

TIN MINING ACTIVITIES ON THE JOS PLATEAU AND POTTERY DEVELOPMENT: YESTERDAY; TODAY AND TOMORROW.

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Abstract

Many researchers have presented papers on various aspects of pottery in Nigeria, but there appears to be no significant written literature on the link between the tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau and the development of a modern pottery centre in the area. This lack of link has brought about the limited knowledge and development or otherwise in both the traditional and modern pottery techniques within communities on the Plateau. The paper looks at the colonialist's efforts in starting large scale tin mining activities in the Jos Plateau area and its contribution to the setting of a modern pottery centre in Jos and how this has contributed in debasing the important position of the traditional pottery practice of the cultural groups on the Jos Plateau. The paper also looks at factors relating to the sudden collapse of the historic Jos Museum Modern Pottery Centre and why up to this period there is no active modern pottery centre on the Jos Plateau despite the availability of needed materials. Considering the current development on the Jos Plateau, the paper inclusively looks at possibilities that will improve the current stand of pottery on the Jos Plateau area.

Key Words: Mining, Activities, Culture, Pottery, Development

Introduction

Jos Plateau area has a complex of ancient granite gneisses with height more than 4000feet above sea level. It is more or less in the centre of Nigeria. It is located between latitudes 7degrees and 11degrees north of the equator, and between longitudes 7 and 25 degrees East. Much of the area consists of undulating highlands with some peaks rising up to 1,800metres. The rivers on this Plateau drain more or less radically, while the wide valleys form basins in which a series of sedimentary beds with interrelated flows of lava from the outbreak of volcanic activities in places like *Hoss*, *Kassa* and *Miango* provide some good deposits of plastic clay for pottery. (Federal Ministry of Antiquities 1979).

The Plateau State Ministry of Tourism, (2014) describes the Jos Plateau as an area which lies wholly in the tropical savannah, but its climate is very pleasant, with an average temperature ranging between 50degrees Fahrenheit and 80degrees Fahrenheit. The cold months are usually from November, through February, while the hot and drier months are from March to May. (These are the month's traditional pottery is most commonly practiced among the cultural groups that inhabit the Plateau area). The rainy season cover from June to October.

Jos Plateau is what is now known as Plateau State of Nigeria. Politically it is divided into three zones namely; Northern zone, Central Zone, and lower Plateau. The study area for this article is the northern zone. This is the area, which has the major tin mining activities on the Plateau. It covers six local government areas namely Bassa, Jos North, Jos East, Jos South, Barkin-Ladi and Riyom.

The People

Mangwat (1984); opined that by 1880 the Jos Plateau area had been occupied by the Anaguta, Buji, Irigwe, Afizere, Aten and Berom cultural groups. Laws (1954) reported that each of these cultural groups occupied a specific area on the Jos Plateau, and living a more or less independent lifestyle. Their social activities and spiritual obligations vary slightly. Each of these cultural groups practiced its own version of the African traditional religion. However, all the groups were predominantly peasant sedimentary farmers living around the outcrops of the younger granite rocks and practicing various art works in line with their traditional beliefs and cultural needs.

Before the inception of Islam and Christian religions on the Plateau, the people were strong believers of their traditional religion. A religion with a strong belief in the super natural powers of the ancestors as gods, to guard the daily lifestyle of the living. The gods were expected to guide every individual in his or her daily activities to a happy life style in the world. While some skills such as farming, hunting, grinding, and cooking can be taught to any interested person within the community, some were restricted to some families as a family secret and should not

be taught to people outside the family cycle. Igwilo (1983) in Gukas (2004) opines that, some art forms were strictly for the men folks and others were the prerogative of the women folks. It is for this reason certain skills are only learnt from ones' parents or a very close relative. Any shift from this, they believed, will be met with stiff resistance, because it is believed that their ancestors will administer some punishments on the defaulter. Gukas and Ahuwan (2004); notes how among the Ngas cultural group, before young ladies reach the age of marriage they must learn the art of pottery from their mothers or from a very close relative of the family. He also found that among the Ngas, Afizere, Buji, Irigwe, Aten and the Berom cultural groups, men do not make pots because of strong myths that prohibit men from coiling pottery clay.

