CHIEF ADAM JOSHUA UDO-EMA AN INDIGENOUS PIONEER CERAMIST

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Abstract
This study attempts to remedy the obscure and a less considered but a major issue of indigenous pioneer trained ceramist or potter in Nigeria. It is noteworthy to always reflect the great effort of Michael Cardew who was trained by Bernard Learch in Britain and he later came to Nigeria in 1950 to establish pottery practice, pottery centres and potters. This good effort of Cardew with the help of Nigerian Government brought the establishment of Abuja pottery centre in the North, Ado Ekiti pottery centre in the West and Okigwe pottery centre in the East. This paper gives attention to Chief Adam Joshua Udo-Ema's pottery works and history as well as his career life and the impact on other people. Chief A. J. Udo Ema got the Federal Government Scholarship which made him to leave for Britain in July 1946. He was in University of London institute of Education up to 1948, while in 1949 he studied in the London, County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts. He studied in the two institutions to obtain certificate in education and diploma in arts (pottery) respectively. He returned from Britain in August 1949. He was the first trained potter as well as the first Nigerian to be trained as an Art teacher by the Federal Government. He had once been in the management of Okigwe pottery centre between 1954 and 1955 even though he was not the one who established it. He also established other pottery centres which are Mbiafun pottery centre in Eastern Ibibio Ikono, Ikot Ubo-Ndot in Abak and Ikot Abasi I in Etinan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Introduction
The exploration of Chief Adam Joshua Udo Ema in the field of Art was majorly expressed in pottery. When the Federal Government of Nigeria offered him scholarship to study Art in Britain, he opted for pottery as his major area of specialization and successfully completed the Diploma Programme before returning to Nigeria in August, 1949.

Indeed, Udo-Ema was Michael Cardew's contemporary who was trained by Bernard Leach in Britain to acquire "formal British Pottery experience" as Adam got from London Country Council Central School of Arts and Crafts. It is believed that the first known formally indigenous trained potter or ceramist who came to Nigeria was Chief Adam Joshua Udo Ema. He arrived in 1949 while Michael Cardew came in 1950. Although Cardew came to Nigeria from Ghana in search for comfortable place to practice the wealth of his pottery practical experience from his uncle, Bernard Leach; his impact in the field of

pottery practices still remains untreatable. Chief A. J. Udo-Ema keyed into the great waves of pottery practice and industrialization in Nigeria then and brought to bear his expertise in pottery.

Analysis of Some Pottery Works of Chief Adam Udo-Ema

Chief Adam began his pottery training and practice in Britain in 1948 and probably was influenced by the works of a great Potter Bernard Leach (1887-1979). He seemed to have been inspired by the natural works of nature and cultural influence around him. Apart from his extensive written works on clay and its products, he produced pottery wares that are naturalistic. His wares are majorly glazed with colours to reflect nature with details. Among some of his works are the palm wine pot, the crawling snail, pots in the net and the crab. His strong illustrations or drawings are exemplary as well as his powerful clay modeling ability.

The palm wine pot (Fig. 1) is rather glazed instead of the usual unglazed pot which is customary to the Ibibio tradition. The flow of the running glaze during firing on the body of the pot adds to the beauty of the pot. The bottom stability of the pot and handle are further constructed using materials from oil palm tree to make the pot more functional. This pot is a marriage of both the tradition and modernity. The oval shape of the pot is simply the traditional shape of Ibibio pots, and the glazing speaks of the modern approach given to the pot.

It is noteworthy that the snail is a depiction of the locally found snail in Ibibio land as well as the colours which reflect the local snails too. The sensitive projections on the head of the snail rather are not raised up to conform to the necessary adjustment when working with clay. This means that he is not guided by or limited to the confines or canons of natural projections in all cases. This work (Fig. 2) stimulates the study of nature as well as its appreciation. Glaze application forms unique details on the snail and this is a demonstration of know-how in glaze decoration.

The unglazed pots in the woven net are interplay between pottery and textiles for aesthetic or decorative purposes. The twin pots (Fig 3.) can be effectively used for exterior and interior decorations. The handles possess good hanging devices for outdoor beautification of the veranda and other places. The woven net adds to the beauty and protection of the wares. The shapes of the pots are very suggestive of modesty while the hanging ends of the woven nets connote variety and buoyancy. The arrangement of the pots depicts a quality of unity which would have otherwise adversely affected the works effectiveness.

