



La-Net

ARC 404

ARCHAEOLOGY OF NIGERIA



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Course code: ARC 404

Course title: Archaeology of Nigeria

Course credit load: 3 Units C: LH 45

List of Series:

1. **Series 1:** Nigerian Paleoenvironment and Archaeological History
2. **Series 2:** University and Museum Archaeology in Nigeria
3. **Series 3:** The Nigerian Stone Age and Food Production
4. **Series 4:** The Nigerian Iron Age and Urban Origins
5. **Series 5:** Major Archaeological Sites of Nigeria

Series 1: Nigerian Paleoenvironment and Archaeological History

Parts and Sub-Parts

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Introduction

Nigeria occupies a geographically and ecologically privileged position in West Africa. Its landscapes range from the Sahel in the far north through the Guinea savanna and rainforest belt to the Atlantic coast in the south, and its two great rivers — the Niger and the Benue — have shaped both human settlement and the preservation of archaeological evidence over millennia. Understanding this environmental backdrop is the essential first step in the study of Nigerian archaeology.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with a foundational understanding of Nigeria's physical and paleoenvironmental setting, the history of archaeological research in the country, and the theoretical and methodological frameworks and chronological tools that define the discipline in the Nigerian context.

We shall commence this Series by examining Nigeria's physical geography and ecological zones, before exploring how climate changed over the Quaternary period and the evidence for these changes preserved in the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental record. Following that, we will trace the history of archaeological research in Nigeria from its colonial beginnings to post-independence developments. We will then consider the theoretical and methodological frameworks that guide research, before concluding with an overview of the dating methods that underpin the Nigerian archaeological chronology.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

16. **SLO 1.1** describe Nigeria's geographical zones, ecological diversity, and major river systems and explain their archaeological significance,
17. **SLO 1.2** explain Quaternary climatic fluctuations and evaluate the evidence for paleoenvironmental change preserved in the Nigerian record,
18. **SLO 1.3** trace the history of archaeological research in Nigeria from the colonial era to the present,
19. **SLO 1.4** identify the theoretical and methodological frameworks applied in Nigerian archaeological research, and
20. **SLO 1.5** describe absolute and relative dating methods and explain how they contribute to building the Nigerian archaeological chronology.

1.1 Nigeria's Physical And Environmental Setting

1.1.1 Geographical zones and ecological diversity

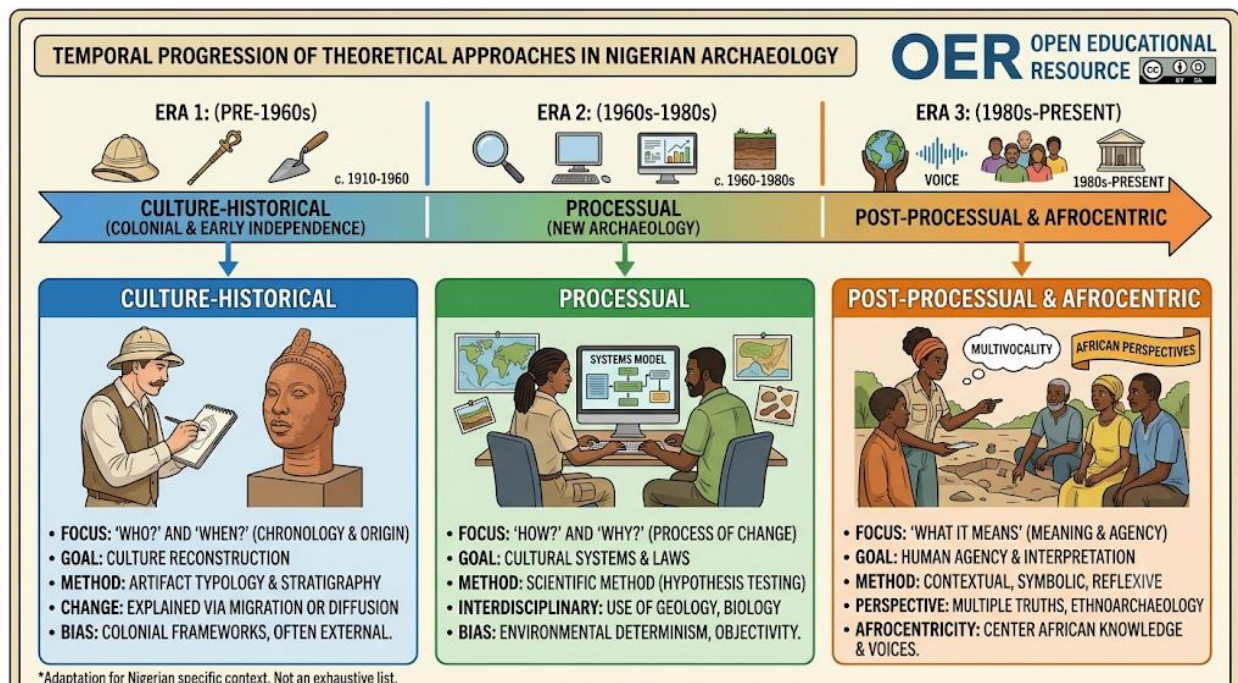
Nigeria covers approximately 923,768 square kilometres and encompasses a remarkable range of ecological zones aligned broadly from north to south. The far north is characterised by the **Sahel** and **Sudan savanna**, with sparse vegetation and low, seasonal rainfall. Moving southward, the **Guinea savanna** — the largest ecological zone — supports a mosaic of woodland, grassland, and gallery forest. The **derived savanna** and **rainforest belt** occupy the south and southwest, with dense vegetation and high annual rainfall. The **Niger Delta** and Atlantic coastline in the south present a distinctive ecology of mangrove swamp, freshwater marsh, and barrier islands. This ecological diversity has shaped patterns of human occupation, subsistence, and mobility across deep time.

Fill in the blank: The largest ecological zone in Nigeria, characterised by a mosaic of woodland and grassland, is the _____ savanna.

1.1.2 River systems, drainage basins, and their archaeological significance

The **River Niger** and its major tributary, the **River Benue**, form Nigeria's principal drainage system, meeting at Lokoja before flowing south to the Niger Delta. These rivers have served as corridors for human migration, trade, and communication since prehistoric times, and their floodplains and terraces preserve stratified archaeological deposits spanning tens of thousands of years. Smaller river systems — including the Sokoto, Kaduna, Gongola, and Cross rivers — have also been important zones of prehistoric occupation. The **alluvial deposits** along river terraces are particularly significant because they preserve organic materials, lithic assemblages, and faunal remains in datable stratigraphic contexts.

Fill in the blank: The River Niger and River Benue meet at _____ before flowing south to the Niger Delta.



A map of Nigeria showing the major ecological zones from north to south — Sahel, Sudan savanna,

Guinea savanna, derived savanna, rainforest, and Niger Delta — alongside the courses of the Niger and Benue rivers.

Figure 1.1 Nigeria's ecological zones and major river systems.

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Name four of the major ecological zones found in Nigeria from north to south.
2. The largest ecological zone in Nigeria is the _____ savanna.
3. Where do the Rivers Niger and Benue meet?
4. Why are river floodplains and terraces particularly significant for archaeological research in Nigeria?
5. Name two smaller river systems in Nigeria that have been important zones of prehistoric occupation.

1.2 Paleoenvironmental Change In Nigeria

1.2.1 Quaternary climatic fluctuations and their ecological impact

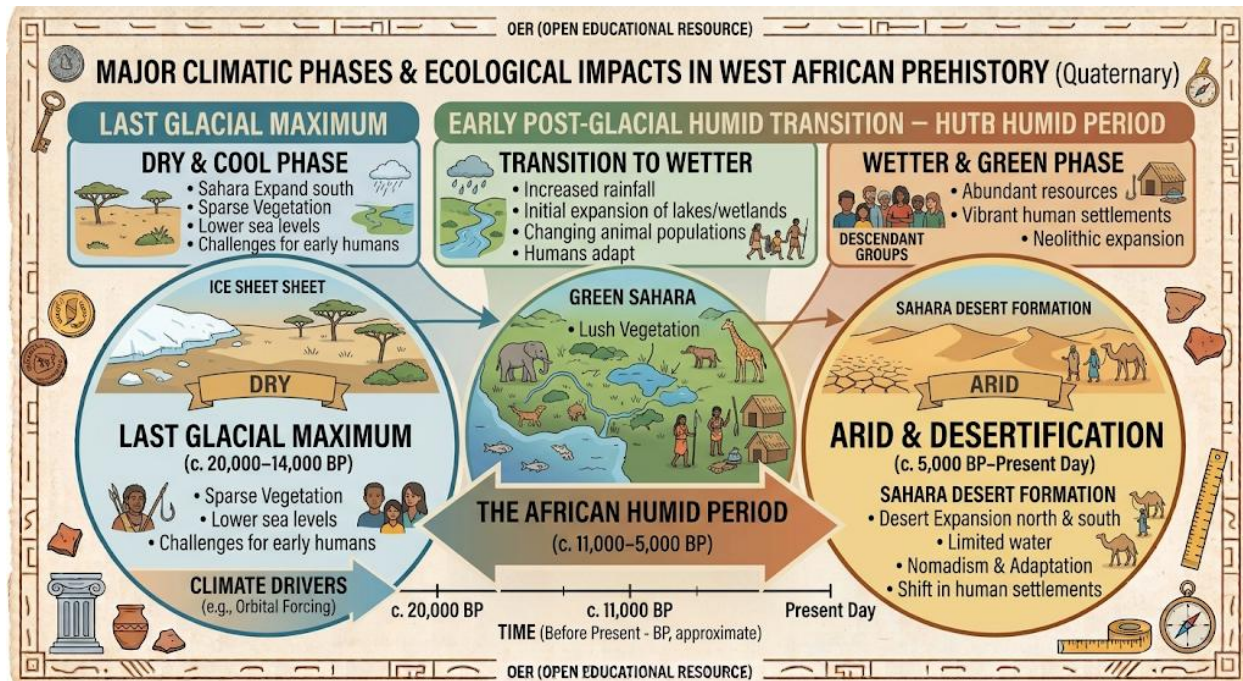
The **Quaternary period** (spanning roughly the last 2.6 million years) was characterised by repeated cycles of climatic cooling and warming that profoundly altered the distribution of vegetation zones, water availability, and human habitability across West Africa. During **glacial maxima** — periods of maximum global cooling — the Sahara expanded southward, vegetation zones contracted, and lake levels fell, restricting zones suitable for human occupation in what is now northern Nigeria. Conversely, during **humid interglacials**, wetter conditions expanded the savanna and forest zones northward, enabling greater human mobility and resource availability. The most recent major humid phase, the **African Humid Period** (approximately 11,000–5,000 years ago), had a particularly significant impact on settlement patterns and the emergence of food production in the region.

Fill in the blank: The African Humid Period lasted from approximately 11,000 to _____ years ago and had a significant impact on settlement and food production.

1.2.2 Evidence for paleoenvironmental change in the Nigerian record

Evidence for past environmental conditions in Nigeria comes from multiple proxy sources. **Pollen analysis** (palynology) of lake sediments and peats reconstructs past vegetation cover. **Lake core records** from Lake Chad and other basins record fluctuations in water levels, salinity, and sedimentation linked to rainfall changes. **Faunal assemblages** from archaeological sites indicate which animal species were present under different climatic regimes. **Stable isotope analysis** of soils, plant remains, and animal bones can distinguish C3 (forest) from C4 (grassland) vegetation, providing a proxy for vegetation change. Together, these sources allow archaeologists to reconstruct the environmental contexts within which past human populations lived, moved, and adapted.

Fill in the blank: The analysis of fossil pollen from lake sediments and peats to reconstruct past vegetation cover is known as _____.



A timeline diagram showing major Quaternary climatic phases relevant to West Africa, including glacial maxima, humid interglacials, and the African Humid Period, with approximate dates.

Figure 1.2 Quaternary climatic phases and their significance for West African prehistory.

Pilot questions 1.2

- What characterised West African environments during glacial maxima of the Quaternary?
- The African Humid Period occurred approximately between _____ and 5,000 years ago.
- Name two proxy sources of paleoenvironmental evidence used in Nigeria.
- How does stable isotope analysis help reconstruct past vegetation in Nigeria?
- What effect did humid interglacials have on vegetation zones and human mobility in West Africa?

1.3 A History Of Archaeological Research In Nigeria

1.3.1 Early colonial-era investigations and their legacy

Formal archaeological investigation in Nigeria began during the British colonial period, driven largely by administrative and antiquarian interests rather than a systematic research agenda. Early discoveries included the **Nok terracotta figurines**, first documented in the 1940s following their accidental discovery during tin mining operations on the Jos Plateau. The colonial archaeologist **Bernard Fagg** played a central role in bringing these figures to scholarly attention and establishing the Nok Culture as a major research focus. Other early investigations included work at **Ife** and **Benin**, where the bronze and terracotta traditions attracted international scholarly interest. Colonial-era research was, however, shaped by assumptions that complex cultural achievements in Nigeria required external stimulus — a bias that post-independence scholars worked systematically to dismantle.

Fill in the blank: The Nok terracotta figurines were first documented in the 1940s following their accidental discovery during _____ mining operations on the Jos Plateau.

1.3.2 Post-independence developments in Nigerian archaeology

Following independence in 1960, Nigerian archaeology underwent a significant reorientation. The establishment of university archaeology departments — notably at **the University of Ibadan** and later at **Ahmadu Bello University**, **the University of Nigeria Nsukka**, and others — enabled a generation of Nigerian scholars to develop the discipline on their own terms. Figures such as **Thurstan Shaw**, **Frank Willett**, and later **Adisa Olanrewaju Sowunmi** and **Philip Oyelaran** made foundational contributions. The establishment of the **National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM)** provided an institutional framework for heritage protection and research. Nigerian archaeologists increasingly challenged Eurocentric interpretations, demonstrating the independent development of metallurgy, urbanism, and art traditions within Nigeria's borders.

Fill in the blank: The _____ for Museums and Monuments was established to provide an institutional framework for heritage protection and research in Nigeria.

This two-column timeline table outlines the foundational milestones in the history of archaeological research in Nigeria, charting its trajectory from early colonial discoveries to the establishment of indigenous academic structures.

As an Open Educational Resource (OER), this resource is structured for easy integration into African history, archaeology, and heritage management curricula.

Milestones in the History of Nigerian Archaeological Research

Date / Period	Milestone
1940s	The Nok Culture Discovery Following initial accidental discoveries during tin mining in 1928, a life-sized terracotta head was found in Jemaa in 1943/1944. This formal identification introduced the world to the Nok culture, one of ancient West Africa's most advanced, iron-smelting civilizations.
1940s – 1950s	Bernard Fagg's Pioneering Fieldwork Serving as an administrative officer and archaeologist, Bernard Fagg systematically collected, analyzed, and preserved Nok terracottas. He established the Jos Museum in 1952 and subsequently carried out crucial rescue excavations at key sites like Taruga and Rop rock-shelter.
1960	Nigerian Independence & Institutional Transition With independence came a fundamental shift from colonial-driven "accidental archaeology" toward building national institutions tasked with reclaiming, documenting, and protecting Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.
1960s – 1970s	Establishment of University Archaeology Departments

Date / Period	Milestone
	Higher education institutions, notably the University of Ibadan and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, established dedicated departments for archaeology and anthropology. This formalized the discipline within West Africa and began the vital work of training the first generations of indigenous Nigerian archaeologists.
1979	Founding of the NCMM (Decree No. 77) The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) was formally established, absorbing the older Federal Department of Antiquities. The NCMM was granted the statutory responsibility to manage national museums, declare national monuments, and strictly regulate archaeological excavations across the federation.
1970s – Present	Major Post-Independence Research Contributions Transitioning from mere artifact collecting to rigorous scientific research, Nigerian and international scholars expanded into settlement archaeology, complex ethnoarchaeology, and advanced metallurgy studies. Landmark excavations across Ife, Benin, Old Oyo, the Jos Plateau, and the cross-river monolith regions have mapped long-term chronologies and complex socio-political systems.

A chronological table of key milestones in Nigerian archaeological history, from early colonial discoveries through to post-independence institutional developments.

Table 1.1 Key milestones in the history of archaeological research in Nigeria.

Pilot questions 1.3

11. In what decade were the Nok terracotta figurines first documented?
12. Who played a central role in bringing the Nok figurines to scholarly attention?
13. Name two biases that characterised colonial-era archaeological interpretations in Nigeria.

14. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments was established to provide a framework for _____ and research in Nigeria.
15. Name two universities in Nigeria that developed archaeology departments after independence.

