

A REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA
BASE IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA: AN
INFORMATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

This essay is with the intent to appreciate, using the theoretical paradigm of informational perspective, the developments that produced the Archaeological data base in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The works examined cover issues relating to the human past and its material remains, which include the remains of settlements, metallurgy, agriculture, burial practices, crafts, festivals, rituals and trade, among others. The viewpoint in the essay is built on the understanding that knowledge is man's essential commodity. Its importance can be traced back to creation. It is defined as the state of knowing, consciousness, awareness or familiarity gained by experience or learning. Galadanci (1993:97) asserts that acquisition of knowledge is for man to realize the following basic things in his life: knowledge of his Creator, obeying the laws of the Creator and worshipping of the Creator. In more practical terms however, it is also about learning how to be a responsible economic being and indeed a responsible citizen. Acquisition of knowledge is, therefore, mandatory, because it is the medium through which creativity is attained. It enhances the ability to innovate, acquire additional skills, including all embracing ethics and values to meet up with expectations and challenges of life. It is in this context that this essay looks at archaeology as a particular form of knowledge.

Archaeology is a discipline that is concerned with the extinct past human experience. This involves knowledge about how human beings organized themselves, as members of a social environment. This form of knowledge consists of how humans organised to understand and exploit their surroundings, for the purposes of satisfying their basic means of survival, as a result of which they created structures and belief systems and indeed initiate. It is while addressing these that archaeology remains relevant as a scientific study that enriches our understanding of the past, through the means of archaeological remains. This

conception is supported by Prince (2006:6), who acknowledges archaeology as a discipline, a source of information about human past, or the study of human past, using material remains. The strength of archaeological studies is that it relies so much on scientific experimentation with clear evidence. This is as in the case of the natural scientist, who has to always collect his material evidence, conduct experiments, formulate hypothesis, test the hypothesis and finally make conclusions Aliyu (2006:20).

Archaeology in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

It is worthwhile to note that Ahmadu Bello University, like most institutions of learning in Nigeria, was established to impart knowledge to all men and women of all races without distinction on the grounds of race, religious or political beliefs. It is with this that the institution advances the frontiers of knowledge, through teaching and research. Archaeological study was started at the Centre for Nigerian Cultural Studies of Ahmadu Bello University. The focus was on the documentation and study of the extinct past of Northern Nigeria. According to the student prospectus of 2009-2011, substantial archaeological investigations were conducted almost throughout Northern Nigeria. The investigations were successful and marked the formative stage of archaeological activities in the University. The success was as a result of the role played by some prominent scholars, such as Thurstan Shaw, Graham Connah, J. E. G. Sutton, K. Effah- Gyamfi and Ade Obayemi. These scholars were the pioneer archaeology staff of the University. Their efforts led to the establishment of a research journal known as *Zaria Archaeology Papers*, under the auspices of the Centre for Nigerian Cultural Studies and subsequently, it came under the Department of History of the University, where archaeology became a Unit. The volumes of *Zaria Archaeology Papers* contain almost all the archaeological investigations conducted in Northern Nigeria, by the archaeology staff of the University. The journal is still in existence and its copies are available in the Archaeology and History Libraries of the University. Below are some of the studies done by the archaeology staff.

Thurstan Shaw:

“Archaeological Work in Borno, 1964 – 1966: Excavations at the Diama Mound”, *Second Interim Report, Northern History Research Scheme, 1967*, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Graham Connah:

“The Coming of Iron: Nok and Diama”, in Shaw, Thurstan (ed.), *Lectures on Nigerian Prehistory and Archaeology* (1969), published by Ibadan University Press.

J. E. G. Sutton:

1. “The Walls of Zaria and Kufena”, *Zaria Archaeological Papers (ZAP)*, Vol. 2, 1976.
2. “Iron Working around Zaria”, *Zaria Archaeological Papers (ZAP)*, Vol. 8, 1976.

