



## **TRADITIONAL POTTERY PRODUCTION AS A WAY OF PRESERVING THE ARTS AND TRADITIONS OF IKANDAGHE PEOPLE IN OGOJA LGA, CRS**

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### **Abstract**

Essential elements of Pottery Arts and the Culture of the Ikandaghe people with a view to assessing their potential for Tourism in Cross River State have been investigated. This research adopted the ethnographic method, which applies qualitative and descriptive approaches. This method offers the researcher the opportunity to collect non-numerical information through an in-depth and insightful understanding of the Ikandaghe Pottery Industry. The qualitative techniques used are semi-structured in-depth interviews and field observation. The findings show that Ikandaghe pots are intimately connected philosophically with the decorative designs and activities of pottery. Decoration of pottery wares using waving lines, for example, symbolizes the continuous flow of a stream besides being a symbol that upholds life. In this regard, life-sustaining substances such as fluids are stored purposely in pots decorated to reflect the indigenous Ikandaghe concept of life and pot making. In its traditional sense, no meaningful life can go on without the use of pots, though this is fast losing its essence because of modernization resulting in the loss of rich and vital arts and cultures of the Ikandaghe people.

**Keywords:** Indigenous pottery, Clay, Technology, Arts and Production

### **1. Introduction**

Pottery is one of the oldest and most conservative crafts practiced by the Ikandaghe people. Indigenous pottery is made by forming plastic clay into objects of required shapes and firing them to appreciable temperatures in the open to induce reactions that lead to permanent changes, including an increase in strength, hardening, and setting of their shapes (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 2007).

The methods used are very simple but demand serious commitment and hard work. For a pot to reach its functional stage, it involves processes such as prospecting and washing clay, forming, trimming, decoration, and firing. Pots are made for several purposes, yet as a role, their basic shape is predominantly round-bottomed, with oval, spherical, or half-spherical representing the

body. Symbolically, the round shape of pots is associated with qualities traditionally considered feminine perhaps that is the reason why women are most associated with Pot Making in many Cultures across the World. (Modey 2006).

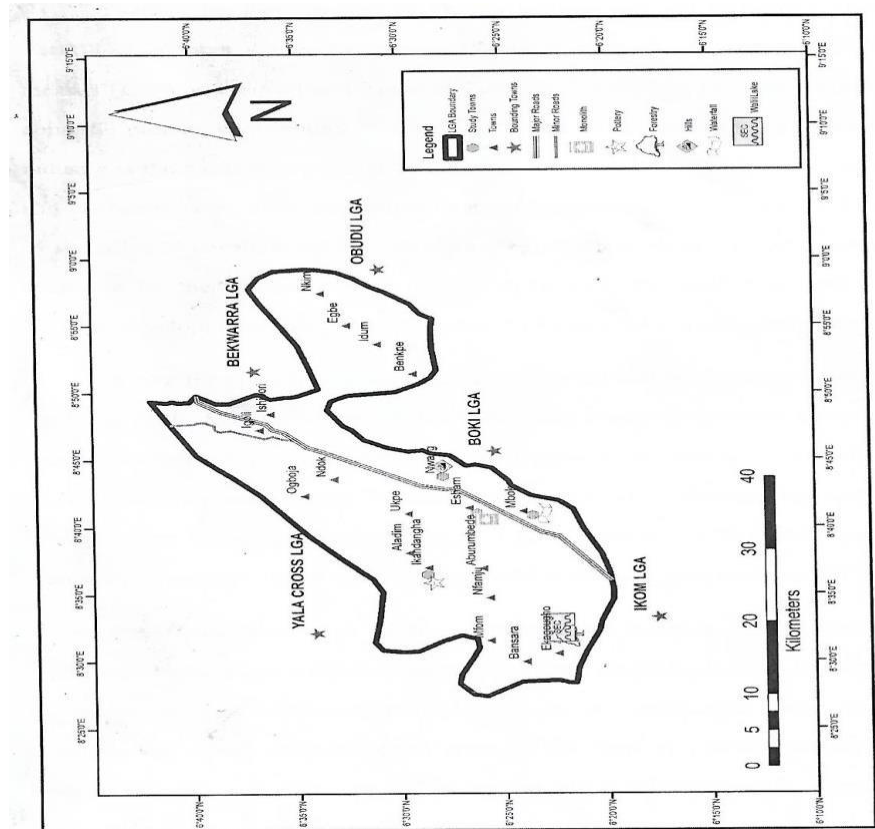
#### **1.1 Problems and Statement of the Studies**

