AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF BAJJU POTTERY TRADITION: A REFLECTION ON ABET

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Abstract
This paper is focused on the pottery tradition of Bajju people and its sustainability (if any) from an archaeological perspective and with reference to pottery from Abet-an archaeological site located in Zangon-Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The importance of pottery in daily human activities especially in prehistory is discussed here. The place of pottery in archaeological research which cannot be overemphasized is also discussed. A description of the site is given with the prevailing climatic conditions of the place. The historical background of the Bajju is also given in a brief. Classification and analysis of potsherds collected from the site was carried out using the following format; paste characteristics, surface finish, vessel forms and decorative motifs. This research is just a preliminary work, therefore more researches are recommended to be carried out on Kajju in order to document the archaeological materials (pottery materials) which are already under human and natural threats.

Introduction
Analysis of finds and features among other methods are important in most archaeological researches. Finds are moveable materials which could be stone tools, potsherds, charcoal, glassware, bone remains, spindle whorls et cetera. Features on the other hand are immovable materials such as mounds, house/granary foundations, caves, shrines, monoliths et cetera. One of the most important finds Archaeologists play with is pottery. Pottery is one of the commonest finds found on archaeological sites on account of its durability and ability to survive under harsh environmental conditions. Through the study of pottery, Archaeologists could reconstruct the history of its makers as well as establish a chronological framework of the area of which they are found. Pottery is one of the earliest crafts of man which predates the iron technology in most African societies and which is still in existence in some communities despite the advent of modernity. The efficiency of this craft in a society depends on some environmental factors like availability of water source, suitable clay source, firing material (grasses) source and decoration material source. In most societies the raw materials are locally sourced while in other societies they are transported or imported from nearby communities.

The end products of pottery are used for domestic, commercial, aesthetic and ritual purposes. Domestically, bowls and pots are used for serving food. They are used for mixing and cooking of herbs and also used for storing mixed local medicines. Larger pots are used for storage of water and grains. These larger pots are used in some societies (Bajju inclusive) for brewing local beer. Pottery wares are also produced for aesthetic purposes in the form of decoration ornaments kept in the homes especially in living rooms where visitors are received.

The use of pottery products is of no difference in Abet, Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The practice is similar among the different Bajju settlements. Bajju is an ethnic group found in three Local Government Areas of Kaduna State-Zangon Kataf, Kachia and Jema'a. St the techniques employed by potters are

similar among the Bajju. The people are called Bajju who speak Jju and reside in Kajju. Abet is just about twenty kilometers from the famous Terra cotta home of Nok. In the distant past, the Nok culture complex covered the area where the Bajju now reside (McKinney, 1985). During this period, the Bajju were referred (by mostly the Hausa) to as Kaje a term which is probably a corruption of Kajju.

Abet is located on latitude 9° 41' 23'' N and longitude 8° 10' 30'' E and falls in a climatic zone characterized by dry and wet seasons. The dry season stretches between November and April. During this period, is the absence of rainfall and the dry atmosphere cause cracks to develop on clay soils (Iloeje, 1981). The wet season stretches between April and October, with the rains reaching their peak between the months of July, August and September. Abet like other parts of Northern Nigeria is underlain by gneisses, migmatites and metasediments of precambian age (mostly shists, quartzite and banded iron formations) which have been intruded by a series of granitic rocks of late precambian to lower palaeozoic age (McCurry, 1979;1989). The place (Abet) is predominantly characterized by metarmophic rocks and the soils are red brown and sandy. One of the oldest surviving sources of water in the land is the *Ncen* (River) *Arabang* which potters in the past got water for both domestic and economic use from. Abet belongs to the guinea savannah zone of Nigeria.

