



ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of women on the economic development of Pottery Arts in Ura community. The research focuses on various acts of violence committed by criminal groups such as kidnapping, cattle theft, and village attacks, and presents evidence that these activities have a damaging impact on socio-economic indices in the community. The study results show that banditry causes a decline in the average per capita income of the community, undermines human dignity among women, and disrupts food security. The

THE ROLE OF WOMEN ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF POTTERY ARTS OF URA COMMUNITY, KWANGWOMA DISTRICTS OF RAFI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGER STATE

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Introduction

For over one thousand years, ceramic pottery arts had been part of human cultural history which is evident in historical places all over the world. Up till now, it is still being widely practiced and used by many people of various ethnic nationalities. Both pottery and ceramics are general terms used to describe objects which have been moulded, formed, hardened by firing and decorated or glazed to make a durable water proof materials or containers with dense quality. Ceramic pottery is a type of containers or material made out of clay. Clay is a natural material created by weathered rock. It is usually soft, malleable and permanently hardened if backed or fired at high temperature to make a practical object for domestic use or as table wares. The oldest kind of ceramic is pottery which was an ancient handcraft that is found in most communities in Nigeria, handed down from generation to generation.

There are so many ethnic groups or communities that are identified with the art of traditional ceramic pottery in Nigeria; prominent among these are: Ushafa community in Bwari area council of F.C.T, Abuja. The popular Ushafa cultural pottery centre is known for its unique pottery arts. Other earliest examples of pottery making center in Nigeria were found in Afikpo in Ebonyi state⁴, traditional pottery centre in Isan Ekiti with its artistic values



findings emphasize the importance of security in the socio-economic development of a region, and the need for serious efforts to address the problem of banditry in order to achieve sustainable progress and prosperity.

Keywords: Effect, Banditry, Development, North-West, Nigeria.

of traditional pot designs and production, Ilorin, the state capital of Kwara State is equally noted for its pottery arts, the Dade pottery centre which covers about an acre of land in Ilorin is the largest pottery centre. Abuja, Suleja have been regarded as the most significant hub of traditional pottery in Nigeria. Ladi Kwali (1925-1984), Nigeria famous ceramist who showed the world the beauty of a Nigeria's arts through intricately decorated earthen ware design is from this axis. There are other numerous pottery centres to mentioned in Nigeria. Outdoor pottery sculptures in Ile Ife, Owo, Afigiokwu, Igbira and Igaland. etc

It is very pertinent to note that, pottery arts is mostly or to some great extent the exclusive indigenous occupation among women folks. In all the pottery centres in Nigeria, hardly can you find men in pottery work. The Ura ethnic groups in Kwangoma district of Rafi Local Government area in Niger State happens to be one of the traditional pottery centers in Nigeria with high aesthetic values, but grossly neglected or not even mentioned in the pottery gallery of Nigeria's ceramic pottery industries. Evidence of archaic pottery industrial materials presently used by the current generations and the immediate past generations suggest that, pottery arts among the Ura people was as old as the people's existence in their ancient settlements in Tsugugu hills and Kurmaza as well as Kwangoma. But lack of proper archaeological relics material culture used by their ancestors due to absence of excavation in the area, was responsible for the neglect and outright exclusion of the Ura people as potential ceramic pottery arts makers in the country⁹. However, this research work is aimed at bringing out the mastery of arts, superior quality of their traditional technology in pottery arts and cultural growth and development. Through the use of appropriate historical methodology, this research work will reveal and throw more light on the ingenuity and immense beauty and style of Ura ceramic pottery arts and its socio-economic benefits. Despite the destructive criticism that Ura people are primitive uneducated and of low social status, their pottery art has continued to triumph and recorded more patronage within the locality and beyond. It has sustained its relevance and existence for such a long period of time. Its main obstacle was exposure to the outside world of modern pottery arts gallery. Not much was known about their ceramic pottery work or even documented or recorded for national and international recognition.

However, Nigeria in general and Niger State in particular during the period under review was experiencing some Plethora of security challenges country had been under siege since the year 2000. Banditry, characterized by terrorism, cattle-rustling and kidnapping had become



the order of the day especially in Northern Nigeria. In 2005 the general insecurity in Niger State, was high particularly among the four Local Government areas of Rafi, Munya, Shiroro and Mariga. The waves of the security challenges in these areas was destroying the lives of the people and the economy of the area. Rafi Local Government as one of the worst Local Government affected by the bandits activities recorded a high degree death casualties, lost of properties, homes, animals and mass migration of people to other places. But the most devastating area affected in the Local Government area was Kwangoma District and the newly created Ura- Ringa District. The Incessant mayhem launched by the Fulani herdsmen which started as a mere clashes between the herdsmen and the farmers resulted into cattle theft and kidnapping. This long historic antecedence of herders/farmers clashes was as a result of grazing areas, painfully posed a great threat to the cooperate existence of Nigeria. Kidnapping of people for ransome, destruction of homes and properties, rapping, assassinations and killing of innocent people rendered all human efforts useless in these areas.

