

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON COLONIAL HERITAGE IN FASKARI TOWN, KATSINA STATE: A PRELIMINARY FIELD SURVEY

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## Abstract

*This article presents a preliminary report of archaeological research on Faskari abandoned settlement to document evidence of colonial activities there. The old town of Faskari in Katsina state, Northern Nigeria witnessed colonial activities which are presently discerned through ruins of relics that include a law court, prison, veterinary clinic and a trading store, among others. These relics point to the existence of an administrative structure that impacted the people in diverse ways. Ethnographic investigations and oral interviews with informants including those who claimed to have witnessed the colonial era in Faskari were used in the research that has aided the archaeological study of the relics. The article demonstrates an interesting case of colonial history and heritage in Northern Nigeria from an archaeological perspective.*

**Keywords:** Colonialism and Archaeological relics

## Introduction

Faskari is one of the old settlements in Katsina whose origin can be traced to as early as the fifteenth century AD (Usman, 1981: 47). It is located in the Southwestern part of Katsina State and is bordered to the West by Kogo Forest Reserve; to the North by Zamfara State; to the South by Funtua Local Government Area and to the East by Kankara Local Government Area of Katsina State.

Archaeological and historical research carried out in the area have revealed evidence of urbanizations, waves of migration into the Faskari area and colonial domination which are discerned through the ruins of relics that include remains of dye pits, house foundations, defensive walls, shrines as well as colonial buildings. While a lot has been said about some of these relics concerning urbanization and the character of these settlements in the Faskari Area (Aliyu, 2005), not much is written on colonial socio-political and economic activities in the area despite the visible presence of colonial structures. This chapter presents some archaeological evidence of colonial activity in Faskari in the light of oral traditions and written records and colonial buildings in the Faskari area.

The study gives a preliminary report on the archaeological research conducted at Faskari from June 1 to 13, 2015, under the aegis of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria's Department of Archaeology.

**Environmental Setting**

Faskari is located about 10 kilometers off Funtua-Gusau road west of Yankara town. Faskari is presently the headquarters of Faskari local government area. The territorial extent of the area has changed over time. Before the colonial period, the area was under the territory of *Galadiman Katsina* as part of Southern Katsina. Faskari is located within the Sudan savannah. The climate and vegetation of the area are that of the Northern Guinea Savanna, with a mean rainfall value of about 700 millimeters which is concentrated between May to September (Aliyu 2005).

The site lies in an area invaded by distinct air masses, affecting the climate and weather. One coming from the north is the dry and continental origin, it is called the Sahara air mass. The other air mass is from the Atlantic in the south; it is most, cool and equatorial maritime, the climate depends mostly on the air masses which covers the area (Udo 1970).

The area is underlain by igneous and metamorphic rocks widely referred to as the Precambrian basement complex. It is deeply dissected and ridged extending over the whole southern part of Katsina state. It has been postulated that there was an uplift in the late Pliocene to early Pleistocene along two axes, one running south-southwest to north-east between Katsina and Kano and the other running north-northwest to south-southeast from Funtua to Jos (Udo, 1970).

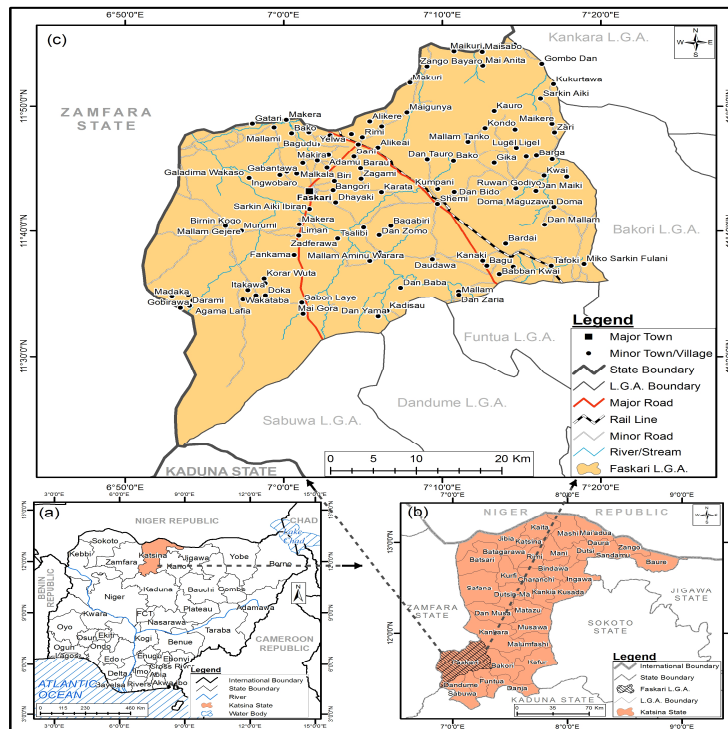


Figure 1: Maps of the study Area: a) Katsina State, b) Faskari L.G.A. in Katsina State, c) Towns/Villages in Faskari L.G.A. Source: Modified from the Administrative Maps of Nigeria, Katsina State and Faskari L.G.A.

