

ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOCIAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The main focus of this paper is to bring to limelight how archaeological activities/findings are appropriate resources not only for understanding the past, but also for the purpose of adequately informing future plans. Archaeological activities and findings have the ability to provide positive answers to the general social instability in a nation (as being experienced or witnessed in Nigeria in particular and West Africa in general). This research is of the opinion that, the archaeological education and engagement is a good asset to a nation's quest for peace and security which can bring about social stability. This is what Nigeria as a nation require at the moment. Archaeological knowledge can be pulled to provide possible solutions to the numerous challenges confronting Nigeria (particularly instability and insecurity) that are causing none-patriotism and disunity in Nigeria today. This is because archaeological resources have the ability to reveal the vast range of human cultural achievements and struggles in the past. The paper articulates that, reviewing the principles, regulations, norms, values and the kind of social organs that helped to drive the past societies can help to ascertain causes of today's problems/situations, which will then provide positive remedy to the problems. The paper suggests that archaeology should be introduced in the primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria to avail children with the opportunity to grow with African cultural norms and values which promotes good behaviour, neighbourliness, respect for elders/human-lives and tolerance.

Keywords: Archaeology, African norms/values, Insecurity, Social stability, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation has been struggling with numerous insecurity issues since independence. These are political or social, religious or ethnic, in nature. This is usually seen (in every nation) when the government is not responding (positively) to the yearning and aspiration of the people (Akinrinmade, 2013; Kassahum, 2011). Under such situations political instability becomes the resultant effect (Akinwale & Aderinto, 2011). This can manifest in different forms, including ethno-religious and electoral violence, youth militancy and/or banditry, and a general civil unrest.

Bad leadership, corruption, social injustice, nepotism, mediocrity, greed and selfishness are amongst the factors that are responsible for the failure of leadership in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. This is also a strong contributory factor to the recent explosion of almost uncontrollable insecurity and threatening social instability particularly in Nigeria. In recent times, there has been a general change in the dimension of insecurity in the country. This is because it has gradually moved from inter-religious (violent) conflicts, ethnic clashes *inter alia*, to insurgency, banditry, escalating herders-farmers' clashes; leading to destruction of crops and farmlands, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom amongst others. Many lives have been lost and properties worth billions of Naira destroyed.

Archaeological and/or cultural heritage sites have become target for attacks in some places particularly around the World Heritage site of Sukur (in Adamawa State) and local settlements of Rim, Shonong and Ropp in Plateau State. Others include ancient fortifications in the southeastern Tivland, sites in the Sothern part of Nasarawa and Taraba to mention a few. These locations have valuable cultural heritage materials like tradition architectures and related materials which are continuously being destroyed by herders.

Generally, insecurity has many consequences, seen in the way it retards developments. Developmental strides such like construction of good roads, provision of good health care services and sound education for the citizens becomes highly unguaranteed. This is so because monies meant for such developments got channeled into resources needed to cub the unfortunate incidence and bring peace back to the citizens.

Also, with instability in the country, investors become remorse in attempt to put their resources into any investment in such a country for fear of the unknown. In some places in the Northeast, Benue State, Sothern Kaduna, Nasarawa, Taraba and Plateau States, farmers no longer go to farm freely as the security of their lives is

no longer guaranteed. This can be seen in the case of the 43 rice farmers who were recently slaughtered by the Boko Haram insurgents in Borno State (<https://m.guardian.ng/news/nigeria/national/43-farmers-killed-by-insurgents-buried-amid-tears-wailing/>), numerous killed by herders from 2012 to the present in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Kaduna States (Duke & Agbaji, 2020).

There have been reports of farmers being humiliated and killed in their farms by bandits and herders in different parts of Nigeria in recent times (both in the Northern and Southern part). Even the major highways in the country are no longer exempted. Bandits are at present holding Nigeria to a stand-still. This has gone to a level that kidnapped victims are no longer allowed to live even when ransom are collected as a condition for their release or freedom (<https://thenationonlineng.net/limits-of-lawlessness/>).