1.4 Theoretical And Methodological Frameworks

1.4.1 Theoretical approaches in Nigerian archaeological research

Nigerian archaeological research has drawn on a range of theoretical perspectives. **Culture-historical archaeology**, dominant in the colonial era, sought to define and map distinct cultural entities across time and space — an approach that informed the identification of cultural sequences such as the Nok, Ife, and Benin traditions. From the 1960s, **processual archaeology** introduced ecological and systems-based frameworks, situating Nigerian cultures within broader environmental and economic contexts. More recently, **post-processual** and **Afrocentric** approaches have drawn attention to the agency of African communities, challenged externalist explanations for cultural change, and sought to integrate oral tradition, ethnoarchaeology, and indigenous knowledge into the interpretation of the past.

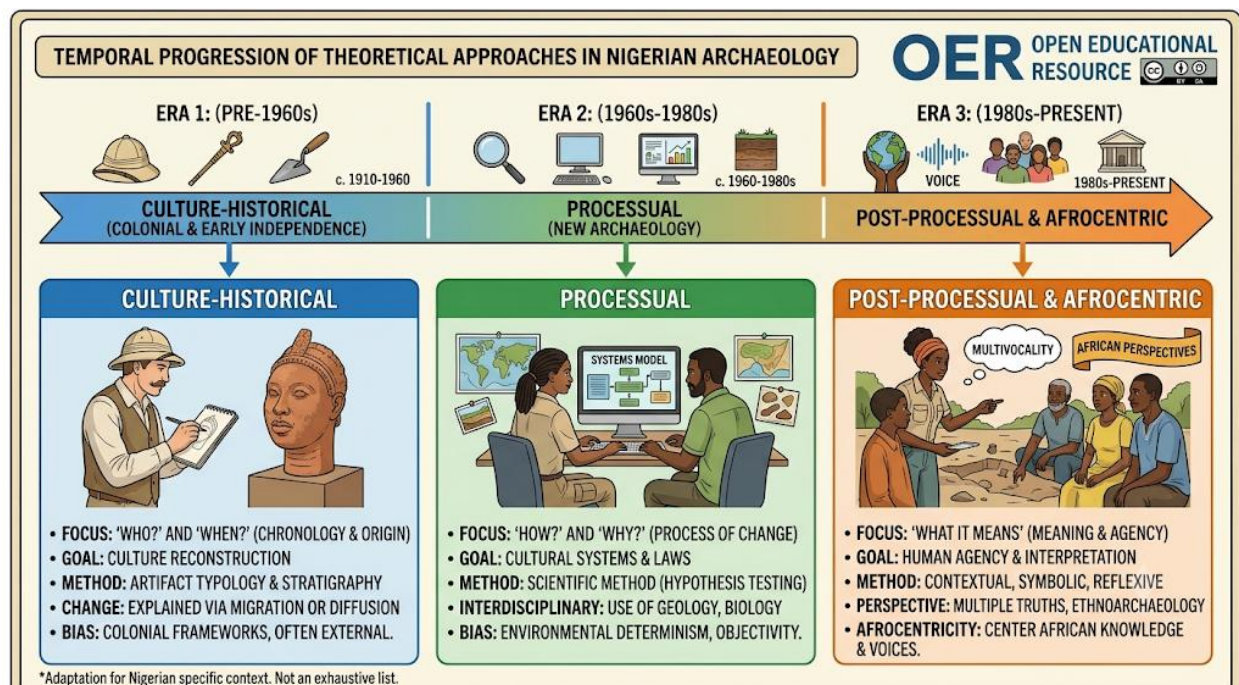
Fill in the blank: Culture-historical archaeology sought to define and map distinct cultural _____ across time and space.

1.4.2 Key methods applied in the Nigerian context

Nigerian archaeology employs a wide range of field and laboratory methods. **Surface survey** and **systematic pedestrian survey** are used to locate and document sites across landscapes. **Test pitting** and **open-area excavation** expose stratigraphic sequences and recover artefacts, ecofacts, and structural remains. **Ethnoarchaeology** — the study of living communities to generate analogies for interpreting the past — has been widely practised in Nigeria, where continuities between past and present material culture are often identifiable. **Archaeobotany** and

zooarchaeology recover plant and animal remains to reconstruct subsistence practices, while **remote sensing** and GIS are increasingly used to locate and map sites across Nigeria's diverse landscapes.

Fill in the blank: _____ is the study of living communities used to generate analogies for interpreting the archaeological past.



A diagram showing the major theoretical approaches in Nigerian archaeology — culture-historical, processual, post-processual, and Afrocentric — arranged chronologically with their key characteristics.

Figure 1.3 Theoretical approaches in Nigerian archaeological research.

Pilot questions 1.4

16. Which theoretical approach dominated Nigerian archaeology during the colonial era?
17. What did processual archaeology introduce to Nigerian archaeological research from the 1960s?

18. Define ethnoarchaeology and explain one way it has been used in Nigeria.
19. Culture-historical archaeology sought to define and map distinct cultural _____ across time and space.
20. Name two laboratory or specialist methods used to reconstruct subsistence practices in Nigerian archaeology.

1.5 Chronology And Dating In Nigerian Archaeology

1.5.1 Absolute and relative dating methods

Archaeological dating in Nigeria relies on a combination of **absolute** and **relative** methods.

Radiocarbon dating (14C) is the most widely applied absolute method, measuring the decay of carbon-14 in organic materials to produce a date range in calendar years. **Thermoluminescence (TL)** and **optically stimulated luminescence (OSL)** dating are used to date fired ceramics and sediment grains respectively, and are particularly valuable where organic materials are absent.

Relative dating methods — including **stratigraphy** (interpreting the sequence of superimposed layers), **typology** (classifying artefacts by form and style), and **seriation** (arranging assemblages in chronological sequence based on changing frequencies) — are essential for establishing the order of events where absolute dates are unavailable.

Fill in the blank: Thermoluminescence and optically stimulated luminescence dating are particularly valuable in Nigeria where _____ materials are absent.

1.5.2 Building the Nigerian archaeological chronology

The Nigerian archaeological chronology has been built incrementally through decades of fieldwork, with radiocarbon dates from key sites providing anchor points for broader cultural sequences. Significant dated assemblages include the **Iwo Eleru rock shelter** in Ondo State (with human skeletal remains dated to approximately 13,000 years ago), evidence for early food production in the Kainji Lake area, and iron-smelting sites in the Nok region dated to the first millennium BC. The

chronology remains uneven: some regions, such as the Jos Plateau and the Niger-Benue confluence, are well-studied, while large areas of southern Nigeria, the Middle Belt, and the northeast remain poorly known archaeologically. Continued fieldwork, improved access to dating laboratories, and collaborative research are essential for filling these gaps.

Fill in the blank: The Iwo Eleru rock shelter in Ondo State contains human skeletal remains dated to approximately _____ years ago.

Pilot questions 1.5

21. What does radiocarbon dating measure to produce a date for organic materials?
22. Name two luminescence dating methods used in Nigerian archaeology.
23. What is stratigraphy as a relative dating method?
24. The Iwo Eleru rock shelter contains human remains dated to approximately _____ years ago.
25. Name one area of Nigeria that remains poorly studied archaeologically.

Series Summary

This Series has established the foundational knowledge needed to study the archaeology of Nigeria. We began by mapping Nigeria's ecological zones and major river systems, noting how this environmental diversity shaped human occupation across deep time. We then examined Quaternary climatic fluctuations and the multiple lines of proxy evidence — from pollen analysis to stable isotopes — that allow archaeologists to reconstruct past environments in Nigeria. Following that, we traced the history of archaeological research in the country from the accidental discovery of the Nok figurines in the 1940s through the institutional and scholarly developments of the post-independence era. We then considered the theoretical frameworks — culture-historical, processual, and Afrocentric — and the field and laboratory methods applied in Nigerian research. Finally, we surveyed the absolute and relative dating methods that underpin the Nigerian chronology and noted the significant gaps that remain in the archaeological record.

By working through this Series, you should now be able to describe Nigeria's physical setting, explain paleoenvironmental change, trace the history of the discipline, identify key theoretical and methodological approaches, and describe the dating tools that build the Nigerian chronology. These foundations will support your study of specific cultural periods and sites in the Series that follow.

Glossary of Terms

21. **African Humid Period:** A phase of increased rainfall and expanded vegetation cover in the Sahara and Sahel regions of Africa, occurring approximately 11,000–5,000 years ago, which facilitated human migration and the development of food production.
22. **Afrocentric archaeology:** A theoretical approach that foregrounds African agency, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems in the interpretation of the African past, challenging externalist and Eurocentric explanations.
23. **Alluvial deposit:** Sediment deposited by flowing water, particularly along river terraces and floodplains, often preserving stratified archaeological evidence.

24. **Archaeobotany:** The study of plant remains recovered from archaeological sites to reconstruct past vegetation, subsistence practices, and human–environment relationships.
25. **Culture-historical archaeology:** A theoretical approach that seeks to define, describe, and map distinct cultural entities across time and space, dominant in Nigerian archaeology during the colonial era.
26. **Ethnoarchaeology:** The study of living communities and their material culture to generate analogies and insights applicable to the interpretation of the archaeological record.
27. **Glacial maximum:** A period of maximum global cooling during the Quaternary, characterised by expanded polar ice sheets, lowered sea levels, and contracted tropical vegetation zones.
28. **Guinea savanna:** The largest ecological zone in Nigeria, lying between the Sudan savanna to the north and the derived savanna to the south, characterised by a mosaic of woodland, grassland, and gallery forest.
29. **Iwo Eleru:** A rock shelter site in Ondo State, southwestern Nigeria, containing human skeletal remains dated to approximately 13,000 years ago, significant for understanding Late Pleistocene human populations in West Africa.
30. **National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM):** The Nigerian government body responsible for the identification, protection, preservation, and promotion of Nigeria's cultural and natural heritage.
31. **Niger Delta:** The coastal region of southern Nigeria where the River Niger fans out into a network of distributary channels before reaching the Atlantic Ocean, characterised by mangrove swamp and freshwater marsh.
32. **Nok Culture:** An early Iron Age cultural tradition centred on the Jos Plateau of central Nigeria, known principally for its distinctive terracotta figurines and evidence for early iron smelting, dated to approximately 1500 BC–AD 200.
33. **Optically stimulated luminescence (OSL):** A dating method that measures the time elapsed since mineral grains in sediments were last exposed to sunlight, used to date archaeological and geological deposits.
34. **Palynology:** The analysis of fossil pollen grains preserved in lake sediments, peats, and soils to reconstruct past vegetation cover and climatic conditions.

35. **Post-processual archaeology:** A theoretical approach that emphasises the role of human agency, symbolism, and social context in shaping the archaeological record, developed as a critique of processual archaeology from the 1980s.
36. **Processual archaeology:** A theoretical approach, dominant from the 1960s, that explains cultural change through ecological, economic, and systemic factors, treating archaeology as a science capable of formulating and testing hypotheses.
37. **Quaternary:** The most recent geological period, spanning approximately the last 2.6 million years, characterised by repeated cycles of glacial and interglacial climatic phases.
38. **Radiocarbon dating (^{14}C):** An absolute dating method that measures the decay of the radioactive isotope carbon-14 in organic materials to estimate the time elapsed since the organism's death.
39. **Seriation:** A relative dating method that arranges assemblages or artefact types in chronological sequence based on changes in their frequency of occurrence over time.
40. **Stable isotope analysis:** A method that measures the ratios of stable isotopes in organic and inorganic materials to reconstruct diet, migration, vegetation type, and palaeoclimate.
41. **Stratigraphy:** The study of the sequence of superimposed geological or archaeological layers (strata) to establish the relative chronological order of deposits and the events they represent.
42. **Thermoluminescence (TL) dating:** An absolute dating method that measures the accumulated radiation energy stored in fired ceramics or burnt minerals to estimate when they were last heated.
43. **Typology:** A relative dating and classification method that groups artefacts by shared formal characteristics and arranges types in developmental sequences.
44. **Zooarchaeology:** The study of animal remains from archaeological sites to reconstruct past subsistence practices, environmental conditions, and human–animal relationships.

Concept Check Questions 1

Objective questions

26. The largest ecological zone in Nigeria is the _____ savanna. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
27. Which of the following is a proxy source of paleoenvironmental evidence used in Nigeria?
(Linked to SLO 1.2)
- 45. a. Radiocarbon dating of iron slag
 - 46. b. Palynological analysis of lake sediments
 - 47. c. Typological classification of pottery
 - 48. d. Ethnoarchaeological interviews
28. The Nok terracotta figurines were first documented in the _____ following their accidental discovery during tin mining operations. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
29. The study of living communities to generate analogies for interpreting the archaeological past is called _____. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
30. The Iwo Eleru rock shelter in Ondo State contains human remains dated to approximately _____ years ago. (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Short-answer questions

31. Explain the archaeological significance of Nigeria's major river systems. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
32. Describe two lines of proxy evidence used to reconstruct past environments in Nigeria and explain what each records. (Linked to SLO 1.2)

33. Distinguish between culture-historical and processual approaches in Nigerian archaeology and identify the period when each was dominant. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Long-answer questions

34. Analyse how Quaternary climatic fluctuations shaped human occupation and resource availability in what is now Nigeria, drawing on specific evidence from the paleoenvironmental record. (Linked to SLO 1.2)

Basic response: During glacial maxima, the Sahara expanded southward, reducing zones suitable for human habitation in northern Nigeria. During humid interglacials, wetter conditions expanded vegetation northward, enabling greater human mobility. The African Humid Period (c. 11,000–5,000 BP) was particularly significant, facilitating settlement and early food production.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may draw on specific proxy evidence — for example, pollen records from Lake Chad showing vegetation shifts, or faunal assemblages from archaeological sites indicating the presence of now-absent species. They may discuss how human populations responded to climatic stress through mobility, dietary diversification, or technological innovation, and consider how the uneven distribution of proxy evidence across Nigeria affects our ability to reconstruct regional variation in human responses to environmental change.

35. Evaluate the development of archaeological research in Nigeria from the colonial era to the post-independence period, discussing how changes in the institutional and scholarly landscape shaped the questions asked and the interpretations produced. (Linked to SLO 1.3 and SLO 1.4)

Basic response: Colonial-era archaeology was shaped by externalist assumptions and administrative priorities. Post-independence developments, including the establishment of university departments and the NCMM, enabled Nigerian scholars to reorient the discipline,

challenge Eurocentric interpretations, and demonstrate the independent development of complex cultures within Nigeria.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may evaluate the legacy of specific colonial-era figures such as Bernard Fagg and consider how their contributions, while significant, were embedded in a broader colonial framework. They may discuss how Afrocentric and post-processual approaches provided theoretical tools for dismantling externalist narratives, and reflect on ongoing challenges — including underfunding of heritage institutions, uneven regional coverage, and the need for greater integration of local and community knowledge — that continue to shape Nigerian archaeology today.

Answers to Concept Check Questions 1

Objective questions

- 36. Guinea.
- 37. b. Palynological analysis of lake sediments.
- 38. 1940s.
- 39. Ethnoarchaeology.
- 40. 13,000.

Short-answer questions

- 41. Nigeria's major rivers — the Niger and the Benue — served as corridors for human migration, trade, and communication since prehistoric times. Their floodplains and terraces preserve stratified archaeological deposits spanning tens of thousands of years, and their alluvial sediments protect organic materials, lithic assemblages, and faunal remains in datable contexts.
- 42. Any two of: (i) palynology — the analysis of fossil pollen from lake sediments and peats to reconstruct past vegetation cover; (ii) lake core records — recording fluctuations in water levels linked to rainfall changes; (iii) faunal assemblages — indicating which animals were present under different climatic conditions; (iv) stable isotope analysis — distinguishing C3 forest from C4 grassland vegetation as a proxy for vegetation change.
- 43. Culture-historical archaeology, dominant during the colonial era (pre-1960s), sought to define and map distinct cultural entities across time and space. Processual archaeology, dominant from the 1960s, introduced ecological and systems-based frameworks, situating cultures within broader environmental and economic contexts.

Long-answer questions

44. See model responses above.

45. See model responses above.

Answers to Pilot Questions 1

Part 1.1

46. Any four of: Sahel, Sudan savanna, Guinea savanna, derived savanna, rainforest belt, Niger Delta.

47. Guinea.

48. Lokoja.

49. Their floodplains and terraces preserve stratified deposits spanning tens of thousands of years, protecting organic materials, lithic assemblages, and faunal remains in datable stratigraphic contexts.