The Ikandaghe pottery industry has not seen adequate documentation from the available literature. It is interesting to note that, pottery production in Ikandaghe has existed for hundreds of years, and Elders who are skillful in the Tradition and philosophy of Pot Making are passing away with valuable knowledge. Therefore, there is an urgent need to make information on their Pottery forms, techniques, functions, decoration, and methods readily available for posterity in view of its declining state.

This research work is an attempt to study traditional pottery production and philosophy as a way of preserving the arts and traditions of the people. Scholars will also be able to appreciate the uniqueness of the Ikandaghe pottery, in terms of the philosophy, unique approach to clay preparation, methods of pottery production, forms, design/decoration, and firing. In addition, scholars that are interested in contemporary African art will also gain insight into how African artists continue to draw upon their cultural past for new works that address societal issues.

Ikandaghe is a community in the Ogoja local government Area of Cross River State and is bounded by Ijama in Okpoma to the north, Ishaiaya to the east, Abapka to the south, Igador to the west (Ogoja District Development Plan 2009-2013). Ikandaghe is about 850 square miles in area with a mountain rise to be height nearing 1000 feet. The study covers Ikandaghe and its environment where the pottery industry is found with particular attention to sources of raw materials, method of production, decoration/ designing, and their ceramic form.

### 1.2 Background of the study



**Figure 1** Map of Ogoja local government showing the study area.

### 1.3 Literature review

**Yala** (province in Southern Nigeria) pottery tradition from the onset considered women as an ancestor and holders of the unique tradition of pottery before the introduction of modern pottery.

The practice of pottery production in **Yala** is ascribed to women alone Ajoma, S.O . (2021).

Kayamba, W. K. (2011) stated that pottery has played a fundamental part in the rural subsistence economy and social relations of the countryside communities, he further argues that the turning point in Ankole Pottery came in the 1950s, with the establishment of Kayamba Memorial School when men realize the commercial prospect of pots, especially as demand for thrown pots

increase with the rising cost of their imported Chinese Ceramic Tableware. Indeed, men started training as a spin of potter's wheel, and an up drought Klin to fire pots was introduced in the Ankole Region. Ali (2011) confirmed the assertion by noting that out of the numerous pottery communities in Igbo land, only Afigbo, Inyi, Ishiagu and few others still practice traditional pottery, and the craft is left in the hand of Elderly Women. Ecoma (2011) see Ishibori Women's Pottery practice and their pottery wears as reflecting the items and values of the culture in which there are made and linking them to these of Nok, Calabar, Igbo-Ukwu of Ife, and other. Ibibio pottery tradition from inception considers women as the forbearer and custodians of the unique tradition of pottery before the advent of modern pottery. (Peter, 2012).

## **2.0 Methodology**

The study covers Ikandaghe and its environment in the Ogoja Local Government Area of Cross River State where the pottery industry is found with particular attention to sources of raw materials, method of production, decoration/designing, and their ceramic form.

This research adopted an ethnographic research method using a qualitative approach to elicit information. The researcher adopted this method based on the fact that every research is designed to accomplish the researcher's objectives. Therefore, the qualitative method adjudged useful for this research is the descriptive qualitative method. This method offers the researcher the opportunity to collect non-numerical information through an in-depth and insightful understanding of the Ikandaghe Pottery Industry (Hay, 2005). As argued by Okpoko and Ezech (2011) qualitative approach's not concerned with the number of events but more interested in how and why it happened. The qualitative techniques used are semi-structured, in-depth interviews and field observation.