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines like anthropology, sociology, economics, political science and security, law, history amongst others have been battling with the search for the right solution to the ongoing and potential disaster. A number of practical and theoretical solutions have also been proposed or applied but to no avail. It is therefore pertinent that, archaeologists begin to contribute in the social analysis of these issues, using their scientific and practical approach to societal matters.

Although archaeology alone cannot provide the solution to the problem, it can however, provide useful suggestions that will usher in the needed solutions. Archaeology teaches the real African values that all people (particularly the youth) need to have. These values provided the peace and security that characterized most pre-colonial societies in Nigeria. These values include 'respect for elders and acknowledgement of the sacrosanct nature of human lives' which were taught to children from infancy to adulthood. These good African values have since been included in the curriculum of Archaeology in Nigerian Universities. The aspect that handles cultural values also teaches 'respect for one another' and that our diversity as Rodney (1972) put "is an important part of our greatness and pillar of our development."

In addition, any deviation from the accepted norms and values of the society was punishable and in some cases the deviant was sent out of the land. However, this has been neglected over a long period of time and is badly affecting our societies and people at the present. This has to be restored. The process here should therefore, involve the teaching of archaeology/cultural studies from the primary and secondary levels of our education to the tertiary. It is at the elementary level

of education that children learn the values of our heritage, our cultural diversity, as well as the need for tolerance (whether religious, ethnic or political). The argument in this paper is best supported by Igirgi (2001) where he posits that;

what archaeologists do, or try to do... is to put together as wholly as possible the totality of man's development and activities through time and space with the ultimate aim of understanding the nature and workings of the human mind-in interference with other humans...(P.311).

Conceptual Understanding

Two concepts are key in our proper understanding of this discourse. They are archaeology and social stability.

Archaeology: Archaeology is one of the important sources of information concerning past human societies. Information provided by archaeological sources has often been used by researchers from other disciplines for their arguments (Kintigh, Altschul, Beandry, & Zeder, 2014). Archaeology as a source of historical reconstruction supplements oral and written sources in the study of past human life ways. Material culture obtained from archaeological research has the major information about early traditions and cultures of human societies (Aliyu, 1995).

The main goal of archaeology is to understand how human cultures develop through time and space, by examining individual cultures (using their material remains) and comparing them cross-culturally (Sablooff, 2008). The archaeologist achieves this through survey, excavation, analysis, and interpretation of his findings, to reconstruct past human cultural development and achievements for public consumption. The material culture obtained from archaeological research do not tell the public directly about themselves. Hence, archaeologists collect them, conduct some analysis on them in the laboratory, formulate hypothesis, test the hypothesis against more data and finally make conclusions (Aliyu, 1995). A lot of information is gathered about the past through the different techniques and method of analysis applied by the archaeologists.

To achieve this, archaeologists employ multidisciplinary techniques especially those of disciplines like sciences, social sciences and in the humanities. That is, archaeologists have to borrow techniques from other disciplines like chemistry, geology, biology, anthropology, ethnography, linguistics and history amongst others. With this multidisciplinary approach archaeology is able to handle

different types of data as well as provide richer and diverse information about subject matters.

In addition, because archaeology have much stronger analytical and interpretative tools, it is more possible for it to research into other important aspects of societal issues. With this, archaeology is in a great position to prefer solutions to contemporary and/or social problems, so as to form the basis on which efforts by other professionals can be validated. By their training archaeologists work closely with the people than other disciplines since they are always with the local communities whose culture and traditions - they study and with whom they work together as a team on cultural heritage sites.

By its nature archaeology is about endurance and tolerance considering the rigorous processes involved in its training especially field school where researchers (mostly students and lecturers) spend reasonable time on top of hills, valleys, shores of rivers, forests and deserted places investigation kinds of past human achievements. These processes help to expose archaeologists to societal problems than other scholars who rarely come into direct contact with the people as well as understanding the problems that causes social instability in the society.