50. Any two of: Sokoto, Kaduna, Gongola, Cross rivers.

Part 1.2

51. The Sahara expanded southward, lake levels fell, vegetation zones contracted, and human habitability in northern Nigeria was reduced.

52. 11,000.

53. Any two of: palynology, lake core records, faunal assemblages, stable isotope analysis.

54. By distinguishing C3 (forest) from C4 (grassland) isotope signatures in soils, plant remains, and animal bones, indicating vegetation type and thus climatic conditions.

55. Wetter conditions expanded savanna and forest zones northward, enabling greater human mobility and resource availability.

Part 1.3

- 56. The 1940s.
- 57. Bernard Fagg.
- 58. Any two of: the assumption that complex cultural achievements required external stimulus; prioritisation of administrative over research goals; focus on spectacular finds rather than systematic survey.
- 59. Heritage protection.
- 60. Any two of: University of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello University, University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Part 1.4

- 61. Culture-historical archaeology.
- 62. Ecological and systems-based frameworks that situate cultures within broader environmental and economic contexts.
- 63. Ethnoarchaeology is the study of living communities to generate analogies for interpreting the past. In Nigeria it has been used to understand the production and use of pottery, iron smelting practices, and settlement patterns by studying contemporary communities with continuity from the past.
- 64. Entities.
- 65. Any two of: archaeobotany (plant remains), zooarchaeology (animal remains), stable isotope analysis, palynology.

Part 1.5

- 66. The decay of the radioactive isotope carbon-14 in organic materials.
- 67. Thermoluminescence (TL) and optically stimulated luminescence (OSL).
- 68. Stratigraphy interprets the sequence of superimposed archaeological layers to establish the relative chronological order of deposits — lower layers are generally older than upper layers.

69. 13,000.

70. Any one of: large areas of southern Nigeria, the Middle Belt, the northeast.

References and Attributions 1

The following references and attributions support the instructional content and illustrations used in Series 1: Nigerian Paleoenvironment and Archaeological History. Entries are presented in APA style for clarity and consistency.

General References

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51. Fagg, B. (1969). Recent work in West Africa: New light on the Nok culture. *World Archaeology*, 1(1), 41–50.
52. Folorunso, C. A. (2003). Perspectives on archaeological practice in Nigeria. *African Archaeological Review*, 20(1), 1–24.
53. Shaw, T. (1978). *Nigeria: Its archaeology and early history*. Thames and Hudson.
54. Shaw, T., Sinclair, P., Andah, B., & Okpoko, A. (Eds.). (1993). *The archaeology of Africa: Food, metals and towns*. Routledge.

Illustrations

55. Figure 1.1 Nigeria's ecological zones and major river systems: Suggested AI-generated diagram using the prompt "Create a labelled map of Nigeria showing the major ecological zones — Sahel, Sudan savanna, Guinea savanna, derived savanna, rainforest belt, and Niger Delta — and the courses of the Niger and Benue rivers." Search string: "Nigeria ecological zones map Niger Benue rivers OER".
56. Figure 1.2 Quaternary climatic phases and their significance for West African prehistory: Suggested AI-generated timeline using the prompt "Create a horizontal timeline showing glacial maxima, humid interglacials, and the African Humid Period (c. 11,000–5,000 BP)

with ecological impacts noted." Search string: "Quaternary climatic phases West Africa timeline diagram OER".

57. Table 1.1 Key milestones in the history of archaeological research in Nigeria: Suggested AI-generated table using the prompt "Create a two-column table with Date/Period and Milestone, covering key events from the 1940s Nok discovery to post-independence institutional developments." Search string: "history archaeological research Nigeria milestones timeline table OER".
58. Figure 1.3 Theoretical approaches in Nigerian archaeological research: Suggested AI-generated diagram using the prompt "Create a horizontal timeline showing culture-historical, processual, and post-processual and Afrocentric approaches with dates and characteristics." Search string: "theoretical approaches Nigerian archaeology timeline diagram OER".
59. Figure 1.4 Key dated sites and cultural phases in the Nigerian archaeological chronology: Suggested AI-generated timeline using the prompt "Create a vertical timeline of Nigerian archaeology from c. 13,000 BP to 1,000 BP marking Iwo Eleru, Nok Culture, early iron smelting, and early urban centres." Search string: "Nigerian archaeological chronology timeline key sites OER".

Open Educational Resources (OERs)

60. Archaeology Data Service (ADS). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk>
61. African Archaeological Review. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/journal/10437>
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Course code: ARC 404

Course title: Archaeology of Nigeria

Course credit load: 3 Units

List of Series:

1. Series 1: Nigerian Paleoenvironment and Archaeological History
2. Series 2: University and Museum Archaeology in Nigeria
3. Series 3: The Nigerian Stone Age and Food Production
4. Series 4: The Nigerian Iron Age and Urban Origins
5. Series 5: Major Archaeological Sites of Nigeria

Series 2: University and Museum Archaeology in Nigeria

Parts and Sub-Parts

Part 1: History and Development of Archaeology in Nigeria

6. 1.1 Pre-Independence Archaeological Work and Colonial Foundations
7. 1.2 Early Nigerian Archaeologists and Institutional Development
8. 1.3 Archaeology's Role in Nation Building After Independence

Part 2: University Archaeology Programs in Nigeria

9. 2.1 Major Universities with Archaeological Programs
10. 2.2 Research Methods and Archaeological Training
11. 2.3 Collaboration Between Universities and External Research Institutions

Part 3: Museum Collections and Heritage Management

12. 3.1 Major Museums and Their Archaeological Collections
13. 3.2 Curatorial Practices and Archaeological Interpretation

14. 3.3 Conservation, Documentation, and Access to Collections

Part 4: Challenges, Capacity Building, and Future Directions

15. 4.1 Funding, Resources, and Institutional Challenges

16. 4.2 Community Engagement and Public Archaeology

17. 4.3 Strengthening Nigerian Archaeology: Vision for Growth

Introduction

Nigerian archaeology is not just about excavations and ancient artefacts; it is fundamentally an institutional enterprise built on universities, museums, and the scholars and professionals who work within them. The discipline's development in Nigeria reflects broader patterns of colonial heritage, postcolonial nation building, and contemporary efforts to establish Nigeria as a centre of archaeological expertise and heritage stewardship. From university departments where students learn archaeological methods to museums preserving the material record of Nigeria's diverse past, these institutions shape how Nigerians understand their history and how the world engages with Nigerian heritage.

The aim of this Series is to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the institutional landscape of archaeology in Nigeria. We shall begin by tracing the historical development of archaeology in Nigeria, from colonial foundations to postcolonial professionalization. Next, we will examine university-based archaeology programs, exploring how they train future archaeologists and conduct research. Following that, we will explore Nigerian museums—their collections, curatorial practices, and roles in heritage preservation and public education. Finally, we will address contemporary challenges facing Nigerian archaeology—inadequate funding, capacity constraints, and limited resources—while envisioning strategies for strengthening the discipline and ensuring that Nigeria leads in the study and stewardship of its own heritage.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

18. SLO 2.1: trace the historical development of archaeology in Nigeria from colonial beginnings through postcolonial professionalization,
19. SLO 2.2: analyse the roles and contributions of major Nigerian universities to archaeological research and training,
20. SLO 2.3: evaluate museum collections, curatorial practices, and institutional roles in heritage preservation and public engagement,

21. SLO 2.4: identify challenges facing Nigerian archaeology including funding, capacity, and resource constraints, and
22. SLO 2.5: propose strategies for strengthening Nigerian archaeology and ensuring equitable heritage stewardship.

1.1 History And Development Of Archaeology In Nigeria

1.1.1 Pre-independence archaeological work and colonial foundations

Systematic archaeological investigation in Nigeria began during the **colonial period**, driven largely by European scholars and colonial administrators. Early work focused on spectacular sites like **Nok** in central Nigeria, famous for its distinctive terracotta sculptures, and **Benin City**, known for its brass plaques and palace art. Colonial archaeologists were motivated by scientific curiosity but also by **imperial interests**—seeking to understand the regions they controlled and to collect spectacular finds for European museums. Much early work lacked rigorous methodology; excavations were often destructive by modern standards. Importantly, colonial archaeology marginalised Nigerian voices; European scholars dominated interpretation, and Nigerian materials were frequently removed to foreign institutions. Despite these limitations, early colonial work did establish the material record of Nigerian antiquity and created collections that remain valuable for understanding the past.

Fill in the blank: Colonial archaeology in Nigeria was driven by European scholars motivated by scientific curiosity and _____ interests, often lacking rigorous methodology and marginalising _____ voices.

1.1.2 Early Nigerian archaeologists and institutional development

The emergence of **Nigerian archaeologists** marked a crucial shift toward professional, locally-led archaeology. Pioneering figures included researchers who received training abroad and returned to establish archaeology in Nigerian universities. The **University of Ibadan** became an early centre for archaeological training, where the Department of Archaeology was established to develop Nigerian expertise. These early Nigerian

archaeologists were instrumental in **professionalising the discipline**—establishing rigorous methods, conducting systematic surveys, and building local institutional capacity. They also began reclaiming Nigerian archaeology from foreign control, insisting that Nigerians should lead research on Nigerian heritage. Their efforts laid the foundation for **indigenous archaeology**—archaeology conducted by and for Nigerians, informed by Nigerian perspectives and priorities rather than external agendas.

Fill in the blank: Early Nigerian archaeologists worked to _____ the discipline, establish local _____, and shift control of Nigerian archaeology from foreign to _____ hands.

1.1.3 Archaeology's role in nation building after independence

Following independence in 1960, archaeology became integral to **nation building**. A newly independent Nigeria faced the challenge of constructing a shared national identity among diverse ethnic groups. Archaeological evidence of past sophistication—ancient kingdoms, urban centres, artistic achievements—provided material proof of Nigerian civilisational achievement, supporting national pride and sovereignty claims. The Nigerian government prioritised **heritage preservation** and archaeology as tools for education and national development. Museums were established or expanded to preserve and display Nigerian artefacts. Universities developed archaeological programs to train Nigerians. However, postcolonial archaeology also faced challenges: **limited funding**, competition for national resources, and difficulty attracting sustained international collaboration. The vision was that Nigerian archaeologists would study Nigerian heritage independently, but institutional capacity and resources remained constrained.

Fill in the blank: After independence, Nigeria prioritised _____ preservation and archaeological research as tools for national _____ and identity building, establishing museums and university _____.

[Insert Figure here] Short description: Timeline showing key institutions and developments in Nigerian archaeology. Caption: Figure 2.1 Development of institutional archaeology in Nigeria (1950s–present). AI prompt suggestion: "Create a timeline

showing establishment of University of Ibadan Archaeology Department, National Museum developments, other university programs, and major research initiatives." Search string: "Nigerian archaeology institutional history timeline OER".

Pilot questions 1.1

23. What motivated colonial archaeological work in Nigeria, and what were its limitations?
24. Name one early Nigerian archaeologist and explain their contribution to professionalising the discipline.
25. What is indigenous archaeology, and why did Nigerian archaeologists advocate for it?
26. How did archaeology contribute to nation building in postcolonial Nigeria?
27. What challenges did postcolonial Nigerian archaeology face in developing independently?

1.2 University Archaeology Programs In Nigeria

1.2.1 Major universities with archaeological programs

Several **major Nigerian universities** have developed archaeology departments and programs. The **University of Ibadan**, established in 1948, houses one of Nigeria's longest-running archaeological programs, with faculty conducting research across Nigerian sites and training generations of archaeologists. The **University of Nigeria, Nsukka** also maintains a strong archaeology tradition. The **University of Lagos** and other institutions offer archaeological courses. These universities provide **undergraduate and postgraduate training** in archaeological methods, theory, and Nigerian archaeology. Importantly, university-based archaeology extends beyond academic credentials; professors and students conduct **field research** that advances knowledge of Nigerian prehistory and history, contribute to **heritage documentation**, and engage with communities. However, university archaeology remains challenged by **limited budgets**, aging facilities, and brain drain as trained scholars migrate abroad.

Fill in the blank: Major universities like Ibadan and Nsukka provide _____ and postgraduate training in archaeology while conducting field _____, though institutional _____ and brain drain remain challenges.

1.2.2 Research methods and archaeological training

Nigerian university archaeology programs train students in **systematic excavation methods, survey techniques, artefact analysis, and site documentation**. Curricula include courses in African archaeology, Nigerian prehistory and history, archaeological theory, and practical fieldwork. Student excavations at sites like Nok and other locations provide hands-on training while advancing research. However, training resources vary: well-resourced programs have **modern equipment** and laboratories, while others lack basic tools. Access to **dating technologies** (radiocarbon, luminescence) is limited, requiring collaboration with foreign institutions. University programs also emphasise **ethical practice**—community engagement, respect for cultural sensitivities, and benefit-sharing with research sites.

Fill in the blank: University archaeology training includes _____, survey techniques, artefact analysis, and _____, though access to modern _____ and dating technologies remains limited.

1.2.3 Collaboration between universities and external research institutions

Nigerian university archaeology increasingly involves **international collaboration** with foreign universities and research institutions. Such partnerships offer benefits: access to funding, advanced technology, expertise, and publication opportunities. However, collaboration also creates tensions. Historical patterns of **unequal partnership**—where foreign institutions lead research and Nigerians provide labour and local access—persist in some collaborations. Additionally, materials and data sometimes flow to foreign museums and archives, limiting Nigerian access to their own heritage. More equitable models involve **co-leadership** with Nigerian scholars in principal roles, **capacity building** to strengthen Nigerian expertise, and **benefit-sharing agreements** ensuring materials remain accessible in Nigeria. Successful collaborations contribute

meaningfully to Nigerian archaeology while respecting Nigerian authority over heritage research.

Fill in the blank: International collaboration offers benefits like funding and technology, but historical patterns of _____ partnership and material _____ require that modern collaborations emphasise co-leadership and _____.

Pilot questions 1.2

28. Name two major universities with archaeology programs and describe their contributions to Nigerian archaeology.
29. What training do university archaeology programs provide, and what constraints limit their effectiveness?
30. How does brain drain affect Nigerian university archaeology?
31. What are the benefits and challenges of international collaboration in Nigerian university archaeology?
32. Explain what equitable partnership means in international archaeological collaboration.

1.3 Museum Collections And Heritage Management

1.3.1 Major museums and their archaeological collections

Nigeria's major museums house extensive **archaeological collections** that document the country's material past. The **National Museum Lagos**, established in 1960, is Nigeria's premier museum, containing significant collections of Nok terracottas, Benin bronzes, and artefacts from across Nigeria. The **Nok Museum** in Kaduna specialises in Nok culture artefacts and serves as a regional centre. The **Benin Palace Museum** preserves artefacts from Benin's royal heritage. Regional and university museums also house collections. These museums serve multiple functions: **preservation** of heritage, **public education**, **research access**, and **national pride**. However, many Nigerian museums face challenges: inadequate funding limits conservation and curation; some historical collections (particularly those acquired during colonialism) remain in foreign

museums, not Nigerian ones; and limited resources affect display quality and public programming.

Fill in the blank: Major museums like the National Museum Lagos preserve _____ collections and serve functions of preservation, education, _____, and national pride, though limited _____ constrains their effectiveness.

1.3.2 Curatorial practices and archaeological interpretation

Museum **curation**—the selection and interpretation of what to display—shapes how publics understand Nigerian archaeology and history. Nigerian museums have shifted away from purely colonial interpretations, increasingly presenting **Nigerian perspectives** on heritage. However, curation remains challenging. Many museum professionals received training before modern curatorial practices were established; ongoing professional development is limited. Curators must balance **scholarly accuracy** with **public accessibility**, and **preservation concerns** with **visitor experience**. Modern practices involve consulting with **descendant communities** and **local experts** in interpretation, ensuring that displays reflect community knowledge and values. Some Nigerian museums have begun collaborating with source communities to develop culturally appropriate interpretations of artefacts.

Fill in the blank: Museum curation involves selecting and interpreting what to display. Modern Nigerian practice emphasises _____ perspectives and consultation with _____ communities, ensuring _____ appropriateness of displays.

1.3.3 Conservation, documentation, and access to collections

Preserving archaeological materials requires **professional conservation**—climate control, pest management, and specialist treatment of fragile materials. Many Nigerian museums struggle with conservation: storage facilities may lack **temperature and humidity control**; budget for **conservation staff** is often limited. **Documentation**—recording collection provenance, creating inventories, and cataloguing—is essential for research access and accountability. However, many Nigerian museums have **incomplete records**, inherited from colonial and early postcolonial eras. Digital initiatives are improving access: some museums are developing **online databases** and

digitised collections that allow remote access. These efforts support research, enable international collaboration, and provide educational access for people unable to visit museums physically. However, digital infrastructure requires ongoing investment.