Traditional Pottery of the Jos Plateau People

The art of traditional pottery practices among the deferent cultural groups in the area under study, are very similar. The traditional potters employ the use of either the coil or mould methods for their pottery production. The choice of which method to use in starting a pot; is largely dependent on the intended size of the pot to be produced. However, they have some slight variations in the finishing that brings out the peculiarities of shapes and design due to cultural differences in concept and the purpose for which the pot is made. It is in relation to this that Ugabi (1999); opined that, up to the present day, the various cultural groups in Nigeria still defer on socio-political and religious factors. It is in respect of these factors that, the art of pottery is only practiced by women folks among all the cultural groups in the study area on the Jos Plateau.

Pots generally have much to do with the day-to-day lifestyle of entire communities. It touches on the social, economic and religious stability of the citizenry and women are the only people authorized to produce all sorts of pottery shapes and decorations. However, every aspect of pottery, starting from clay sourcing to its use is guided by a set of taboos, myths and religious believes. It is based on these factors that even the production methods have largely remained the same for ages on the Jos Plateau without marked changes in shape, size or mode of decoration.

Every shape or motif used on a pot is geared towards serving a specific cultural purpose. Pots to the Plateau people are what helped in maintaining the temporal and spiritual life of the communities; for pots were and still are used for all sorts of social and religious rituals. In this way, pottery shapes and decorations were and may still be regarded as strong means of communication and the philosophy behind the shape; size and the way it is decorated speak volumes to members of the cultural group the pot is meant to serve. It is no wonder that even the name given to a pot specifies its function. Traditional pottery among the Jos Plateau people before the colonial rule and the proliferation of tin mining activities was therefore a serious business specifically for the women folks before the advent of Islam, Christian religions and Tin mining activities.

Tin Mining on the Jos Plateau

Farrington (1936) and The Jos National Museum (1979) both reported that, mining had been in practice for some years on the Jos Plateau area along the Dilimi river bank and the Tilde Fulani area before contact with white people was made on the Plateau. Tin was used as a commodity for trade along the Sahara trade routes, it was first traded from Dilimi to a place called Badikko near Toro then to Ririwai in Kano where it was melted and traded to Egypt, Ashanti, Tripoli and Tumbuktu in the early 19th century. According to Farrington (1936), Clapperton in his 1820 report to the British government stated that he saw antimony and tin in Kano. But Europe and the other trading partners in Africa had no knowledge of the exact place this valuable commodity was being mined. Everyone thought it must have been mined somewhere in Kano, because they were the major suppliers. This was the general believe until when colonel Nicolas reported that Kano was only serving as a middle man and that the tin was from a place under the Naraguta Hills called Dilimi.

Because of the numerous uses of tin in the manufacturing industries as alloy of copper, coating agent, and welding purpose; the British government was eager to know the place the commodity was coming from to boost their industries. In the year 1880, the Royal Niger Company sent an expedition team to find out where exactly the tin was being mined. By 1904 Colonel Henry William Laws discovered the tin mining area on the Jos plateau to be in Dilimi

among a people referred to as hostile. However, he was able to work among the people and set up a tin mining industry centre at Naraguta. By 1954, up to about 150 more tin mining companies were established on the Jos Plateau employing both men and women as casual laborers. The tin was then transported from Dilimi to Lagos or Port Harcourt by road for onward shipment to Britain to be melted.

To ease this hardship of transporting the raw tin to Britain, there was the need for a smelting company on the Jos Plateau. This necessitated the establishment of the Makeri Smelting Company along Jos Bukuru road in 1961 and a railway line to Jos terminus to ease the transportation of tin to the coastal ports of Lagos and Port Harcourt; from there it was shipped to England. This development brought transportation closer to the miners.

