

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF GENDER AMONG THE EARLY INHABITANTS OF BADURUM SETTLEMENT, KAURU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Gender as a concept emanated from the western world and has gradually grown in scope and as a discipline and is now being imported into the African continent. Gender roles vary from one society to another, and so, stereotyping the concept or imposing a society's idea of the concept on another society by way of generalization could have negative impacts on the latter. This, therefore, calls for an independent study of gender roles of individual societies in a bid to understand the various contributions of both male and female genders in the socio-cultural development of that society. In light of the above, this paper aimed to examine the nature of gender roles and their impact on the settlement of the early inhabitants of Badurum site. This was done by studying markers of gender on the site by way of gender attribution in corroboration with oral and ethnographic data, through archaeological and ethnographic surveys of the site and potters in Fadan Chawai respectively, as well as a collection of oral tradition from inhabitants of Badurum Sama and Badurum Kasa. The study has shown that the people under study had operated a patriarchal society and developed a gender structure that had its effects on their craft, settlement pattern, politics (etc.). This phenomenon experienced some level of modification due to intrusions of external religions, cultures and governments. The people developed a gender structure to help them effectively run the society to make it stable and protect it from potential external threats.

Keywords: Gender, Badurum, Gender attribution, Contextual and spatial analysis.

Introduction

The site of Badurum, like any other community, consisted of both males and females of varied age grades living together, who must have shared specific obligations. The existence of artifacts on the researched site demonstrates such divisions of labour among the inhabitants. Gender representation in the archaeological record is a product of cultural constructs

that are very varied both temporally and spatially (Silverblatt, 1995 cf. Gilchrist, 1999; Sørensen, 2019).

Gender has been defined and explained in many ways by different scholars, most of which suit the West where it emerged: the concept reflects the situation in the West, in a bid to address gender-related issues that were prevalent in that region. These gender-related issues are part of the social discrimination that was occurring in certain western homes. As put by Oyewumi (2004), "...the architecture and furnishings of gender research have by and large been distilled from European and American experiences." Overtime, the notion evolved into a discipline known as gender studies, which sought to address gender issues prominent in European and American societies. Gender studies are gradually becoming a global phenomenon, as it is being imported into other regions, including the African continent. Gender, as coined in Europe, cannot be applied in Africa, this is because of the African tradition which is in every way different from what is obtainable in the West (Amelia, 2014:4; Sørensen, 2019), and if forcefully applied on the African continent, the African societal tradition will eventually deface. As a result, the universalization or cross-cultural generalizations of gender is deemed largely inappropriate. Although gender studies are an import in the African continent, it must be adapted to suit the African people or cultural situation. Gender appears to be unique in Africa and as such, it must be treated differently. The prevalence of 'female spouses' in some African traditional communities is one of several reasons that advocate for an Africanist understanding of the idea of gender (Oyewumi, 2004).

According to Kisian'ani (2004), "gender studies represent a body of debates, which interrogate the various ways that identities of masculinity and femininity have influenced patterns of human life." Gender also has to do with the cultural attachments to males and females in any given society. It also "refers to one of several culturally constructed categories of difference that cross-cut human groups based on perceived biological, racial, class, and ethnic characteristics" (Hill, 1998). It is a socio-cultural construct: an expression of social practice and belief about sexual differences (Oyewumi, 2004; Gilchrist, 1999). Traditional archaeological interpretations of the past could best be described as being mostly androcentric, thereby neglecting the active roles that women played in shaping past cultures (Engelstad, 2007). Gender archaeology, therefore, becomes an important branch of archaeology, as it tries to strike balance in the archaeological narration of the past.

Two major factors determine gender roles and responsibilities: religion or belief system and the culture of the people. For this cause, gender roles and responsibilities within the African continent vary from one geographical location or society to another, and at the same time more pronounced in some societies than others.