The advantage that this source of history has over other sources is its ability to extend our knowledge about Nigerian past beyond the era of writing. Investigation using archaeological sources in this case can provide useful clues concerning ancient human activities and dates going back to many years before the beginning of writing.

Social Stability: Social Stability is the degree to which a society and its institutions remain predictable and reliable (Spacey, 2020). The opposite of this becomes what is known as insecurity. Social stability is important because it allows participant in the society such as individuals and groups to plan and conduct their affairs without disruption. It is in fact the common and/or primary goal of a society (Spacey, 2020).

Every society strives to have stability because social stability creates an even and just society where there is a social solidarity between the people which motivate them to work together and make the society better.

Keeping a society stable is the responsibility of all stakeholders like the teachers, parents, youth, community leaders, kings, religious leaders, government officials and the law. Amongst all these, the government is more equipped to overcome any attempt to destabilize its society (both social and political). It is the solemn role

of the government to guarantee citizens stable society and provide necessary conditions to improve the quality of life of its citizens.

As mentioned earlier, bad leadership, scarce resources, unemployment, unbalanced wealth, corruption, social injustice, nepotism, mediocrity, greed and selfishness are amongst the factors that create possible avenues for instability to take place. Whenever a leadership system fails to this extent, it lends credence to kinds of clamour by the citizens for leadership change, overhaul and even restructuring (which is the present clamour in Nigeria).

Away from the solemn responsibility of the government is the prime role of teachers. A teacher is at the centre of student's ability to know what is good and bad and most importantly the norms and values of a given society. And this is why teachers should be regarded as the most important stakeholder in the fight against insecurity and social instability in Nigeria. This has been neglected for quite a long time and must be reconsidered because it is glaring to everyone at the moment that drug abuse, rape, kidnapping and many others social vices are carried ignorantly by the youth. The present escalating nature of social instability in Nigeria calls well-coordinated cultural and social education such as the one proposed above.

Some Archaeological Discoveries in Nigeria (Implications)

Archaeology is a discipline that is so curious about human societies and their relationship with the past. This is why Shank and Tilley (1992) observed that archaeology is part of the human quest for knowledge and truth. Archaeology probes the past in the service of the present. In this case, the result of an archaeological research brings to limelight, past human achievements (presented to the public through publications, museum exhibitions etc.). The manner in which the past is conceptualized, by the interrogation of cultural material (been heritage of the people) through analysis and interpretation is highly significant in attempt to render solutions to present issues because the present is a product of the past (Kristiansen, 1989).

Ownership of archaeological heritage or a place by a particular people (especially in Africa) is used as a means of legitimizing the existence. According to Kristiansen (1989), the archaeological heritage contributes a lot to the historical identity of nations, people and local communities. It provides the foundation upon which future decisions are taken at all levels in the society. Their discovery/presence represents an irreplaceable contribution to the ancient achievement and memory

of a people (Ugwuanyi, 2018). Hence, understanding the meaning of these heritages becomes critical to the understanding of who a particular people are and what they should represent at the present, which will inform or give a clear direction of where they should be heading (Ugwuanyi, 2018). No wonder it served as a rallying point for African nationalists to fight colonialism after the Second World War.

In Nigeria, a number of archaeological sites have provided fascinating discoveries. Archaeological excavations on different sites in Nigeria have provided useful clues concerning Nigerian history. Archaeological research has provided evidence of early iron working in the Nok Valley, which thrived between 200BC to 1000AD (Abubakar, 2012). The iron smelting culture in the Nok has been associated with the production of beautiful terracotta figurines. This culture extended to Jos where similar materials were also found by tin miners (PIDAN, 2010), Abuja, and Katsina-Ala where Nok styled terracotta were discovered by chance during the construction of a hockey pitch for the then Government Middle School (Jemkur, 1992).