In order for the Naguta community to check the activities of the miners, the Naraguta Chief's palace was then shifted from its traditional site into Jos town. Jos then became accessible from all parts of the country by road and by rail. Many people from all over Nigeria then trooped into the Jos Plateau area for mining and other business. This development brought about the gradual development of Jos to be the capital city on the Jos Plateau area.

Within a very short time, the captivating temperate weather, the impressive landscape and the archeological artifact findings which came about as a result of tin mining activities on the Plateau made many tourists to desire to pay a visit to Jos. This made the federal government to establish the Jos Museum in 1928. Jos then became a place to want to visit. Many other Nigerian cultural groups and expatriates from far and near then trooped into Jos for either business or tourism. Jos town was then laid out with separate areas for the various population groups. The Yoruba speaking at Nassarawa Gwong, the Ibos around Jenta area while government civil servants were at the government reserved area (GRA), around the Plateau Hospital and Hill station area up to Wamba road of Tudun Wada. Others were the native town and the township area east of the present Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) Sarkin Mangu Street, up to the present Jos North Local Government Secretariat and the former Bong Gwom Jos Palace.

Members of the local communities that had no business in the mining activities were practicing their traditional pottery and crafts in their different locations for their private use and to also sell to the growing population within the Jos Plateau.

The Origin of Modern Pottery on the Jos Plateau

It is a known fact that the discovery of tin on the Jos Plateau has brought about the discovery of antiquities on the Jos Plateau and since then people of different nationalities have been tramping into the Jos Plateau area for different purposes. Some of the visitors came for business, some as missionaries some as tourists with different measures of influence on the life style of the indigene and the settlers on the Jos Plateau. The Federal Department of Antiquities (1978), reports that, it was Mrs. Spruyt (an American tourist to Jos) that suggested that a modern pottery centre be built in the Jos Museum. She felt that if glazed pottery products like the ones introduced in 1950 by Cardew in Sule-Ja is introduced in Jos, tourists can buy and use as household utensils or as souvenir from Jos. She did not just make the suggestion to the government but also supported her desire with a personal donation of **£1,500.00** in the year 1959 for its take-off. This was nine years after Michael Cardew had established the famous Ladi Kwali pottery centre at Sule Ja-Abuja.

Cardew was so delighted when the Federal Department of Antiquities approached him with the request to build a modern pottery centre in Jos. This was partly because it had been his dreams to establish one other modern pottery centre in Jos area because the area has in abundance the needed ceramic raw materials, and partly because he had trained some people who can take charge of the Jos centre while he stayed at Sule- Ja-Abuja the head office.

Cardew together with one of his student, Mr. Kofi Athey (A Ghanaian) who had learnt the art of modern pottery on the Potter's wheel, completed building the down and up draught Kilns similar to those in Sule Ja-Abuja in 1963.



Figure 1: Jos Museum Bisque Kiln build by Cardew as it stands now (photo by Gukas 2016).



Figure 2: Inside the Gloss Kiln Chamber; build by Cardew note the back walls and the flue that leads to the bisque chamber. (Photo by Gukas 2016)

Some of the facilities for the centre such as the potter's wheels and the ball mill were locally constructed by Cardew while the Jaw crusher, Pug mill, the generator and the rest of the other needed facilities to start the pottery workshop where donated to the centre by UNSECO.

With all these facilities on ground, the first modern ceramic ware made on the Jos Plateau came to light in October 1964 that was five years after Mrs. Spruyt donated the takeoff money for the centre. Cardew and O'Brien trained Mr. Kofi Athey and kept him in charge of the centre but visited him from time to time. It should be in record that the Jos pottery center came to light fourteen years after Cardew established the Sule- Ja-Abuja pottery centre.

