 1984). Trigger (1972) formulates the new approach succinctly: “whatever else a city may be, it is a unit of settlement which performs specialized functions in relation to a broader hinterland”. Also this notion was portrayed by Andah (1976) and Okpoko (1998) when they implied that, it is only with increased food production (resulting in food surplus) and improved distributive network that urban centers in most parts of Africa began to concentrate on either technical or socio-political activities.

It is evidently clear that the nature of the interaction between urban and rural settlements provides the key to understanding the historical processes of urban settlements. Thus the focus of investigation has shifted from single urban nuclei to regional site systems (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984).

The central elements in the study of urbanism are specialization and concentration. These organizational traits operate at very low levels in non-urban systems; urbanism arises as a new condition in the system when these traits are greatly elaborated (McIntosh & McIntosh 1992). Thus, the chronology and evolution of urban genesis can be investigated by documenting increasing specialization and centralization among elements of an emerging regional hierarchy (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). This implies that research guided by this approach is focused on documenting development process of an entire urban system; beginning at a period pre-dating the emergence of fully recognizable urban centers (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). This is a great departure from the static, descriptive approach that relies heavily on historical documents for an interpretative framework (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984). The novel aspect here is documenting how specialization and centralization change through time and space within a site system. This will require new methods for collecting and integrating data from various components of the systems.

From the discussion above, we can see that the regional approach is favoured in the study of urban archaeology in West Africa. The present study although limited in scope is a foundation for a possible major excavation in the future; that will require the application of the regional approach on the site. This is particularly important since oral traditions have associated some of the surrounding villages with the early development of the walled town. Bassawa for instance is one of the surrounding villages that exclusively provided all servants of the royal house. Chidago is another satellite village that provided

the royal house in the walled town with all the palace guards and Raku village served as the territory's military camp (Morgan 1936).

It is very important in the regional approach to cover every bit of land in the area under study (including its surrounding settlements). Where such an undertaking cannot be done for logistic reason the best option in the regional approach is to investigate the major urban center in the region (McIntosh & McIntosh 1984).

CHAPTER TWO

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING

2.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Old Birnin Gwari walled town ($11^{\circ} 00''$ - $11^{\circ} 01''$ N and $6^{\circ} 46''$ - $6^{\circ} 47''$ E) is about 200 km North-west of Kaduna city. The site is surrounded by many villages including Gayyam, Kagaru, Muriya, Kazeggi, Gwaran Dutse, Bassawa, Kwaga, and others.

2.2 WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The climate of the area is marked by two different seasons, the dry season and the rainy season. The dry season lasts from November to mid April while the rainy season lasts between 6-8 months starting from March. The temperature is cool during the rainy season and hot during the dry season. The peak of the rainy season is the months of August and September; the dry season on the other hand has its peak around February before the rainy season (Keay 1953).

2.3 GEOLOGY

The regional geological setting of the area (Birnin Gwari) is divided into the basement complex and the schist belts (Russ 1932). The basement complex is overlain by gently dipping cretaceous and younger sediments of the Iullemeden basin in the North West and the Bida Basin in the South West (Anebi 1987).

The Schist belts are divided into two main groups. The group in which the Birnin Gwari belt is assigned (Pan African Orogeny) has Coarse-grained to fine-grained clastic

insignificant mafic igneous rocks. The fine-grained laminated sediments like phyllites and iron formation indicate quite water conditions (Anebi 1987).

The rocks of the schist belts are classified into stratigraphic units. Four formations are distinguished; Kushaka formation, Zungeru formation, Zuru quartzite formation, and Anka Meta Conglomerate schist formation (Anebi 1987).

The Kushaka schist belt (or Kushaka schist formation) occupies a belt of about 50km wide and stretching from the Minna area up to the old Birnin Gwari area of the northwestern Nigeria (Kuster 1990). The rocks lie in a number of isoclinal fold structures trending NNE, which give rise to a strong foliation parallel to the axial planes of the folds (Truswell & Cope 1963). Many granitic plutons intrude the metasedimentary succession (schists, phyllites, banded iron formations), and the whole series is cut and displaced by the Kalangai fault. There are also a variety of amphibolites and amphibole-epidote, chlorite, and talc-bearing schists which partly correspond to theoleiitic basalt (Elueze 1981). The age of the Kushaka schist formation is tentatively put at about 1100 Ma, but there is yet no reported radiometric dating (Jibade et al 1989)

2.3.1 THE GEOLOGICAL SUCCESSION OF THE BIRNIN GWARI REGION

The Precambrian to lower Palaeozoic (Basement Complex): This encompasses a wide range of igneous and metamorphic rocks. The older granites merge into gneisses and migmatites. The younger granites are biotite and riebeckite granites with considerable mineralization. The younger granites are particularly resistant to erosion and have led to the preservation of the highlands in some part of the Birnin Gwari Area (Anebi 1987, Jibade et al 1989).

According to Jacobson (1958) the rocks of the Basement Complex represent two main orogenic cycles of which the second probably extended from late Precambrian to Cambrian times. Granites are believed to have occurred during this second cycle; the pegmatites which are abundant in the Birnin Gwari area may also be associated with this phase (Kuster 1990).

Jurassic (Younger Granites): These are rocks that intruded into the Basement Complex in the Jurassic. They consisted of fine to coarse grained granites. All younger granites occur as ring complexes within and outside the region (Kuster 1990).

Upper Cretaceous (Nupe Sandstones): These forms mainly outside the Birnin Gwari area proper in the southern part of the region. They are normally flat bedded, medium to coarse sandstones that have been strongly ferruginised. The sediments are believed to be Upper Maestrichian in age (Reyment 1965, Jibade et al 1989).