Ura ethnic groups were mostly affected in the area, because of the topography their settlements and villages which played an important role in the history of kidnapping in the area. The thick and densely rugged forest that cut across the entire areas from Birnin-Gwari to Pandogari, Alewa, Bassa and Erena, all passed through the Ura villages and their small settlements. These, thickly forest are the domicile of the miscreants and had provided a convenient hide out for their operation over the years. Their transit rough routes pass themselves through the main ancient cattle track routes from Zamfara to Birnin-Gwari, Pandogari, Allewa and Bassa areas. (Brutali) this main cattle track routes shared common boundry with my own farm along Birnin-Gwari-Lagos highway. My farm usually serves as a battle ground between the community vigilante groups and the bandits any time they are crossing from Zamfara to Niger State. All the Ura villages and their small settlement areas are located along this dangerous routes. As a result of this unfortunate situation, the community suffered very serious casualties that range from lost of lives, properties, animals, homes and above all their prestigious ceramic pottery arts. The producers and managers of the industry were dislodged the area. The sources of raw-materials became a no go area to the women potters. Production level went down and so also the supply this resulted in the prices going up as dealers of the pottery materials have to struggle between themselves for few products made available. The transporters, the dealers, the pot merchants and the producers were at lost due to the activities of the bandits.

The root cause of this act of banditry manifested itself in various dimensions. Basically, corruption and inequality in the distribution of wealth of the nation and lack of formulation and implementation of better policies to create employment among our youth was responsible to some great extent for the banditry activities¹⁰. Specifically, lack of proper education, poverty, poor socio-economic amenities and the gap between the have and have not are equally responsible for the ugly situation. However, the escalation of the problem was as a result of governments' poor responses to the security challenges due to inadequate manpower, poor welfare package to security personnel, inadequate training and retraining as well



as poor intelligence gathering mechanism. “The immediate cause of the current insurgency can as well be attributed to religious bigotry and the long standing farmers/herders conflicts coupled with the Fulani ethic loyalty, arrogance and wickedness.

Generally, banditry has brought about various degree of impact on the lives of not only the Ura ethnic groups and their pottery industry, but also the entire state and nation in general. Specifically, it brought about food security challenges, blocking of local trade routes, burning and raiding of homes, internally displaced people, cattle-theft, killing and kidnapping of people for the payment of ransome, complete economic short falls, ethnic rivalry etc¹².

Conceptual Framework

Ceramics:

Ceramic are made out of inorganic and non-material substance that becomes insoluble when heated at high-temperature e.g clay. A clay is a ceramic material, but there are other ceramic materials like glaze. A glaze is a thin, smooth shiny coating made of silica. Fluxis and alumina structural materials that are heated to become herdsman turn in to objects such as glass¹².

Pottery:

Pottery on the other hand is another form of ceramic but made out of clay only. A clear is a natural material or substance created by weathered rock. It is soft, malleable and will permanently hardened if backed or fired of high temperature make a container material like pots¹³.

Both pottery and ceramic and general term that describe objects which have been formed through molding, firing, baking or heated to become hardened and turn into objects such as pots or glass for domestic use as table wares or instruments and are often decorated. They are one and the same, but ceramics have a broader range of products. This is because it is not just made out of clay. There are other forms of ceramic such a glaze. However, all clays are ceramic and pottery is limited only to making pots

There are certain characteristics that differentiate between ceramics and pottery.

1. Ceramics are not only made by clay but also other materials like glaze, white pottery is made up of clay only.
2. Pottery is one form of ceramics i.e ceramic is broader aspects of molding certain materials into certain articles or something of use.
3. Ceramics have a smother suffice with that new technique of molding being used on it. But pottery is still rough, though by the use of glaze coating, its end product could equally be smooth and shining¹⁴.

