

EXPANDING THE HISTORY OF PAST SETTLEMENTS OF NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA: A REPORT OF PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF ZIGAM SETTLEMENT IN BAUCHI STATE

BY

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Abstract

Zigam is a hilltop settlement with a long history in the record of the central Bauchi region and was occupied by the group of people known with Zigamachi language in the past. The settlement was said to have a lineage with the Zigau and Birni Gazargamu people from the historical narration. Until now, there was no record of archaeological investigation bearing in mind the documentation and reconstruction of the past history of Zigam settlement within Kasar Bauchi. This is a preliminary report of the archaeological investigation carried out at Zigam settlement and the report presents an account of material remains spatially distributed on the surface of the settlement such as defensive walls, circular stone arrangement of different sizes (house and granary foundations), rock hollows, lower grinding stones, possible places of burial, stone anvil, dyeing complex, ruined building, and scattered potsherds on the surface of the settlement. The method adopted in the course of this investigation was an archaeological survey and is beginning to assist in understanding the cultural landscape of the settlement. The report recommends further investigations to reveal more about the past-history of Zigam settlement archaeologically.

Keywords: Zigam, Bauchi Region, Material Culture, Spatial Distribution.

Introduction

Zigam is a hilltop settlement situated at Ganjuwa Local Government Area, Bauchi State, Nigeria. The settlement is located 15kilometers North-West ofMararraban Mai-Alewa which is at the main road from Bauchi, Birni. Kudu and Kano express way. Zigam is bordered by Wuro to the West, Kariya to the south, Gala to the East and Labba to the

North respectively. The geographical coordinate of the settlement falls between latitude 10° 59'N and Longitude 009° 45' to 009° 46'E (See Fig I).



Figure 1: Zigam in Northern Nigeria

Source: Modified from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=6/9.117/8.674>.

There is an appreciable level of archaeological reconstruction and documentation of the southern and northern parts of the Bauchi region (Giade, 2011; Sule, 2013; Sule and Haour, 2014; Giade, 2016; Abdulkadir, 2008; Yusuf, 2008; Yakubu, 2008; Yusuf, 2009) with a lesser degree of awareness and knowledge about the archaeology of Central Bauchi region. This is, however, a region that is recognized as historically important, where for instance, Abubakar (1974:156) acknowledged that:

“On the central part of Bauchi, much of which is very flat and fertile with broken rocky hills suitable for cultivation and cattle grazing. The settlements with the presence of several rivers such as Misau, Zala and Mariga seems to have attracted various immigrations from Hausa Land and Borno (including pastoral Fulani), leading to the formation of several ancient sizeable communities of which Ganjuwa was the most important”

Historical narration from Ganjuwa region attests that Zigam is one of the oldest settlements of the region (Ganjuwa), with historical relevance and the manifestation of the existence of valuable cultural values and heritage among other settlements in the region.

No advanced archaeological investigation before this investigation has been conducted on the site to determine the cultural viability of the settlement. The recent work on Zigam Hilltop settlement was carried out to fill the noticed gap from previous archaeological investigations over the region and this is an attempt to reconstruct the settlement history of Zigam settlement to contribute to the documentation of the history of people of the central Bauchi region in North-eastern Nigeria.

Methodology

The methods adopted during this investigation includes Oral tradition, Consultation of Written Sources and Archaeological Survey.

Twenty-two informants (12 males and 10 females) were interviewed at the new settlement of Zigam and the selection of the informants cut across gender, age, occupation and status among the people of Zigam settlement. This method of inquiry was useful in gathering information relating to the origin, migration history, occupation, crafts, taboos, conquest history, relationships with other communities, religion and festivals among others. This method assisted in identifying the old settlement of Zigam; providing a clue about the picture of the nature of the settlement, distributions of material evidence and other antiquities on the surface of the settlement in the past through the assistance of field guides. The written sources involved a first-hand assessment of relevant documents which include published and unpublished materials like journals, diaries, memories, books, archival materials, magazines, newspapers, and maps (Thomas, 20115) which were all contributed to the compilation of this research work at Zigam. The archival materials consulted were the expeditionary and colonial records on Bauchi state with particular attention to its central region, which was sourced from the Bauchi State Library and National Archive, Kaduna State, Nigeria respectively.