Fill in the blank: Museum conservation and documentation are challenged by inadequate _____ and incomplete _____. Digital initiatives like _____ databases improve access and support research.

Pilot questions 1.3

33. Name three major Nigerian museums and describe their archaeological collections.
34. What functions do museums serve in heritage preservation and public education?
35. What are the challenges for museum conservation in Nigeria, and how do they affect collections?
36. Why is consultation with descendant communities important in museum curation?
37. How can digital initiatives improve access to Nigerian museum collections?

1.4 Challenges, Capacity Building, And Future Directions

1.4.1 Funding, resources, and institutional challenges

Nigerian archaeology faces serious **funding challenges**. Universities and museums operate on **limited budgets**, constraining fieldwork, conservation, and training. Government funding for heritage is often inadequate; **international funding** remains important but uncertain. Resource limitations mean many sites remain **unexcavated or inadequately documented**. Museums lack funds for facility maintenance, conservation, and staff; collections may deteriorate. Universities struggle to maintain laboratories and acquire modern **research equipment**. Additionally, **infrastructure deficits** (irregular electricity, limited internet) hinder research and documentation. **Brain drain**—trained archaeologists migrating abroad for better opportunities—further weakens local capacity. These challenges have systemic roots: archaeology competes

with other national priorities for limited resources; heritage is sometimes undervalued compared to immediate development needs.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian archaeology faces _____ budgets at universities and museums, limiting _____, conservation, and training, while _____ of trained personnel further weakens local capacity.

1.4.2 Community engagement and public archaeology

Strengthening Nigerian archaeology requires greater **community engagement**.

Communities living near archaeological sites often hold **oral histories** and local knowledge about heritage; they may have spiritual or cultural attachments to sites.

Public archaeology involves sharing archaeological knowledge through school programs, public lectures, and heritage education. Museums can reach wider audiences through **exhibition programs** and **community outreach**. **Collaborative research**—where communities are partners in investigation—builds local capacity and ensures research benefits communities. However, many institutions lack resources for serious engagement. Furthermore, archaeology must address **looting and illegal excavation**, which destroys sites and removes artefacts from public collections. Education and community benefit-sharing can help communities value heritage preservation over selling artefacts to traffickers.

Fill in the blank: Community engagement through _____ archaeology and _____ research builds local capacity and ensures benefits flow to communities, while education helps address _____ of archaeological sites.

1.4.3 Strengthening Nigerian archaeology: Vision for growth

Strengthening Nigerian archaeology requires **strategic investment** across multiple areas. First, **institutional support**—government and private funding for universities and museums—must increase. Second, **capacity building** through training programs, scholarships, and professional development will retain and develop local talent. Third, **research infrastructure** including laboratories, digital tools, and dating facilities strengthens research capabilities. Fourth, **heritage policy** and **site protection** prevent looting and destruction. Fifth, **collaboration networks**—connecting Nigerian

archaeologists regionally and internationally—support knowledge exchange. Finally, **public valorisation** of heritage—recognising archaeology's contributions to education, tourism, and identity—can increase political support. A vision for the future is a self-sufficient Nigerian archaeology led by Nigerians, equipped with resources to study and preserve heritage, and contributing to both global knowledge and Nigerian development.

Fill in the blank: Strengthening Nigerian archaeology requires _____ for institutions, _____ building, research _____, heritage policy, collaboration networks, and public recognition of archaeology's _____ to education and development.

Pilot questions 1.4

38. Identify three major funding and resource challenges facing Nigerian archaeology.
39. What is brain drain, and how does it affect Nigerian archaeological institutions?
40. How can community engagement strengthen archaeological research and heritage protection?
41. What strategies can address looting and illegal excavation of archaeological sites?
42. Propose three investments that would strengthen Nigerian archaeology and build institutional capacity.

Series Summary

This Series has provided a comprehensive examination of the institutional foundations of archaeology in Nigeria. We began by tracing the historical development of Nigerian archaeology from colonial beginnings through postcolonial professionalization, highlighting how early Nigerian archaeologists worked to establish indigenous, locally-led archaeology. We then explored university-based archaeology, examining how universities train the next generation of archaeologists and conduct research, while acknowledging the constraints of limited funding and brain drain. We explored Nigerian museums—their collections, curatorial practices, and roles in heritage preservation and public engagement—recognising both their achievements and their conservation and documentation challenges. Finally, we addressed contemporary challenges and future directions, identifying funding constraints, the need for community engagement, and strategies for strengthening Nigerian archaeology. By engaging with this Series, you should now understand the history of institutional archaeology in Nigeria, appreciate the contributions of universities and museums to heritage study and preservation, recognise the challenges facing these institutions, and envision how strategic investment and capacity building can establish Nigeria as a centre of archaeological excellence and heritage stewardship.

Glossary of Terms

- 43. **Artefact analysis:** Study and interpretation of material objects, including classification, dating, and determining function and cultural significance.
- 44. **Brain drain:** Migration of trained professionals from one's home country to other countries for better opportunities, reducing local capacity.
- 45. **Capacity building:** Development of institutional expertise, training, infrastructure, and resources to strengthen local research and heritage management.

46. **Community archaeology:** Approach to archaeology that emphasises community engagement, local knowledge, and shared benefits from heritage research.
47. **Conservation:** Professional preservation of artefacts through climate control, pest management, and specialist treatment of fragile materials.
48. **Curation:** Selection and interpretation of artefacts for museum display and presentation to public audiences.
49. **Documentation:** Recording of artefact provenance, creation of inventories, and cataloguing of collections for research and accountability.
50. **Excavation:** Systematic removal of soil and artefacts from archaeological sites, involving careful documentation and stratigraphic recording.
51. **Field survey:** Archaeological investigation conducted on the ground to identify, locate, and document sites without excavation.
52. **Heritage preservation:** Protection and conservation of cultural and archaeological materials and sites for present and future generations.
53. **Indigenous archaeology:** Archaeology conducted by and for indigenous or local communities, informed by their perspectives and serving their interests.
54. **Looting:** Illegal excavation and removal of artefacts from archaeological sites, typically for sale on the antiquities market.
55. **Public archaeology:** Communication and teaching of archaeological knowledge to broader audiences through education programs and outreach.
56. **Provenance:** Documentation of an artefact's origin, history of ownership, and how it was acquired by a museum or collection.
57. **Stratigraphy:** The study of soil layers and their relationships, used to determine relative chronology of artefacts in excavation.
58. **Survey:** Systematic examination of a geographic area to identify, locate, and record archaeological sites and surface features.

Concept Check Questions 2

Objective questions

59. 1. Colonial archaeology in Nigeria was driven by European scholars motivated by scientific curiosity and _____ interests. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
60. 2. Early Nigerian archaeologists worked to _____ the discipline and shift control from foreign to _____ hands. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
61. 3. The University of _____ was an early centre for establishing archaeology as a professional discipline in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
62. 4. The _____ Museum Lagos is Nigeria's premier museum, containing Nok terracottas and _____ from across the country. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
63. 5. Nigerian museums face challenges of limited _____, incomplete documentation, and inadequate _____ equipment. (Linked to SLO 2.3)

Short-answer questions

64. 6. Explain how colonial archaeology was both scientifically valuable and complicit in imperialism. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
65. 7. Describe the contributions that early Nigerian archaeologists made to professionalising the discipline. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
66. 8. What are three challenges that university archaeology programs in Nigeria face? (Linked to SLO 2.2)
67. 9. Explain what equitable international collaboration in archaeology means. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
68. 10. Describe two benefits and two challenges of digital museum initiatives. (Linked to SLO 2.3)

Long-answer questions

69. 11. Critically analyse how the transition from colonial to postcolonial archaeology in Nigeria changed research priorities and institutional arrangements. (Linked to SLO 2.1 and 2.5)
70. 12. Design a comprehensive strategy for strengthening Nigerian archaeology, addressing funding, capacity, community engagement, and heritage protection. (Linked to SLO 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 2

Objective questions

- 71. 1. Imperial
- 72. 2. Professionalise; Nigerian
- 73. 3. Ibadan
- 74. 4. National; collections (or: artefacts/materials)
- 75. 5. Funding (or: budgets); conservation

Short-answer questions

- 76. 6. Basic response: Colonial archaeology produced valuable knowledge about Nigerian antiquity. However, it was conducted by and for Europeans, marginalised Nigerian voices, and removed materials to foreign museums. Value-added response: Excellent learners may note that this reflects broader colonial power structures—that even 'neutral' science was embedded in imperialism.
- 77. 7. Basic response: They established archaeology as a professional discipline, conducted systematic research, and worked to reclaim Nigerian archaeology from foreign control. Value-added response: Outstanding learners may name specific individuals or institutions, or discuss how they balanced scientific rigor with national development agendas.
- 78. 8. Basic response: Limited funding; brain drain; inadequate research equipment. Value-added response: Excellent learners may add: limited professional development; infrastructure constraints; difficulty maintaining facilities.
- 79. 9. Basic response: Both partners have equal voice and leadership; benefits flow equitably. Value-added response: Outstanding learners may specify that Nigerian institutions lead or co-lead; capacity building is prioritised; materials remain accessible in Nigeria; knowledge is shared.

80. 10. Basic response: Benefits include remote access and research support. Challenges include infrastructure costs. Value-added response: Excellent learners may elaborate on benefits (education, international collaboration) and challenges (ongoing maintenance, digital divide).

Long-answer questions

81. 11. Basic response: Colonial archaeology was externally controlled; postcolonial archaeology emphasised Nigerian leadership and national heritage. Value-added response: Excellent learners may discuss how postcolonial archaeology shifted from foreign to Nigerian interpretive authority; how it served nation-building; and how it aspired to—but struggled to achieve—institutional independence.
82. 12. Basic response: Should include funding mechanisms, training, site protection, and community involvement. Value-added response: Outstanding learners may propose specific funding sources, training programs, heritage legislation, community benefit-sharing models, and international collaboration frameworks.

Answers to Pilot Questions 2

Part 1.1

83. Colonial archaeology was motivated by scientific curiosity about Nigerian antiquity and by imperial interests in understanding and controlling colonial territories. It was limited by lack of rigorous methodology, destructive excavations, and marginalisation of Nigerian voices.
84. Early Nigerian archaeologists (specific names vary by institutional context, but examples include figures who established archaeology at Ibadan) worked to professionalise the discipline through rigorous methodology, systematic research, and insistence that Nigerians should lead archaeology in Nigeria.
85. Indigenous archaeology is archaeology conducted by and for indigenous or local communities, informed by their perspectives and priorities. Nigerian

archaeologists advocated for it to ensure that Nigerian heritage was studied by Nigerians and for Nigerian benefit.

86. Archaeological evidence of past sophistication—ancient kingdoms, urban centres, artistic achievements—supported national pride and sovereignty. Heritage became a tool for education and national identity.

87. Limited funding; difficulty establishing independent research programs; competition with other national priorities; and constraints on international collaboration.

Part 1.2

88. University of Ibadan established one of Nigeria's oldest archaeology programs and trained generations of archaeologists. University of Nigeria, Nsukka also maintains strong traditions. These universities conduct field research, publish findings, and train students.

89. Training includes excavation, survey, artefact analysis, and documentation. Constraints include limited budgets for equipment, limited access to dating technology (requiring foreign collaboration), and infrastructure deficits.

90. Brain drain occurs when trained archaeologists migrate abroad for better opportunities. This weakens local capacity and reduces Nigeria's ability to conduct independent research.

91. Benefits include access to funding, technology, expertise, and publication. Challenges include historical patterns of unequal partnership where foreign institutions lead and Nigerians provide access; and materials/data flowing to foreign institutions rather than remaining in Nigeria.

92. Equitable partnership means Nigerian scholars are in leadership roles (not subordinate), capacity building is prioritised to strengthen Nigerian expertise, benefit-sharing agreements ensure materials remain accessible, and research serves Nigerian as well as international interests.

Part 1.3

93. National Museum Lagos (Nok terracottas, collections from across Nigeria); Nok Museum (specialises in Nok materials); Benin Palace Museum (Benin royal heritage).
94. Museums preserve heritage, provide public education, support research, and foster national pride. These functions require adequate funding and professional staff.
95. Limited funding means inadequate climate control, pest management, and specialist conservation staff. This causes deterioration of collections and limits what can be preserved.
96. Community consultation ensures interpretations reflect cultural knowledge and values; it respects communities' perspectives on their own heritage rather than imposing external interpretation.
97. Digital initiatives allow remote access, support research, enable international collaboration, and provide education to people unable to visit museums. They also help document collections.

Part 1.4

98. Limited government funding; inadequate resources for fieldwork, conservation, and training; unexcavated sites; deteriorating collections; lack of modern research equipment.
99. Trained archaeologists migrate abroad seeking better job opportunities and resources. This weakens local capacity, reduces research output, and limits Nigeria's ability to conduct independent archaeological work.
100. Communities hold oral histories and local knowledge; they may have cultural attachments to sites. Collaborative research builds local capacity, ensures research benefits communities, and produces culturally appropriate interpretations.
101. Education programs that teach community value of heritage preservation; benefit-sharing agreements that give communities economic incentives to

protect sites; law enforcement against traffickers; and alternatives to looting for community income.

102. Examples might include: (1) Government and private funding for university and museum programs; (2) Scholarships to retain talented archaeologists; (3) Research infrastructure (laboratories, digital tools); (4) Heritage legislation and site protection; (5) Community engagement and benefit-sharing programs.

References and Attributions 2

The following references and attributions support the instructional content and illustrations used in Series 2: University and Museum Archaeology in Nigeria. Entries are presented in APA style for clarity and consistency.

General References

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106. Grillo, R. D., & Sheridan, R. E. (Eds.). (1978). *An anthropology of imperialism: Essays in honour of Harry Hardin Bean*. Academic Press.
107. Yusoff, K., & Musari, K. (2019). Archaeology of West Africa: Perspectives on development. *African Journal of Archaeology*, 5(2), 45–63.

Illustrations

108. Figure 2.1 Development of institutional archaeology in Nigeria (1950s–present): Suggested AI-generated timeline using the prompt "Create a timeline showing: establishment of University of Ibadan Archaeology Department (1950s), National Museum Lagos founding (1960), University of Nigeria, Nsukka programs, other university initiatives, major research projects, and contemporary challenges." Tool/platform: AI timeline generator. Search string: "Nigerian archaeology institutional development timeline OER".

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109. National Museum Lagos. (n.d.). Collections and exhibitions. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalmuseum.gov.ng/>

110. UNESCO. (n.d.). Museums and archaeology in Africa. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/>

African Archaeology Network. (n.d.). Research and capacity building. Retrieved from <https://www.africanarc.org/> (illustrative example; confirm current resources)

Course Code: ARC 404

Course Title: Archaeology of Nigeria

Course Credit Load: 3 Units

List of Series

1. Series 1: Nigerian Paleoenvironment and Archaeological History
2. Series 2: University and Museum Archaeology in Nigeria
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4. Series 4: The Nigerian Iron Age and Urban Origins
5. Series 5: Major Archaeological Sites of Nigeria

Series 3: The Nigerian Stone Age and Food Production

Parts and Sub-Parts

Part 1: The Nigerian Stone Age

11. 3.1.1 Meaning and Characteristics of the Stone Age
12. 3.1.2 Classification of the Nigerian Stone Age
13. 3.1.3 Stone Tools and Technological Development

Part 2: Stone Age Communities in Nigeria

- 3.2.1 Early Human Occupation in Nigeria
- 3.2.2 Subsistence Practices during the Stone Age
- 3.2.3 Settlement Patterns of Stone Age Communities



Part 3: Food Production in Prehistoric Nigeria

- 3.3.1 The Origins of Food Production
- 3.3.2 Domestication of Plants and Animals
- 3.3.3 Early Agricultural Practices in Nigeria

Part 4: Archaeological Evidence of Food Production

1. 3.4.1 Archaeological Indicators of Early Farming
2. 3.4.2 The Relationship Between Food Production and Social Development
3. 3.4.3 Significance of Food Production in Nigerian Archaeology

Introduction

The Stone Age represents one of the earliest periods of human technological and cultural development. In Nigeria, archaeological evidence has revealed important information about early human activities, the manufacture of stone tools, and the gradual transition from hunting and gathering to food production. The emergence of agriculture and animal domestication marked significant developments in prehistoric societies and contributed to changes in settlement patterns and social organisation.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the Nigerian Stone Age and examine the development of food production practices among prehistoric communities in Nigeria.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the meaning, classification, and technological characteristics of the Nigerian Stone Age. Next, we will examine the lifestyles and subsistence practices of Stone Age communities. Thereafter, we will discuss the origins of food production and the domestication of plants and animals in prehistoric Nigeria. Finally, we will consider the archaeological evidence for early farming and its significance in understanding social and economic development.



Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

1. SLO 3.1 explain the characteristics and classification of the Nigerian Stone Age,
2. SLO 3.2 describe the lifestyles and subsistence practices of Stone Age communities in Nigeria,
3. SLO 3.3 discuss the origins and development of food production in prehistoric Nigeria,
4. SLO 3.4 identify archaeological evidence associated with early farming practices, and
5. SLO 3.5 analyse the significance of food production in the development of prehistoric Nigerian societies.

3.1 The Nigerian Stone Age

3.1.1 Meaning and Characteristics of the Stone Age

The Stone Age refers to the prehistoric period during which stone was the primary material used for making tools and implements. In Nigeria, this period is characterised by the production of stone tools, hunting and gathering activities, and the gradual development of human societies.

Fill in the blank: The Stone Age is characterised by the use of _____ tools and implements.

3.1.2 Classification of the Nigerian Stone Age

The Nigerian Stone Age is generally classified into the Early Stone Age, Middle Stone Age, and Later Stone Age. Each period is distinguished by differences in tool technology, subsistence practices, and cultural development.

Fill in the blank: The Nigerian Stone Age is commonly divided into _____ major periods.



3.1.3 Stone Tools and Technological Development

Stone tools served various functions, including hunting, cutting, and food processing. Improvements in tool-making techniques contributed significantly to human adaptation and survival.

Fill in the blank: Stone tools contributed significantly to human _____ and survival.

Pilot Questions 3.1

6. The Stone Age is characterised by the use of _____ tools.
7. Name the three major classifications of the Nigerian Stone Age.
8. State one function of stone tools.
9. The Nigerian Stone Age is divided into _____ major periods.
10. Why were stone tools important to prehistoric societies?

3.2 Stone Age Communities in Nigeria

3.2.1 Early Human Occupation in Nigeria

Archaeological discoveries indicate that prehistoric communities occupied various regions of present-day Nigeria. Evidence from caves, rock shelters, and open-air sites has contributed significantly to our understanding of early human activities.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological discoveries provide evidence of early human _____ in Nigeria.



3.2.2 Subsistence Practices during the Stone Age

Stone Age communities depended primarily on hunting, fishing, and the gathering of wild plants for survival. These subsistence activities provided the foundation for later agricultural developments.

Fill in the blank: Hunting and gathering were important _____ practices during the Stone Age.

3.2.3 Settlement Patterns of Stone Age Communities

Stone Age populations often settled near water sources and areas rich in natural resources. Settlement patterns were influenced by environmental conditions and access to food.

Fill in the blank: Stone Age communities frequently settled near _____ sources.

Pilot Questions 3.2

1. Archaeological discoveries provide evidence of early human _____ in Nigeria.
2. Name two subsistence practices of Stone Age communities.
3. Why were water sources important to early settlements?
4. Hunting and gathering were important _____ practices.
5. State one factor that influenced Stone Age settlement patterns.

3.3 Food Production in Prehistoric Nigeria

3.3.1 The Origins of Food Production



Food production refers to the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals for human consumption. The transition from food gathering to food production marked an important stage in human history.

Fill in the blank: Food production involves the cultivation of crops and the _____ of animals.

3.3.2 Domestication of Plants and Animals

The domestication process enabled prehistoric communities to secure more reliable food supplies and establish more permanent settlements. Domesticated plants and animals contributed to economic and social development.

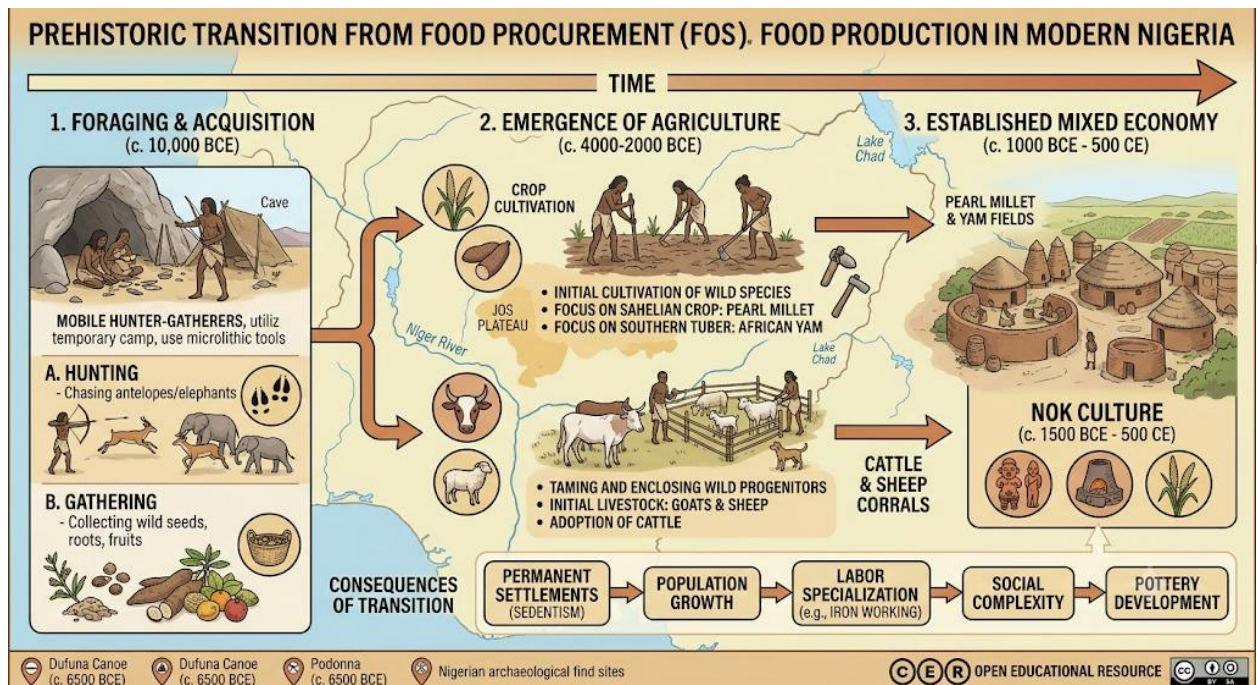
Fill in the blank: Domestication contributed to more _____ food supplies.

3.3.3 Early Agricultural Practices in Nigeria

Early agricultural practices in Nigeria included crop cultivation and animal husbandry. These activities supported population growth and promoted social interaction among communities.

Fill in the blank: Early agriculture promoted population _____ among prehistoric communities.





Short description: Diagram illustrating the transition from hunting and gathering to food production.

Figure 3.1 Transition from food gathering to food production in prehistoric Nigeria.

Pilot Questions 3.3

1. Food production involves the cultivation of crops and the _____ of animals.
2. What is domestication?
3. Domestication contributed to more _____ food supplies.
4. Name one early agricultural practice in Nigeria.
5. Why was food production important to prehistoric communities?

3.4 Archaeological Evidence of Food Production

3.4.1 Archaeological Indicators of Early Farming



Archaeologists study plant remains, animal bones, pottery, and agricultural tools to understand early food production activities. Such materials provide valuable information about prehistoric farming practices.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological evidence of farming includes plant remains and _____ bones.

3.4.2 The Relationship Between Food Production and Social Development

The development of food production contributed to population growth, permanent settlements, and increased social complexity. Agricultural communities often developed more organised economic systems.

Fill in the blank: Food production contributed to population growth and _____ settlements.

3.4.3 Significance of Food Production in Nigerian Archaeology

The study of food production provides archaeologists with insights into cultural change, technological development, and human adaptation in prehistoric Nigeria.

Fill in the blank: Food production provides insights into cultural and _____ development.

1. Here is a structured table listing key archaeological evidence of early farming and domestication in prehistoric Nigeria, drawing from notable sites like Dufuna, the Nok Culture sites, and Korsimora.
2. Archaeological Evidence of Early Agriculture in Nigeria



Evidence Category	Material/Physical Finds	Key Archaeological Sites	Implications for Food Production
Plant Remains (Archaeobotanical)	- Carbonized seeds of Pearl Millet (<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>) - Phytoliths and starch grains of African Yam (<i>Dioscorea rotundata</i>) - Oil palm nut shells (<i>Elaeis guineensis</i>)	- Nok Culture regions (Taruga, Katsina-Ala) - Korsimora (Lake Chad Basin) - Tula and Daima	Confirms the transition from foraging to active plant cultivation. Pearl millet adapted well to the drying Sahelian climate, while yam exploitation supported early forest-savanna populations.
Animal Bones (Zooarchaeological)	- Bones showing morphological changes indicative of domestication (e.g., smaller horns/size in cattle) - Skeletal remains of domestic sheep (<i>Ovis aries</i>) and goats (<i>Capra hircus</i>)	- Daima (early pastoral levels) - Gajiganna (Lake Chad region) - Birnin Kudu	Demonstrates a shift from relying entirely on wild game hunting to managing controlled, domestic livestock for meat, milk, and traction.
Pottery & Ceramics	Thick-walled, heavily tempered ceramic vessels	Nok Culture sites	Sedentary agricultural life required heavy



Evidence Category	Material/Physical Finds	Key Archaeological Sites	Implications for Food Production
	• Pots decorated with comb-stamped, roulette, or incised patterns • Ceramic lipid residues (fatty acids from cooking)	• Iwo Eleru (later phases) • Gajiganna complexes	storage vessels for grains and water. Chemical analysis of pottery residues often confirms the boiling of plant stews and processing of animal products.
Agricultural Tools	• Ground stone axes and adzes • Iron hoes, sickles, and points (later phases) • Grinding stones (querns) and pestles	• Dufuna (associated region) • Taruga (early iron smelting site) • Jos Plateau surface finds	Ground stone axes were essential for clearing dense forest and bush fallow for plots. Grinding stones indicate intensive processing of hard grains like millet, while iron tools vastly improved agricultural efficiency.

3. Table 3.1 Archaeological evidence associated with early food production.



4. Short description: A table showing examples of archaeological materials used to study early agriculture in Nigeria.

Pilot Questions 3.4

11. Archaeological evidence of farming includes plant remains and _____ bones.
12. How did food production influence settlement patterns?
13. Name one archaeological material used to study early agriculture.
14. Food production contributed to _____ settlements.
15. Why is food production important in Nigerian archaeology?



Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the Nigerian Stone Age and the development of food production among prehistoric communities. We began by examining the characteristics and classifications of the Nigerian Stone Age and the technological importance of stone tools. We then explored the lifestyles, subsistence practices, and settlement patterns of Stone Age communities in Nigeria. Thereafter, we discussed the origins of food production, plant and animal domestication, and early agricultural practices. Finally, we considered the archaeological evidence of early farming and its significance in understanding cultural and social developments in prehistoric Nigeria.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to explain the Nigerian Stone Age, describe the development of food production practices, identify archaeological indicators of early agriculture, and analyse their significance in Nigerian archaeological studies.

Glossary of Terms

- Archaeological evidence: Material remains used to interpret past human activities.
- Domestication: The process of adapting plants and animals for human use.
- Early Stone Age: The earliest phase of prehistoric technological development characterised by simple stone tools.
- Food production: The cultivation of crops and domestication of animals for human consumption.
- Later Stone Age: The period characterised by more refined stone tool technologies and cultural developments.
- Middle Stone Age: The transitional phase marked by technological and behavioural changes.
- Settlement pattern: The manner in which human communities occupy and organise living spaces.
- Subsistence practices: Activities undertaken to obtain food and other basic needs.



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Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. The Stone Age is characterised by the use of _____ tools and implements. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Hunting and gathering were important _____ practices during the Stone Age. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. Food production involves the cultivation of crops and the _____ of animals. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
4. Archaeological evidence of farming includes plant remains and _____ bones. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
5. Food production contributed to population growth and _____ settlements. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Short-Answer Questions

- Explain the significance of stone tools in prehistoric Nigerian societies.
- Describe one subsistence practice of Stone Age communities.
- State one benefit of plant and animal domestication.
- Identify one archaeological material used to study early farming.
- Explain the relationship between food production and social development.

Long-Answer Questions

- Discuss the major characteristics and classifications of the Nigerian Stone Age. (Linked to SLOs 3.1 and 3.2)
- Evaluate the importance of food production in the cultural and social development of prehistoric Nigerian societies. (Linked to SLOs 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 3



Objective Questions

- Stone.
- Subsistence.
- Domestication.
- Animal.
- Permanent.

Short-Answer Questions

- Stone tools supported hunting, food processing, and human survival.
- Hunting, fishing, or gathering wild plants.
- It provided more reliable food supplies and encouraged permanent settlement.
- Plant remains, pottery, agricultural tools, or animal bones.
- Food production promoted population growth and social organisation.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Basic response: The Nigerian Stone Age is divided into Early, Middle, and Later Stone Age periods distinguished by technological developments and subsistence practices.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may discuss environmental adaptation, tool-making technologies, and settlement patterns.

1. Basic response: Food production transformed prehistoric societies by improving food security and encouraging permanent settlements.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may further discuss economic development, social complexity, and cultural changes associated with agriculture.

Answers to Pilot Questions 3

Part 3.1



1. Stone.
2. Early Stone Age, Middle Stone Age, and Later Stone Age.
3. Hunting or cutting.
4. Three.
5. They supported survival and technological development.

Part 3.2

1. Occupation.
2. Hunting and gathering.
3. They provided water and food resources.
4. Subsistence.
5. Environmental conditions and resource availability.

Part 3.3

- Domestication.
- The adaptation of plants and animals for human use.
- Reliable.
- Crop cultivation or animal husbandry.
- It improved food security and supported settlement development.

Part 3.4

1. Animal.
2. It encouraged permanent settlements.
3. Plant remains, pottery, or agricultural tools.
4. Permanent.
5. It provides insights into prehistoric cultural and technological development.



References and Attributions 3

General References

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7. Andah, B. W., & Okpoko, A. I. (1994). *Practising Archaeology in Africa*. Wisdom Publishers.
8. Renfrew, C., & Bahn, P. (2016). *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (7th ed.). Thames & Hudson.
9. Breunig, P. (2014). *Nok: African Sculpture in Archaeological Context*. Africa Magna Verlag.

Illustrations

11. Figure 3.1 Transition from food gathering to food production in prehistoric Nigeria: Suggested AI-generated diagram using the supplied prompt.
12. Table 3.1 Archaeological evidence associated with early food production: Suggested AI-generated table using the supplied prompt.

Open Educational Resources (OERs)

1. Archaeology Data Service (ADS). (n.d.).
2. Internet Archaeology Journal. (n.d.).
3. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (n.d.).



Course code: ARC 404

Course title: Archaeology of Nigeria

Course credit load: 3 Units C: LH 45

List of Series:

- **Series 1:** Nigerian Paleoenvironment and Archaeological History
- **Series 2:** University and Museum Archaeology in Nigeria
- **Series 3:** The Nigerian Stone Age and Food Production
- **Series 4:** The Nigerian Iron Age and Urban Origins
- **Series 5:** Major Archaeological Sites of Nigeria

Series 4: The Nigerian Iron Age and Urban Origins

Parts and Sub-Parts

Part 1: The Beginnings of Iron Technology in Nigeria

- 4.1.1 Origins and spread of iron smelting in sub-Saharan Africa
- 4.1.2 Early iron-working in Nigeria: the Nok evidence

Part 2: Iron Age Cultures and Traditions

- 4.2.1 Iron Age archaeological cultures across Nigeria
- 4.2.2 Iron technology, agriculture, and social complexity

Part 3: The Archaeology of Ife and Benin

- 4.3.1 Ile-Ife: archaeology, art, and political authority
- 4.3.2 Benin City: urbanism, earthworks, and the royal court

Part 4: Urban Origins in Northern Nigeria

- 4.4.1 The emergence of Hausa urbanism
- 4.4.2 Kanem-Borno and the archaeology of the Lake Chad Basin

Part 5: Interpreting Nigerian Urban Origins



- 4.5.1 Theoretical debates on African urbanism
- 4.5.2 Trade, craft specialisation, and political authority as drivers of urbanisation

Introduction

The adoption of iron technology transformed the human landscape of Nigeria in profound ways. Iron tools enabled more efficient forest clearance and agricultural intensification, supported the growth of specialist craft production, and underpinned the military and political power of emerging elites. Over the course of the first millennium BC through the second millennium AD, these processes gave rise to a remarkable diversity of complex societies, urban centres, and artistic traditions that have left deep imprints in the Nigerian archaeological record.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with a comprehensive understanding of the Nigerian Iron Age from the earliest evidence of iron smelting to the rise of major urban centres in the south and north of the country and to engage you with the theoretical debates surrounding the origins of urbanism in Nigeria and the wider African context.