Types of ceramic pottery:

(iv). There are three types of ceramic pottery:



1. Earthen ware: is a clay fired at a relatively low temperatures of between 1.000 to 1,500 degness. This result in a hardened but brittle material which is slightly porus (small holes through which liquid or air can go through), therefore it cannot be used to cover the objects before it is fired in the klin for a second time and rendered waterproof¹⁵.
2. Store ware: Is made from a particular clay which is fired at a higher temperature of 1,200°C. This result in a more durable material with denser, stone like quality. The finished products will be waterproof and unlike earthen does not need to be glazed.
3. Porcelain: Comes from a refined clay which is fired at very high temperature of approximately 1,200 – 1,450°. The result is an extremely hard, shiny material often white and translucent in appearance. It originated in China around 1600BC (popularly called Bone China or fire China) because animals bones is added to the clay.

The main point of comparism between the three will be the temperature at which the clay is fired and the resulting strength, water resistance and durability of the finished products. The quality of the product will depend on the quality and purity of the clay that is used to create them, but as a general rule, stonewares and porcelain will be more durable forms of ceramics which are community used as table wares of home.

Literature Review

Although there is no literature dealing directly with Kwangoma pottery, there are some that are related to the topic. For instance in his book *Ceramics; a Potters Handbook* by Glen C. Nelson (1966), the writer critically examines the origin and the discovery of pot. According to him:

The discovery of pottery making was crucial to the development of primitive life. The primitive Agriculturists needed cooking and storing containers, and the prevalence of a corded basket like design on early wares has led to the theory that basket were first coated with clay to enable them hold small and wild grain seeds. And the accidental burn of one of these baskets led to the discovery that a clay vessel baked in the hot coals of fire would become hard and suitable for such use Another contributor, Rhodes (1972) examines problems and difficulties faced by potters. According to him the difficulties are due to variables involved even when all the materials are bought in prepared form. The variable of forming techniques, drying, firing, and even glaze application remain. What the potter needs to do in order to get the ceramic under process control is an understanding of the principles which govern the behavior of the raw materials used. He may need to know, why some clay shrink more than others, why pots sometimes crack during cooling of the kiln, and how to blend and fire material for the desired effects through the application of comparatively few principles, the variable of raw materials, composition, and fire treatment. Consentino (1987) in his book titled *Creative Pottery* observed clay formation. According to him, clay comes from igneous rocks which is formed from molten lava or magma hardened beneath or above the earth surface. It is created by a long process of decomposition over a hundred million years, as the rock is worn away by wind,



water and snow above the ground or corroded by water and acid below it. Charlotte and John (1999) in their book *Hands in Clay* stated clearly the traditional firing methods. According to them, whatever method used to shape the vessel or sculpture, obviously the piece eventually has to be fired before it could be changed into a ceramic. The most abundant clay available throughout the world is earthenware clay and it could be fired at a comparatively short time. This is due to the large amount of iron in it that acts as a flux, making it possible for the refractory component to melt at a low temperature. This low firing body still supplies the bulk of cooking and storage containers in an area where industrial product such as plastic have not taken over the potter's market. They also note that the first earthen ware was fired in open firing, or in pit, much as it is still done in some villages in Africa and other parts of the world. Before firing, potters air-dry the pot and sometimes, to speed the drying process and drive out all the water from the clay, probably burn dried grasses or dung inside the container. This process also heated the pot slowly, minimizing the thermal shock that could have caused them to crack during firing. In another development Chalotte (1999) clearly revealed the qualities expected of good clay when wrote:

Clay differ greatly in their quality or degree of plasticity, some are so sticky that they are almost impossible to be shaped, other clay which might work well when used in a semi-liquid slip form for casting would never hold together, if used for throwing on a potter's wheel. Clay that is a joy to shape on the wheel may not be successfully modeled into a large sculpture. So the clay worker may take into account the properties of the clay in relation to desired results or work. This variation in clay as well as the local availability of specific clays had an important effect on how the craft of developed and improved in different parts of the world.

In the area of clay preparation, Gukas and Tadiri (2001) in their book, *The Art of Pottery*, described a similar method of clay preparation or (clay wash) in which the clay is soaked with excess water for a day or two after which it is turned into slurry and sieved with sieve. The same principle is adopted by Kwangoma potters but the only difference is that Kwangoma clay is not plastic, so immediately after the sieving the liquid substances obtained from Rankiya plant is added to improve the plasticity and make it workable. Oladipo (2004) in his contribution titled, "Changing Phases of traditional Art", says that contemporary pottery is an offshoot of traditional pottery. The only difference between the two is the technique of production. While the contemporary relies heavily on modern equipment, the traditional pottery relies solely on the use of hand and simple crafted tool. In the area of decoration Alasa (2005) in his book *fundamentals of ceramics* He sees decoration as the art of embellishing ceramic ware to make it attractive, beautiful and appeal to our sense of perception, according to him decoration is usually applied on the surface of ceramic ware at the green ware, leather hard, bisque and glazed staged. This depend on the material, tools, techniques, and the character of the form and the type of effect intended to achieved. The type of decorations



are:- Burnishing, incised, sgraffito, inlay, embossed/sprigging, stamped or impress, slip trailing, wax resist, stenciled, and glazed.

