

ARCHAEOLOGY AND NATION BUILDING: THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

The invaluable contributions of archaeology to Nation building have not been fully appreciated and incorporated in policy planning and development programmes by different tiers of government in Nigeria. The colonial governments in Africa however made good use of anthropology and archaeological studies to achieve their set goals in their respective colonies. And since man should be the centre / fulcrum of development and nation building, the universities have important role to awaken the consciousness of Nigerians and government to integrate archaeological information in policy making and development strategies. It is only then that sustainable development will be more meaningful and beneficial to Nigerian people

Introduction

The partition of African Continent at the Berlin Conference in its wake in 1885, and the attendant desire to consolidate power by colonial masters in their various spheres of influence brought the need to understand the people they were meant to rule to the fore. As a result, colonial officials even though, ill-equipped and trained, began to conduct archaeological and anthropological researches in Africa. The resultant out come of these studies were the colonial policies implemented in various parts of Africa of which the indirect rule and assimilation polices were paramount. Consequently, anthropology has been seen as a child of imperialism, which served the interests of colonial governments (Owusu 1978; Hall 1990). Interestingly too, African archaeology grew up as an appendage of European archaeology (Posnansky 1982). As a result, models and theories developed and applied in Europe were used to interpret archaeological sites in parts of Africa as well as the artifacts derived there from.

In Nigeria, however, the colonial government paid very little attention, if any, to archaeological research when compared to anthropological studies and mineral surveys. This is because their main pre-occupation was to fashion a viable political system that would ensure adequate revenue for the colonist, and at the same time less expensive to maintain. Consequently, the British colonial government officials devoted much time and energy in the study of the political structures of various Nigeria ethnic groups. Be that as it may, copious archaeological discoveries associated with many of these groups were accidentally uncovered. Although the cultural artifacts uncovered during the process suggest distinct traditions and multi-ethnicity, further, studies, however, have shown that there were close similarities that are suggestive of possible early intergroup relations among these different ethnic groups (Afigbo 1987; Usman 1983; Ibeanu et al 1997).

The British colonial government had anthropologists, administrators and geologists to conduct researches in these parts, but there was no archaeologist to investigate sites in Nigeria until the late 1950s. For example, the Igbo-Ukwu bronze artefacts were first discovered in 1939 but was not investigated until 1958. It is therefore, surprising, Afigbo (1971) observed, that the same colonial government that maintained a team of anthropologists charged with the understanding of indigenous political authority for the political control of

the people was unable to ~~retain~~ an archaeologist to follow up the accidental finds at Igbo-Ukwu.

This paper attempts to briefly survey the development of archaeological and research and teaching in Nigeria with a view to showcasing how the mistakes/neglects of the past could be ameliorated. It anchors the solution on collaborative efforts with anthropological research by African scholars and their European counterparts. In this way, Africans will have the opportunity to make the needed input in the interpretation of sites in their localities. This will, in no small way, enhance the teaching and research of archaeology and anthropology and the utilization of research results for development purposes by African governments, some of whom had equally neglected the importance of archeological resources in Nation building and cultural re-awakening (Ibeanu 2005).

Development of Archaeology in Nigeria

The archaeological potentials of Nigeria Shaw (1967) opined, was brought to limelight as a result of the following events; the discovery by Leo Frobenius at Ife in 1911 of terracotta figurines, the report by an unknown journalist of three quartz stools credited to the Yorubas which was given to George Carter by the Oni of Ife and lastly the British expedition of 1897 in Benin which led to the carting away of Nigeria's cultural artefacts to Europe. Further more, the geological surveys in parts of Nigeria by colonial officials revealed a number of archaeological sites and copious archaeological materials. Nevertheless these archaeological findings were not considered by the colonial officials as issues of immediate concern. Hence, these findings did not stimulate further early archaeological researches and the uses of archaeological research findings by the colonial government in policy formulation and implementation. For example, Mr. Kitson (1913) summarized his remarkable archaeological discovery in the course of his geological survey of southern Nigeria as follows:

But while surveying the Udi-Okana Coalfield in 1911, I found number of rough and polished stone implements of this departed race, and thus made the first discovery in the colony of pre-historic stone working sites, and of stone implements in large numbers.

It is important to note that the provenance of these important stone tools and sites is lost to posterity. These archaeological findings were neither published nor were the specimens left in Nigeria with the necessary documentations. As a result, this important discoveries of Kitson were never referred to by pioneer archaeologists in Nigeria. Among the stone tools which Mr. Kitson collected were axes, picks, scrapers, and hammers.