We shall commence this Series by examining the origins of iron technology in Nigeria and the evidence provided by the Nok Culture. Next, we will survey the broader Iron Age cultural traditions across the country and consider how iron technology shaped agriculture and social complexity. Following that, we will explore the archaeology of Ile-Ife and Benin City two of the most intensively studied urban centres in West Africa. We will then turn to the development of urban centres in northern Nigeria, including the Hausa city-states and the Kanem-Borno polity. Finally, we will assess the theoretical debates on African urbanism and evaluate the role of trade, craft specialisation, and political authority as drivers of urbanisation in Nigeria.

Series Learning Outcomes



Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** describe the origins and spread of iron smelting in Nigeria and evaluate the significance of the Nok evidence,
- **SLO 4.2** identify the major Iron Age cultural traditions across Nigeria and explain the relationship between iron technology, agriculture, and social complexity,
- **SLO 4.3** analyse the archaeological evidence for urbanism at Ile-Ife and Benin City,
- **SLO 4.4** describe the emergence of Hausa urbanism and the Kanem-Borno polity in northern Nigeria, and
- **SLO 4.5** evaluate theoretical debates on African urban origins and assess the roles of trade, craft specialisation, and political authority in Nigerian urbanisation.

4.1 The Beginnings Of Iron Technology In Nigeria

4.1.1 Origins and spread of iron smelting in sub-Saharan Africa

The origins of iron technology in sub-Saharan Africa remain a subject of active scholarly debate. Evidence from sites in Central Africa (Rwanda and Burundi), West Africa, and the Great Lakes region suggests that iron smelting may have developed **independently** in sub-Saharan Africa rather than through diffusion from North Africa or the ancient Near East. In West Africa, iron-working dates to at least the first millennium BC, with some claims for earlier dates requiring further verification. The spread of iron technology across sub-Saharan Africa was closely associated with the **Bantu expansion** the migration of Bantu-speaking agricultural communities southward and eastward from a West/Central African homeland though iron-working in the Nigerian region predates or is contemporary with the earliest phases of this expansion.

Fill in the blank: Evidence suggests that iron smelting in sub-Saharan Africa may have developed _____ rather than through diffusion from North Africa or the Near East.



4.1.2 Early iron-working in Nigeria: the Nok evidence

The **Nok Culture**, centred on the Jos Plateau of central Nigeria and dated to approximately **1500 BC–AD 200**, provides the earliest well-documented evidence for iron smelting in Nigeria. Nok sites have yielded iron slag, tuyères (ceramic pipes used in furnaces), and smelting furnace fragments alongside the culture's celebrated terracotta figurines. The co-occurrence of iron technology with sophisticated figurative art suggests a level of social organisation capable of supporting specialist craft producers. **Radiocarbon dates** and **thermoluminescence dates** from Nok sites place iron-working firmly within the first millennium BC, making the Nok tradition one of the earliest documented iron-working cultures in West Africa.

Fill in the blank: The Nok Culture is dated to approximately 1500 BC–AD 200 and is centred on the _____ Plateau of central Nigeria.





A map of Nigeria and the broader West African region showing the location of early iron-smelting sites, including Nok sites on the Jos Plateau, with approximate dates.

Figure 4.1 Early iron-smelting sites in Nigeria and West Africa.

Pilot questions 4.1

1. Iron smelting in sub-Saharan Africa is thought to have developed _____ rather than through diffusion from North Africa.
2. What is the approximate date range of the Nok Culture?
3. Name two types of iron-working evidence found at Nok sites.
4. What does the co-occurrence of iron technology and terracotta figurines at Nok sites suggest about Nok society?
5. What is a tuyère and what was its function in iron smelting?



4.2 Iron Age Cultures And Traditions

4.2.1 Iron Age archaeological cultures across Nigeria

Following the Nok Culture, iron-working spread widely across Nigeria, giving rise to a range of regional Iron Age traditions. In the **Middle Niger** area, sites associated with early farming communities show the rapid adoption of iron tools from the late first millennium BC. The **Igbo-Ukwu** site in southeastern Nigeria, dated to the ninth century AD, produced extraordinary evidence for bronze casting of exceptional technical sophistication, alongside iron tools and objects, indicating a society of considerable wealth and organisational complexity. In the **Middle Belt** and **northeastern Nigeria**, numerous Iron Age smelting sites have been documented, though many remain incompletely investigated. The diversity of Iron Age traditions across Nigeria reflects the varied ecological, social, and political contexts in which iron technology was adopted and developed.

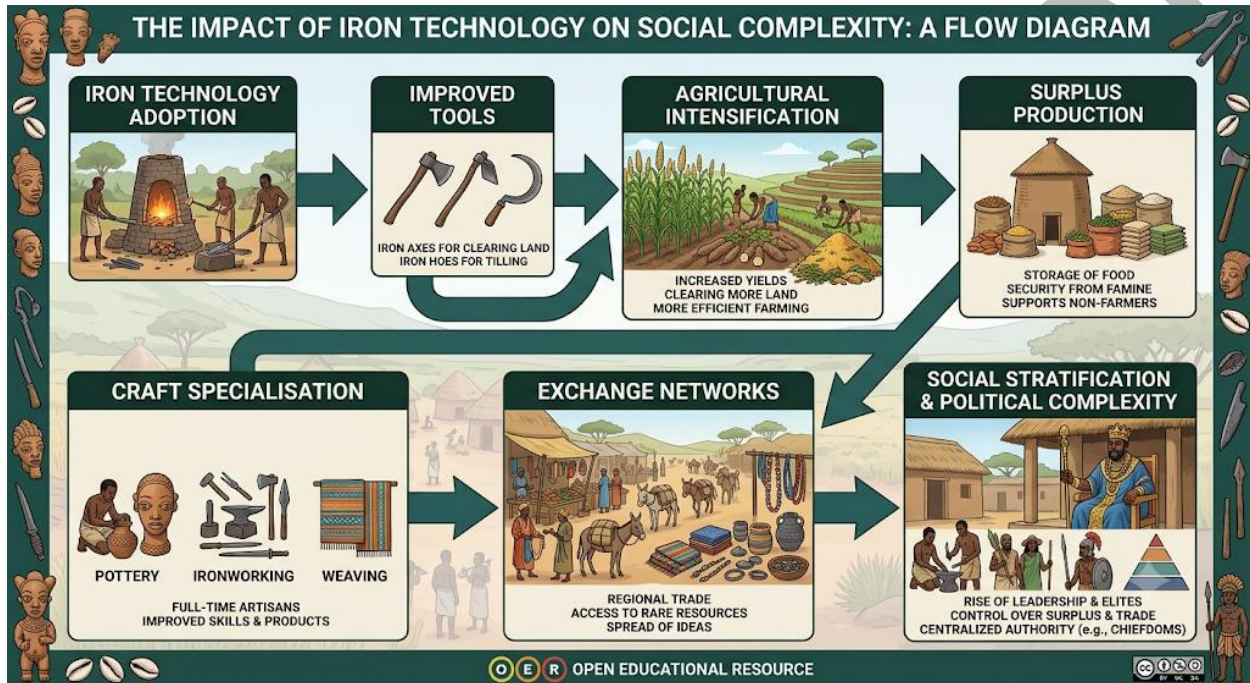
Fill in the blank: The Igbo-Ukwu site in southeastern Nigeria, dated to the _____ century AD, produced evidence for bronze casting of exceptional technical sophistication.

4.2.2 Iron technology, agriculture, and social complexity

The adoption of iron technology had transformative consequences for agriculture and social organisation across Nigeria. **Iron hoes** and **iron axes** enabled more efficient soil cultivation and forest clearance, facilitating agricultural intensification and population growth. Surplus food production supported non-agricultural specialists including smiths, potters, weavers, and traders whose activities accelerated the development of **exchange networks** and **social stratification**. Control over iron production and distribution became a source of political power: communities with access to iron ore and smelting expertise wielded significant economic and military advantages over those without. The integration of iron technology into existing systems of agricultural production thus acted as a catalyst for increasing social complexity across much of Nigeria.



Fill in the blank: Control over iron _____ and distribution became a significant source of political power in Iron Age Nigeria.



A diagram showing the cascading effects of iron technology adoption in Nigeria: from improved tools to agricultural intensification, surplus production, craft specialisation, exchange networks, and social stratification.

Figure 4.2 The social and economic consequences of iron technology adoption in Nigeria.

Pilot questions 4.2

6. Name two iron tools that facilitated agricultural intensification in Iron Age Nigeria.
7. The Igbo-Ukwu site is dated to the ninth century AD and is notable for evidence of _____ casting of exceptional sophistication.



8. How did iron technology contribute to the development of social stratification in Nigeria?
9. Why did control over iron production become a source of political power?
10. Name one region of Nigeria where Iron Age smelting sites remain incompletely investigated.

4.3 The Archaeology Of Ife And Benin

4.3.1 Ile-Ife: archaeology, art, and political authority

Ile-Ife, in present-day Osun State, is regarded in Yoruba tradition as the sacred place of creation and the origin of kingship. Archaeological investigations notably by **Frank Willett** from the 1950s and by subsequent Nigerian scholars have confirmed Ife as a major urban centre by at least the **eleventh century AD**. The site is renowned for its **naturalistic bronze and terracotta heads**, which depict royal and elite personages with extraordinary realism and technical mastery. Excavations have revealed **pavement areas** of potsherd pavements, evidence of large-scale craft production, and a substantial settlement extending over several square kilometres. The artistic and material evidence from Ife strongly supports the interpretation of the site as the ritual and political capital of a complex, hierarchically organised state.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological evidence confirms Ile-Ife as a major urban centre by at least the _____ century AD.

4.3.2 Benin City: urbanism, earthworks, and the royal court

Benin City, capital of the historic Kingdom of Benin in present-day Edo State, is one of the most extensively documented urban centres in Nigerian archaeology. The city is surrounded by a remarkable system of **earthworks** ramparts and ditches that extend for



thousands of kilometres in total length and are considered among the largest earthwork systems in the world. **Philip Igbafe** and **Graham Connah's** investigations documented the scale and complexity of these earthworks, which served both defensive and territorial functions. The **royal palace** and its associated **bronze plaques and commemorative heads** attest to a highly centralised political authority and a court culture of great artistic sophistication. The Benin bronzes, many removed to European collections during the 1897 British Punitive Expedition, remain at the centre of ongoing repatriation debates.

Fill in the blank: The earthwork system surrounding Benin City served both _____ and territorial functions.



An image of a naturalistic bronze or terracotta head from Ile-Ife, illustrating the technical and artistic sophistication of Ife court culture.

Plate 4.1 A naturalistic head from Ile-Ife illustrating the artistic achievement of Ife court culture.



Pilot questions 4.3

11. By approximately what century AD does archaeological evidence confirm Ile-Ife as a major urban centre?
12. Name two types of material evidence recovered from archaeological investigations at Ile-Ife.
13. What functions did the earthwork system surrounding Benin City serve?
14. Who conducted influential archaeological investigations of the Benin earthworks?
15. The Benin bronzes were removed to European collections during the _____ British Punitive Expedition.

4.4 Urban Origins In Northern Nigeria

4.4.1 The emergence of Hausa urbanism

The **Hausa city-states** of northern Nigeria including Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Sokoto, and Daura represent one of the most significant concentrations of urban settlement in sub-Saharan African history. Their origins, while partially traceable in oral tradition through the **Bayajidda legend**, are increasingly illuminated by archaeological research. Excavations and surveys in Kano and Katsina have documented substantial **walled settlements** and evidence of **specialised craft production** including leather working, textile weaving, and metal smithing dating to the first and second millennia AD. Long-distance trade connections with North Africa via trans-Saharan routes were a defining feature of Hausa urbanism, supplying luxury goods, currency, and enslaved persons in exchange for cloth, leather, and agricultural produce.

Fill in the blank: Long-distance trade via _____ routes linking northern Nigeria to North Africa was a defining feature of Hausa urbanism.

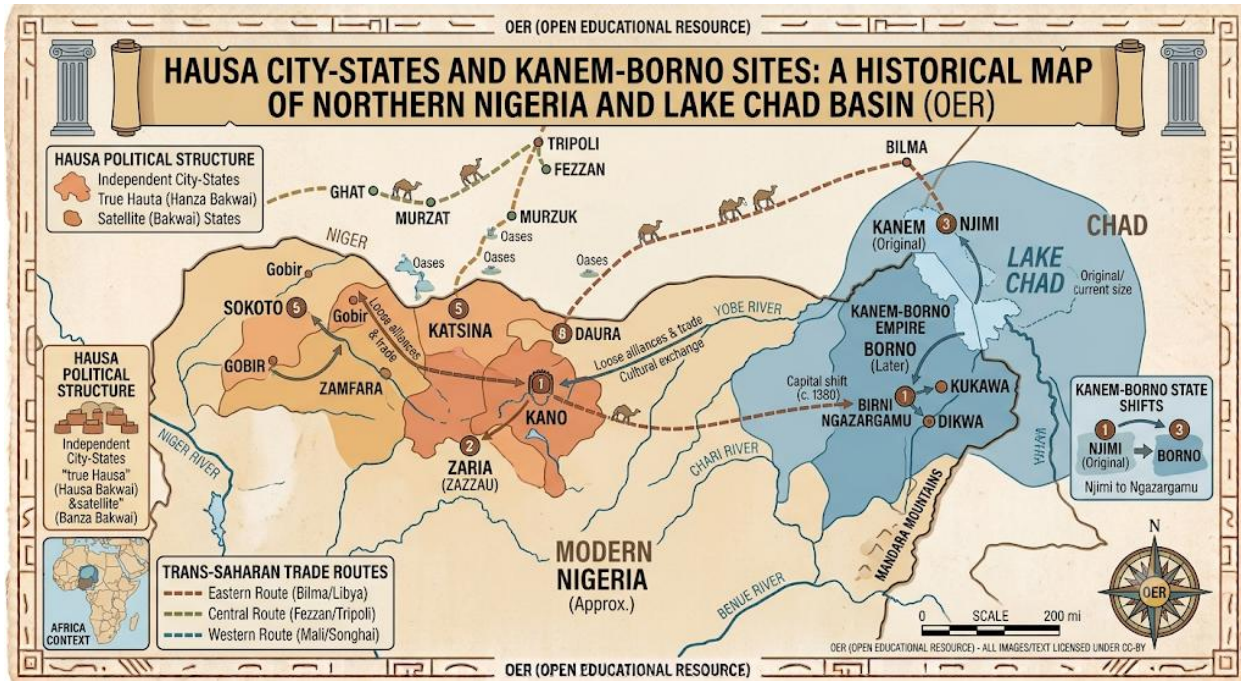


4.4.2 Kanem-Borno and the archaeology of the Lake Chad Basin

The **Kanem-Borno** polity, centred on the Lake Chad Basin to the northeast of Nigeria, was one of the longest-lasting political entities in African history, with origins traceable to at least the ninth century AD and continuity through to the nineteenth century. Archaeological investigations in the **Lake Chad Basin** have documented a landscape of mounded sites locally known as **tells** that represent the accumulated debris of centuries of occupation by sedentary farming and fishing communities. **Graham Connah's** surveys in the 1960s and 1970s revealed the extent and complexity of this archaeological landscape. The material culture of Kanem-Borno sites includes distinctive **ceramics**, iron tools, and evidence of long-distance trade connections with North Africa, the Nile Valley, and the broader Saharan world.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological mounded sites in the Lake Chad Basin, known as _____, represent centuries of accumulated occupation debris.





A map of northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin showing the locations of major Hausa city-states and Kanem-Borno archaeological sites.

Figure 4.3 Hausa city-states and Kanem-Borno archaeological sites in northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin.

Pilot questions 4.4

16. Name three of the major Hausa city-states in northern Nigeria.
17. What trade commodity was exchanged along trans-Saharan routes by Hausa city-states?
18. What is a tell in the context of Lake Chad Basin archaeology?
19. Who conducted influential surveys of the Lake Chad Basin archaeological landscape?
20. The origins of the Kanem-Borno polity are traceable to at least the _____ century AD.