Gender is quite difficult to unearth in any archaeological research, one of the reasons for this is because there is no universal model for studying engendered cultural objects. Archaeologists, therefore, augment the markers

of gender on the archaeological site with oral tradition and ethnography, as well as documented sources to have an understanding of the nature of gender roles and responsibilities as they used to be in the past. It should be noted that the afore-mentioned sources have inherent limitations in trying to understand gender roles and responsibilities in any society. This is because the culture of a given society is not static, as it could be influenced by that of other societies. Thus, the sources may provide data that represent a period that conflict with the archaeological data in hand.

Research Objective

This research is aimed at studying the nature of gender roles and their impact on the settlement of the early inhabitants of Badurum archaeological site. A study of this nature is important seeing that gender is a product of cultural construction, which is in itself dynamic. By implication, gender roles and responsibilities are equally non-static as a result, gender related traditions could eventually be lost if not studied and documented.

Research Methodology

To effectively prosecute the study, an archaeological survey method was adopted in the Badurum archaeological site to identify and map available gender markers as shown in figure 2. An ethnographic survey on pottery making in the present-day Fadan Chawai was carried out in order to have an understanding of how gender roles and responsibilities played out in this area of craft among the early inhabitants. This was achieved through participant observation and the use of unstructured interview for the potters.

Also, informants from present-day Badurum Sama and Badurum Kasa were interviewed for the collection of oral tradition. The key informant method of the interview was adopted for 20 informants cutting across age-grades, gender and social status in the society.

Location of the Study Area

The site of Badurum (also spelt as Baduru) was inhabited by a group of Atsam speaking population, which comprised several groups of people who are said to have individually migrated from other places, both far and near, to occupy the site. The site is located on a hilly terrain, on 9° 54' 04.3" N and 8° 35' 28.8" E, in the present-day Atsam (Chawai in the Hausa dialect) area, Kauru Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State, Nigeria (Figure 1). The site of Badurum being one of the villages that constituted the Atsam is bounded by Gyi-pankan (Fadan Chawai) to the north, Maizanko (Damakasuwa) and Gyi-rivu (Zambina) to the northwest, Gyi-tinbang (Izam) to the south, and Irigwe (Miango in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State) to the east (Ali, 2014). Figure 1 below is a visual representation of the location of the site.