Volcanic occurrence in the late Tertiary and Quaternary times impacted on the Birnin Gwari area and this resulted in the deposition of basalts. Anebi (1987) have divided these into three groups:

- A. Lateritised Old Basalt- these are decomposed lavas, mostly conveying a thick iron cap.
- B. Older Basalts- these mostly forms as small eroded remnants without a clear volcanic focus; and
- C. Newer Basalts- these most current flows are less affected by weathering and erosion and can generally be located to a well preserved volcanic cone. Russ (1932), who investigated the eastern part of the Birnin Gwari region, indicated that it has been covered with more recent basalt, that is, the newer basalt.

2.4 SOIL

The main soil elements within the Birnin Gwari region came from Precambrian granite gneisses and migmatites of the basement complex (Anebi 1987). The rocks have been affected by weathering and are often overlain by gravelly material probably eroded from further up-slope. In some areas, lateritic iron pan, believe to have been formed in the late tertiary times, and related concretionary gravels, overlie the in situ rocks. In other parts of the area there are localized deep accumulations of unconsolidated materials which are probably due to mass movement. The soil surfaces are sandy which could be as a result of biological re-working; fine material brought up from the weathering zone by termites and other soil fauna accumulates at the surface. No detailed work on the effect of termite action on soil in the area is available. Poor drainage may affect any of these parent materials, but due to the marked seasonal rainfall the water table fluctuates. The sandy

surface spheres of many of the soils drain rapidly, particularly where underlain by gravelly material.

2.5 VEGETATION

The Birnin Gwari area is a transitional zone between two ecosystems; the forest and the savanna (Hopkins 1975). The region has an annual rainfall of 100cm to 200cm, a wet season of 6 to 8 months, a well-marked dry season of 4-6 months subject to bush fire, and laterite soil of medium to low fertility (Keay 1953). These conditions and human activities produce vegetation types recognizable within the Birnin Gwari zone. Two plant associations therefore occur: Forest and Savanna, which are further subdivided into forest, savanna woodlands, and shrub savanna (see Hopkins 1975).

Patches of rain forest vegetation are widespread in the area. These forest patches are noticeable in forest reserve in Kamuku. The vegetation here is dominated by large trees, some of which grow up to a height of 40m. Smaller trees and shrubs are present in large numbers. The most characteristic feature of the forest is the presence of large woody climbers. The more frequent of the tree species include; Locust bean (*Parkia Biglobosa*), Palm trees "Kwakwa Gnaiyi" (*Phoenix Dactylifera*), Tamarind "Gnaiyi" (*Tamarindus Indica*), Mango "Mangoro Gnaiyi" (*Mangifera Indica*), Baobab "Kwai" (*Adansonia Digitata*), Acacia (*Acacia Implexa*), Shea butter (*Butyrospermum Parkii*) (Hopkins 1975).

The savanna woodland occurs most extensively in the more rugged part of the Birnin Gwari area. It is dominated by a simpler vegetation than the forest and essentially include; Mango trees "*Mangoro Gnaiyi*" (*Mangifera Indica*), Cashew (*Anacardium Occidentale*), Guava (*Psidium Guajava*), Baobab "*Kwai*" (*Adansonia Digitata*) and Locust bean (*Parkia Biglobosa*) (Hopkins 1975).

Shrub savanna occurs close to valley complexes – usually below wooded ridges and hills within the area. They occur extensively on low interfluves and ridges on the plains. The distinguishing feature of the shrub savanna is that its does provide the main foliage layer (grass) 'bgabga' (Jones 1963)

2.5.1 EFFECT OF MAN ON THE VEGETATION IN THE BIRNIN GWARI AREA

Human alterations of the environment by way of agriculture and the repeated burning of bush have been most important elements in influencing the present ecological status of the vegetation and especially its distribution in the Birnin Gwari region. Forest in this region is in reserve which restricts human interference. Where either forest or woodland is found, it is a clear indication that agriculture is not normally practiced. In woodlands crop production is not feasible because of the steep slopes and shallow soils on which the woodlands are located (Hopkins 1975).

In the case of the rain forest patches in the area, agriculture has been restricted through forest reservation at Kamuku game reserve (about 27 km south of the walled town). The woodlands and forest are homes of the remaining wild animals in the Birnin Gwari region; as such human activities are not entirely restricted especially outside the zone

demarcated as reserve (Kamuku Game Reserve). These wild lives constitute good hunting grounds (Anebi 1987).

Moreover, the woodlands are prone to annual bush fires, especially where found on the plains used for farming. During the dry season, the grassy ground layer dries up and the majority of the trees shed their leaves. Consequently, the woodland vegetation burns easily. Whether by deliberate act or accident, the woodlands are usually invaded by fire during dry season (Anebi 1987).

In the areas of shrub savanna both fire and farming activities are important in the maintenance of the typical characteristics of the vegetation. Other conditions responsible for the vegetation in the Birnin Gwari region include; annual rainfall of 100cm to 200cm, a wet season of 6 to 8 months, a well marked dry season of 4-6 months prone to bush fire, and laterite soil of medium to low fertility (Keay 1960).

Today the main occupation of the people in the area is agriculture. According to my informants more than 90% of the people here engaged in one form of farming or another. Cultivation begins after the bush is cleared usually by setting fire to it; this burns off the grass layer and scorches the shrub. The trees may not be removed where they do not cast a deep shade. But where their shades are deep enough to threaten the healthy growth of crops, some of them are removed. After one or two cultivation the land is abandoned through the shift cultivation method.

2.6 RELIEF AND DRAINAGE

The walled town lies in a group of hills (Dutsen bayan fada , Dutsen rafin mata, & Dutsen danbida). The hills stand some hundreds meters above the gently undulating plain of the valley and are covered by typical savanna woodland (Russ 1931).