The field-walking method of archaeological survey was employed, which involved walking on foot with a visual inspection of the site. This research work employed the services of two field guides and three field assistants with the exercise involving systematic field walking and traversing around the site using the global positioning system (GPS) to record the coordinates of finds and features. Prismatic compass for bearing coordinates of finds and features, ranging poles, measuring tape (5m and 30m) for measurement of distance and association of cultural materials on the site, a digital camera for the photographic documentation of finds and features with the ranging pole placed beside each feature or cluster of finds as the material remains on the site. And field notes for documenting finds and features of archaeological and historical interest. All visible material cultures on the settlement were recorded and a comprehensive site map which indicated the spatial distributions of material culture on the settlement was produced.

Traditions of Origin

The origin of the people from the Central Bauchi region could be classified to have belonged to “Westernman and Greenberg linguistic family. This is based on the assumption that (a) the central and eastern plains of the Bauchi region match with the south-western frontiers of the Chad region with no marked geographical barrier to migrations and continuous communication; and (b) the rise of the KanemBorno empire and the height of power which it reached in the 16th and 17th century particularly after the transfer from Kanem to Birnin- Gazargamu meant a more active interest in the regions to the west and south” (Abubakar, 1974:178). See also Sule (2018) for a general discussion about the roots of migrations for the other peoples of the Bauchi region.

The Zigam settlement was occupied by a group of people with Zigamachi language; that has a lineage with the people of Zigau. The people of Zigam migrated from Gazargamu Empire because of war and first settled at a renounced region called Zigau in the Northern Bauchi and finally settled at Zigamhilltop settlement (Ibrahim, Pers. Comm. 2020). The oral tradition has it that they migrated from Zigau as a result of several attacks of the slave trade and settled on the hilltop with defensive structures to defend themselves against invaders and put their enemy at disadvantage in the past. The people of Zigam however, abandoned the hilltop and settled on the plain surface (present settlement of today) because there was no more war on the hilltop and there was an epidemic disease called “Kulukunu” in Zigamachi language and “Agana” in the Hausa language. They believed that the occurrence of this disease was a result of evil acts of their forefathers on the hilltop (Yakubu, Pers. Comm. 2020). These people claimed to have been the first inhabitants of the settlement, built defensive walls around the settlement for protection against invaders towards the settlement and these walls attracted many other groups and individuals to join the settlement. Oral tradition claimed that people from Hausa Land and Fulani people joined them at the settlement and made the settlement announced in the whole Ganjuwa region today. Zigamanchi which was traced to the “Greenberg linguistic family” (Abubakar, 1974) was the linguafranka in the past, but most of the inhabitants of the settlement speaks Hausa and the minority speaks Hausa and Zigamanchi (Ibrahim, Pers. Comm. 2020).

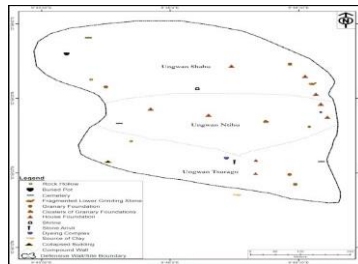
Archaeological Survey

The traverse technique of the ground survey method was adopted. This technique, involved the movement, recording, documenting and photographing of finds and features on the surface of the hilltop site. The method was achieved with the aid of field assistants in photographing and documenting the GPS coordinate of each feature; and field guides who pointed at some of the locations with historical significances on the settlement. Three different zones (Ungwans) were identified and surveyed on the settlement of Zigam hilltop site and both finds and features from each zone were presented respectively in this chapter. The objectives of the survey include:

Identify and document the finds and features on the settlement; documenting the geographical coordinate of every feature dotted on the landscape of the settlement to produce the map of the site and mapping out the hilltop to establish the spatial distribution of material remain on the surface of the site.

Site Descriptions

Zigam hilltop settlement site is measured about 81,320m² in size. The site is characterized by three different zones (namely: UngwanShabbu, Ntibu and Tsurago) which were demarcated with compound walls on the surface of the hilltop. The hilltop was identified with a flat and partly undulating surface, an elevation of 588m (above sea level), rock outcrops, short grasses, tall trees such as tamarind, baobab and neem among others (See Fig II).