The Place of Pottery in Archaeological Studies

Pottery studies play a vital and integral role in the reconstruction of the material and non material cultures of humans. The composition of the material and the mosaic and nature of techniques make pottery one of the most complex artifacts that the early man left (Aleru, 2006). Some of the contributions pottery studies can make to any archaeological research are; the reconstruction of ancient techniques, unraveling the significance of pottery for various cultures, providing information about the flow of communication and influence in time-from generation to generation- and in space from one cultural system to the other, addressing the issue of origin of intrusive pottery whether it is by trade or immigration and contributing to increased knowledge about the ecological environment of the potter as well as the pottery(Aleru, 2006).

Indeed, pottery studies occupy a very significant place in culture histories of especially non-industrialized societies, where the production and use of pottery under long established indigenous conditions as against its production and use under modern conditions have continued through the post-palaeolithic ages to the present (Aleru, 2006). Pottery can also aid in explaining culture change, movements and social organizations of peoples. For example in Kajju, pottery in the past was practiced by both males and females but the digging of clay was the exclusive job of the men due to its tedious nature.

Classification and Analysis of Abet Pottery

Classification can be defined as a process of ordering or arranging objects into groups on the basis of shared characteristics and termed attributes. Analysis on the other hand is the description of principles based on shapes, sizes and decorative styles (Bakinde, 2015).

Fifty two (52) potsherds (broken pieces of pottery) were randomly picked from Abet abandoned site and have been analyzed in this report. Visual examination was used to analyze and classify these potsherds and the classification was done in the following format:

Paste characteristics – The pottery contains large particles of quartz, laterite, granite and sand and is light brown in color on the surface.

Surface finish – A larger part of the potsherds collected were burnished and decorated while others were eroded due to environmental factors like erosion. Forty seven (47) potsherds were burnished while five (5) were eroded.

Vessel forms – There are two categories of vessel that could be reconstructed through the study of rim morphology. These are the pots and the bowls. The analysis on the rim form could reconstruct the shape and the size of the vessel before it was broken (Yakubu, 1997). In this analysis, five (5) rims were identified as everted while one was slightly everted. Two specimens are represented as form 1 and form 2 in this paper (figure 1 and 2).

Decorative motifs – Decorative motifs are the decorations made on a vessel when it is at the leather hard stage (Dauji, 2008) .These decorative motifs are basically of two (2) categories –the addictive and the non addictive decorations. The addictive type of decorative motif involves the attachment of a figure or a device to the vessel. The non-addictive decorative motif is the decoration depicted on the vessel directly without adding extra clay. In this type of decoration, some instruments such as wooden objects could be used to draw marks on the surface of the vessel at the leather hard stage either horizontally or vertically (Dauji, 2008). These types of decorations are referred to as incisions and grooves. A vessel could also be stamped with an object and this is called stamping. When an object is rolled on the vessel, it is then called roulletting. Other method of roulletting could be employed by a potter using a corn cob or a corn husk (Ekemezie, 1995). In this analysis, forty seven (47) potsherds were identified as decorated while five (5) were eroded which all carried the non-addictive motif with different decorations. Twenty nine (29) potsherds had single decoration while eighteen (18) had multiple designs. They are grouped according to the decorations on them and labeled motifs 1-8 (Figures 3-10). Tables 1 and 2 below show the summary of the single and multiple decorative motifs respectively.

Vessel parts-Pottery vessels consist primarily of four (4) main parts which are; rim, neck, body and base. The rim is the upper most part of the vessel which is joined to the neck. The body is the main frame of the body while the base is the seat of the vessel. Among the fifty two (52) potsherds collected, six (6) were identified as rims, seven (7) were classified as neck, thirty nine (39) were identified as body and no base was identified.