The terrain is comparatively lowland and it is cut by tributaries and gullies such as the spring water (rafin mata) emanating from the foot of ‘dutsen rafin mata’ and the stream by the side of Dutsen Bayan Fada which flow into River Kureta.

2.7 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are different versions of traditions related to the origin of old Birnin Gwari. What is not in dispute in all of the traditions is that old Birnin Gwari town was originally founded by the Gbagyi people. Birnin Gwari literally translated in Hausa means the town of Gbagyi, therefore, it will be correct to say the origin of the old Birnin Gwari town has never been in dispute. According to both documented history and oral traditions the old Birnin Gwari town was established by “pagan” Gbagyi people (Morgan 1936). It is a known fact that Umaru Nagwamatse a Fulani jihadist in 1859 listed old Birnin Gwari among the “pagan” towns he conquered and established his authority on (Ibrahim 1992). Based on this historical source old Birnin Gwari is listed among the “pagan” towns dominated by the Caliphate.

Similarly one of the traditions claims that three brothers who were hunters from Kuta in Niger State, came to the area, and founded three villages, these villages are; old Birnin Gwari, Gayyam and Kagaru. This tradition is handed down in the family of M. Maiyaki and narrated by his descendants.

The argument by traditions that the origin of old Birnin Gwari is from the east is doubtful. The Nupe Gazetteer (1934) in part tried to link the Gbagyi ancestry in Birnin Gwari with Arabia. The origin of these 3 brothers is traced to Arabia. Traditions claimed that these three were the sons of a Muslim Arab named Sharif (another source referred to him as Sham), who came to Kuta and impressed the Emir with his medicines and later married the Emir's daughter (Nupe Gazetteer 1934). Sharif later moved with his family to Danyamu from where his sons further moved to establish the town.

It is noteworthy to state here that the same document (Nupe Gazetteer 1934) also documented independent tradition of origin of the Gbagyi people. It reported that sham was the daughter of the Emir and does not name her husband (different source of tradition from the first version mentioned above).

Old Birnin Gwari was attacked by Sultan Bello in 1810 during the reign of Dan Gana (Morgan 1936). In 1859 Umaru Nagwamatse was conferred the title of Sarkin Sudan (King of the Blacks), to indicate his authority over the "pagan" groups among whom he was living (Ibrahim 1992). He constantly raided the Bassa, Yauri, Birnin Gwari, Kamuku, Dakarawa, towns that he could reach from Kontagora (Ibrahim 1992). Based on

this historical source Old Birnin Gwari as mentioned earlier is listed among the “pagan” towns dominated by the Caliphate. As such it may be suggested that the Gbagyi of old Birnin Gwari may not have originally been the descendant of a Muslim Arab. Unfortunately Gbagyi oral historical sources are not very clear on the origin of the settlement. As in the case with all Nigerian ethnic groups, the issue of the origin of the Gbagyi remains complicated (Ibrahim 1992). Different Gbagyi settlements have their different versions, such that it is virtually impossible to make any historical statement that is valid for all of the Gbagyi people.

However some argued that the original centre of the Gbagyi may lie in the Kuta- fuka areas of Niger State. It is proposed by those who hold this view that it was from these areas that the Gbagyi penetrated to the various areas which they now occupy. In the process they mixed with a number of other peoples like; Nupe, Koro, Gwandara, Gade, Kamuku, and Hausa (Ibrahim 1992).

Whatever might have been the origin of old Birnin Gwari, the settlement and outlying villages were conquered by Sultan Bello in 1810 and its ruler sacked (Ibrahim 1992). Having achieved his aim of subjugating the Gbagyi, he made no attempt to create a Gwari emirate, the area was consequently ruled from Katsina until the rise of Kontagora (Ibrahim 1992).

In 1859 Birnin Gwari was attacked by Sarkin Kontagora Umaru Nagwamatse (son of the 2nd Sultan, Abubakar), the founder of the Kontagora emirate (Ibrahim 1992). His war

strategy was to first attack the small outlying villages, causing their inhabitants to take refuge in the walled town. The town would then be besieged until starvation forced it to surrender eventually. In order to weaken their resistance, their crops at harvest time were burnt, thus adding famine to the other horrors of war. The people captured from the walled town were either killed or sold into slavery (Ibrahim 1992).

His son Ibrahim Nagwamatse, was made the Emir of Kontagora in 1880, he pursued the same policy of his father dominating the subjugated groups such as the Gbagyi and Kamuku in the North and East, and the Kambari in the west (Ibrahim 1992). He was continually raiding Gbagyis, Birnin Gwari was devastated and depopulated to a point that even food was not available. The settlement was literally destroyed and the inhabitants sold to slavery (Ibrahim 1992), and others that were not captured scattered in all directions. Among those that escaped to Kuta were Jibrin who was the chief (Agali) and Abubakar (who later became the 'Agali' of Birnin Gwari), they remained in Kuta for one year (Morgan 1936). At the end of this time they attempted to return back to Birnin Gwari but Jibrin was intercepted, captured by the Emir of Kontagora and was later killed. Abubakar returned to Birnin Gwari and was made the chief (Agali) of the town. Later when the British arrived, he offered them no resistance; in fact he assisted them in the capture of Sarkin Kontagora in 1902 (Morgan 1936, Ibrahim 1992).

In 1903, Ibrahim Nagwamatse was reinstated as the Emir of Kontagora. All his former districts under Kontagora were restored to him except Dakarawa and Gwari areas (Ibrahim 1992). Birnin Gwari district became part of Kwangwama Division with

headquarters at Kagara. In 1924 Birnin Gwari was removed from Kwangwama Division and placed under Zaria Province as an independent district (Ibrahim 1992).