K. Effah Gyamfi:

1. “A Comparative Study of Pottery from Three Iron-Working Sites of the Zaria Region, Kaduna State”, *Fifth Interim Report, Northern History Research Scheme, 1976-1978*, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
2. “Excavation of an Early Iron Occupation Site at Samaru-West, Zaria”, *Zaria Archaeological Papers*, Vol. III, 1981, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Ade Obayemi:

1. “Archaeological Sites in Sokoto, Katsina and Zaria Provinces and in Kwara State”, *Third Interim Report, Northern History Research Scheme, 1967-1971*, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
2. “Archaeology and History of Western Hausa Land: An Introductory Contribution”, *Fourth Interim Report, Northern History Research Scheme, 1971-1976*, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Considering the relevance of Archaeology in the facilitation of human development, in 1976, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences recommended the establishment of Department of Archaeology. Though the recommendation was not granted in full, in 1977, the University approved the running of Archaeology degree programme under the Department of History. The programme started with

Bachelor of Arts degree, followed by combined honours History/Archaeology degree.

A dynamic teaching and research programme was soon put in place, by some senior members of the Department of History, such as Dr. Yusufu Bala Usman and Dr. Mahadi Adamu, which supported the proposition for the establishment of Department of Archaeology. The efforts of these scholars led to the approval, by Ahmadu Bello University, for establishment of the Department of Archaeology. During the 1979 convocation, the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ango Abdullahi, in his address, announced that archaeology would be one of the new Departments to be established in the University, in the 1980/81 academic session. This undertaking, however, suffered set back, as a result of the death of the Head of Archaeology Unit, Dr. K. Effah-Gyamfi, in October, 1981. The set back was not overcome until in 2006, when the Archaeology Unit, under the Department of History, became a fully-fledged Department. Notwithstanding the long period it took archaeology to become a Department, archaeological research in Northern Nigeria was continuous.

From the 1960s to the present, large amount of research on Northern Nigeria and beyond has been done and documented. This research includes the annual archaeological field school, organized for students, from 200 to 400 levels, aimed at providing practical training on archaeological research, including the techniques of excavation. Among the places where field school activities were conducted are as follows:

1. Kauru in Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State.
2. Turunku in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State.
3. Tsauni in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna State.
4. Kwatarkwashi in Bungudu Local Government Area of Zamfara State.
5. Mkar in Boko Local Government Area of Benue State.
6. Ushongo in Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State.
7. Shikaan in Katsina Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

8. Yandoto in Chafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State.
9. Surami in Silame Local Government Area of Sokoto State.
10. Zungeru in Washishi Local Government Area of Niger State.
11. Jere in Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The Archaeology Library and Information System

Archaeology library is one of the special libraries in the University, purposely designed to conserve, promote and disseminate knowledge. The library assists the Department of Archaeology in the discharge of its functions by acquiring all the relevant information, facilities and services, necessary for teaching, learning and research.

Library, which is an amphitheatre of knowledge, performs its functions largely depending upon a number of factors. These include: the provision of adequate information resources, facilities, qualified staff, adequate accommodation and funding. The Archaeology Library is equipped with over 5,000 information resources ranging from books, journals, projects, dissertations, field reports, among others. These resources are organized in a systematic manner to facilitate access to users. The library is also equipped with computers and internet access. There are hundreds of e-resources on various aspects of world archaeology in the Library. These allow for easy access to various sources of information on archaeology as well as other disciplines. They also facilitate integration of various activities in the library, including facilitation of information sharing and library networking within and outside the University.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The importance of library to teaching and research and information dissemination cannot be over-emphasized. The archaeology library should, therefore, be made, by the University authorities, to meet the objectives of its establishment. This should be done by sufficiently funding the library to make it up to date. The following recommendations are also made for general improvement of archaeological studies in the University.

1. Sufficient funding of archaeological research, as was done in the past, should be revived.
2. There should be well-equipped archaeology laboratory and museum.

3. There should be provision of additional advanced scientific research aids, such as telephones, photocopiers, scanners, digital cameras, among others.
4. The archaeology staff should be provided with adequate training on information technology to become more relevant and efficient in discharging their duties.

References

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