Discussion

From the analysis of pottery from the abandoned site, it is clear that there is a high degree of continuity in the pottery tradition of Abet people. Most of the decorations depicted on the pottery from the site such as grooves are still being used today on contemporary pottery from Bajju land. The rim forms show pots that are globular in nature. It is instructive to note that the same type of rim formation is still in use among the people up till date. This point is very important for note as the Bajju currently do not produce pottery. Thus, there is a possibility that they have been getting their pottery from neighbouring communities since a long time ago, and not just today. Pottery played an important role in the economy of Bajju in the past as the craft was practiced by both men and women in the land but the major role of the men in this craft was digging of the raw material (clay) used (Shehu, pers. Comm., 2007) . Unfortunately, the craft has gone extinct among the Bajju of Abet according to the oldest surviving potter of the land who still has some pots (plate 1) which she made more than twenty (20) years ago, but age has deterred her continuity of the craft to date.

Oral informants could not trace the origin of pottery production in the area, but it could be inferred that the people must have exploited their environment judiciously to be able to detect the clay suitable for pottery production since it was gathered that the raw material used was locally sourced. The size of a pot is determined by its function. Large pots were used for brewing *nkwa* (local beer), cooking for large crowds during ceremonies and for storage of water and grains. The diameter of such pots is usually between 20-25cm and the thickness of the wall is between 2-2.5cm. The medium and small sized pots are used for cooking foods like *duttuk* (corn meal), for cooking and storing of herbs used for medicinal purposes. The diameter of these types of pots fall between 10-16cm and the thickness of the wall is between 0.6- 1.2cm. Apart from domestic use of pottery among the people, it was also used as an item of trade by barter with neighboring communities.

Broken pieces of pots were also used in flooring living rooms and compounds in the past in almost every household and even at present a few number of people who cannot afford the modern process using cement still floor their houses with potsherds. According to oral information, this type of flooring is achieved by spreading the broken pieces of the pots on the floor after water has been sprinkled on the floor making it damp to enable the broken pieces of pots stick well onto the floor when hit with a smooth surfaced object normally a flat stone. Locust bean pods are then soaked in water, boiled and poured on the floor, which is done in order to add aesthetic value to the floor as it gives it a dark

brown colour and also to make the flooring stronger.

The different decorations on the potsherds show the techniques employed by the potters which to some extent shows the creativity of the people in the past. According to oral informant, the raw materials used for these decorations such as raffia palm fronds were sourced locally around *Ncen Arabang*. This further shows how the people exploited their environment for optimum living.

Conclusion

The study of pottery among others sheds light on the technology, social interaction, trade and migration among African communities. In the case of Abet pottery, potters do not longer practice the craft because of modernization, even though the people still use pottery wares (like the big pots for water storage and small ones for cooking herbs) but they buy them from the neigbouring communities of the Atakar people of Kaura local government Area of Kaduna state. This shows that the craft has no promising fate of being resuscitated but the best call that can be made on this hopeless situation is the call on more extensive archaeological work to be carried out on the site through excavation in order to have a better and wider documentation of this dead craft (that once existed in Kajju) for posterity purpose.

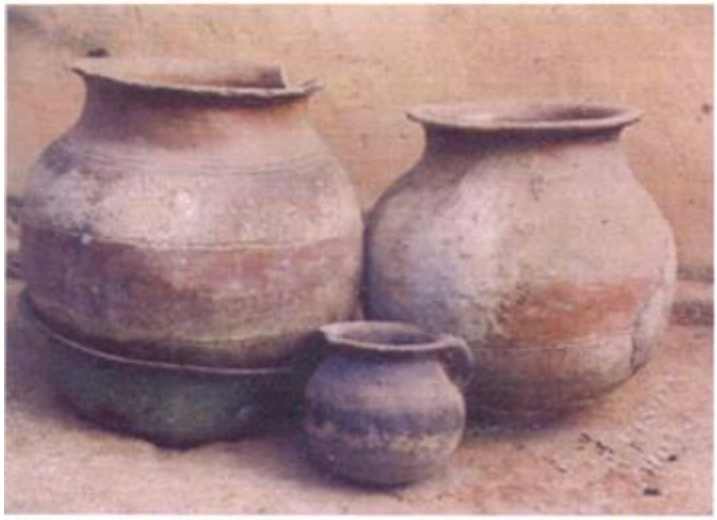

Plate 1: Pots Made by the Oldest Surviving Potter (Rifkatu)