In Ghana however, the archaeological finds of similar geological survey were preserved and were infact very useful to early archaeological research. According to Shaw (1990);

Although the Gold coast at the time was an almost virgin territory archaeologically and no trained archaeologist had worked there, nevertheless there was a certain amount of data to start from. Before leaving England I had discovered that the Gold coast Geological survey had a London headquarters in

Cornwall Gardens, and that they had a large collection of stone implements which their field officers had collected and deposited there. Accordingly I paid this collection a number of visits and made notes and drawings of its contents.

It was the arrival of Kenneth Murray to Nigeria in 1927, as art teacher that aroused the consciousness of the colonial government to her responsibility to Nigeria's cultural heritage. Murray observed that "you just had to read those literature sent home by colonial officials and come to this colony (Lagos) to see how seriously misleading and dangerous these were" (Oloidi 1989). Shaw (1990) has rightly observed that it was the efforts of educational officers and art teachers in collecting and preserving Nigeria's rich cultural artefacts that tended to make archaeology art oriented. Even when Bernard Fagg, a trained archaeologist was posted to Nigeria, he was designated Assistant District Officer. He however used his spare time to collect some archaeological materials from the tin-mining operations in Jos Plateau. Kenneth Murray initiated the collection of discarded traditional art objects to save them from exportation by colonial officials and outright destruction by the Christian missionaries (Oloidi 1989). His efforts led to the enactment of the Antiquities Law by the colonial government which made the exportation of Nigerian art treasure a crime (Murray 1939).

It was only in 1946 that the colonial government sent H.J. Braunholtz, Keeper of the Department of Ethnography in the British Museum to advise on the preservation of Nigeria's antiquities. He recommended among other things, the re-designation of Bernard Fagg as a Government archaeologists and stated in very clear terms that archaeological work in Nigeria was neglected (Nigeria, 1947:1). This led to the appointment in 1947 of Bernard Fagg as the first government archaeologist and later Director of the Nigeria Department of Antiquities in 1957.

Archaeology as a Teaching/Research Discipline with close Relationship with Anthropology

The invitation of Thurstan Shaw by Bernard Fagg in 1958 to investigate the site of Igbo-Ukwu which had been discovered since 1939 showed an improved level of concern by the colonial government. Shaw's invitation and subsequent appointment as a research professor in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan marked a turning point in the development of archaeology in Nigeria from mere collection and preservation of art works and cultural relics from tin-mining sites to research-oriented discipline. He was, among other things to establish a teaching department of archaeology. This, it was hoped, would help to spread the awareness of archaeology and archaeological research to the wider public. However, this task was not easy since archaeology had already been seen as the collection of traditional art objects, devoid of socio cultural dynamics of man that made and used the objects.

Shaw, therefore, in his wise judgment carefully resisted moves to base archaeology in the Faculty of Arts as a sub-department of History. To do so, he believed would have affected the growth of archaeology (Shaw 1990). His initial plan was to closely associate archaeology with anthropology. This move also, was not feasible at the time as anthropology was still regarded by many as the study of primitive people. Consequently, he domiciled archaeology

in the Faculty of Science, University of Ibadan. This development brought in its wake the interdisciplinary nature of archaeology with other related disciplines such as arts, social sciences and science. As a result, student's in-take come from both Faculties of Science and Arts.

In 1983, however, after Shaw had retired, late Professor Bassey Andah; a trained anthropologist with specialization in archaeology brought Shaw's dream about close collaboration between archaeology, anthropology and environmental archaeology to a reality. The department of Archaeology Ibadan was changed to the department of Archaeology and Anthropology with Environmental archaeology unit under Prof. Adebisi Sowunmi. And some anthropologists were also employed to complement the existing teaching staff who are trained archaeologists. This development led to a marked increase in student's intake and widened the scope of employment opportunities for the "products" of the department.