Kofi Athey the Ghanaian with the help of four unskilled male potters from the surrounding communities on the JOS Plateau namely; Mr. Bot Chall from Du-Bukuru, Mr. Daniel Samson from Buji-Pengana; Mr. Ajiji from Forbur and Mr. Victor Samba from Bokkos. These four men worked under Mr. Kofi as studio attendants and clay men. During their stay under Mr. Kofi, they used the opportunity and learnt to throw pots on the wheel. Mr. Kofi served as the chief potter till his retirement in 1992.

When Mr. Kofi retired, there was no properly trained capable hand to keep the pottery centre flourishing, however; Mr. Bot Chall who had a secondary school certificate was left to lead his other colleagues in the centre at the Museum. At that time, the very few University trained ceramists on the Jos Plateau such as Mr. Mahan Dung, Leonard Yabal, Agwom Nyam Isha, Habila J. Gukas, Laurence Gida, Chuwang Datiri, Rhoda Tawal and Dorcas Bentu were either still in training or had already been gainfully employed in other organizations. None of the women folks who had learnt the art of pottery in the tradition method was ready to work at the modern pottery centre because the forming method was quite deferent from the traditional coiling or mould methods of pottery they were used to, additionally, there was the strong belief that the

art of pottery should be learned within the family setting, scared the women from going to learn the art of modern pottery from men of a completely different cultural backgrounds. This fear was so strong in the women because they did not want to go against the dictates of the gods of their various traditional religions. Another reason was the difficulty involved in kicking the potter's wheel and at the same time concentrating on the shaping of the pot.

The cultures in the communities of the Jos Plateau prohibited men folks from building pots. These four persons who offered to work at the modern pottery centre saw the modern pottery method as a different method of pottery that will not contravene their traditional beliefs. Moreover, all of them were Christians, as such, the traditional myths that prohibit men from pottery did not extend to them, so they offered to work in the Museum pottery centre with Mr. Kofi Athey as civil servants.

Influence of Mining Activities on the Traditional pottery of the Jos Plateau Communities.

Although it can be said that tin mining has brought about the development of modern pottery on the Jos Plateau, but there is no mining activity without damages. Tin mining activities within the Jos Plateau area has grossly affected the production of and development of traditional pottery among the communities of Anaguta, Buji, Irigwe, Berom and Afizere. Tin mining activities have disturbed and destroyed many farm lands and traditional clay pits. The Federal Department of Museum and Antiquities (1978) reported that in 1961 alone the mining industry moved more than 28,000,000 cubic yards (about 36,000,000 tons) of ground in search of tin known as casetarite. This destruction alone can discourage the potters from performing. In Sabo and Laminga Villages of the Afizere community, one hardly comes across a traditional potter because the people have changed their status in line with the current situation of modernity. The women earn more money from the labour they render at the mining pits or from the sale of food to the miners than what they would have earned from making pots. The economic situation has now over taken the traditional importance given to pottery production (Murray, 1972).

At the moment most women within the study area have uplifted their social status. They no longer need earthenware pots for cooking and for other domestic factions. Majority of the women now cook in industrially made iron or aluminum pots. If there is any need for a traditional clay pot, they will have to purchase it from their far away neighboring village communities of Federe, Mai-juju and Fursum districts of Plateau state. In most cases, the women, prefer using the cast aluminum pots made locally from scraps markets at Katako and Gangare in Jos for cooking. The industrially cast aluminum pots are so designed to serve well when used on a kerosene or gas stove in modern kitchens. With this development one can say that Tin mining on the Jos Plateau area has helped in changing the living standards of the citizenry. It has changed their status, and many do not even cook with firewood again there by reducing the use of traditional pots among the people.

The influx of other cultural and religious groups into the Jos Plateau area for mining, has also affected the hitherto strong traditional believes and the accompanying myths. The visitors came along with their religions and other systems of doing things that have influenced the traditional system of doing things among the Plateau indigenes. The result of this is that a good percentage of the indigenes have changed from their traditional religious believe to those of the visiting groups. The religions that have influenced most of the Plateau people are Christianity and Islam. The doctrines of these too religions have greatly influenced those that have decided to be members. This change in doctrine and upbringing became the beginning of the neglect of the emphases on traditional pottery and the assorted myths that prohibit the men folks form building pots among communities on the Jos Plateau.