Crab is significant in the tradition of the Ibibios. It is commonly found in the area and it is of economic importance to the people as well as its use in story illustration. Crab crawls forward and backward without necessarily turning itself, and many lessons are lent from it. This work (Fig. 4) looks natural in its representation in the area of shape and colour appearance. The projection of form shows a clear understanding of basic characteristics of crab. This work generally utilizes the canons of the most classical of clay forms. This is noticed in the projection of the many legs which are rather given a web-like projection while the legs are clearly shown. The work in its monumental simplicity does not belie the depth of content and meaning. Glaze application on the crab is realistic and stimulating. The glaze forms the eyes and other details on the crab.

Impact of Chief Adam's Pottery on His Career Life and Those He Worked With

The return of Adam Joshua Udo-Ema from Britain in 1949 who later worked as an assistant pottery officer at Okigwe pottery centre before coming to work in

Akwa Ibom (then in the Eastern Region of Nigeria) in 1955 heralded serious modern pottery practice in Akwa Ibom state. Chief Udo-Ema established three pottery centres in Akwa Ibom State among them are pottery centre at Mbiafun Ikono in Eastern Ibibio Ikono, pottery centre at Ikot Ubo-Ntot in Abak Local Government Area and Ikot Abasi 1 pottery centre in Etinan Local Government Area. Wood kilns were built and wares were glazed with the advent of establishment of the pottery centres. Adam's pottery practice indeed impacted greatly on many people. Through him many people were employed to work in the pottery centres under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Chief Okon Edem of Ikot Abasi1 was trained in pottery at Ekulu (Enugu) and Japan. So many people were trained also in pottery. Among those who were trained and employed are Mr. J.U. Umoh and Mr. Peter Essien both from Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. They were trained in Okigwe, Japan and later in Italy. The exploit made by Chief Udo-Ema in the field of pottery and art generally is significant. Among the books written by Chief Adam are African Art Teacher's Handbook (Longmans), The Art and Crafts Teacher (Longmans), Art Teaching in Elementary School: Book One (Longmans, 1965), Art Teaching in Elementary School: Book Two (Longmans, 1966), A new graded course for teaching Efik in primary school titled EdiIkot Nwed1 by A . J. Udo-Ema & O.E.E Anwann (Oxford University Press), Nwed Usem Nnyin 2 by A.J. Udo-Ema and Mary J. Edet (Macmillan, 1987), and teaching clay work in schools by A.J Udo-Ema (Longmans, 1952). The tremendous influence of Adam's books and pottery practice cannot be over emphasized.

Historical Brief on Adam Joshua Udo Ema (1915-1994)

Adam Joshua Udo-Ema is undoubtedly the first formally trained Nigerian potter and therefore a pioneer trained potter. He devoted his life to work and promoted the course of art in Nigeria. Adam Udo-Ema an Ibibio man was born on October 7, 1915 in Etinan of Iman Clan, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. His father was Chief Joshua Udo Ema and his grandfather was Chief Udo-Ema and both of them were renowed and talented artists and craftsmen. They were very influential in Ibibio land and outside. According to Okon Edem(1991) Chief Joshua Udo- Ema was among the friends of Oba Ovanramwen of Benin between 1897-1914:

> *"Information also has it that among Oba Ovanramwen's friends included Chief Ekwere Inyang and Chief Joshua Udo Ema, who were rich traders with the spirit of adventures. Both heard so much about the Oba on their trading trips and so decided they should establish deep fraternal links with him as they discovered that he was the very Oba who gave to Obong Offong of Ibibio a royal burial in Benin. Both paid him regular visits with their gifts and those of their Chiefs and elders of Ibibio land. They expressed serious concern over the idea that a traditional ruler of that fame should remain under restricted guard while at Calabar which meant he was in prison".*

Chief Adam was very courageous and adventurous like his father Chief Joshua Udo Ema. He created impact in the field of pottery, art and education.