Further, Acheulian material has been found by archaeologists at the sites of Mai Idon Toro, Ropp Rock shelter and Dutsen Kogba all on the Jos Plateau. Other archaeological excavations with result of various stone tools has been conducted in Kursakata, Daima and Shilma in Borno State; Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State; Kaura Namoda in Zamfara State; Iwo Eleru in Ondo State; Ile Ife in Osun State; Igbo Ukwu in Anambra State; Ugwuele in Abia State; Benin city in Edo State and Ekwoama in Rivers State, amongst others (Okafor, 1989; Harvati, Stringer, Grün, Aubert, Allsworth-Jones, & Folorunso, 2011; Scerri, 2017).

Archaeological excavation of many sites in Nigeria has produced evidence that speak volume about the settlement constructions and security strategies amongst past populations. Fascinating discoveries about sophisticated settlement such as the Kano, Katsina, Nok Valley, Turunku, Katsina-Ala Basin, Ibinda and Tse-Dura Complex, Wo-Mondo, Bako hill, Kpe hill, Da'ama, Iwo-Eleru, Ancient Ile-Ife, Old-Oyo, Benin, and Igbo-Ukwu amongst others (see Folorunso, 1981; Tubosun & Andah, 1983; Andah, 1983b; Shaw & Daniels, 1984; Okpoko, 1984; Igirgi, 1984; Ogundele, 1990, 2005; Tubosun, 1995; Gundu, 1999; Mangut, 1986; Okafor, 1989; Mangut, 1990; Ibeanu, 2000; Aremu & Odofin, 2002; Ndera, 2009; Sule, 2013).

Some of the archaeological sites particularly the Nok valley, have been associated with some arts works (such as terracotta figurines) of high aesthetic and artistic values, which has been considered as the best and the earliest art in the entire Black Africa (Eyo, 1977, cited from Odofin 1995:18; Usman, 2007). Terracotta figurines

have also been found in some sites in association with bronze materials of different shapes and kinds, with some of them depicting on their faces, the situations the people find themselves at that time (Odofin, 1995). The bronze objects on the other hand depict royalty, wealth and the socio-political system of the periods.

Some of the archaeological materials in Nigeria (Nok terracotta which is dated to 500 BC and 200 AD, Igbo Ukwu bronzes dated to 9th century AD, Ife brass heads and terracotta, and Benin bronzes dated to 12th - 16th Centuries AD, the Niger-Benue Tada figures, Esie soapstone figures and the decorated stone circuits of the Cross River people) show evidence of unique artistic craftsmanship capable of bringing together and/or unifying the Nigerian peoples.

Others are the ancient city walls and fortifications; with fortifications such as those of “stone walling systems which are common in Tivland and Ungwailand and the other of mud walls, “Bauchi and Kano are prominent in this regard” (Moody, 1969; Eboime, 2003; Ogundele, 2005, p. 82).

The discovery of a Dufuna canoe in the dry valley of Komadugu Gana River, in Funa Local Government Area of Yobe State, dated to about 800 years ago and probably indicating change in the environmental conditions of the area overtime (Usman, 2007), is also of paramount example.

There are two sites in Nigeria that are officially declared as World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These include Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa State which was declared in 1999 and the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove declared in 2005.

There are twelve other sites that are on the tentative list of UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. These include; Benin Iya/Sungbo’s Eredo (declared in 1995), Old Oyo (1995), Kwiambana and/or Ningi (1995), Oban Hills/Korup (1995), Niger Delta Mangrove (1995), Gashaki-Gumpti National park (1995), Oke Idanre (Idanre Hill) (2007), Arochukwu Long Juju Slave Route (Cave Temple Complex) (2007), Ancient Kano City Walls and Associated Sites (2007), Surame Cultural Landscape (2007), Alok Ikom Stone Monoliths (2007), Ogbunike Caves (2007), Lake Chad Cultural Landscape (2018), and Cross River - Korup - Takamanda (CRIKOT) National Parks (2020) (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/NG>).

Other spectacular cultural heritages found in Nigeria include; the Ancient Walls of Benin, described as the largest earthworks in the world and dated to between 800-1400AD; Igbo-Ora, a little town in Oyo State which has been nick-named as ‘Twin capital of the World’ because of its unusual association with high rate of

twin birth; and the Sungbo Eredo, located in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, and believed to be the largest pre-colonial monument in Africa.