Unlike the University of Ibadan, the development of archaeology as a teaching subject started differently in other universities in Nigeria. The experience in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka for instance seem interesting, since archaeology was conceived as an appendage of history. Professor Donald Hartle, the first archaeologist to work in the then eastern Nigeria was recruited in 1963 to carry out researches and teach some courses in archaeology in the department of history. As a result, archaeology was seen as a hand-maid of history and should be under the firm grip of history Professors who controlled the research funds for archaeological research. This might explain why Shaw resisted to swallow this bait at Ibadan. It was only in 1981 that Archaeology was able to win her independence from history with some measure of struggle by archaeologists on the staff. For example, late Professor Afigbo (1986) in his contribution on how archaeological methods would enhance the teaching of history observed that even "autonomy seeking" archaeologists would agree with him on this invaluable role. Late Dr. F.N. Anozie nurtured the new department as its founding head of department. It is important to note however, that the recruitment of Ibadan trained archaeologists on the staff of the department has greatly influenced the positive and dynamic changes in the academic contents/programme of the department. Before now, regional/prehistory courses with historical biases were emphasized. Presently, courses on theory and methods, such as, ethnography, ethnoarchaeology and anthropological research method have been introduced with anthropological research skills. The department is currently running a combined degree programme with the department of Sociology and Anthropology and elective courses in Geology and Earth Sciences. To further make archaeology more relevant in Nation building the department now graduates students in Archaeology and Tourism. This development which served as a catalyst to a surge in students in-take has also repositioned archaeology as well as archaeological resources as veritable tourism resources yearning to be harnessed for development purposes, increased job opportunities and income generation (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002; Ibeanu 2006). This modest contribution of the department of Archaeology and Tourism, University of Nigeria, Nsukka to Nation building has been brought to limelight and commended as a welcome development by Ezeh (2006).

At Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, archaeology was until 2005 a sub-department in the department of history. This arrangement, of course, could not allow the full realization of

the potentials of interdisciplinary nature of archaeological science in teaching and research. It is hoped that with the recent full fledged departmental status and the commendable aggressive staff development programme of ABU administration, the potential of archaeological science would soon be realized.

At Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, with the rationalization of archaeology departments by National Universities Commission (NUC) archaeologists on the staff were transferred to the Museum of Natural history as research Fellows. The NUC however, has made it mandatory for selected archaeology courses to be part of the curriculum of history departments at both federal and state universities. These courses are serviced by archaeology departments or taught by trained archaeologists employed in the department of history, such as, Universities of Jos, Portharcout and Nasarawa State University. The teaching of these courses will create the much needed awareness on the benefits archaeology in Nation building by enabling Nigerians to know where they are coming from , where they are and where they are going as a Nation.

Archaeological Research in the Twenty-First Century

Given the low level of research funding and the deteriorating condition of research facilities in the universities, teaching and research in Nigeria Universities have been adversely affected. This unfavorable environment for research has increased the isolation of researchers and the development of academic disciplines. For instance, researchers find it increasingly difficult to access current books and journals and were more difficult to attend both local and international conferences (Ibeanu 1991). Again the World Bank initiative in Nigeria geared towards the improvement of effective teaching and research through the provision of essential inputs and upgrading of staff is yet to have the desired impact (Nkwanga 1991). This move is being frustrated further by poor adherence to laid down principles by government and the attendant threat to political stability, which is at variance with meaningful development.

In the present circumstance therefore, this paper advocates for multidisciplinary research endeavors and the formation of broad based research teams. These research teams, which should have institutional affiliations would be in a better position to source research funds from granting bodies and development agencies. In this way, funding bodies and agencies would be better placed to monitor research progress and goals as well as resource management through the organization of seminars and workshops. These teams, must, as a matter of policy involve archaeologists and anthropologists since they currently play important role in development projects especially in the identification of impacts and suggesting appropriate mitigation measures. As have been observed, failed development projects were traceable to either lack of or inadequate feasibility studies of impacts on communities (Okpoko in press).

This research model will not only help to strengthen our institutions but will also provide mutual benefits to the universities and collaborating foreign researchers. For instance, the joint research project between the universities of Frankfurt and Maiduguri which facilitated joint archaeological fieldworks in parts of northern Nigeria is a good example of such collaborative effort. This project titled "History of Culture and Language in the Natural

Environment of the West African Savannah", which was funded by a German fund granting body (SFB), will ensure among other things:

- (i) The collection of primary data which is only possible in developing countries.
- (ii) The improvement of research skills and equipment of Nigerian academics and enhanced access to data analyses, and
- (iii) The training of university lecturers to obtain higher degrees, who might seize the advantage of such joint research to write their Ph.D. dissertations working on data generated locally.

Some archaeologists and researchers in the University of Maiduguri and National Commission for Museums and Monuments working with the archaeology team of SFB project under the Supervision of Professor Peter Breunig excavated sites in the Chad basin. The aim was to throw some light on early human settlement and environment (Breunig et al 1993). A similar interdisciplinary research project was also undertaken by the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries (SAREC) in eastern Africa. This project on 'Urban Origins in Eastern Africa' benefited many east African academics and archaeologists who were trained in the 'state-of-the-art' techniques in information technology, data collection and processing. The high point of this project was the sponsoring of a World Archaeological intercongress on Urban origins in Eastern Africa held in Mombasa Kenya in 1993 (Sinclair 1989).