He had his first education in Etinan Town School, later renamed John Kirk Memorial School. He was admitted into the school in January 1922 where he did his standard one and two and left in December 1923. He was further admitted into Etinan Institute in 1924 where he passed his standard six examinations in March 1927. In 1931 Chief Adam passed entrance examination with scholarship to Uzuakoli Institute later named Methodist College, Uzuakoli. He successfully studied in the

Institute and got his teachers grade II in 1934.

Ema (1995) observes that, "His success in Federal Government scholarship interview of February 1946 made it possible for him to leave for Britain for further studies in July the same year. From 1947 to 1948 he was in the University of London, Institute of Education while in 1949 he studied in the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts. He obtained Certificates in Education and Diploma in Arts from the two Institutions respectively. He was the first Nigerian to be trained as an Art Teacher by the Federal Government. He studied on scholarship at the University of Indiana, Bloomington in the United States of America from 1961-1962 where he obtained both M.Sc. degree in Education with Psychology as a major and Diploma in Audio-Visual Education and Methods. From August 1962 he studied in Britain again and at the end of that year he had a certificate in Teaching Arts Utilization.Chief Adam believed that one could aspire greatly through the means of education and this is in line with the Spartan aims of education which state "it could be seen that the aims of Spartan Education were to promote courage, patriotism, endurance, obedience, strength and military efficiency. The belief was that a citizen was to posses all of the above qualities through education" (Essien 1983). He served the government of Nigeria and others in different capacities. Ema (1995) states:

> *In 1929 he left the service of Qua Iboe Mission on the grounds that the mission failed to fulfill its own part of the contract of training him after two years. He joined the Methodist Mission as a Pupil-Teacher at the Oyubia Central School the same year. On completion of his further studies at Uzuakoli Institute he was posted to Oron Boy's High School in 1935. In early 1940s he left to Etinan Institute, but resigned his appointment in 1942 and joined the civil service in January 1943. He was sent to Kake Teacher Training College Kumba in South Western Cameroun. By 1946 he took up a full appointment as Scout Training Commissioner for Eastern Nigeria but left for Britain in the next year. On his return from Britain in August, 1949, he was sent to Teacher Training College, Okene (now in Kogi State) as Master Grade II. In 1954 he transferred his service to the Ministry of Industries in the Eastern Region of Nigeria and was posted to Okigwe Pottery Training Centre as an Assistant Pottery Officer.*

According to Peters (2002) "the beginning of modern Kiln construction in Nigeria started shortly after Michael Cardew (the great potter) came to Nigeria in 1950, when Nigerian Government set up three pottery centres. The pottery centres set up by the Government in 1950 were Abuja pottery training centre started by Michael Cardew in the North, Ado Ekiti pottery training centre in the West, and the Oligwe pottery training centre in the East which was started by Mr. Gregory (senior) along with Mr. A.C. Atkins, Chief Adam Joshua Udo-ema and Mr. Eke". Chief Ema joined Mr Gregory as an Assistant pottery officer before he left in 1955. Ema (1995) further indicates that in 1955 Chief A. J. Ema left for Ikot Ekpene.

In 1955 he left for Ikot Ekpene where he established rural Potteries at Mbiafun in Eastern Ibibio, Ikono, Ikot Ubo-Ndot in Abak and Ikot Abasi 1 in Etinan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. From 1958 to 1961 he was an Education officer in Uyo. On his return from United States of America in 1962 he worked briefly with the Ministry of Education in Enugu. In 1963 he was transferred to Uyo and was promoted Senior Assistant Inspector of Education (Senior Education

Officer) and transferred to administrative section in Uyo Office. In 1966 he was posted to Ikot Ekpene to cover Ikot Ekpene and Abak Divisions. In 1968 he was posted to Ministry of Education Zonal Office Uyo and shortly after to Calabar to take charge of the Primary Education, Teacher Training and Adult Education Sectors of the Ministry of Education. In 1970 his service was extended to October, 1972 when he finally retired.