Ungwan Shabbu

This was the first identified demarcated zone situated on the Zigam hilltop settlement site. The Ungwan covered between the Northwest and northeastern part of the Hilltop. The area was characterized by the presence of a defensive wall, buried pot, cemetery, granary foundations, house foundations, lower grinding stone, shrine, rock hollow and scattered potsherds on the surface of the area.

Finds and Features

Potsherds were in abundance found scattered the surface of the settlement. The potsherds were collected with simple sampling methods at an interval of 2meters on the site. A total number of 61 samples of potsherds were collected and further examined. From this zone, two fragments of animal bones were identified and a sample was collected from the site. Other finds from this part of the zone accounted for the discovery of bones. The bones were identified as animal bones from the visual observations but the species of the animal at which the bones belonged yet to be identified. Iron implements were also identified at this part of zone on the site. Two samples were identified and collected from the site and the iron implements are flats and rusting as the process of mixture of water and soil on the irons. Another notable find from the sites is upper grinding stones. These are handling pebble stone tools identified from the site. The upper grinding stones were circular and with a smooth surface. At the northeastern part of the hilltop there was an identification of fragmented lower grinding stone which was characterized by a hollow with smooth surface indicating several uses over time. The lower grinding stone was protruded and measured 23cm in height, 25cm in length and 14cm in breadth. Protrude pot was also identified at this part of zone; the pot is located at the northwestern part of the abandoned site. Half of the pot was protruding on the surface of the abandoned settlement site; the protrude pot was measured 28cm in diameter, 11cm in height and 1.8cm in thickness.

Another material culture from the site is the possible place of burial situated at the northwestern part of the site. This was characterized by the presence of graves with head markers (stones) placed at the edge of some graves, while some without markers. The location was characterized by the presence of red dried leaves from trees that surrounded the location and an abundance of potsherds scattered over the area. The place is located 2meters north east of the protrude buried pot and this was measured 14.7m in length and 8.34m in breadth.



Plate 1: Cemetery from UngwanShabbu

This zone has a presence of defensive walls. The defensive wall was situated on the foot of the hilltop from the entrance and joined with big rocks that served as the continuation of the defensive wall of the settlement. The defensive wall was characterized by stone arrangements as a form of walling structure; there was presence of dried grasses and trees closer to the defensive walls. The visible remnant of the defensive wall was mapped alongside the big rocks to establish the site boundary and extent. The defensive wall was measured 8.9m in length, 56cm in height and 74cm in width.

Other important features on this part of the site were granary foundations. Two granary foundations were identified at this part of the site. The granary foundations were characterized by stone arrangement in circular shape and in smaller size compare to house foundations on the site. Granary Foundation A was identified at the north-western part of the site; this is situated at 2.45m south-east of rock hollow on the site and was measured 1.15m in diameter and 8cm height. Granary Foundation B was identified at the northeastern part of the site; situated 7.5m northwest of House Foundation and was measured 1.12m in diameter and 6cm in height.



Plate II: Granary Foundation from Plate UngwanShabbu

Another important feature on the site was a shrine. This was identified towards the centre of the site; the shrine was indicated by one of the field guides in the course of an archaeological survey of the site. The location of the shrine was characterized by the presence of stone arrangement in a circular shape, the presence of dried grasses and red leaves over the location and the abundance of potsherds at the location. There was notice of a unique potsherd with the representation of animal figures over the area. The shrine is measured 2.08m in diameter and 13cm in height.

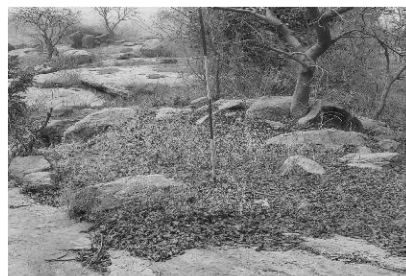


Plate III: House Foundation from UngwanShabbu

Two house foundations were also identified as part of a settlement and were characterized by the arrangement of stones in a circular shape. House foundation A was identified at the northeastern part of the site; situated at 8.45m northwest of lower grinding stones and was measured 2.25m in diameter and 16cm in height. House Foundation B was identified at the southwestern part of the site and was measured 1.52m in diameter and 7cm in height.