Other areas of life of the ancient people of Nigeria that has been brought to limelight as a result of the numerous archaeological researches in Nigeria are seen in the areas of arts and crafts, trade, human settlements as well as environmental adaptation. Nigeria is also rich in intangible heritage resources which manifest in the form of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces. These practices can be found in the various aspects of the people's cosmology, literature and religion amongst others (Usman, 2007).

Archaeological investigations in Nigeria have also revealed that the ancient Nigerian people explored iron ore, smelted it and used it in forging tools. Tools made from iron were used by those who leaders and/or kings to control others and even extend their control over people of far locations. At this point centralized states began to emerge. By the 19th century Nigeria already had a number of centralized states like Kanem-Borno, Hausa states, Oyo, Ife, Benin, the small but independent states of the Niger Delta, Igala, Jukun and Nupe kingdoms, as well as the non-centralized states of the Igbos and those of the Middle Belt like the Tiv, Mwaghavul, and Ngas, amongst other. These states were civilized with developed well established means of maintaining their autonomy over a long period of time as a result of their ability to adapt and also manipulate their environment (particular the use of iron) (Abubakar, 1980).

Archaeological discoveries in Nigeria have also provided evidence of ancient contacts between people of Nigeria and those of other regions in Africa. For instance, the technique used in the production of Igbo-Ukwu bronze was completely alien to the Nigerian area, suggesting importation from outside, though with some trait of local innovations (Shaw, 1980). Archaeological and historical evidence have linked these developments to importation from North Africa probably through the Trans-Saharan trade.

Rituals, tribal marks and names given to persons and places in local languages are also important aspects of the cultural heritage of Nigeria people. It is hoped that as more universities have continued to introduce Archaeology as a course of study, more discoveries concerning the past achievements of the Nigerian people will be further uncovered.

The Role of Archaeology in Social Stability/Security in Nigeria

Archaeology is the only discipline with the complete expertise of reconstructing man's past ways of life. It does this through the study of material remains left behind, and that have survived over time in the environment. These materials have the ability to extend our knowledge of the past deeper than documents and oral sources. Archaeology being an interpretative practice engaging in a critical process of theoretical work relating the past and present, applies techniques from other disciplines such as geology, geography, chemistry, and biology amongst others.

Archaeology is realistic because the material culture and their interrogation bring researchers into direct contact with the past as well as reality of life. Through the analysis and interpretation of archaeological materials, the archaeologists obtain information that is relevant in societal building. In his analysis and interpretation, the archaeologist plays the role comparable to that of a judge (Shanks & Tilley, 1992). The information contained in those cultural materials is produced and presented to the public through publications.

Archaeology does not only provide a conscious conception or view about the past, it also presents to the public information concerning the nature of the human conditions and by implication social transformation (Shanks & Tilley, 1992). The solution to most of our problems including those of social instability/insecurity requires knowledge of the past. For instance, by their training, archaeologists can contribute in a number of ways in proffering the solutions to the problems that are presently confronting Nigeria. The thorough and interrogative nature of their research as well as the cultural values enshrine in archaeological training can produce good citizenry that will treat one another with respect and also view the country's diversity as the foundation to the nation's quest for greatness.

More so, by employing techniques from other disciplines, archaeologists are placed in better position to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to adequately address societal problems. Nigeria is also blessed with enormous cultural heritages that are often displayed during various festivals of ethnic groups in Nigeria - whether Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, Tiv, Ijaw, Zuru, Jukun, Ibibio, Berom, Mwaghavul, Ngas or Ngeomai amongst others (Usman, 2003; Ekechukwu & Onyeabo, 2003). These groups usually have a culture of inviting their neighbours to celebrate together with them in the spirit of brotherhood (Gubak, Kromtit & Gubam, 2020). These events are usually attended by people from far and near, and also foster unity as well as peaceful living amongst the diverse groups. Cultural materials usually displayed at the venues are purchased by

visitors as souvenirs. Thereby, pointing to an increased tolerance and love for one another's culture.