Pottery and Economic Empowerment of Women

Since ancient times, the technology and applications in ceramics, including glass, have steadily increased. We often take for granted the major roles that ceramics has played in the progress of humankind. Let us look at a few examples of the impact of ceramics on society Geiger (2004:3, 5) reports that modern iron and steel, and non-ferrous metal production would not be possible without the use of sophisticated refractory materials that are used to line high temperature furnaces, troughs and ladles. The chemical petroleum, energy conversion, glass, and other ceramics industries all rely on refractory of the materials. Geiger also points out that many of the construction industries depend on the use of ceramic materials. These include brick, cement, tile and glass. Cement is used to make concrete which in turn is used for roads, dams, buildings and bridges. Uses of glass in the construction industry include various types of windows, glass block and fibres for use in insulation, ceiling panels and roofing tiles. Geiger goes further to say that the electronic industry would not exist without ceramics conductors, super conductors, and magnets. Ceramics spark plugs, which are electrical insulators, have had a large impact on society. They were first invented in 1860 to ignite fuel for internal combustion engines and are still being used for this purpose today. Ceramic voltage insulators make it possible to safely connect electricity to houses and business.

Apart from the western world experience, ceramics/pottery has and is still playing important roles in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Pottery ceramics has influenced the social and cultural life of the people immensely Pots have been a concrete embodiment of the transmission of cultural values. They are capable of telling stories about the culture of a people in different countries. An example of this are the large pottery vessels ornamented with different objects by the people of Ura community in Kwangoma district of Rafi local government area of Niger state. In the Niger State, pots are used as storage objects, for cooking, eating, ritual activities and decorations. Earthenware pots are also believed to provide some specific aroma and taste to liquid and soups prepared, stored and served in them. Barley (714), in support of this opinion, observes that a neglected aspect of pottery is its ability to affect the taste of food by absorbing and retaining flavour.

Pottery as Instrument for Economic Empowerment in Northern Nigeria, they are often used to prepare and offer special sacrifices on behalf of the community. They are also considered especially adepts of hairdressing, and may have been the only ones to dress the hair for certain occasions. In return, potters receive gifts of money, grain and cloth from their patron families. Otternberg (1957:215) as quoted by Ali (2000:111) reports that the decline of the practice of traditional pottery occurred in Ura economy. This happening deprived the women of an important source of income because it created unemployment problem amongst the potters, especially those who were not privileged to acquire western education, and do not have opportunity to secure white-collar jobs. The Kwangoma potters are witnessing this same



experience. It was confirmed that pot-making belongs to the Ura quarters of Kwangoma district, but as a result of inter-marriages, the art has spread to the other areas of Niger State and even beyond. People from neighbouring towns are said to have started copying the pottery tradition as a result of the beautiful wares and the long years of experience exhibited by the founder of the pottery industry. This practice of pot-making seems to be facing extinction because of the drift of youths (boys, girls, young fathers and young mothers) from villages to cities, in search of “fertile” ground. Most of the youths regard this practice as good for old women and those who are lacking in opportunities. The production of this recent development of enamels and plastics in the market has been a threat to pottery products. These are gradually pushing out ceramic pieces from markets especially our native or terracotta pots associated with traditional art. Another factor is the rate of losses during firing. It was confirmed that one expects that when one puts in more effort in production, in terms of quantity one should hope to have high profit margin, but if little of the lot survived firing, the individual who did the production would be discouraged. In spite of these problems associated with pottery in recent times, it has been a source of livelihood to many families in the Ura community and environs in the past and people still depend on the practice even up till now.

Conclusion

Pottery as one of the visual arts in the trends that keep traditional art alive and also blending traditions and modernity, it is possible to draw inspiration from Kwangoma traditional pottery. Despite the fact that pottery techniques all over the world are almost the same yet there are variation in some other aspects and forms. The researcher has uncovered the traditional pottery of Kwangoma district and how their production techniques and unique forms can be appropriated into contemporary ceramic art capable of addressing social issues of national and international concerns.

Endnotes

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