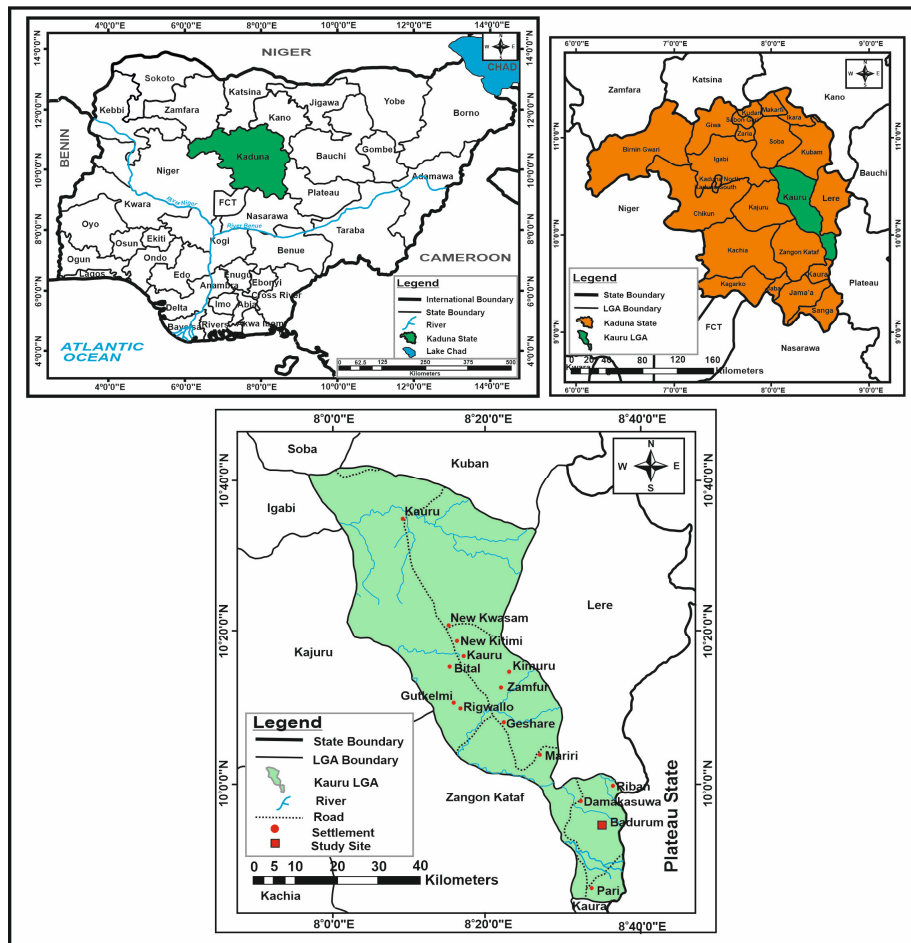


Figure 1: Maps Depicting the Location of the Badurum Site

Source: Adapted from the Administrative Maps of Nigeria, Kaduna State and Kauru L.G.A.

Presentation of Findings

The archaeological survey of the site of Badurum has revealed a number of cultural materials that have survived through time, ranging from potsherds, lower grinding stones, a monolith, burial mounds, among other artifacts. With respect to these cultural materials, the gender roles as identified in the course of this study are discussed under the following headings: spatial and contextual analysis, craft, burial practice, household activities and the socio-religious and political life of the people.

Socio-Religious and Political Spheres of the People’s Life

The socio-religious and political organization of Badurum is such that it gives preference to the men over the women. As a result, leadership roles in the community are considered to be best suited for the males, probably

because the society considers males to have what it takes to lead while women don't. This explains why the two major traditional leadership offices in the community had always been held by males till date. These traditional leadership offices are referred to as the *Res* and *Yekut*. Other leadership roles in the community were the clan heads and family heads, which were also held by males. The leadership structure is such that the family heads reported to the clan heads, while the clan heads answered to the *Yekut* who is responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the various Atsam villages (Nengel, *et al.*, 2002; Meek, 1931). The *Res-Tsam* on the other hand is the over-all leader of the Atsam, who is saddled with the responsibility of overseeing the political affairs of the Atsam people. The clan heads also serve as the elders of the Badurum settlement.

The system of succession of leadership in the Badurum community is based on age, that is, the eldest male in a family or clan assumes the office of the family head or the clan head respectively. In cases where it is a female that is the oldest, she is not given the respective leadership position, the eldest male is considered next in the line of succession and so takes over leadership (Ibrahim, 2018). The people believed that women are unable to lead, and so they were not allowed to become leaders: women were considered to be weak, and as such will not be able to conceal confidential information that must never be made known to neighbouring or rival communities. The people's attitude towards leadership has affected other spheres of their lives. One of such areas their attitude towards leadership has influenced is in the use of space; for the sake of concealing vital information that was considered to be confidential, certain spaces in the society had been engendered by the people.

Spatial and Contextual Analysis

Space is an important factor in the gender structure of some societies; it refers to certain areas within the society where men or women are either allowed or forbidden to be seen. In the case of the site of Badurum, there were certain locations where women were not allowed to go to. Oral tradition has identified four locations where women were not allowed to be seen. These areas include the area around the monolith, which is in association with a cluster of shallow rock hollows on a flat rock surface; the shrine, which is characterized by fragmented clay pots within a circular stone arrangement, in association with a cluster of stone balls and a lower grinding stone; the security structure which is characterized by a fragmented clay structure; and a meeting area which is characterized by a rock outcrop with a flat top and 21 rock hollows.

The spaces where the *Yekut* carried out his official duties in the community, were considered sacred and taboo for females to be found in such places, and so were not allowed to offer sacrifices on their own. Such places included the shrine where the *Yekut* carried out his official duties as the spiritual head of the people and his residence where he also conducted spiritual-related duties. The reasons why women were not considered fit to be

in such places are as stated above; they could easily give up confidential information to foreigners, more especially when they were given out for marriage to neighbouring or rival communities.