Today the major ethnic groups within the vicinity of the abandoned settlement are Hausa/Fulani and Gbagyi. According to documented history as presented by Giles (1936) old Birnin Gwari and its surrounding villages were mainly populated by Gbagyi. The following villages were dominated by the Gbagyis: Gayyam, Kagaru, Gwauron Dutse, Basawa, Kwaga and Chidago. And the villages that were later repopulated after the Jihad by either Hausa/Fulani or Maguzawa (Hausa pagans) are: Kazeggi (all office holders were Gbagyi, but the population mostly Hausa from Zaria and Katsina), Kutemeshi (all Hausa from Katsina or Zaria), and Ritafi (Maguzawa) (Giles 1936).

The ruling family of Birnin Gwari in the present day thinks their Hausa ways and looks are merely due to the continued inter-marriage with Hausas and with each other since the town became Muslim. The ruling family insisted that they are Gbagyi by origin since there is no evidence to show the caliphate installed anybody outside the town as their immediate leader. Another explanation to the change in the cultural outlook of the people of this area is that the real Gbagyi don't like to associate with other people of different cultures as such the more the Hausa-Fulani moved into the Gbagyi villages the farther the Gbagyi people moved away.

Today the royal seat of power is no longer in the old Birnin Gwari but at new Birnin Gwari. New Birnin Gwari was founded in 1957, about 57kms south of the abandoned settlement (Ibrahim 1992). According to tradition the then Emir Alhaji Abubakar Mai

Gwari (I) vacated the old palace with a large followership to the new Birnin Gwari, after he was counseled by the Division Officer (D.O) from Zaria, who suggested the new area because of its strategic location linking it with other parts of the North (Ibrahim 1992).

2.8 SETTLEMENT BEHAVIOUR AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The settlement at old Birnin Gwari is clustered and linear and the compounds or huts are made of clay bricks. The styles of the constructions are round or rectangular mud rooms or huts with rectangular doors about 1 meter wide and 2 meters high. The door covers are usually made of wood or iron although occasionally you see others of grass matting. The heights of the rooms or huts, as the case may be are from 3 to 4 meters. The roofing system is by conical wooden rafter, with zinc or grass thatch covering the rafters. The number of rooms in a compound depends on its complexity. Most of the compounds if not all have granaries for storing grains, also pens are found in some of the compound where cattle, sheep and goats are kept. According to the Hausa/Fulani presently living there, the Gbagyi have since moved further from the area.

The principal occupation of the people is farming. Major crops produced include; guinea corn, maize, and rice. Fruits like paw-paw, cashew, and banana, are also produced. Also onions, tomatoes, cabbage, pepper and the like are equally produced by the people. Domestic animals reared include; sheep, goats, and cows. Also birds like; chicken, guinea fowls and ducks are kept. Other economic activities engaged by the people of this area include; gold mining, black smithing, and thatch making.

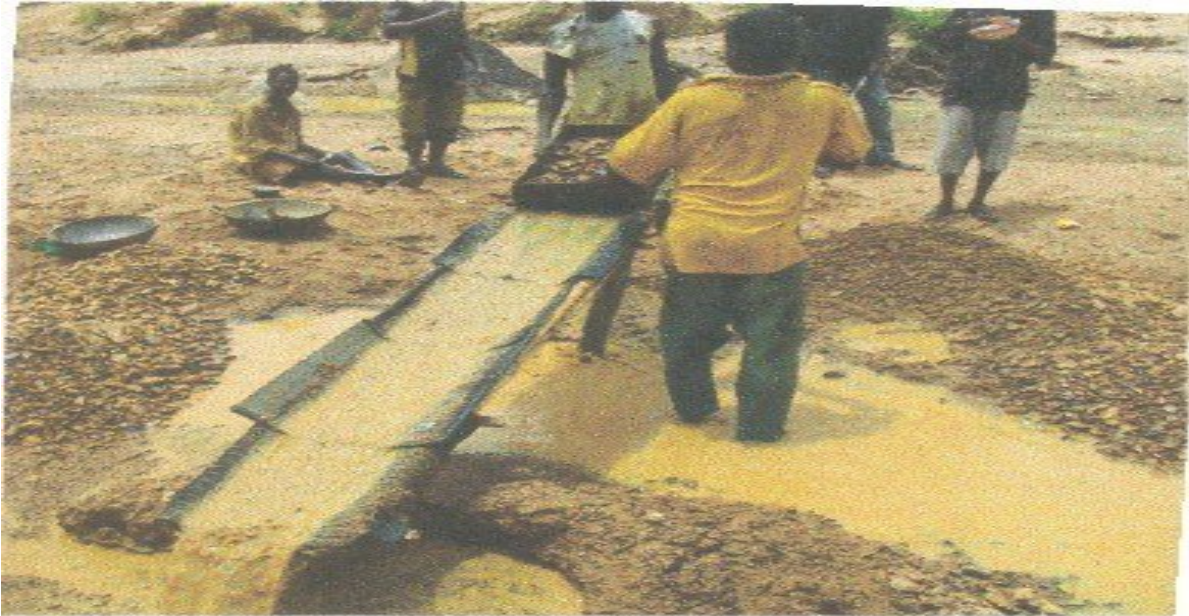


Plate 1 Pic: Local gold miners searching for gold through the muddy water along the bank of river kureta. .



Plate 2. Pic: Local thatch makers at old Birnin Gwari in the process of producing a thatch roof. .

Picture source: Amber (2008)

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF OLD BIRNIN GWARI SITE

INTRODUCTION

Old Birnin Gwari is a hilltop site comprising of abandoned settlement evidence in form of walling system and house foundation. Other features include furnace foundations and dye pits. An archaeological reconnaissance targeted at exploring for archaeological evidence in the site was carried out; in which the assistance of Mallam Suleiman and Awalu assigned for the purpose by the Sarkin old Birnin Gwari was invaluable. Consequently, five settlement clusters were found and recorded in the site. Other than the Mosque foundation, the other 4 settlement clusters were identified as deserted Gbagyi settlements by the informants. Artifacts especially potsherds were identified and collected by hand picking during the exercise from some of the settlement clusters of the site. Photographs were equally taken in order to have a proper documentation of all cultural materials found on the site.

