Terracotta sculptures from Northwestern Nigeria, better known to the art world as Katsina and Sokoto sculptures, have been victims of massive plundering. As is usually the case in such situations, they have been denuded of primary information. In an attempt to ameliorate this pathetic situation, the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments embarked on archaeological investigations at sites that were hoped could still yield some information in Katsina State in the year 2000. Several local government areas were investigated, including the Kankara Local Government.

**Tsunkwui**

The site (11°31’N and 70°31’E) is sandwiched between two hills north of Tsunkwui village. This general area possibly served as a settlement site probably for defensive reasons. Prominent trees around the site include *Tamarindus indica, Parkia biglobosa, Balanites aegyptiaca* and *Acacia ataxacanth*. The undergrowth is mainly shrubs like *Lanea leocarpa* and several types of grasses.

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing sites mentioned in the text.
Figure 2. Terracotta sculpture in situ.

Figure 3. Closeup of terracotta sculpture.
A 2 m² square was chosen because of its strategic location in the midst of the disturbed areas to determine whether objects of archaeological interest can still be recovered in the already ravaged area. Digging was done in 10 cm spits. The excavation was conducted down to 2 m below the datum point. Five stratigraphic layers were observed, and their description is based on the eastern wall. Layer 1, from 0 to 40 cm, consists of coarse soil mixed with decomposing pebbles with a lot of archaeological material. The color is grayish. Layer 2, from 40 to 80 cm, is composed of a grayish, archaeologically sterile, gravelly sandy deposit. Layer 3, from 80 to 110/120 cm, is composed of a dark brown sandy deposit. It contained some potsherds which could be intrusive. Layer 4, from 120/130 to 170/180 cm, is a reddish brown fine sand layer which contained the terracotta and associated materials. Layer 5, from 180 to 200 cm, is composed of reddish fine sand, and is archaeologically sterile. A small terracotta head was discovered at 164 cm below the surface in a position that suggested concealment beneath a stone arrangement, which I refer to as the primary contact of abandonment.

**Dating**

A charcoal sample was recovered at the same spit level where the terracotta was found. The charcoal sample UtC 13298 returned a date of 3,337 ± 39 BP. This date is very exciting. Though more dates will be required to confirm or refute this, it makes it possible that the Northwestern terracotta traditions could be possible antecedents to the better known Nok sculptures. This date suggests that more work should be carried out in this region, and it is therefore gratifying that Professor Peter Breunig of J. W. Goethe Universität, Frankfurt, Germany, has started supporting this project.

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