The snowball sampling method will be used to select people believed to have relevant

knowledge of the people of Ikandaghe and their pottery industry. The researcher will identify one of some population/groups of interest and interview them including those they will suggest. Thus, community members, farmers, tappers, hunters, and potters were selected and interviewed. The main instruments to be used for data collection are semi-structured, in-depth interviews and field observation. In this type of interview, the researcher and respondents are provided with the opportunity to interact face-to-face, and the respondents are encouraged to talk freely about their experiences, beliefs, and attitudes as they relate to the research problem. Secondary information will however be obtained from books, journals, and some unpublished materials.

In this study, the researcher adopted the framework of circular interactive analysis of qualitative data developed by Dey, (1993). By this method, an in-depth explanation of the true situation on the ground will be done. Interpretation and discussion of the results will be in accordance with empirical literature, which is normally followed by a conclusion and recommendations.

## **3.0 Result/Analysis**

### **3.1 Belief Associated with Ikandaghe Pottery**

Traditional beliefs linking Ikandaghe culture to their pottery include spiritual powers, and certain restrictions and taboos are associated, for instance, menstrual women don't go for the acquisition of clay, it is believed that if she does, they will have developed swollen belly, pots that are not fired cannot be taken out of the industry site, pots cannot be purposely broken.

### **3.2 Tools and materials used in pot production**

Clay, water, bamboos stick, stick, old sack, rope, shell, fresh leaf, basket, cutlass, hoe, potsherd, and shovel with coloring materials

### **3.3 Production technology:**

The techniques and methods of pottery production are similar in Ogoja and Yala,

varieties of utilitarian classes of vessels are always manufactured, such as for cooking, storing water, fetching water, serving/eating food, cooking herbs as well as sports competitions.

### 3.4 Acquisition of Clay

Ajoma, S.O (2021) noted that clay is been extracted from the riverine area, alluvial clay which is rich in iron and when fired changes to a red colour in an oxidizing atmosphere. The red or brownish clay can be collected around our river bank. On the other hand, the sticky clay which is

blackish in colour when is mined is as hard as a rock and after taken home is as solid as a block that must be soaked and broken into pieces.

The clay is collected at the brink of the river bank. In the process of collecting the clay the potter digs to some level either a 20cm or 40cm pit with a shovel, hoe, knife, or spade until she gets the required clay, the collection of the clay is very difficult and hard. After removing the clay is then taken to the home with either basket or bowl it could be the potter herself or the children.



**Plate1:** Clay acquisition

#### 3.4.1 Preparation of Clay

The clay preparation process begins after it has been transported home from the acquisition site (Nicholson Paul, T. 2009), remarks that preparation depends upon its final use. The method of preparation varied from region to region depending on the types of clay used. Sarusioati and Behura (1966) opined that “there are certain standardized processes which are employed by potters all over the country. They are as follows; cleaning, mixing, and extracting

#### 3.4.2 Cleaning

Cleaning clay is done at home, it involves several processes. After extracting the clay, the potters slice the clay with a slicer either bamboo or shell

to remove the unwanted particles from the clay, unwanted particles can be stone, water, dirt or decomposed materials, etc. Cleaning is frequently necessary to make additions to their mixture in order to enhance their working properties.

#### 3.4.3 Mixing

In order to make the clay pliable and lessen the stickiness the potter mixed one of plastic martial and tempering, material sand. The mixing of tempering material depends on the thickness of the clay. Usually mixing is done on flat wooden materials.



### 3.4.5 Kneading:

Kneading is the final stage of clay preparation. Kneading depends on the choice of the potters. Kneading is done either by hand, wood or by bamboo the process of kneading dried husk is been sprinkling on it. It is a continuous process until the potters get the desired texture and

preserve its softness and wetness by covering the clay with wet gumming bags. After kneading the clay is divided or sheared into sections and is separately placed on a wooden platform for the formation of a pot.