Rock hollow with upper grinding stone was also identified at the northwestern part of the site; the rock hollow was situated closer to the granary foundation A. It is situated on a rock boulder with a flat surface and measured 62cm in height, 1.21m in length, 65cm in breadth and 14cm in diameter. While, the upper grinding stone on the rock hollow was measured 6cm in diameter

UngwanNtibu
This is the second clan on the same hilltop of Zigam settlement site. The clan was demarcated with compound walls and covered the centre and towards the southern part of the site. The area was characterized by the presence of material remains such as a cluster of granary foundations, pond, house foundations, potsherds and compound walls. This location was characterized by the presence of baobab trees, neem trees, among others at the settlement.

Finds and Features

A total number of 76 samples of potsherds were collected with simple sampling methods at an interval of 2meters on the site and were furthered examined.

A possible place of burial was also identified at the part of this site. This was identified at the western part of the site; the cemetery was characterized by presence of dried grasses, burial places and stone arrangement as demarcation of the cemetery's boundary. The cemetery was measured 12.4m in length and 5.85m in breadth.

This part of the site is also characterized by the presence of compound walls. There were identifications of compound walls that served as the demarcation of zones on the site. The compound walls were identified at both the Northwestern and northeastern parts of the site and were mapped accordingly. Northwestern wall served as the demarcation between the 1st clan and 2nd clan. The wall was arranged with stones in linear shape and joined with big rocks that served as the continuation of the defensive wall. The visible stone arrangements were mapped and measured 8.4m in length and 65cm in height. The southeastern wall served as the demarcation between the 2nd clan and the 3rd clan. The visible stone arrangement was mapped and measured 6.82m in length and 2.21m in height.



Plate IV: Compound Wall from UngwanNtibu

There were identifications of three granary foundations on the surface of the site; two were clustered and the last one was at a separate location over the area. The granary foundations were characterized by the arrangement of stones in a circular shape. The first granary foundation was situated at the southeastern part of the site and was measured 1.62m in diameter and 5cm in height; while the second was measured 1.56m in diameter and 8cm in height. The third granary foundation is situated at the northeastern part of the site and was measured 1.22m in diameter and 42cm in height.



Plate V: Granary Foundation from UngwanNtibu

House foundations were also identified at this part of the site. There were identifications of four house foundations and were also characterized by the circular stone arrangements. House foundation A was identified at the northwestern part of the defensive wall; the house foundation was 3.5m south-east of the compound wall and was measured 3.21m in diameter and 28cm in height. House Foundation B was identified at the eastern part of the site and was measured 3.42m in diameter and 23cm in height. House Foundation C was identified at the southeastern part of the site and measured 3.42m in diameter and 8cm in height. House Foundation D is situated at the southwestern part of the site; the house foundation was measured 3.38m in diameter and 12cm in height.



Plate VI: House Foundation from UngwanNtibu

Ungwan Tsurago

This is the last clan on the same hilltop of Zigam site. The Ungwan covered the southeastern and southwestern part of the hilltop. The clan was demarcated from the second clan with compound wall as discussed above. The location of the clan was also characterized by the presence of material remains such as cemetery, dyeing area, granary foundations, house foundations, ruined buildings, stone anvil, and source of clay, among others. The location of the clan was also characterized by the undulating and flat surface with stone outcrops, thick vegetation and planted trees. The location also has evidence of farming activities in the present day as most of the flat part of the surface was re-occupied for farming activities.

Finds and Features

A total number of 83 samples of potsherds were collected with simple sampling methods at an interval of 2meters on the site and were furthered examined.

A possible place of burial was also identified at the part of this site. This was identified at the southeastern part of the site. The cemetery was situated in proximity to the exit of the settlement and was measured 14.6m in length and 8.95m in breadth.

Another important material culture from the site was the dyeing complex. This is located at the centre of

the zone (Ungwan) towards the southeastern part of the site. The dyeing complex was identified at the proximity of 4.5m northwest of a stone anvil. The dyeing area was characterized by grey soil and loosed in nature, fine texture and presence of a fragment of dyeing pits and as well as potsherds over the location. The dyeing complex was rectangular and measured 8.56m in length and 5.85m in breadth.



Plate VII: Dyeing Complex from UngwanTsurago

Two granary foundations were also identified at the part of this site. Granary foundation A was identified at the southeastern part of the site. The granary foundation was identified at proximity of 4.54m southeast of house foundation A. The granary foundation was measured at 1.12m in breadth and 1.54m in length. While the granary foundation B was identified at the southeastern part of the site and measured 1.82m in diameter.