Below are the settlement clusters identified on the Old Birnin Gwari Site

3.2 ABANDONED HILLTOP SETTLEMENT

The upper section of the North wall of old Birnin Gwari is a very visible feature on the open savanna hill side (dutsen bayan fada). The hill is located at 11° 01.46 N and 6° 46 52 E. at the height of 662 feet above sea level. Holes (according to tradition these holes were meant for sighting and shooting at the enemies), on the wall are found mainly on the lower slopes above the North gateway. Proceeding to the top of the hill, the upper section of the wall contains no holes. No potsherd was discovered here during the reconnaissance exercise.



Plate 3: A view of the hill top abandoned settlement

3.3 ABANDONED MOSQUE FOUNDATION

This area of the site is located at 11° 01.6 N and 6° 46 43 E. In 1810 old Birnin Gwari was conquered by the Fulani Jihadist led by Sultan Bello and also in 1859 the abandoned wall settlement was raided by Umaru Nagwamatse. According to tradition this abandoned Mosque was occupied by Umaru Nagwamatse, when he conquered the walled town, Nagwamatse, used the place as a worship ground. The site is marked by a stone foundation measuring 28.46m from its northern side, 21.26m on the southern side, 5.83m on the eastern side and 17.20m on the western side. This stone foundation has a shape similar to a mosque. No potsherd was discovered here.



Plate 4: Abandoned Mosque

3.4 MADAWAKI ABANDONED SETTLEMENT

This part of the site is located at 11° 01 29.N and 6° 46 54.E. It has a walled enclosure reported by tradition as the house of Madaki the custodian of the Emir's horses. Another

variant of tradition claimed that the ruin was a stable. Here 51 potsherds were recovered from this abandoned settlement cluster and handpicked during reconnaissance of the site.

The walled enclosure is in varying degrees of preservation. Inside the enclosure 3 stone circles all measuring a meter in diameter were found.



Plate 5: Stone foundation 1m in diameter

Two lower grinding stones were also found on the site, one of the grinding stones is in a good state of preservation and the other one is hollowed.



Plate 6: Hollowed lower grinding stone

The hallowed lower grinding stone was measured and the depth of the hallow on the stone is 7.3cm



Plate 7: Lower grinding stone

At the same Madawaki settlement, precisely 11° 01 31N and 6° 46 49E, we found 10 pits; almost all filled with soil except one which is half way filled too. All the ten pits measured 1m in diameter.



Plate 8:Filled dye pit

These pits are reported by tradition as dye pits. One interesting development is that we encountered a woman (Hafsatu Abdullahi) who gave us information about the dyeing activities that took place on that part of the site. The dyeing industry at old Birnin Gwari collapsed about 60 years ago according to our informant who said she was not more than 10 years at the time.



Plate 9:Half-filled dye pit

3.5 IRON SMELTING

This part of the site is located at 11° 01 58.60N and 6° 46 19.14E. Seven furnaces are discovered here. The area of occupation is within the north-western side of the hill top abandoned settlement, 70 meters from the east bank of the River (River kureta) at the peak of the steep ascent

The choice of this site for occupation in the past was probably due in large measure to its proximity to a laterite outcrop which would most probably have served as the source of raw material for the smelting. Also its fairly drained landscape would have been an important determinant as well.

The iron smelting site is located outside the walled town but it is not unusual to discover such archaeological evidence outside the main occupation area and this is so for a number of reasons. Iron smelting required a lot of fuel and as such iron smelting sites are mostly located within the forest outside the main town. Also water is essential in the process of iron smelting hence the location of the site near a river most of the time. And another reason for the location of iron smelting site outside the main settlement is the need to protect the knowledge since in the past craftsmen were placed on the upper social class (Okpoko 1989, Effah-Gyamfi 1986).

The survey revealed seven furnaces built in similar style as clay vessels shaped with straight sides and circular ends, somewhat barrel-shaped. Three of the furnaces are sampled here:

- * Furnace 1: plate 10- This furnace is firmly rooted to the ground. The furnace wall was damaged and most parts of its upper side disintegrated, the debris can be seen inside the furnace and around it. The furnace is measured 1 meter in diameter, and 25cm high.



Plate 10: Furnace (1)

- * Furnace 2: plate 11- This furnace is short and has crack all over its wall. From its sunken base, this furnace measured 70cm in diameter and 20cm high.



Plate 11: Furnace (2)

- * Furnace 3: plate 12- This furnace is the tallest on the site, though its tops are also broken but most of its upper side is relatively intact. This furnace is measured 82cm in diameter and 66cm high.



Plate 12: Furnace (3)

Iron smelting residues particularly lumps of slag are almost invariably found by the furnaces and littered around.

3.6 ABANDONED OLD PALACE

This settlement is located 11° 0057N and 6° 478E. According to tradition this place served as the palace of the Emir of old Birnin Gwari. It was abandoned in 1957 after the new Birnin Gwari was founded in an area about 57 km south of the old Birini Gwari settlement (Ibrahim 1992).

The settlement is a walled compound with an enclosure where the Emir actually lived, the other part of the large compound according to tradition was occupied by other important royalties. The walls of the compound and the enclosure are in varying degrees

of preservation. This abandoned settlement provided us with much of the potsherd recovered from the site at old Birnin Gwari. 105 potsherds were collected from the old palace.