Further, materials retrieved from archaeological excavations are displayed in Museums for public consumption. An appreciation of these aspects of Nigeria's cultural heritage will also strengthen our unity in diversity which further strengthens tolerance in the midst of the multiplicity of ethnic-groups. Their aesthetics have even earned Nigeria a lot of respect from other nations of the world. In describing the cultural richness of Nigeria, Danburi (2007:58) stated that;

Nigeria is a cultural library that has provided Africa and the entire World with abundant wealth of information in areas such as the prehistoric environment, in Borno and the Lake Chad area, iron technology and agriculture in the Nok area, and early human occupation in the Iwo Eleru sites, etc.

This illustrates the perception of experts from other countries about the endowment of Nigeria particularly her cultural heritage as exposed by archaeological discoveries and ethnographic studies of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. These archaeological and ethnographic materials have earned Nigeria so much respect amongst committee of nations.

Therefore, archaeology materials became an inspirational tool to Nigerians, both as opportunities for creativity and instruments of liberation. It was instrumental to the 1945 struggles for the confirmation of the rights of Nigerian people and the preeminence of the country as a nation. Archaeology was thus, used by Nigerians as an aspect of national identity (Ogundiran, 2002). Many people took pride in their past which were brought to light or public arena through the discovery of terracotta figurines, bronze heads, ancient walls and other related materials.

Generally, archaeology gained a good understanding of human psychology through its practices, which places the discipline in a better position to project into the past and also provide useful solution to present problem (Neiman, 2016). Interrogating ancient cultures through the practice of archaeology enable it to put together history, regarding ways in which individuals and mass psychology operates. When this knowledge of the past is applied into today's problems, it helps to have an in-depth understanding of their causes and also chat the way for appropriate solutions.

Neiman (2016) posits that;

our understanding of the axis of time related to human life, and the lessons we extract from them allows us to create effective solutions to deal with today's problems. This comes through being aware of cause-effect relationships which have led to the result that humanity experience today.

Humanity's understanding of the past no doubt helps to open the door for the future. This is because of the fact that knowledge of the past enables a projection of the future.

Archaeological discoveries became national pride to the younger generations and Nigerian heroes and heroines such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Joseph Tarka, Mrs. Funmiayo Ransome Kuti, Hajia Gambo Sawaba, etc. This can also serve as inspiration to the present generation of people in Nigeria especially the youth. The knowledge of the meaning and importance of these cultural heritage materials can help the contemporary Nigerians to imbibe the spirit of patriotism requires to make Nigeria a peaceful nation. The people will become "more patriotic and strive to maintain their traditions and culture, while also showcasing it to the visitors" (Nomishan, et al. 2020:11).

As noted earlier, archaeological education has the ability to create the needed awareness concerning several issues such as religion, politics or ethnic misconceptions that is a big syndrome causing disunity, instability and insecurity in Nigeria.

The above assertion is made following the fact that every group of people in world exist with a common goal. This goal is therefore, the focal point of daily engagement of all the members of that group of people. Again every meaning phenomenon in existence has history and this history becomes the major force that pool energy that drives the progress of such a phenomenon. This is not different from human societal existence.

Every society has reasons to be together and one of these reasons is the goal pursued by the members of such a society. Historically and archaeologically Nigeria and Nigerians has abandoned the goal that initially brought the nation and its people together. The question is what was the major goal that mandated the founding fathers of Nigeria to make sure that there was an entity called Nigeria? This question needs to be addressed and also addressed properly.

Thus, in addressing this question, one will seek to be aware of the knowledge of the Nigerian history that is given to children and youth in Nigeria. To this end, it

is disappointing to imagine that history as subject is no longer important to Nigeria as a government. And so the manner in which historical and archaeological related subjects are relegated to zero level in the elementary educational levels in Nigeria becomes worrisome. The authors of this piece of knowledge also believe that the alarming none-patriotism, instability and insecurity presently going on in Nigeria have a lot to do with the way Nigeria have maltreated its own history. For Soyinka (2006), any entity that disregards its history like Nigeria should simply be told to forget the past and forfeit the future.