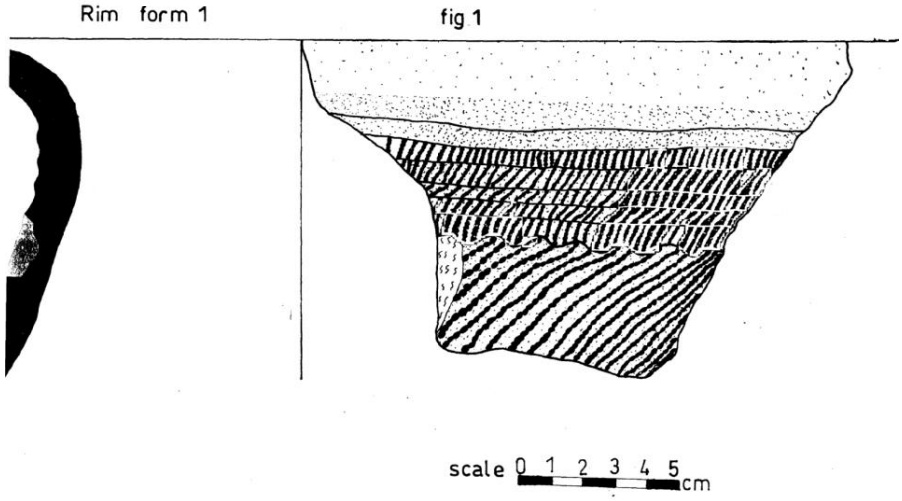

Figure 1: Form 1

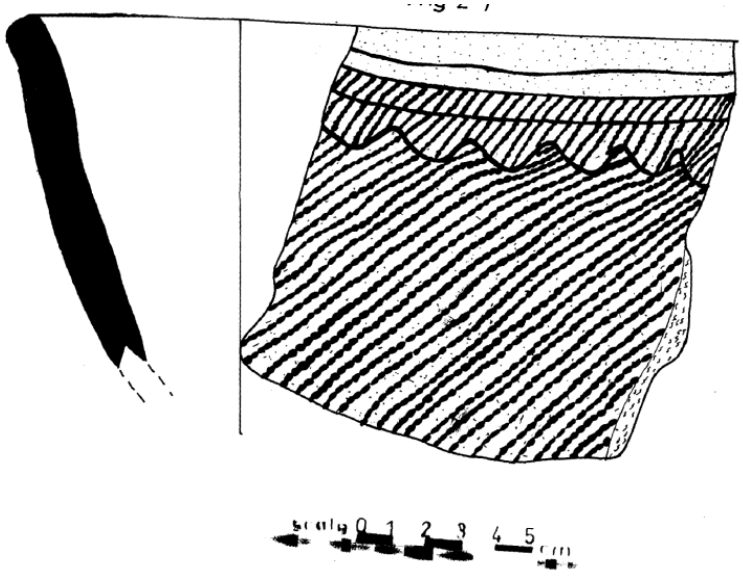

Figure2: Form 2

Table 1: Summary of Single Decorative Motifs

Decorative Motifs	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Carved roulette (motif 1)	24	82.8
Banded grooves (motif 2)	5	17.2
Total	**29**	**100**