**Plate2:** Clay preparation

### 3.4.6 Formation of vessels

After clay preparation, the next process is the fashioning of vessels. There are two methods by which fashioning can be done; wheel forming and hand-finger forming (Arnold and Bourriau, 1993) have established a threefold scheme for the development of pottery forming in Egypt using “non-radial, free radial, and central radial technique”.

Varieties of pottery are produced from *Ikangdeghe* in response to the market demand of

their customer. Different types of implements are used for fashioning out vessels. The beater and the anvil in the process of fashioning vessels involved beating and pressing techniques. *Yala* potters are women who fashion or produce pottery with their skilled hands and fingers Ajoma S. O (2021). However, the gesture employed also differs because of their relatively specialized character like working while standing bent over seated with legs spread or with one leg folded in front Gosselain, (2008).



**Plate3:** Formation process



**plate4:** Formation of vessel



**Plate5:** Bamboo's sly for design



**Plate6:** Rope for roulette



**plate7:** Old sack for smooth design



**Plate 8:** Shell for designing the rims. **Plate9:** potter's designing pot with rope roulette



**Plate10:** Pieces of potsherd during reconnaissance



**4.0 Decorative motif used by potters**

They are various decorative motif potters used in designing pots, but it all depends on the potter's choice, they include burnishing, net impression, rope roulette, maize cob, incision, and composite.

However, Ikangdage potters are limited or familiar with two types of design net impression and rope roulette, the design depends on market demand



**Plate9:** Rims



**Plate10:** Neck



**Plate11:** Neck



**Plate12:** Base





**Plate13:** Body

**Table:1** Analysis during and after firing

Analysis during and after firing	Frequency
Length of firing	30-45 minute
Burnishing	2
Decorative motif	3

**Table 2:** Laboratory Analysis of the Thickness

Lab analysis of the thickness	Thickness(mm)
<b>Rim</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>Neck</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>Body</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>3.6</b>

### 4.1 Firing

This is the process whereby the clay changes from plastic to ceramic, there are various methods this process can be done. The common method is bonfire firing which is been adopted by the Ikandaghe potters and is less costly, the second method is open-air firing which is quite challenging because of the technicality involved in observing and controlling the temperature. The people of this locality use firewood and grasses

which they potter assume will give the required heat for proper firing. The real firing started by lining wood in a systematic way on the bonfire site, which followed by placing pots facing downward to avoid cracks and breakage the process is followed to the desired level of the potter, after which is being covered with grasses and dry palm leave that will give a required heat, and then fired.



**Plate14:** Firing and Length of firing. It takes 15- 20 minutes for the pot to be achieved the desired level

### 4.2 Dying

Dying involves dipping of pots into the prepared colour or a potter dips her fingers into the

prepared coloured and pain or draws on the pot, the colour is extracted from the pigment of the tree.



**Plate15:1**Unprepared colour

**plate16:** prepared colour

After drying the pots are kept under the tree shade to enable it dry



**Plate17:** Painted pots

## 5.0 Conclusion

Ikandaghe pots are also intimately connected philosophically with the decorative designs and activities of pottery. Decoration of pottery wares using waving lines, for example, symbolizes the continuous flow of a stream signifies a symbol that upholds life. In this regard, life-sustaining substances such as fluids are stored purposely in pots decorated to reflect the indigenous Ikandaghe concept of life, specifically to the Ikandaghe, life, and pot making are inseparable so far as the role of pots is concerned, no meaningful life can go on without the use of the pots.

The industry has survived perhaps for the fact that potters work hard to preserve ancient customs and traditions handed down to them by their ancestors. Among them are respect for and an intimate relationship with tradition, strong personal value systems, and a reference for pottery as part of daily life. For instance, traditions in relation to digging clay, molding pots, and firing using age-old practices rather than modern methods are beloved to ensure consistency in production. The potters of the area are still adopting the ancient method of pot

manufacturing which is very unique and less expensive and labor-intensive.

Considering the production of pottery in Ikandaghe, there is a need to examine both the production technology and the use technology, manufacturer and user expectation regarding the product need to be synonymous.

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