Apart from the above, the contemporary Nigerian society has lost good value systems that past African society were known for. These cherished values (which include respect for elders and one another, personal discipline, high moral standard, and above all respect for culture and tradition, are however, thought by archaeology. These values are the most needed in Nigerian society today. Archaeology do this through the appreciation of the nature of various cultures both past and present, their uniqueness and similarities, their development, and a variety of ways in which they are preserved. By so doing, archaeology stands the chance to offer a lot to the preservation of these heritages and also promote togetherness of all the nationalities in Nigeria. Thus, by its practice, archaeology promotes patriotism and unity amongst citizens, which is the most needed in Nigeria today.

Conclusion

Nigeria no doubt is passing through a number of national challenges that have led to insecurity and political/social instability in the country. Religion, politics, ethnicity, corruption, injustice, and struggle for control of resources were the most common problems of Nigeria in the past. However, in recent times, lack of appropriate knowledge of the country's history amongst her children and youth has paved the way for serious instability and insecurity in the nation.

Instability and insecurity have taken a different dimension in the county, taking the form of insurgency (Boko Haram); banditry (reckless killing of innocent people, stealing and destruction of properties); kidnapping (holding of innocent people in the forest for ransom, and rootless killing of some of the victims; Fulani herders massacre (tagged as herder-farmer clashes which is usually done to destroy farmlands and crops and also kidnap farmers for ransom; secessionists agitators (this more pronounce in the south-eastern part of Nigeria where some Igbo people are calling themselves "Independent People of Biafra IPOB,

demanding to have a separate county from Nigeria, leading to several dimensions of deaths and destruction of properties); youth protests (for example the recent “end sars” protest by the youth that lead to the killing of several youths in the country alongside destruction of properties) amongst others.

This apart from leading to loss of lives and property, it has also created fear in the minds of the citizens who feel unsafe in their homes/lands. This has also scared away investors, leads to wastage of state resources, closure of centers of learning and loss of revenue amounting to several billions of dollars. The situation seems to deter different kinds of solutions as both the State and state actors as well as scholars from different disciplines have recently not known any rest in bids to let the country out of the problem.

To this end, it is paramount to state that, archaeology and archaeologists have a great role to play in this respect. Considering the nature of the discipline and its expert’s closeness to the people at the grassroots, it has better ways of engaging the people for positive results. It can reignite the loss African values and help to promote patriotism, unity and tolerance, anchored on the principle of producing citizens that are disciplined and whose aim would be the appreciation of national diversity.

Archaeology have reveal a lot about the achievements of our ancient people in terms of the peaceful societies they had which consequently made it possible for them to organized themselves and produce beautiful arts work which has been regarded as the oldest in Black Africa (Eyo cited from Odojin 1995:18). This was alongside other achievements such as advanced technology of smelting iron and bronze, as well as domestication amongst others.

Archaeological research has also produced several evidence of long distance trade as shown on some rock paintings and chariot drawings. Some of the evidence also reflects past existence of peace and security in African societies. Despite the fact that archaeological materials have served as rallying point for African patriots after the second world war and also inspire them to fight against colonialism, its ability to contribute to proffering solution to the present security challenges is yet to be exploited.

Archaeology teaches the cherished African values that are most needed in Nigeria today. And therefore, this is the right time the Nigerian society and government to seek the intervention of archaeology in solving national issues. This can be done by utilizing the benefits of archaeological investigations in Nigeria which help to understand what how certain materials were made, what they were made from,

what function they performed and what symbols they represented to the past population in the country.

Some of the cultural materials were used to provide solution to certain problems (e.g. curing of illnesses or diseases); or for religious purposes (e.g. giving of sacrifices to the gods); and for aesthetics (e.g. decoration of palaces or chariots of kings) amongst others. Therefore, the work of archaeology/archaeologists has social and political implications every society. By their background and nature of training, archaeologists are placed in a good position to contribute a huge quota in a bid to get Nigeria out of the present predicament.

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