Need For Interdisciplinary Research In Ugwuele-Okigwe

The Okigwe area was first brought to limelight in Igbo cultural history, by colonial anthropologists and scholars who believed that the area was one of the 'nuclei' or 'core' areas from where other parts of Igboland was later occupied (Talbot and Mulhall 1962; Jones 1963; Uchendu 1966; Barry Floyd 1969; Isichei 1976). Also, the at Ugwuele in Uturu-Okigwe a prehistoric stone age factory site was discovered. The kind of site so far discovered, in primary context, in the forest belt of West Africa. Anozie et al (1978) has maintained that Ugwuele prehistoric site belongs to the upper Acheulian with handaxes accounting for up to 80% of the tools.

The above conclusion has drawn severe criticisms from Clark (1983) and Jones (1987) who believed that the site represented a much later stage of human culture development that is the Neolithic period- a time when man was assumed to have occupied the forest zones. It is important to observe however, that neither Clark nor Jones visited the prehistoric site in question, but based their comments and conclusions on presentations at the 9th Pan African Congress in Jos (Anozie 1983). Since then, archeological research in this important site has been stalled. This is partly because no foreign researcher has interest in this unique archaeological site, and secondly local researchers lack the necessary fund and field equipment to conduct the research. Apart from the correlation of Ugwuele finds with dated achuaelian sites in Europe, Eastern/Southern Africa, this paper, in line with Okafor (1980) believe there is urgent need to put to rest the dating controversy surrounding the Ugwuele

site. This could be achieved through an interdisciplinary research endeavours geared towards the collection of possible dateable samples that would address both environmental and chronological issues. The work done so far at Ugwuele Stone age site could be described as rescue excavation and much works are still left to be done.

The site is significant in many ways as it is situated on the transition zone of the forest and savannah belts of West Africa. Interdisciplinary research in Ugwuelle would throw light on the following:

- (i) Early technological developments and human adaptation in the forest zone
- (ii) Possible environmental changes from both palynological and anthropological studies
- (iii) Chronological sequence of human occupation of the area from archaeological excavations of relevant sites
- (iv) Resource exploitation (cultural and natural) and management, and
- (v) Settlements, migrations and levels of inter/intra group relations.

From 199....., the archaeological reconnaissance was started in Okigwe and its environs by staff and students of department of archaeology and Tourism University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The aim was to throw light on the early culture history of the present inhabitants of the area and to see if they had any relationship with the archaeological sites, including, the prehistoric stone age site at Ugwuele. Caves and rock shelters which could have been used by man were located in our area of research. Equally important is the evidence for ironsmelting and smithing (Okpoko et al 1994; Ibeanu et al 1995; Ibeanu 2000; Ekechukwu 2001). The studies so far have shown that oral tradition is relevant in locating and interpretation of finds from excavated caves and rock shelter. This is not so with the prehistoric stone tool site. Two cultural levels were established at Uhuchukwu cave the oldest level was radiocarbon dated 3464 ± 104 BC and polynological studies of the cave deposit seem to suggest paleoclimatic changes in the area (Ibeanu and Umeji 2001) However there is need for sustained multi disciplinary research in Okigwe. This is necessary because, there are many caves /rock shelters not yet investigated. More radiocarbon dates are still needed in the area to enable the understanding of the chronology and cultural sequence of Ugwuele stone tool site.

Summary and Conclusion

For archaeological teaching and research in Nigeria to be relevant and responsive to development needs in the society, archaeologists should conduct their research in collaboration with anthropologists. In this way, both disciplines can advance the course of human progress and societies would appreciate one another for what they are. Consequently, Andah (1994) has opined and rightly too, that even though stratigraphic and typological studies are important, however, archaeologists should be aware that a people's culture and life styles cannot be equated to just this aspect of technology. Of crucial importance also, is the impact of and interaction with ecological habitat as seen from human behavioural adaptations at economic, socio-political and spiritual levels.

Archaeologists and anthropologists should seek closer research relationship in the over all interest of the society particularly in West African sub-region where the two disciplines have been used in one form or the other to achieve set colonial objectives. In the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the recruitment of lecturers who are trained in cultural anthropology from the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan will no doubt bring about this needed research relationship between archaeologists and anthropologists. For instance, researchers from both disciplines collaborate on a broad based research team titled "Indigenous Knowledge on Population, Resource and Environmental Management". Again, the coming on stream of the combined programme on archaeology and anthropology as well as tourism and elective courses in the sciences will help to bring about increased awareness of the role of archaeology in Nation building amongst the Nigerian public. It is hoped that policy makers in different tiers of Nigerian government will take cognizance of the results of archaeological and anthropological researches in policy implementation and the execution of development projects. In this way, the two disciplines would contribute to nation building and development in Nigeria's multi-ethnic society.

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