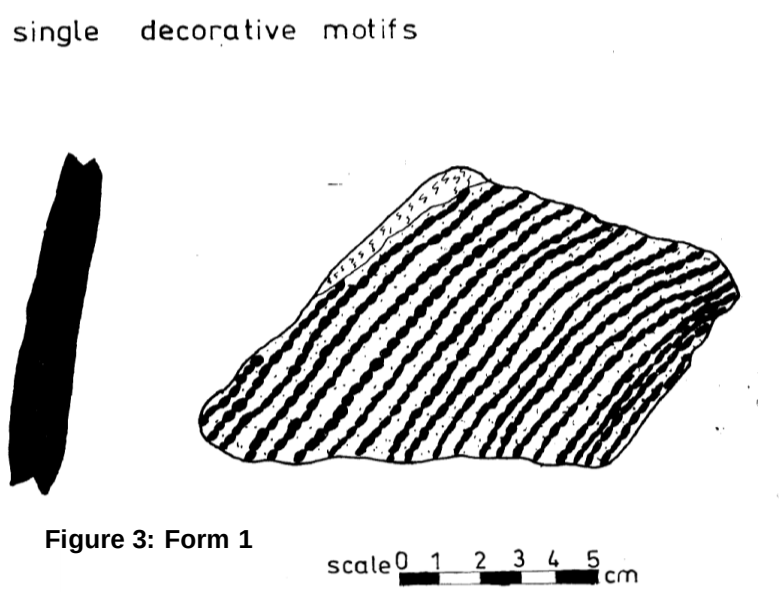

Figure 3: Form 1

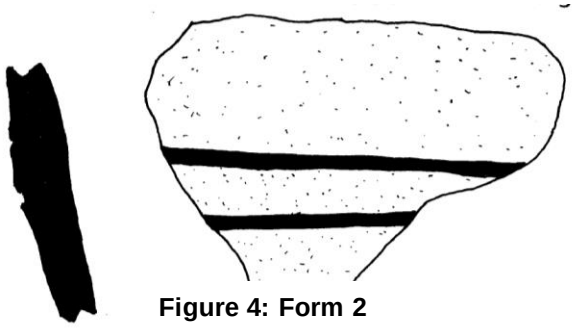

Figure 4: Form 2

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Decorative Motifs

Decorative Motifs	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Carved roulette with banded lines of notches (motif 3)	1	5.6
Banded horizontal grooves super imposed on roulette (motif 4)	1	5.6
String roulette with banded horizontal grooves and wavy groove (motif 5)	11	61.1
Banded horizontal shallow grooves with comb dragging (motif 6)	3	16.7
Horizontal grooves with oblique cord roulettes (motif 7)	1	5.6
Single roulette with incisions (motif 8)	1	5.6
Total	**18**	**100**