As it stands today among a good percentage of the different cultural groups on the Jos Plateau, Pots meant for traditional ritual purposes have ceased to be in existence. Many traditional pots meant for rituals have lost their traditional functions among the communities and are no more being produced. Young girls and the middle aged women prefer to be at the mining sites working in the mines or as food vendors than to be making pots at home. With this development the art of traditional pottery among the different indigenous communities on the Jos Plateau is on the verge of extinction.



Figure 3: Pit mining activities at Foron Nafan- Lo Junction. (Photo by Gukas 2016).



Figure 4: Some Young Girls who would have been learning the art of pottery under their mothers now go to Mining Sites to work. (Photo by Gukas 2016)



Figure 5: Women and girls trading at a Mining Site near Forom-Fan Lo Junction. (Photo by Gukas 2016)
As it is today, only the very old women who are not strong to go to the mining fields to work still practice the art on a part-time bases and only when someone is kind enough to dig the pottery

clay for them. Since the traditional system of learning the art of pottery is not being groomed into the school syllabus, it is not gaining any patronage even from the remote villages.

It was noted that the very few middle aged women found making pots have now designed the base of their pots to the design of the cast aluminum or iron pots, with more or less round base, so that it can remain stable on kerosene stove or gas cooker for cooking. A good percentage of the so called traditional potters on the Jos Plateau have actually lost the traditional design of pointed based pottery designs and the decoration techniques that alongside their traditional socio-religious, economic and aesthetic values.

Proliferation of Modern Pottery on the Plateau

The Pottery centre at the museum was popular among all visitors to the area. The pottery wares had become a product to be used in homes of highly placed civil servants on the Plateau. When Mr. Kofi retired and shortly after his retirement the center was gutted by fire in 1992. This brought to an end the first phase of modern pottery on the Jos Plateau.



Figure 6: After the fire accident the Ball Mill now serves as a dustbin (Photo by Gukas 2016).



Figure 7: The Pug Mill after the fire accident at the centre. (Photo by Gukas 2016)

There was no other modern pottery studio on the Jos plateau.



Figure 8: The Pottery Workshop centre now serves as a shopping center (Photo by Gukas 2016).



Figure 9: The Bisque and the Gloss Kilns at the Jos Museum; built by Cardew and Mr. Kofi Athey in 1963. These kilns have been un- attended to after the fire accident. (Photo by Gukas 2016)

Due to the high demand for the product among tourists; civil servants and some rich individuals some people decided to setup their private pottery studios at different locations on the Jos Plateau from the late 1980s. Those that did so, were encouraged by the self-reliance project and the Better life for rural women campaign. These centers were then set up on the Jos Plateau area:

Marsha Pottery was set up at Kwata-Kuru near GTTS, in 1986.

Datiri. C. setup his **Modern Pottery** at Barkin Ladi in 1988.

Sanusi Pottery was setup at GTTS Kuru in 1990.

Prof. Sa'idu Na'Allah and Rojas setup a pottery studio which later became known as **Roll clay Ceramics Industry** at Dadin Kowa near Kalwa market-Jos in 1990

.Daniel Samson (a former staff of the Jos Museum Pottery Center) setup a **pottery Center** at Farin Gada Jos in 1992.

It is sad to note that all of these pottery centers did not last long due to so many challenges ranging from the difficulties of getting the needed equipments, funds, and lack of patronage due to persistent lack of peace on the Jos Plateau and the country at large. However, the hope was not lost as the art of modern pottery was being taught in the two Colleges of Education located in Gindiri and F.C.E. Pankshin. As it is now, People are beginning to look inwards for survival within this period of relative peace as certain art works pottery inclusive are being produced.