4.5 Interpreting Nigerian Urban Origins

4.5.1 Theoretical debates on African urbanism

The origins of urbanism in Africa have been the subject of sustained theoretical debate. Early scholarship, influenced by Eurocentric assumptions, questioned whether pre-colonial African settlements constituted genuine **cities** by the standards applied to ancient Near Eastern or Mediterranean urban centres. This perspective was effectively challenged by scholars such as **Thurstan Shaw**, **Graham Connah**, and **Susan Keech McIntosh**, who demonstrated that African urbanism took distinctive forms that should be understood on their own terms. The concept of **heterarchy** in which power is distributed across multiple institutions rather than concentrated in a single hierarchy has been proposed as a more appropriate framework for understanding some African urban formations than conventional models of top-down centralised authority.

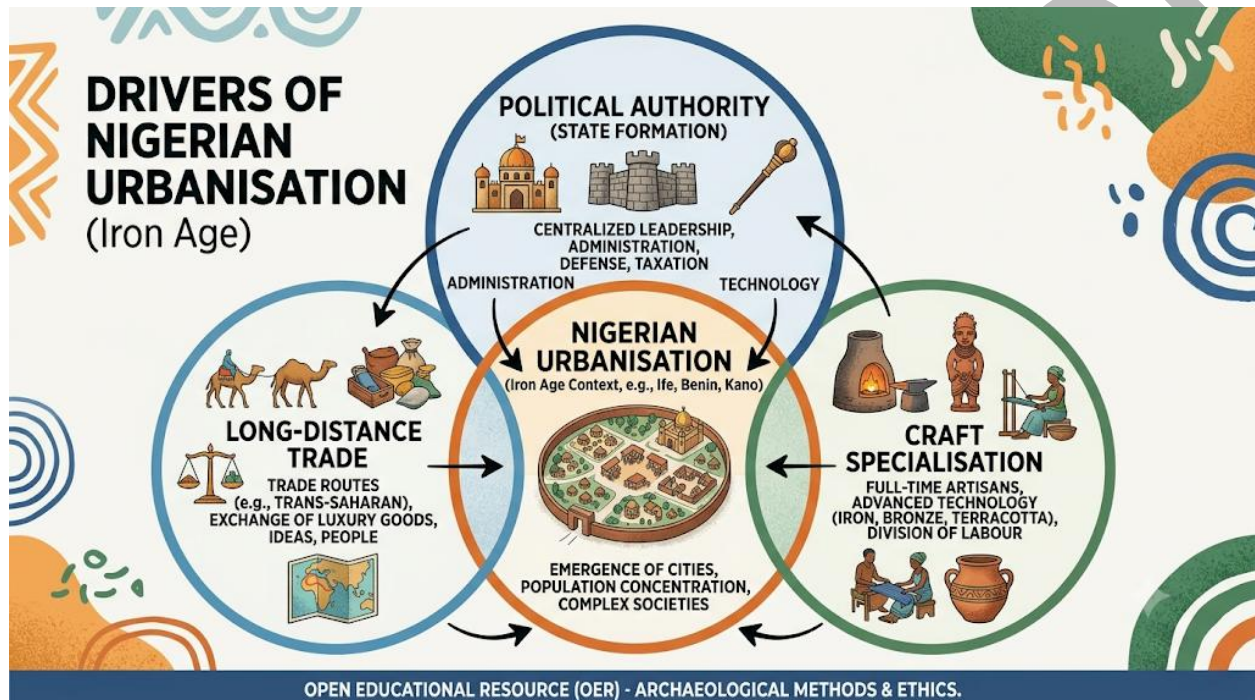
Fill in the blank: _____ refers to a form of social organisation in which power is distributed across multiple institutions rather than concentrated in a single hierarchy.

4.5.2 Trade, craft specialisation, and political authority as drivers of urbanisation

Nigerian urbanism emerged from the convergence of several interacting factors. **Long-distance trade** whether along trans-Saharan routes in the north or through coastal and riverine networks in the south generated the wealth and demand for specialist goods that supported urban populations. **Craft specialisation** in bronze casting, iron smelting, textile production, and bead making concentrated specialist producers in particular locations, attracting further population and exchange. **Political authority** expressed through royal courts, ritual centres, and military power organised labour, controlled redistribution, and provided the administrative capacity for managing large and diverse urban populations. In most Nigerian cases, urbanisation resulted not from a single driver but from the reinforcing interaction of all three, operating within specific ecological and historical contexts.



Fill in the blank: Nigerian urbanism emerged from the convergence of long-distance trade, craft specialisation, and _____ authority.



A diagram showing the three key drivers of urbanisation in Nigeria trade, craft specialisation, and political authority as interlocking factors that together produced urban growth.

Figure 4.4 Drivers of urbanisation in Iron Age Nigeria.

Pilot questions 4.5

21. What Eurocentric assumption about African urbanism was challenged by twentieth-century scholarship?
22. Define heterarchy and explain why it has been proposed as a useful concept for understanding African urbanism.



23. Name three scholars who contributed to the scholarly defence of African urbanism as a genuine phenomenon.

24. How did long-distance trade contribute to the development of urban centres in northern Nigeria?

25. Nigerian urbanism resulted from the convergence of trade, craft specialisation, and _____ authority.



Series Summary

This Series has traced the development of the Nigerian Iron Age and the emergence of urban centres across the country. We began with the origins of iron smelting in sub-Saharan Africa and the landmark evidence provided by the Nok Culture on the Jos Plateau. We then surveyed the broader Iron Age cultural traditions across Nigeria, considering how iron technology transformed agriculture and drove social complexity. Following that, we explored the archaeological evidence for two of Nigeria's most celebrated urban centres Ile-Ife and Benin City examining their art, earthworks, and political organisation. We then turned to northern Nigeria, where the Hausa city-states and the Kanem-Borno polity represent distinct but equally significant expressions of urban life rooted in trans-Saharan trade and craft specialisation. Finally, we engaged with the theoretical debates on African urbanism, evaluating the concepts of heterarchy and the multi-causal model of urbanisation through trade, craft specialisation, and political authority.

By working through this Series, you should now be able to describe the origins of iron technology in Nigeria, identify major Iron Age traditions, analyse the archaeology of Ife and Benin, describe northern Nigerian urbanism, and evaluate theoretical frameworks for understanding urban origins. These abilities provide an essential foundation for the study of Nigeria's major archaeological sites in Series 5.

Glossary of Terms

- **Bantu expansion:** The gradual migration of Bantu-speaking agricultural communities from a West/Central African homeland southward and eastward across sub-Saharan Africa, beginning in the late second millennium BC, closely associated with the spread of iron technology.
- **Bayajidda legend:** An origin narrative shared among Hausa communities that traces the founding of the seven legitimate Hausa city-states (Hausa Bakwai) to the



hero Bayajidda, used by archaeologists as a framework for investigating urban origins.

- **Bronze casting:** A metalworking technique in which molten bronze (an alloy of copper and tin) is poured into moulds to produce objects; in Nigeria, exemplified by the sophisticated traditions of Ife, Benin, and Igbo-Ukwu.
- **Earthworks:** Constructed banks, ramparts, and ditches of earth used for defensive, territorial, or symbolic purposes; the Benin earthwork system is one of the largest in the world.
- **Heterarchy:** A form of social or political organisation in which power is distributed across multiple institutions or groups rather than concentrated in a single ranked hierarchy; proposed as a framework for understanding some African urban formations.
- **Igbo-Ukwu:** An archaeological site in southeastern Nigeria, dated to the ninth century AD, that produced extraordinary evidence for bronze casting of exceptional technical sophistication, associated with a ritual and chiefly tradition in Igboland.
- **Ile-Ife:** A city in present-day Osun State, southwestern Nigeria, regarded in Yoruba tradition as the place of creation and origin of kingship, and confirmed archaeologically as a major urban centre by at least the eleventh century AD.
- **Iron slag:** The waste material produced during iron smelting, used by archaeologists as primary evidence for the location and date of iron-working activities.
- **Kanem-Borno:** A long-lasting polity centred on the Lake Chad Basin, with origins traceable to at least the ninth century AD, significant for its trans-Saharan trade connections and complex political organisation.
- **Nok Culture:** An early Iron Age tradition centred on the Jos Plateau of central Nigeria, dated to approximately 1500 BC–AD 200, known for terracotta figurines and one of the earliest documented iron-working industries in West Africa.
- **Potsherd pavement:** A surface of deliberately laid pottery fragments found at Ile-Ife and other Nigerian sites, interpreted as a marker of high-status or ritual space.



- **Royal court:** The institution centred on a ruler and their attendants, advisors, and craftspeople, whose consumption of luxury goods and patronage of specialist crafts drove economic and urban development at sites such as Ife and Benin.
- **Social stratification:** The division of a society into ranked groups with differential access to wealth, power, and prestige; iron technology is considered a catalyst for increasing stratification in Iron Age Nigeria.
- **Tell:** An Arabic/regional term for a mounded archaeological site formed by the accumulation of occupation debris over centuries; used in the context of Lake Chad Basin archaeology.
- **Trans-Saharan trade:** Long-distance exchange networks crossing the Sahara Desert that linked sub-Saharan West Africa with North Africa, the Mediterranean world, and the Middle East, supplying luxury goods and currency in exchange for gold, enslaved people, and agricultural products.
- **Tuyère:** A ceramic pipe inserted into an iron-smelting furnace through which bellows forced air, increasing the temperature of combustion; tuyères are a key diagnostic artefact for identifying iron-smelting sites.
- **Urbanism:** The process or condition of urban life, characterised by dense population concentrations, occupational specialisation, social stratification, and complex political and economic organisation.



Concept Check Questions 4

Objective questions

26. The Nok Culture is centred on the _____ Plateau of central Nigeria and dated to approximately 1500 BC–AD 200. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
27. Which of the following best describes a tuyère? (Linked to SLO 4.1)
- a. A type of terracotta figurine from the Nok Culture
 - b. A ceramic pipe used to force air into an iron-smelting furnace
 - c. A form of potsherd pavement found at Ile-Ife
 - d. A burial vessel associated with the Igbo-Ukwu tradition
28. The earthwork system surrounding Benin City served both defensive and _____ functions. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
29. A form of social organisation in which power is distributed across multiple institutions rather than a single hierarchy is called _____. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
30. Nigerian urbanism emerged from the convergence of long-distance trade, craft specialisation, and _____ authority. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Short-answer questions

31. Describe two types of evidence from Nok sites that confirm iron-working activity and explain what each indicates. (Linked to SLO 4.1)



32. Explain how iron technology contributed to agricultural intensification and the development of social complexity in Iron Age Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 4.2)

33. Describe two key characteristics of the Hausa city-states that distinguish them as urban centres. (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Long-answer questions

34. Analyse the archaeological evidence for urbanism at Ile-Ife and Benin City, comparing the nature of the evidence at each site and what it reveals about the political and cultural organisation of these centres. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Basic response: Ile-Ife is confirmed as a major urban centre by at least the eleventh century AD, with naturalistic bronze and terracotta heads, potsherd pavements, and evidence of large-scale craft production. Benin City is surrounded by extensive earthworks and is associated with royal bronze plaques and commemorative heads, indicating a centralised royal court.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may compare the forms of political authority evident at each site noting that Ife appears primarily as a ritual and artistic capital with sacral kingship at its centre, while Benin shows evidence of more overtly military and administrative power expressed through its earthwork system and court bronzes. They may also consider the methodological challenges of interpreting urban organisation from the archaeological record alone, the role of oral tradition in supplementing material evidence, and the significance of the repatriation debate surrounding the Benin bronzes for understanding the relationship between archaeological knowledge and heritage politics.



35. Evaluate the theoretical debates surrounding the origins of urbanism in Nigeria, assessing the usefulness of the concept of heterarchy and the multi-causal model of urbanisation. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Basic response: Early Eurocentric scholarship questioned whether African settlements were genuine cities. Scholars such as Shaw, Connah, and McIntosh demonstrated that African urbanism was real but took distinctive forms. Heterarchy offers a useful alternative to top-down models, and urbanisation in Nigeria resulted from the interaction of trade, craft specialisation, and political authority.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may evaluate the concept of heterarchy critically noting that while it usefully challenges rigid hierarchical models, not all Nigerian urban centres show heterarchical organisation equally clearly. They may discuss specific cases: for example, whether Benin's centralised royal court fits better with a hierarchical model, while sites such as Igbo-Ukwu may reflect more heterarchical structures. They may also consider how the uneven archaeological coverage of different regions of Nigeria limits the generalisability of any single theoretical model, and argue for contextually sensitive interpretations that acknowledge both structural factors and historical contingency.



Objective questions

36. Jos.

37. b. A ceramic pipe used to force air into an iron-smelting furnace.

38. Territorial.

39. Heterarchy.

40. Political.

Short-answer questions

41. Any two of: (i) iron slag the waste product of smelting, confirming that iron was produced on site; (ii) tuyères ceramic pipes used to introduce air into the furnace, indicating the smelting process; (iii) furnace fragments the physical remains of iron-smelting structures. Each type confirms that iron production rather than mere iron use was occurring at Nok sites.

42. Iron hoes and axes improved soil cultivation and forest clearance, enabling agricultural intensification and population growth. Surplus food production released people from farming to pursue specialist crafts, generating exchange networks and social stratification. Control over iron production became a source of political power, further accelerating social complexity.

43. Any two of: substantial walled settlements; evidence of specialised craft production (leather, textiles, metalwork); long-distance trade connections via trans-Saharan routes; high population densities; complex political and economic organisation.



Long-answer questions

44. See model responses above.

45. See model responses above.

Answers to Pilot Questions 4

Part 4.1

46. Independently.

47. Approximately 1500 BC–AD 200.

48. Any two of: iron slag, tuyères, smelting furnace fragments.

49. A level of social organisation capable of supporting specialist craft producers both iron workers and terracotta artists.

50. A tuyère is a ceramic pipe inserted into an iron-smelting furnace through which bellows forced air to increase combustion temperature.

Part 4.2

51. Iron hoes and iron axes.

52. Bronze.

53. By enabling surplus food production, which supported non-agricultural specialists, generating exchange networks and social stratification.

54. Because communities with iron production expertise held military and economic advantages over those without access to iron tools and weapons.

55. Any one of: the Middle Belt, northeastern Nigeria.



Part 4.3

- 56. By at least the eleventh century AD.
- 57. Any two of: naturalistic bronze and terracotta heads, potsherd pavements, evidence of large-scale craft production, substantial settlement area.
- 58. Defensive and territorial functions.
- 59. Graham Connah (and Philip Igbafe).
- 60. 1897.

Part 4.4

- 61. Any three of: Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Daura, Sokoto.
- 62. Cloth and leather (in exchange for luxury goods, currency, and enslaved persons from North Africa).
- 63. A mounded archaeological site formed by the accumulation of centuries of occupation debris by sedentary communities.
- 64. Graham Connah.
- 65. Ninth.

Part 4.5

- 66. That African settlements did not constitute genuine cities by the standards applied to ancient Near Eastern or Mediterranean urban centres.
- 67. Heterarchy describes a form of organisation in which power is distributed across multiple institutions rather than a single hierarchy; it is proposed as a more



appropriate model for some African urban centres where power was not solely concentrated in a single ruler or institution.

68. Thurstan Shaw, Graham Connah, Susan Keech McIntosh.

69. Trans-Saharan trade generated wealth and demand for specialist goods, attracted specialist producers to particular locations, and supplied currency and luxury items that supported urban consumption and elite power.

70. Political.



References and Attributions 4

The following references and attributions support the instructional content and illustrations used in Series 4: The Nigerian Iron Age and Urban Origins. Entries are presented in APA style for clarity and consistency.

General References

- Connah, G. (1987). *African civilizations: Precolonial cities and states in tropical Africa An archaeological perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fagg, B. (1969). Recent work in West Africa: New light on the Nok culture. *World Archaeology*, 1(1), 41–50.
- McIntosh, S. K. (Ed.). (1999). *Beyond chiefdoms: Pathways to complexity in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shaw, T. (1970). *Igbo-Ukwu: An account of archaeological discoveries in eastern Nigeria* (2 vols.). Faber and Faber.
- Shaw, T. (1978). *Nigeria: Its archaeology and early history*. Thames and Hudson.
- Willett, F. (1967). *Ife in the history of West African sculpture*. Thames and Hudson.

Illustrations

- Figure 4.1 Early iron-smelting sites in Nigeria and West Africa: Suggested AI-generated map using the prompt "Create a map of Nigeria and West Africa marking early iron-smelting sites including the Nok Culture on the Jos Plateau with approximate dates." Search string: "early iron smelting sites Nigeria West Africa map Nok OER".
- Figure 4.2 The social and economic consequences of iron technology adoption in Nigeria: Suggested AI-generated flow diagram using the prompt "Create a flow



diagram showing iron technology adoption → improved tools → agricultural intensification → surplus production → craft specialisation → exchange networks → social stratification." Search string: "iron technology agriculture social complexity Nigeria flow diagram OER".