Multiple Decorations

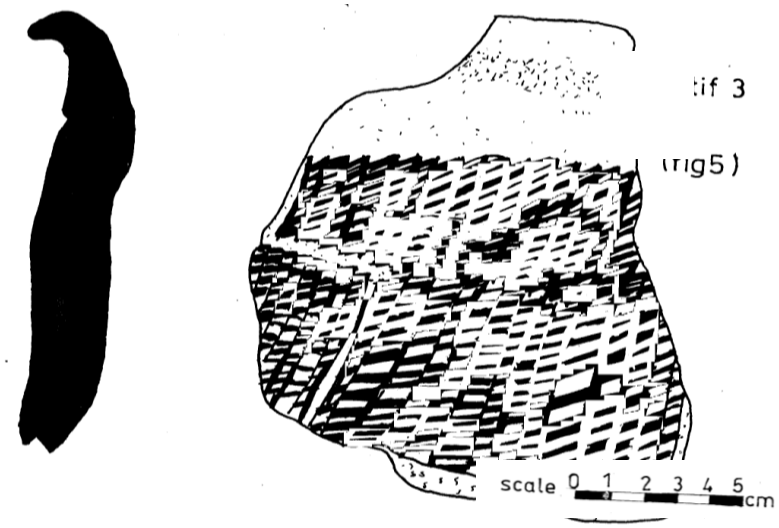

Figure 5: Motif 3

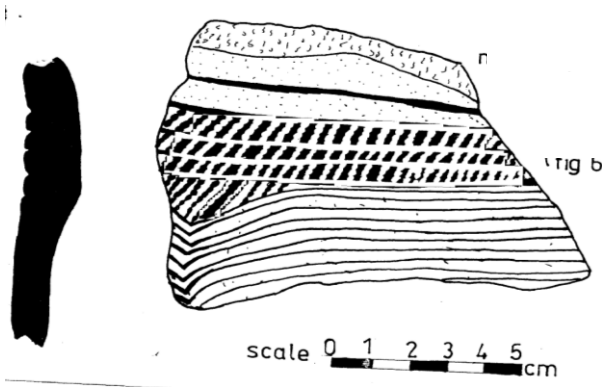

Figure 6: Motif

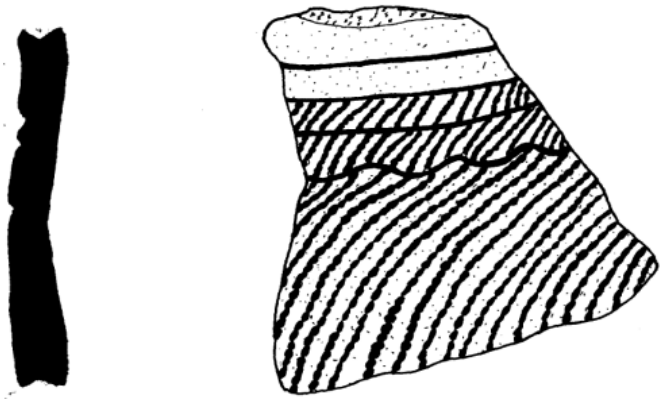

Figure 7: Motif 5

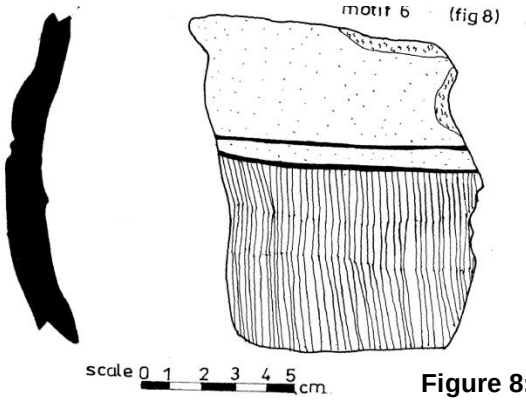

Figure 8: Motif 6

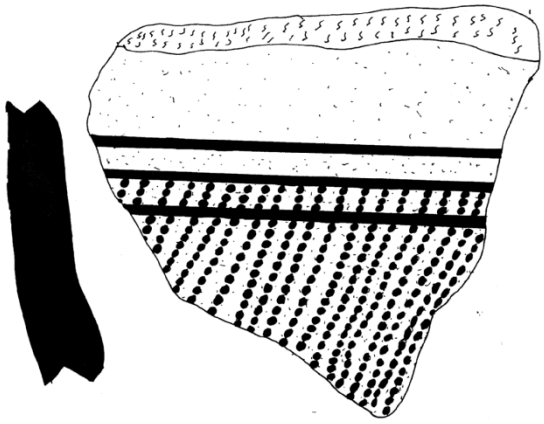

Figure 9: Motif 7

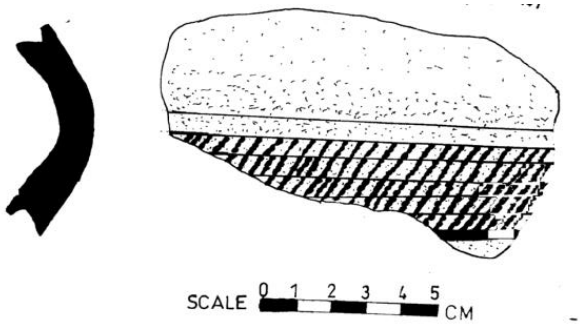

Figure 10: Motif 8

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Interviews

Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
Dr. Clement Sunday Bakinde	53	Teaching	A.B.U. Zaria	16/7/2016
Rifkatu Shehu	80	Farming	Abet	4/2/2007