3.7 THE WALL

The inner wall encloses an area covering 3.3 square kilo meters, the outer wall 7.2 square kilo meters. The walls could be generally described as an earth rampart characterized by an outer ditch system. In some sections we observed that the ditch is completely obliterated and only re-emerges some meters away. In areas where there are no rock boulders around, we noticed that the wall is built only with mud mixed with grasses. In other areas of the site where boulders of rock abound, stone walling was used greatly.



Plate 13: The walls strengthened by slabs at old Birnin Gwari

There are areas without rock boulders around, but the earth ramparts often contain slabs of boulders



Plate 14: Walls at old Birnin Gwari

A very important feature of the outer wall is the presence of numerous gates on the wall. The wall has six gates named; Kofar Kuyambana, Kofar Dawaki, Kofar Maguzawa, Babban Kofa, Kofar Rafin Mata and Kofar Gero. It is important to note that the name Kofar Kuyambana reflected a name of a village close to old Birnin Gwari and not the Kofar Kuyambana in Zaria.

The area enclosed by the outer wall comprises of plains about 1km in the north of the site devoid of archaeological remains, and such open lands have been explained by scholars as a feature of ancient West African urban centers, having been enclosed so as to offer agricultural lands in time of siege (see Effah-Gyamfi 1986). The inner wall appears to have enclosed the main area of activities which are the hills and their immediate plains. The inner wall also has ditches but compared with the outer wall, the ditch system here is on a rather modest scale. Generally, the earth rampart was often strengthened, like the outer wall, with boulders of rock.



Plate 15 The inner wall on the hill top

3.8 MAPPING OF SETTLEMENT FEATURES AND FINDS AT OLD BIRNIN

GWARI

INTRODUCTION

Topographic survey was carried out at old Birnin Gwari in order to produce a map of the site. The relief of the terrain and the natural and cultural features are located by measurement and depicted on a flat sheet to form a topographic map.

A complete ground survey of the inner and outer walls was carried out, through walking and traversing, using Garmin 12XL hand held G.P.S device. This work was carried out

between 22nd and 23rd June 2009, between the hours of 3pm-7pm on the first day and 6am-1pm the second day. The GPS device was used to determine the coordinates and elevations of the various stations identified on the walls, other archaeological features as well as natural features. Through this exercise the shape and size of the site was mapped (see next page for the map).

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 CLASSIFICATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

In archaeology, artifacts provide vital clues about human history, ecological conditions, and culture history. This information about human past are extracted from material remains made/used and discarded by man in the past. The methods employed by archaeologists through which information are deduced from archaeological data include classification, analysis and interpretation of the available data at the disposal of the archaeologist concerned with a particular archaeological problem (Wafula 1999).

These methods are fundamental processes through which understanding of the functions of cultural materials are made possible. Also through these processes the archaeologist can understand the cultural and historical implications of the artifacts (Okpoko 1998).

The material artifacts class under the present study is pottery. The study focused on pottery for the following reasons. First, pottery is among the few remaining traditional craft that are still surviving in the region under which the present site falls, and secondly, pottery has the capacity to provide us with information on many aspects of human behavior (Rice 1987). Lastly, archeological pottery is abundant, stable and very resistant to decay. Hence, pottery comprises the major artifact group that has been used to study past cultures not only in the region under study but also in most of sub-Saharan Africa (Wafula 1999). Detailed analysis of pottery recovered from the present site is very crucial

if archaeology is to make any meaningful contribution to the history of the site. However it must be pointed out that the present research is in a foundation stage as such it cannot draw any conclusive information.

4.2 POTTERY CLASSIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

During our several visits to the walled town site of old Birnin Gwari we collected 156 potsherds through reconnaissance by hand picking in some of the settlement clusters; which were analyzed. The first step in conducting analysis of pottery is to classify them into types, forms, colour, function and technology. This makes it possible for the archaeologist to reduce the cumbersome nature of the data and make it easier to produce meaning out of the artifacts. This would aid in the reconstruction of the culture and the life ways of the people associated with the artifacts. Through pottery analysis the archaeologist can identify the variety of styles, techniques employed and materials used in the production of the artifact (Wafula 1999).

Bulk of the finds from the walled town site is potsherds. These are therefore classified into different groups, which will aid in analysis. These are:

- i. Classification according to paste characteristic
- ii. Classification into vessel parts
- iii. Classification into vessel form
- iv. Classification into surface finish

v. Classification into decorative motifs

Classification according to paste characteristic

This form of classification is concerned with the composition of the clay which is the primary constituent of pottery material. Clay consists of different materials such as; silicon, aluminium, mica and quartzite (Anebi1987). There are different scientific methods available for the identification of the nature, type and source of the clay used in the production of a particular pottery. These methods include microscopic examination, x-ray diffraction, among others, but in the present case, the study of potsherds from old Birnin Gwari was carried out based on visual identification and observation because the technological means is highly expensive and not readily available.

The clay from the potsherds collected consists of laterite soil, which is reddish in colour, while others are dark or brownish. It should be noted that quartz, iron oxide and mica occur naturally in clay (Anebi 1987). Therefore, nearly all the potsherds contained white stones known as quartz, the shiny material called mica (which glitter on exposure to light) while some others contained sand.

Classification based on vessel parts

Vessel parts refer to the different parts of a pot, such as, rim, neck, body and base. Potsherds collected from the site at old Birnin Gwari are classified into the following:

- a. Rim: The rim is the upper most part of a vessel, it constitute the mouth of the pot where contents are poured into the pot.
- b. Neck part: This is section of a pot that is below the rim.
- c. Body parts: This constitute the mid section of the pot, it usually forms the largest part of a vessel below the neck.