Two numbers of house foundations were also identified at this part of the settlement. House foundation A was identified at the southeastern part of the site; it is located at 4.54m away from the granary foundation and was measured 2.85m in diameter and 18cm in height. House Foundation B was identified at the southeastern part of the site and was measured 1.82m breadth and 8cm in height.

Another important feature on this part of the site was a rock hollow. This was identified at the northeastern part of the site; it was characterized by a smooth surface indicating several uses in the past and was measured 1.21m in diameter and 28cm depth.

The ruined building was also identified as part of features on the site. This was identified at the southwestern part of the site. The ruined building was characterized by the remnant of mud building which was circular and located closer to the exit of the abandoned settlement. The ruined building was measured 3.21m in diameter, 1.23m in height and 18cm in thickness.



Plate VIII: Ruined Building from UngwanTsurago

Another feature on the site was a stone anvil. This was identified at the southeastern part of the site. The stone anvil was located at proximity of 4.5m to the dyeing complex; characterized by a smooth surface and measured 85cm in length, 48cm in width and 23cm in height



Plate IX: Stone Anvil from ungwan/Isurago

The source of Clay was another important feature situated on the site. This was identified at the foot of Zigam hilltop. The oral informant narrated that the stream served as the location for the source of clay for pottery production and building construction at the settlement in the past.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research aim to attempt to reconstruct the past settlement history of the people of Zigam through material remains on the surface of the settlement was achieved. Concerning artefactual evidence discussed above, this research has contributed to the reconstruction of part of the settlement history of Zigam. This research revealed that Zigam hilltop settlement was occupied for habitation, socio-economic activities, religious practices and security purpose in the past.

The evidence of defensive structure, house foundations, granary foundations and grinding stones alongside with abundance of potsherds suggested a sedentary way of life among the people of Zigam in the past. The settlement could have been probably occupied for defensive purpose based on the evidence of defensive structures despite the location of the hilltop settlement. Oral traditions from the settlement also attested to the view that many other people from other communities joined the settlement (Zigam hilltop) in seeking protections against invaders in the past and this contributed to the population of the settlement over time (Hurst, 1972; Richard, 2000; Sohoni, 2002).

The arable land and deposits from decay rock at the bank of Tsamia stream became a source of clay for pottery production in Zigam settlement. The oral information from the settlement claimed that the location has been the source of clay for the settlement over time and the thin section analysis on the pottery samples from the site attested that they were from a single source and belonged to a complex basement rock environment where the geology of Zigam belonged. The presence of a dyeing complex area on the settlement alongside with stone anvil at close proximity on the site suggested dyeing practices as part of subsistence economic practices of the people in the settlement. The evidence from oral information also supported that the inhabitant of the settlement engaged in dyeing activities and the arable land alongside the Tsamia stream supported this practice over time.

We can as well reconstruct an aspect of social stratification of the settlement from both historical and archaeological evidence from the site. The defensive wall on Zigam settlement is an indication of authority on the settlement (Akinade, 2005) and the presence of compound walls that were used in demarcating zones on the site is an indication of social stratifications. Various sizes and shapes of the house foundations on the settlement also suggested evidence of social stratification in the settlement. The oral tradition from the settlement shared light on the division of labour in the settlement in terms of economic, burial and religious practices as well in the past. The abundance of graves at the demarcated portions on the site, alongside the evidence of protrude pot from proximity at the settlement suggested the burial practices in the settlement and probably the people of the settlement used pottery for burying their deceased in the past as attested by oral tradition.

The presence of iron implements on the surface of the settlement suggested a trade contact between the people of Zigam and the neighbouring community that is known of iron production, since there was no evidence of iron working on the surface of the site and the oral information from the site as well, attested that their forefathers do not know about iron working.

Lastly, we can conclude that the presence of arable land, Tsamiam stream as a source of water and its bank as a source of clay, hilltop as defensive mechanism among other natural resources over the settlement suggested some factors among many factors that might have attracted the inhabitants to settle over the area.

This research, however, recommends further investigations such as excavations to unravel most of the material culture deposited beneath the earth surface of Zigam settlement and chronometric dating to determine the period at which the settlement has been in existence within the regional context of Bauchi and northern Nigeria.

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