## Literature Review

The colonial relics around have not been archaeologically explored. Only two research works on the history of sites and archaeological relics have been undertaken in the area to date. The first was on the social and economic history of Faskari at which the area was regarded as an important centre of Katsina Kingdom before the Jihad era (Suleiman 2004). The second was a PhD thesis on historical sites around the Faskari and Birnin Kogo area where an archaeological survey and excavation were conducted (Aliyu, 2005). The first work was mainly historical and placed the area among the earliest centre of human habitation in Katsina, while the second was Archaeological but centered mainly on the abandoned settlements of Faskari and Birnin Kogo.

Old Faskari was first occupied by Hausa people, who were called *Maguzawa*. They were non-Muslim who practised the religion of the *Iskoki* and *Magiro* traditional cult (Aliyu, 2008). They originally lived in caves around the Inselberg that characterized the vicinity of old Faskari town and they were predominantly farmers (Suleiman, 2004).

Old Faskari is located about 2 kilometres Northwest of present-day Faskari town. The site is situated beside the rocky hills along the old Faskari - Sokoto road. There is evidence of defensive walls, remains of dye pits, colonial buildings and scattered potsherds. Old Faskari was first occupied by the *Maguzawa*. They are originally Hausa who professed traditional beliefs on the *Magiro* and *Iskoki* worship. They originally lived in caves of the inselbergs that characterized the vicinity of the Faskari area (Suleiman, 2004).

It is not known when the site was first settled in the past. According to oral tradition, the name Faskari was derived from the Hausa word '*Mafaskara*' meaning a slaughter site for hunters and was occupied mainly by the *Maguzawa* in its early stage. A group of migrants of *Gobirawa* from *Birnin Alkalawa* under the leadership of *Wari*, *Kido* and *Danyabani* settled in the area around 1778 (Pers. comm., Garba, 2015)

Another tradition traced the history of Faskari to Bare-bari who first settled at *Birnin Kogo*, they migrated from the Kanem-Bornu Empire. The descendants of these groups are still present in Faskari today and are referred to as the '*Kogowa*' people of Kogo. There is also another tradition that traces the origin of Faskari from a group of migrants from Katsina, who settled in the area due to vast arable land and grazing area (Pers. comm., Garba, 2015)

In the early stage of its development, political authority in Faskari is vested around the *Gida* (House) with *Maigida* (Head of the household) as the overall head. The inhabitants of Faskari lived in independent family groups and clans. With the arrival of migrants and a diversified economy, these family groups fused to form *Unguwa* (ward) that led to the formation of a large village (Kauye). Political Authority was then shifted from '*Maigida*' to '*Mai Unguwa*' (Village Head) and from there a town developed usually under the '*Masu-Gari*'.

The 'Masu Gari' represents a dominant force of political authority in the area. They seem to have emerged as part of political changes associated with the growth of permanent agriculture, craft and local industries. But another tradition in the history of the political evolution of Faskari traced its origin to religious worshipping around inselbergs associated with *Iskoki*. The 'Dutsen Magodiya' Magodiya rock and some specific Boabab trees were used for this purpose.

Agriculture is the main occupation in Faskari; other occupation in the area includes local crafts, such as leatherwork, wood carving, textile manufacture, pottery making, blacksmithing, smelting, weaving, dyeing and long-distance trade.

### **The Coming of Europeans and Colonialism in Faskari**

The Royal Niger Company was the chartered company that open up economic activities in Northern Nigeria. Up to the advent of colonial conquest, the British interest had been protected by the chartered company and its consults. The first European incursion in Katsina Emirate took place in March 1902 when a force of the British infantry captured the Emir of Kontagora Ibrahim Mai Sudan outside the Northern gate of Maska. By 1903, the British had conquered the city of Katsina.

From 1903 onward a lot of organization and re-organization took place that changes the political landscape of the area. Territorial chiefs were relegated to mere tax collectors under Districts Officers who are under the Resident at Katsina. By 1923, with the construction of a new railway line from Zaria to Kauran-Namoda and the station of the British Cotton Growers Association at Funtua and Daudawa Village in Faskari District, Faskari was fully annexed into the colonial economy.