In cases where there was a need for a female in the community requiring certain rituals or sacrifices to be made in the shrine, her husband was to be in the shrine on her behalf. And in situations where the female was yet to get married, her father represented her at the shrine. The people had to make sure that activities that were carried out by the *Yekut* were not made known to females in the society for any reason whatsoever. It is noteworthy to state that there were exceptional cases where it was inevitable for the females to approach the *Yekut* in person, and not by proxy. To remedy such occurrences, the people made a provision, a ritual mound, which served as an extension of the shrine to accommodate women and children alike, to be attended to in matters such as healing of diseases, infertility problems, among others.

The monolith on the site is symbolic of spirituality, unity, social stratification, manhood, as well as leadership among the early inhabitants of the site (Ibrahim, 2018). The people usually observed a feast, *Pyebi*, which was done to celebrate a hunter(s) who had successfully killed a leopard. The feast was observed to honour the hunter's victory and manhood in general, as a result only men partook in the feast. The game was prepared by men and the meat was eaten among them alone (Ali, 2014). By implication, if one was not initiated into manhood, he could not partake in such feasts. This also means that boys or infants who were still under the care of their mothers were not welcome to such events, probably because they are prone to relating confidential information to their mothers, which could defeat the main reason for excluding women from certain societal functions. Also, parts of the leopard that were not consumed by the people such as the skin was used as attire for the *Yekut* (Ibrahim, pers. comm., 2016; Meek, 1931).

Security-related activities were considered a reserve of males, as a result, the security post on the site was a prohibited area for females to be found around. The security structure is located on an elevated ground, on the southern part of the giant rock on the site. The feature is characterized by a clay structure, which served as a wall covering to a shelter on the rock. The feature was built for surveillance to check for intruders (Wayit, pers. comm., 2016).

Decision making that concerned the community as a whole was exclusively done by men in the community. The persons involved in this included the *Yekut* and the clan heads of the community. The place where such meetings were held is a flat-top rock outcrop, which is elevated to a height of 1.6m above the ground surface. The feature is associated with twenty-one rock hollows (Ibrahim, 2018). Meetings were conducted on this feature yearly, usually towards the end of every year which is marked by the harvest of grains. During such periods, reconciliations were usually made among the people in

cases of conflicts throughout the year. This was done to foster unity among the clan heads and their subjects.

The meetings were said to have been held in the evenings, and at such a time the *Yekut* roused 'spirits' who roamed through the entire settlement for reasons that have not been made clear by oral tradition. As a result of the spirits roaming about the settlement, women and children were prohibited to be outdoor. The woman or child who violated this rule could face unbearable consequences if they came in contact with the spirits (Wayit, pers. comm., 2016).

The relationship between the afore-mentioned twenty-one rock hollows and the meeting could not be established by oral information. It could however be that females in the community were only temporarily not allowed to come around the feature. That is, women only came around the meeting area and even made use of it to process grains in particular periods of the year when no meeting was been held, thereby making the meeting area a temporary engendered feature.

Figure 2 is a map of the site of Badurum depicting a graphic representation of the gender-space relationship among the early inhabitants of the site, thereby revealing how gender had modified the cultural landscape of Badurum. The dotted circles on the map represent the engendered spaces on the Badurum site.