- Plate 4.1 A naturalistic head from Ile-Ife: Suggested AI-generated image using the prompt "Generate an image of a naturalistic bronze head from Ile-Ife, Nigeria, showing fine facial details, a beaded crown, and striations typical of Ife court art." Search string: "Ile-Ife bronze head Nigeria court art OER image".
- Figure 4.3 Hausa city-states and Kanem-Borno sites: Suggested AI-generated map using the prompt "Create a map of northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin marking major Hausa city-states and key Kanem-Borno sites with trans-Saharan trade routes indicated." Search string: "Hausa city-states Kanem-Borno Lake Chad Basin map Nigeria OER".
- Figure 4.4 Drivers of urbanisation in Iron Age Nigeria: Suggested AI-generated diagram using the prompt "Create a Venn diagram showing three drivers of Nigerian urbanisation: long-distance trade, craft specialisation, and political authority, with urbanisation as the outcome of their intersection." Search string: "drivers urbanisation Nigeria Iron Age trade craft political authority diagram OER".

Open Educational Resources (OERs)

- African Archaeological Review. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/journal/10437>
- Archaeology Data Service (ADS). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk>
- Internet Archaeology Journal. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://intarch.ac.uk>



Course Code: ARC 404

Course Title: Archaeology of Nigeria

Course Credit Load: 3 Units (C: LH 45)

Series 5: Major Archaeological Sites of Nigeria

Parts and Sub-Parts

5.1 Major Archaeological Sites of Northern Nigeria

- 5.1.1 Daima and the Chad Basin Archaeological Complex
- 5.1.2 Birnin Kudu Rock Art Site
- 5.1.3 Kwatarkwashi and Other Northern Archaeological Sites

5.2 Major Archaeological Sites of Southern Nigeria

- 5.2.1 Igbo-Ukwu Archaeological Site
- 5.2.2 Iwo Eleru Rock Shelter
- 5.2.3 Owo and Sungbo's Eredo

5.3 The Nok Culture and Central Nigerian Archaeology

- 5.3.1 Discovery and Distribution of the Nok Culture
- 5.3.2 Nok Terracotta Tradition
- 5.3.3 Archaeological Significance of Nok Sites

5.4 Early Urban and Historical Archaeological Centres

- 5.4.1 Ile-Ife and Early Urban Development
- 5.4.2 Benin and its Archaeological Heritage
- 5.4.3 Old Oyo and Political Complexity

5.5 Heritage Management and Archaeological Significance

- 5.5.1 Preservation of Archaeological Sites in Nigeria
- 5.5.2 Challenges in Heritage Management
- 5.5.3 Importance of Archaeological Sites to Nigerian History



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Introduction

Nigeria is endowed with numerous archaeological sites that provide valuable information about its prehistoric and historic past. These sites preserve evidence of technological innovations, artistic achievements, political organisation, settlement patterns, and cultural interactions among ancient Nigerian societies. Archaeological investigations conducted across the country have significantly contributed to the reconstruction of Nigerian history and the preservation of its cultural heritage.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the major archaeological sites of Nigeria and their contributions to archaeological knowledge and heritage studies.

We shall commence this Series by examining major archaeological sites in northern Nigeria and their archaeological significance. We shall then consider important archaeological sites in southern Nigeria before discussing the Nok Culture and its contributions to Nigerian archaeology. Thereafter, we will explore early urban and historical centres such as Ile-Ife, Benin, and Old Oyo. Finally, we shall examine issues relating to the preservation and management of archaeological heritage in Nigeria.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 5.1 identify the major archaeological sites in Nigeria and their locations;
- SLO 5.2 explain the archaeological significance of selected Nigerian archaeological sites;
- SLO 5.3 describe the cultural and technological developments associated with major archaeological discoveries in Nigeria;
- SLO 5.4 discuss the contributions of archaeological sites to Nigerian history and heritage studies; and
- SLO 5.5 evaluate the challenges and prospects of archaeological heritage management in Nigeria.

5.1 Major Archaeological Sites of Northern Nigeria

5.1.1 Daima and the Chad Basin Archaeological Complex



Daima is one of Nigeria's most important archaeological sites located in the Chad Basin. Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of early farming, iron working, and long-term human occupation spanning several centuries.

Fill in the blank: Daima is located in the _____ Basin of northeastern Nigeria.

5.1.2 Birnin Kudu Rock Art Site

Birnin Kudu in Jigawa State is renowned for its prehistoric rock paintings that provide valuable information about artistic expression and symbolic behaviour among early populations.

Fill in the blank: Birnin Kudu is famous for its prehistoric rock _____.

5.1.3 Kwatarkwashi and Other Northern Archaeological Sites

Northern Nigeria contains several archaeological sites that provide evidence of ancient settlements and technological developments. Kwatarkwashi remains an important site for understanding early cultural traditions in the region.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological sites in northern Nigeria provide evidence of ancient _____.

Pilot Questions 5.1

1. Where is Daima located?
2. What is Birnin Kudu famous for?
3. State one archaeological significance of Daima.
4. Archaeological sites in northern Nigeria provide evidence of ancient _____.
5. Why are archaeological sites important to historical studies?

5.2 Major Archaeological Sites of Southern Nigeria

5.2.1 Igbo-Ukwu Archaeological Site



Igbo-Ukwu is internationally recognised for its sophisticated bronze artefacts and advanced metalworking technology. The site demonstrates the technological and artistic achievements of early Nigerian societies.

Fill in the blank: Igbo-Ukwu is famous for its bronze _____.

5.2.2 Iwo Eleru Rock Shelter

Iwo Eleru in Ondo State has yielded important human skeletal remains that provide evidence of prehistoric human occupation in Nigeria.

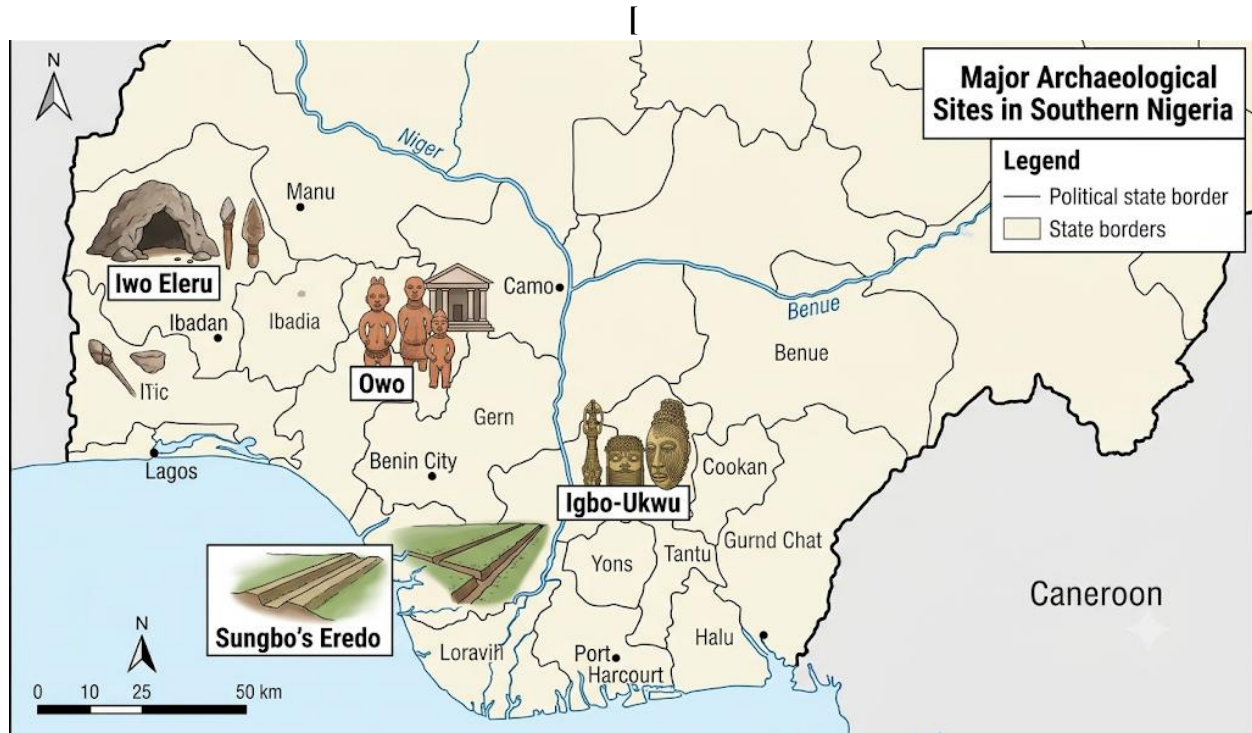
Fill in the blank: Iwo Eleru provides evidence of prehistoric human _____.

5.2.3 Owo and Sungbo's Eredo

The archaeological remains at Owo and Sungbo's Eredo contribute significantly to our understanding of early settlement systems and monumental earthworks in southwestern Nigeria.

Fill in the blank: Sungbo's Eredo is one of Africa's largest ancient _____ works.





Map showing major archaeological sites in southern Nigeria.

Figure 5.1 Major archaeological sites of southern Nigeria.

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. What is Igbo-Ukwu famous for?
2. Where is Iwo Eleru located?
3. What type of archaeological feature is Sungbo's Eredo?
4. Iwo Eleru provides evidence of prehistoric human _____.
5. Why is Igbo-Ukwu significant in Nigerian archaeology?

5.3 The Nok Culture and Central Nigerian Archaeology

5.3.1 Discovery and Distribution of the Nok Culture

The Nok Culture was first discovered during tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau and remains one of Africa's earliest archaeological cultures.

Fill in the blank: The Nok Culture was discovered during _____ mining activities.



5.3.2 Nok Terracotta Tradition

The Nok people are widely known for their terracotta sculptures, which demonstrate remarkable artistic sophistication.

Fill in the blank: The Nok Culture is renowned for its terracotta _____.

5.3.3 Archaeological Significance of Nok Sites

Archaeological investigations have shown that Nok communities practised early iron smelting and agriculture.

Fill in the blank: Nok communities practised early _____ smelting technologies.

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. How was the Nok Culture discovered?
2. What artistic tradition is associated with the Nok Culture?
3. Name one technological development associated with the Nok people.
4. The Nok Culture is famous for its terracotta _____.
5. Why is the Nok Culture important in African archaeology?

5.4 Early Urban and Historical Archaeological Centres

5.4.1 Ile-Ife and Early Urban Development

Ile-Ife is regarded as an important centre of early urbanisation and artistic excellence in Nigeria. Archaeological discoveries at the site have enhanced our understanding of Yoruba civilisation.

Fill in the blank: Ile-Ife is renowned for its artistic and _____ achievements.

5.4.2 Benin and Its Archaeological Heritage



The Benin Kingdom is famous for its bronze artworks, palace architecture, and extensive earthworks that reflect its political and technological sophistication.

Fill in the blank: Benin is famous for its bronze artworks and ancient _____.

5.4.3 Old Oyo and Political Complexity

Old Oyo represents an important archaeological centre for understanding state formation and political organisation in precolonial Nigeria.

Fill in the blank: Old Oyo provides insights into precolonial _____ formation.

[Insert Table Here]

- Short description: Comparative table of major archaeological centres and their archaeological significance.
- Caption: Table 5.1 Major archaeological centres in Nigeria and their notable discoveries.
- AI prompt suggestion: *Create a comparative table showing Nok, Ile-Ife, Benin, Igbo-Ukwu, and Old Oyo.*
- Search string: *Major archaeological centres in Nigeria OER.*

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. What is Ile-Ife renowned for?
2. What are the Benin Walls?
3. Which archaeological centre is associated with the Oyo Empire?
4. Old Oyo provides insights into precolonial _____ formation.
5. Why is Benin important in Nigerian archaeology?

5.5 Heritage Management and Archaeological Significance

5.5.1 Preservation of Archaeological Sites in Nigeria



Archaeological preservation involves protecting cultural resources from environmental degradation, urban development, and illegal excavations.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological preservation protects cultural _____.

5.5.2 Challenges in Heritage Management

Heritage management in Nigeria faces challenges such as looting, inadequate funding, and illegal antiquities trade.

Fill in the blank: Illegal antiquities _____ pose significant challenges to heritage management.

5.5.3 Importance of Archaeological Sites to Nigerian History

Archaeological sites contribute significantly to historical reconstruction, cultural preservation, tourism, and national identity.

Fill in the blank: Archaeological sites contribute significantly to national _____.

Pilot Questions 5.5

1. What is archaeological preservation?
2. State two challenges facing heritage management in Nigeria.
3. Why are archaeological sites important to Nigerian history?
4. Archaeological sites contribute significantly to national _____.
5. Mention one benefit of archaeological tourism.



Series Summary

This Series has examined the major archaeological sites of Nigeria and their significance in understanding the country's cultural and historical development. We discussed important archaeological sites in northern and southern Nigeria, the Nok Culture and its terracotta traditions, early urban centres such as Ile-Ife, Benin, and Old Oyo, and contemporary issues relating to archaeological heritage management.

By studying these sites, you should now be able to identify major Nigerian archaeological centres, explain their archaeological significance, discuss their contributions to Nigerian history, and evaluate challenges associated with heritage preservation and management.

Glossary of Terms

- Archaeological heritage
- Cultural preservation
- Daima
- Heritage management
- Igbo-Ukwu
- Iwo Eleru
- Nok Culture
- Old Oyo
- Sungbo's Eredo
- Urbanisation

Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. The Nok Culture was discovered during _____ mining activities.
2. Igbo-Ukwu is famous for its bronze _____.
3. Benin is renowned for its bronze artworks and ancient _____.
4. Archaeological preservation protects cultural _____.
5. Archaeological sites contribute significantly to national _____.

Short-Answer Questions

1. Explain the archaeological significance of Igbo-Ukwu.



2. Describe one contribution of the Nok Culture to Nigerian archaeology.
3. State two challenges facing archaeological heritage management in Nigeria.
4. Explain the significance of Old Oyo in Nigerian history.
5. Identify one benefit of archaeological tourism.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the contributions of major archaeological sites to the reconstruction of Nigerian history.
2. Evaluate the challenges associated with preserving archaeological heritage in Nigeria and suggest possible solutions.

Answers to Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. Tin.
2. Artefacts.
3. Earthworks.
4. Resources.
5. Identity.

Short-Answer Questions

1. Igbo-Ukwu demonstrates advanced bronze-casting and metalworking technology.
2. The Nok Culture provides evidence of early terracotta traditions and iron-smelting technologies.
3. Looting and inadequate funding.
4. It provides evidence of political organisation and state formation in precolonial Nigeria.
5. Archaeological tourism promotes education and economic development.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Major archaeological sites preserve evidence of technological, cultural, and political developments that help reconstruct Nigerian history.
2. Heritage preservation in Nigeria faces challenges such as looting, inadequate funding, and illegal antiquities trade. Solutions include stronger heritage policies, public awareness programmes, and improved institutional support.



Answers to Pilot Questions

Part 5.1

1. The Chad Basin of northeastern Nigeria.
2. Prehistoric rock paintings.
3. Evidence of early farming and human occupation.
4. Settlements.
5. They help reconstruct the history of ancient societies.

Part 5.2

1. Sophisticated bronze artefacts.
2. Ondo State.
3. Ancient earthwork.
4. Occupation.
5. It demonstrates advanced metalworking technology.

Part 5.3

1. During tin mining activities.
2. Terracotta sculptures.
3. Iron smelting.
4. Sculptures.
5. It is one of Africa's earliest archaeological cultures.

Part 5.4

1. Artistic and urban achievements.
2. Ancient defensive earthworks of the Benin Kingdom.
3. Old Oyo.
4. State.
5. It reflects political and technological sophistication.

Part 5.5

1. The protection of archaeological resources and cultural heritage.
2. Looting and illegal antiquities trade.
3. They preserve evidence of Nigeria's cultural and historical development.
4. Identity.
5. Promotion of cultural tourism and education.



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References and Attributions 5

General References

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- Breunig, P. (2014). *Nok: African Sculpture in Archaeological Context*. Africa Magna Verlag.
- Connah, G. (2001). *African Civilizations: An Archaeological Perspective* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Shaw, T. (1978). *Nigeria: Its Archaeology and Early History*. Thames and Hudson.

Illustrations

- Figure 5.1 Major archaeological sites of southern Nigeria.
- Table 5.1 Major archaeological centres in Nigeria and their notable discoveries.

Open Educational Resources (OERs)

- Archaeology Data Service (ADS).
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
- Internet Archaeology Journal.