### **Archaeological Relics of Colonialism in Faskari**

The method adopted in this research is two-fold: this includes a desktop review and consultation of written sources in libraries and archaeological investigation. Oral interviews were collected from informants that include those who testified to have witnessed the colonial era in Faskari. The archaeological reconnaissance on the other hand involved walking around abandoned settlements with the help of local field guides. Also, a Global Positioning System (GPS) was used to take the spatial representation of the relics of colonial buildings found on the site.

The archaeological reconnaissance was conducted to generally identify, and document finds and features of archaeological interest including the colonial relics. The reconnaissance was conducted on foot with a hand-held GPS, tapes, range pole and cameras. The vicinity surrounding the site is characterized by inselbergs like *Tandama*, *Fikaci*, *Gwauro* and *Magodiya*.

## Research Findings

The following became evident from a preliminary investigation of the abandoned settlement:

### a- Courts

This is located near the old Funtua-Sokoto Road. The building is made up of stones and bricks and has a character of typical colonial buildings. According to oral information, the court was the main centre of resolving political and economic disputes. The English common laws and Islamic penal system were usually administered to resolve conflicts. Instead of the various 'Masu Gari' village head political later becomes vested in the hands of the *Alkalai* (Judges) who were appointed by colonial officers.



**Plate 1:** Dilapidated Court building

### b- Prison cells

The second building near the court is a prison cell. This is divided into two rooms and was believed to be cells for males and females, people are locked-up in the cell if they avert taxes and refuse to obey colonial ordinances and laws. The structure depicts how convicts were housed based on their gender. According to our informant, another pillar was built in front of the jail cell where convicts are punished.



**Plate2:** Prison Cells (for men and women)



**Plate 3:** A Pillar Within the Prison Yard

**c- Veterinary clinic**

This is located at the outskirts of the ancient, abandoned settlement; an inscription on the structure shows that it was constructed in 1938. According to our interviewees, there was no human clinic throughout the colonial era.



**Plate 4:** Veterinary Clinic

**d- Trading stores**

Near the old Funtua-Sokoto road stood a large and well-fortified trade shop. It was owned by the United Africa Company (UAC), and according to our sources, it was the first store to open in the Southern Katsina Area. Items sold in the area include insecticides, pesticides, improved seeds and other luxury goods. Later the colonial government established the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) branch at Funtua and Daudawa in 1928.



**Plate 5:** United Africa Company trading store

### **Discussion of Findings**

The primary intent of this paper is to report the present conditional state of the colonial structures identified during our research at Faskari. The archaeological relics identified about colonial activities in Faskari indicate the presence of Europeans and their economic intent in remote areas of Hausaland. Colonial records hardly reveal the violent activities, trading and economic exploitation mounted on the inhabitants of such areas. But our oral informants who claimed to have witnessed the colonial era vividly revealed the impact of colonialism on the inhabitants of Faskari.

With the conquest of Katsina in 1903, the entire emirate came under the British overrule, new political structures were established such as the Native Authority, Native Courts, Treasury, Veterinary clinics and trading stores. This changes the political, economic and social system of the entire emirate in general and Faskari in particular.

### **Conclusion**

The preliminary results from this ongoing research offer a tentative argument that the activities of the Europeans and colonial officers have impacted greatly on the people of Faskari in diverse ways. Their past activities have left traces on the landscape that can teach us a lot about how these individuals conducted themselves. This research is novel in the Faskari Area, and if sustained, it will provide some insight into the area's colonial history and legacy. It is the view of this author that these colonial relics need to be preserved and protected so that the history of the period will still be remembered by our people. It can also form an important resource for tourism development in the area and Katsina state in general. Further research on these colonial structures in Faskari and British Cotton Ginnery Authority Station at Daudawa will add more knowledge to our understanding of the colonial history in the Southern Katsina Area. The Faskari area is currently under security threats of banditry and kidnapping, Government agencies at all levels need to intensify effort in protecting our cultural heritage for posterity.

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**List of Informants**

1. Alh. Usman Saidu, District Head of Faskari, Aged 75yrs.
2. Alh. Lawal Garba, Village Head of Faskari, Aged 70yrs.
3. Mal. Muhammadu Mai Tukunya, Potter, Aged 60yrs.
4. Mal. Muhammadu Makeri, Blacksmiths, Aged 60yrs.
5. Alh. Abubakar Lado, Farmer, Aged, 65yrs.