Out of the 156 potsherd collected 18 pieces were rims, 20 were necks, while 108 were body parts. Below is a table of vessel parts

SUMMARY OF VESSEL PARTS

1	Rim	18	
2	Neck	20	
3	Body	108	
TOTAL		156	

Table 1

Classification based on rim forms

Pottery materials may have different forms and shapes, these are usually identified from the observation of the rim morphology of vessels and the orientation the rim forms may take. The rims recovered from old Birnin Gwari site have been classified into two: pots and bowls

A pot is usually known when the rim diameter is shorter than the estimated height of the pot. On the other part, a bowl is known when the rim diameter is longer than the height of the vessel. 156 potsherds were sampled, 18 potsherds were identified as rims and from them 3 different vessel forms could be reconstructed.

Form 1: this category of vessel is believed to be a medium pot. The rim diameter is 20 centimeters wide, which is shorter than the height of the pot. 5 samples of this vessel type were recovered from the old Birnin Gwari site (see fig 1).

Form 2: this category of vessel is believed to be a large pot, it is very large with thick walls. The rim diameter is 30 centimeters wide. 9 of this vessel type were recovered from the old Birnin Gwari site (see fig 2).

Form 3: this category of vessel is believed to be a bowl. The rim diameter is 22 centimeters wide, which is longer than the height of the vessel. 4 of this vessel type were recovered from the old Birnin Gwari site (see fig 3).

Below is the summary of the vessel forms:

TABLE SHOWING VESSEL FORMS

1	Medium pot	5	
2	Large pot	9	
3	Bowl	4	
TOTAL		18	

Table 2

Classification based on surface finish

Surface finish refers to the degree of smoothness or coarseness of the body of a vessel. Thus a pot is said to be burnished if its body is smooth and unburnished if its body is coarse. Based on this form of classification, the pottery could be burnished or unburnished. The sherds collected from the site have different surface treatment. This identification was achieved through careful examination of the samples. Exactly 41 of the sherds are burnished and decorated, and 84 sherds are burnished and undecorated, while 12 are unburnished and decorated, and 19 are unburnished and undecorated. The following are the tabulation of the surface treatments of potsherds from old Birnin Gwari.

TABLE SHOWING A SUMMARY OF SURFACE FINISH

Surface Finish	Quantity	Percentage
Burnished and Decorated	41	23.2 %
Burnished and Undecorated	84	58 %
Unburnished and Decorated	12	7.2 %
Unburnished and Undecorated	19	11.6 %

Table 3

Classification into decorative motifs

Precisely 53 potsherds out of the 156 found on the site, were observed to have one form of decoration or another. Decorative motifs stand for the patterns of designs made on the surface of the pot usually during the last part of production when the pottery is leather hard before firing. Based on our observation 4 different decorative motifs were identified; they are further classified into single decorative motif (which has only one type of decoration), multiple decorative motif (which has two or more decorative motifs on one sherd). The motifs on the sherds analyzed are classified into roulettes, grooves, incisions, and notching. These decorations are all made on the exterior of the vessel parts.

The following are the tabulation of the motifs identified from the surface collection from the site:

TABLE SHOWING A SUMMARY OF DECORATED POTSHERDS

Type Of Decoration	Decoration Motifs	Vessel parts	Qty	%
Single decoration	Corn cub roulettes	Body parts	3	
	Horizontal incisions	Body parts	5	
	Fine string roulettes	Body part	9	
	Slanting grooves	Body parts	5	
	Horizontal grooves	Body part	6	
	Double twisted fibre roulettes	Body parts	3	
Multiple decoration	Notching & horizontal incisions	Body part	8	
	Wavy lines incisions & groove	Body parts	3	

	Horizontal incisions & fine string roulettes	Body part	6	
	Vertical incisions & slanting grooves	Body part	5	

Table 4

4.3 INTERPRETATION

Basically archaeology relies on material components of culture in understanding the past. Thus archaeology uses material evidence to make inference about the behavioral aspects of the people under study (Okpoko 1998). This inference is achieved based on the reasoning that the identity of unknown relations may be inferred from those that are known (Okpoko 1989).

Pottery is among the few remaining traditional crafts that are surviving in modern societies. Pottery studies are very important because it has the capacity to provide us with information on many aspects of human behavior (Rice 1987). Pottery provides us with information about the people who made them, their technology, aesthetic value, knowledge of their physical environment; and forms of cultural context in terms of trade, marriage and so on.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDS

Pottery –a careful examination of the sherds recovered from the old Birnin Gwari Indicates that there are two categories of pottery identified. Category one is labeled as cooking vessel. It has a rim diameter which is almost as wide as the height of the vessel. Category two is seen as storage vessels; they have a rim diameter between 22-30cm and are large. This could have been used for water storage or grains.

On the basis of decoration both potsherds recovered by the present author and Amber (2008) are closer by exhibiting decorations, which include roulette, incision and grooving.

STONE ARTIFACTS

Grinding stones found on the site suggest that the people might have used these materials for the grinding of grains or possibly vegetables. This might mean that the people practiced agriculture.

DYE PITS

Based on tradition collected, the inhabitants of old Birnin Gwari in the past were engaged in traditional dyeing industry which died out around 50 – 60 years ago. The dye industry was in form of a cluster of ten dye pits. All the ten dye pits identified are preserved. The number of these dye pits indicates that there had been a dyeing industry in old Birnin Gwari.

The nature of the dyeing industry, may suggest that the industry operated not only to serve the need of the settlement but other neighboring settlements and even beyond.

FURNACES AND IRON SLAGS

The presence of furnaces and iron slag in the outskirts of the walled town, along the bank of the river Kureta that drain the site suggests early inhabitants of the site practiced iron smelting.

WALLS

Walls surrounding ancient cities and towns were built for protection against external attacks (Effah-Gyamfi 1986). These walls served as barriers to undermine the

advancement of invaders into a settlement. In old Birnin Gwari, the walls surrounding the settlement indicate the need for defense against external forces in the past. Both documented history and oral traditions have indicated that old Birnin Gwari suffered numerous attacks in the past (Morgan 1936).