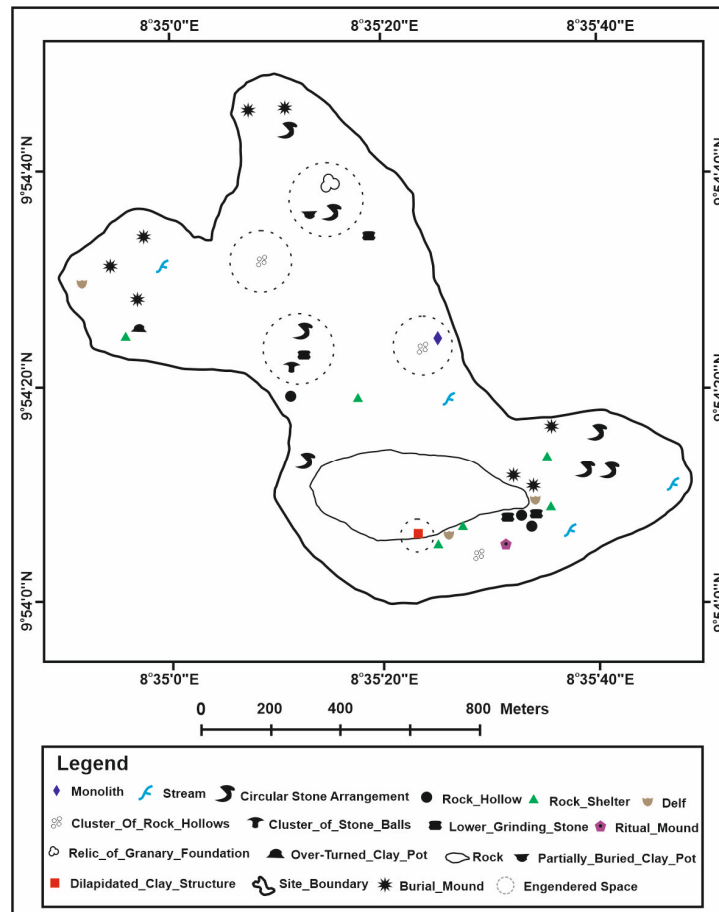


Figure 2: A Thematic Map of Badurum Site Depicting Engendered Spaces
Source: Field Work (2017).

The Household

The early inhabitants of Badurum considered the household to be the major domain of the females in the society. Such household activities included child-bearing, raising the little children, food preparation, among other activities. The women were required to educate the girls to be housekeepers, while the boys were taken to be later on schooled and initiated into manhood (Wayit, pers. comm., 2016). By implication, unlike the girls, the boys were trained to become potential leaders. Since food processing was strictly a female activity, most artefacts on the site that suggest this activity must have been used by women in society. Such artefacts include grinding stones, rock hollows and potsherds, with exceptions as seen in the spatial and contextual analysis of the site; males also made use of clay pots, rock hollows and grinding stones to execute non-domestic related activities as earlier stated.

In the area of farming activities, there was usually a division of labour between both genders of a family: the family head and boys who are above

teenage handled the more difficult aspects of farming activities. These activities included bush clearing, ridge making, weeding and transporting crops from the farm to the home, while the wife or wives and daughters who may or may not have passed teenage stage engaged in less laborious activities such as planting, meanwhile harvesting of crops was done by both genders. This is also borne out of the notion that males are better capable of performing hard tasks than girls.

Craft

Gender among the inhabitants had also affected 'who manufactures what' to be utilized in their day-to-day activities in society. This is reflected in the area of pottery manufacture and stone working. Stone-working was considered the job of males in the community, due to the high level of technicality involved in carving out grinding stones. Pottery making on the other hand was more or less a craft that involved both males and females. Fadan Chawai, as at the time of the study, is the only place where pottery production is carried out in the whole of Atsam. The potters claimed that males alongside females were involved in pottery making, and potsherds that were products of male potters were identified through the kind of decorative motifs on the sherds (Musa, pers. Comm., 2016).

The involvement of both males and females in the craft was due to the intended function the vessel was meant to serve household earthen-wares were manufactured by females, while vessels meant for ritual purposes were made by male potters. As a result, the form and decorations on the vessels were usually distinctive. During analyses of potsherds from the site, it was discovered that the male-manufactured vessels were less in quantity compared with those made by females. This could imply that there were more female potters than there were male potters in the community, due to the probable high demand for domestic wares compared with non-domestic wares.