Modern Ceramics in Jos Today

Looking at the humble beginnings of modern ceramics in Nigeria and the host of ceramic professionals in the country and on the Jos Plateau today, one may say that, there has been a huge breakthrough within the over fifty-seven (57) years of modern potter existence in Nigeria and the 53years on the Jos Plateau. It is sad to note however that, modern ceramics on the Jos Plateau has not developed much. There are so many factors hindering its development and these include:

Lack of the modern facilities such as; the potters' wheel, a ball mill, a blunger, a pug mill, and a high firing Kiln. All these are expensive and cannot be bought easily or fabricated by young graduates willing to start a small scale ceramic production business. It has also been noted that even schools and universities in Nigeria cannot afford to buy some of the essential facilities for modern pottery.

Gukas (2006), notes that in a Nigerian university a department that has over 250 students could only provide two manual kick wheels and an electronic Kiln for the students to learn on. In such a situation the students will be ill trained and will not be fit for a breakthrough in ceramics. It is no wonder therefore that many of Nigeria's ceramic pieces exhibited on the road sides on the Jos Plateau are bought from somewhere and brought in by hawkers. Such ceramic works are more often than not usually just oil painted or polished bisque ware. If one should try finding out why the products are not glazed. The usual common responses are that there is no money to buy glazes or the facilities to prepare the locally available glazes materials are hard to come by. Some may even say that there is no good enough kiln for them to fire the ware to glaze temperature. The situation is likely going to be worst, with the fall of the Nigerian currency to the dollar, this has greatly affected the purchasing power since all the needed facilities have to be purchased in the Dollar equivalent as imported goods. Presently there is no credible ceramic equipment manufacturing company in Nigeria. Going in for any crudely and locally manufactured facility will not give the desired product that will be good enough to meet the present high taste of Nigerian citizens these days.

It will be recalled that most of the modern ceramic products that were made at the Jos Museum centre were mostly bought by visitors as souvenir. Since the time the centre burnt down, there has not been any effort to bring it back to existence, partly because of the high cost involved in putting it to function. In addition, the effect of the 2001 religious crisis in Jos and the activities of Boko Haram in the north and the Jos Plateau area have made it difficult for people to visit the Jos Plateau area as it used to be in the past. This lack of peace has affected tourism on the Jos Plateau subsequently works of art such as ceramics have come to a standstill in the north and the Jos area because of low patronage. As a result, people do not invest in the area. These factors have made ceramic products hard to come by as such ceramics lovers on the Jos Plateau prefer to search for alternatives in imported plastic and ceramic products that will serve their needs.

However; the hope is not lost, as the existing two colleges of Education on the Plateau offer ceramics as a course of study. In addition, Federal government has finally established a Fine and Applied Arts Department in the University of Jos with ceramics included in the curriculum. It is hoped that the Department will work hand- in- hand with the Nigerian Mining Cooperation (NMC) and the National Metallurgical Development Centre (NMDC) in Jos for conducting researches on some of the available ceramic raw materials to develop workable ceramic bodies and glazes, while the Engineering Department in the University will work towards fabricating some of the needed Ceramic equipment. It is hoped that with the current level of peace being experienced in the state will be sustained, so that the crop of the university trained ceramists who are currently roaming the streets without jobs will begin to look inwards to use the abundantly available raw materials such as Kaolin, Feldspar, Granite, Talc, and Ball clay to make the art of pottery a living art once more on the Jos Plateau area.

Conclusion

It is true that tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau area has brought about the introduction of modern ceramics on the Jos Plateau. As good as that is, it has however, debased the traditional pottery activities of the natives. It has also disregarded some of the traditional beliefs surrounding the art of traditional pottery of the Plateau people. Furthermore, it has introduced the men folks into pottery business making pottery a business for all sexes. There is a strong urge among a wide spectrum of Plateau people for going back to ceramic production as a means of being self-reliant in the area now. This is an indication that ceramic art will flourish more so, that more of the youths are becoming interested in the subject. However, this dream can only be achieved if the Government is willing to assist with the provision of the needed facilities and the fight for peace among citizens on the Plateau and the entire country for tourism to flourish.

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