The double wall signified the need for settlement expansion probably as a result of population increase or because of the need to have an enclosed open land. Such open lands have been explained by scholars as a feature of most of ancient West African urban centers, having been enclosed so as to offer agricultural lands in time of siege (Effah-Gyamfi 1986). The ditch dug round the outer wall, is still visible in certain areas where as in other areas it has been covered as a result of erosion taking place in the area. The ditch was dug probably in order to source for the material needed for the construction of the walls and also might have been dug deliberately to reinforce the defensive capacity of the walls by making it difficult if not impossible for horses manned by the invaders to cross.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.2 SUMMARY

Old Birnin Gwari as earlier stated in the preceding chapters is one of the prominent sites in Kaduna State as attested by Effah-Gyamfi (1986). Thus, this work is an effort to document the various archaeological features found on the site, in an attempt to fill the void created by the absence of detailed archaeological work on the abandoned walled settlement. The archaeological data gathered from this research will aid in our understanding of the nature of the settlement in the context of early political developments of the Gbagyi people.

Being a follow up to Amber's preliminary work on the site (2008), we attempted to provide more archaeological details on the settlement. Thus various features were identified, described, documented and mapped. Methods employed in this research include; oral traditions, reconnaissance/survey and literature review.

Artifacts particularly potsherds were collected and analyzed; pottery types, their vessel forms and decorative motifs were examined. Detailed analysis of pottery retrieved from site is essential in order to get an insight into its history.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This research seeks to identify, document, and map the various archaeological features on the walled settlement. Thus further archaeological research needs to be done in order to establish a comprehensive picture of the site. Such investigation should provide the local sequence of the site, which can be used to establish a chronological and typological basis for comparison with other archaeological works carried out on the neighboring settlements in the region.

I agreed with Mohammed (2001) that the Gbagyi traditions of origin do not offer us sufficient explanation of the origin of the people. Critical examinations of these traditions that are trying to explain the origins of the Gbagyi and other central Nigerian people from outside, have unfolded that they are recent formulations (Mohammed 2001, Filaba & Gojeh 2008). Most of the traditions are stereotyped with “the tendency of substituting the origin of the dominant group either culturally or politically, for that of the whole” (Ohiare 1987, cited by Filaba & Gojeh 2008).

Similarly, some of these traditions are made up by the people that are essentially traditionalist subdued by the 19th century Jihadists creating their stories linking them with centers of Islam in order to enjoy certain privileges such as position of power (Mohammed 1978, cited by Filaba & Gojeh 2008, Mohammed 2001).

According to Shaw (1981) the problem with these traditions, is that they do not reflect the true origins of the people, but complete substitution of the indigenous stories of origins

for universalistic hamitic hypothesis. Such attitude influenced by the contacts with the Christian and Muslim concepts and universalistic perspectives of single origin for the whole world.

However other pieces of evidence from linguistic and archaeology have challenged the validity of these traditions. Studies carried out on the languages of Gbagyi, Nupe, Epira and Gade have placed them in the same unit as the Kwa linguistic sub-family of the Niger-Congo group of languages (Greenberg 1963). These studies have indicated the existence of similarities in some core words in the Nupe and Gbagyi languages; this no doubt has shown very glaringly their relationship (Mohammed 2001). Based on the relationship between many of the languages existing in the Niger-Benue confluence area, it has been suggested that the area is the core of these languages (Gunn & Connant 1960, Mohammed 2001). Similarly the speakers of the languages are believed to have “gradually spread out over the area in groups, speaking dialects which with time became the proto-languages of the different groups” (Gunn & Connant 1960). This could very well mean that the Gbagyi people were part of this process.

In my opinion it may be more productive to look for the origin of the Gbagyi in the Niger-Benue confluence area. This is because the close linguistic relationship between the Gbagyi, Nupe, Epira and Gade (Gunn & Connant 1960) means that their original homes could not have been far apart.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

NAME	TITLE	AGE
Haruna abdullahi	Village Head ,Farmer &Butcher	65 yrs
Hafsat Abdullahi	House Wife	60yrs
Awalu Abdullahi	Farmer	27yrs
Suleiman Mohd	Farmer	36yrs
Iliya Philip	Retired Farmer	81yrs
Makau Ibrahim	Farmer	64yrs
Shekwagye john	Farmer	54yrs
Gami Musa	Farmer	59yrs
Yemi Maigatare	House Wife	67yrs
Shukwaga Tanko	Farmer	32yrs
Abelo Awta	Farmer	25yrs
Maikudi Tailer	Tailor	46yrs
Garba Shehu	Farmer	54yrs
Musa Awta	Farmer	61yrs
Babateye Jamo	Farmer	59yrs
Simon john	Farmer	49yrs
Garba Ali	Miner	42yrs
Mohd Yahya	Miner	45yrs
Haruna Saidu	Thatch Maker	39yrs
Haladu Baba	Thatch Maker	47yrs
Sunday Makama	Retired Farmer	85yrs
Jumai Makama	House Wife	74yrs
Jatau Makama	farmer	57yrs
Musa Makama	Farmer	68yrs
Ibrahim Makama	Trader	52yrs

QUESTION GUIDE

- Who were the early settlers of this site?
- Where did they come from and at what time?
- Why did this people choose the site?
- Did they fight any war?
- If they did with whom?
- What were their strategies of war?
- What kind of food did they produce?
- What was their method of food production?
- Why did they abandon the site?
- How long was the site abandoned?
- Is there any link between the present & early occupants of the site?
- Who were responsible for the ancient industries in the site?
- What materials were used in making them?
- Where were the resources located?
- What types of tools were used in making them?
- Was there any taboo associated with people involved in these industries?
- Was every member of the community allowed to participate in the industries?