Burial Practice

The male-biased political system of the people has also to an extent affected their burial practice. The burial practice of the people of Badurum, beyond just being a pointer to social stratification, is another area of culture that the people have engendered due to politics. The same method of burial is done for all deceased members of the society: the burial pits are dug in the form of an inverted 'T' (Ibrahim, 2018). There is however a twist to the mode of burying the chiefs and clan-heads. The burial pits of noble persons in the society are continually reused so that a newly deceased noble is buried in the same burial pit as his predecessor. For this reason, only the burial mounds of nobles (males) were visible at the time of surveying the site, and they are said to be still functional up to date (Wayit, pers. Comm., 2016).

Both genders were claimed to have used division of labour throughout the people's burial ritual (Yerima, pers. comm., 2016). Males were considered

to be stronger and more resilient, and so they were assigned the responsibility of digging the burial trenches in which deceased members of society were to be interred. Also, the internment was done by male youths. Males were equally responsible for executing various burial rites, such as blowing a special musical instrument and chanting incantations to invite spirits into the deceased, causing the body to vibrate. Afterwards, the corpse will be wrapped in leaves to be interned (Ibrahim, pers, comm., 2016). The women would sing songs and dance in procession and spray grains along their path to the burial site, while musical instruments were being played (Musa, pers. Comm., 2016). All of these are done as a rite of passage.

Discussion

From the foregoing, it is clear to see that the culture of the early inhabitants of Badurum projected the males over the females, thereby making it a patriarchal society. As a result, the male was presented to be stronger and made to be at the front-burner of societal affairs, while the female was considered to be weaker and so, more or less occupied a supportive position in the society and was relegated more to a domestic lifestyle.

Although the level of male-female representation in the present-day communities (Badurum Sama and Badurum Kasa) that descended from the early Badurum site has changed to some extent, due to certain socio-cultural, religious and political infiltrations that have successfully modified the tradition of gender relations of the people (Nengel, *et al.*, 2002). Such elements that have impregnated the early Badurum society include foreign religions, external cultures due to inter-marriages and trade, influences of colonial and state governments, among others, which have had effects on the local culture and tradition of the people in general. These external elements have succeeded in changing the world view of the people, as well as abolishing some of the cultures of the people. As a result, certain areas of male dominance have experienced a lesser level of significance compared to how they used to be in the past.

Gender roles and responsibilities that were identified from the study can be seen as a product of the level of social development that the people were able to attain in the past. The socio-cultural construct of gender roles also reflects the political structure of the people.

Societies, both past and present, are built on the strength of information/knowledge. Thus, the more information society can acquire and/or conceal, the more advantage it stands to have over another (Carnegie, 2021). In the same way, the early inhabitants of the site of Badurum were able to design a social system that attempted to prevent the transfer of their secrets to their neighbours (Ibrahim, 2018), thereby justifying the gender construction that is seen among them, as indicated by this study. Thus, this has made them maintain some level of political relevance and sovereignty between them and their neighbours.

Conclusion

The early inhabitants of Badurum had been able to structure their society in a particular manner due to their world perception, and how they deemed it fit to run the society. This cultural design of gender has no doubt helped in shaping their daily affairs. The gender construction might not have necessarily undermined the role of women in the society, it probably defined roles and responsibilities of men and women to ensure an organized and structured society as well as to avoid duplication of responsibilities or clashes of interests, based on biology and/or past social experiences. This construction was well established to an extent that its effect was felt in virtually all aspects of the society, including their settlement pattern, agricultural practice, mortuary practice, leadership and politics, family and spiritual lifestyle, among others.

Although the gender construction of the people might have proven to be effective in running the society in the past, certain elements such as foreign socio-cultural, socio-religious and socio-political elements, as earlier discussed, have brought about changes in the cultural perceptions of the people that have either abolished or lessened effects of their gender construction. It is important to note that the early inhabitants of Badurum had developed this kind of gender structure out of necessity to protect the society from external potential threats from neighbours, and to establish a well-structured social, religious and political society.

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