When the march for African cultural renaissance started, Chief Adam J. Udo-Ema was brought to display his wealth of experience in Art and Culture at the State, National and International levels. Esema (1973) states:

> *In all part of the black world, particularly in today's African continent, cultural revival activities are blowing like a breath of refreshing air throughout the world. The burst of cultural revival and the enthusiasm with which it is being pursued have been unprecedented in the recent past from the hamlet to the village; from national arenas to international theatre, the Blackman is thrusting open the recesses of his glorious traditional past. Cultural rehearsals and festivals have become regular features among African national groups. Cultural exchange programmes are helping bridge the gap of understanding among seemingly divergent but ethnographically similar groups.*

Chief A.J.U. Udo-Ema was inclined to art and culture preservation for posterity. He spoke on Ibibio Art as the chairman of on art exhibition tagged ETINAN-ART 1987, organized by Edem Peters and Mr. Akpafiong held at Etinan Institute. Etinan and he-echoed on the preservation of Ibibio craft such as the good traditional utensils and other craft (Peters 1987). According to Esema (1973);

> *"In this global crusade to revitalize the blackman's cultural personality and identity, Nigeria is playing a leading role. As the march towards African cultural renaissance goes on there is need for the proper documentation of the diverse standards of the arts, music, dances, sculpturing, crafts and institutions, that identify the African traditional personality. There is also the need for the creation of reservoir of information that will facilitate proper understanding and appreciation of Africa's cultural past".*

The dire need for African cultural revival as earlier discussed saw Chief A. J. U. Udo-Ema under a severe pressure from the then South Eastern State Government to take charge of the cultural activities in the state as the Chief Cultural Officer. South Eastern State won a first place and the Head of State's gold gong in Kaduna at the All Nigerian Festival of Arts in October, 1973 under Chief Adam as the Chief Cultural Officer.

Honours and more Appointments by the Government

His competency and wealth of experience in Art and culture made the Federal Government of Nigeria to appoint him Director in-charge of Nigeria Crafts exhibits during the Festival of Arts and Culture - FESTAC 1977. The University of Calabar appointed him Senior Research Fellow in April 1977 and he held this post till October 31, 1983 at the age of 68 years where he finally withdrew his services. Chief A. J. Udo-Ema was honoured as the Father of Nigeria's Contemporary Art by University of Nigeria Art Graduates in Lagos in 1993. Chief Adam was no mean potter, Artist and Educationist. His publication on "Importance of Art in

Education in 1973 in Heritage Magazine, Chief Adam States;

> *For quite a long time the world was focusing its attention on Art. Every sphere of human endeavour either centres on or was dominated by Art. It was in man and man was with it. Its impact on the person and on society was so great that it became the core of learning and an element of civilization.*

Today, with the rise of science and modern technology, art still holds out both as a discipline and as an indispensable factor of refined human life whether individual or collective. In daily activities, e.g. speaking, dressing, working, playing, dancing, and almost everything else, some dimension of art is involved. Classically then, art means a skill or an ability. Its Latin antecedent 'ars' and the German equipment 'kunst' both means "to be able".

Operationally, art means an attempt to communicate a sense of beauty or react to such an impulse or express it through one of various visual media, plastic, graphic, music, literature, theatre, etc. Fine Arts-natural abilities that generate pleasant emotions in the minds of those who experience them; Fine Arts include all aesthetically directed expressions through visual, verbal, or auditory images and symbols.

Chief A. J. Udo-Ema commented on the erroneous perception of art by the society but he took courage to propagate the importance of art to the generality of the people. The poor attitude of the people towards art was a great concern and also was a serious challenge to him; as a potter, artist, art educationist audio visual technologist, writer, teacher, senior research fellow, Boys Scout Commissioner, psychologist and Director of craft. FESTAC 77, his deep love for art found expression in every facet of his endeavours. Chief Adam in his publication further explains:

> *While science analyses by isolating and breaking things, art synthesizes by assembling selected materials and building things up. The aim of art education is to develop the whole man. One educator calls it the development of the four H's (i.e. the Head, Heart, Health, and hands). This implies physical, moral, social and intellectual development.*
>
> *A lot of social problems today are the result of imbalanced educational development. We have intellectually-developed people whose characters have yet to be properly moulded. We have intellectuals possessing fine characters but whose practical skills and sense of Gevity need development. It appears that so far, our emphases have been on intellectual and moral developments. We have given the practical side-art-little or mean attention. This indifference to this important aspect of education may be due to our ignorance of its value. Esema (1973).*

Scholarly Contributions

Among his other publications include, Teaching Clay work in Schools by A. J. Udo-Ema, Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1952, and Art Teaching in Elementary schools (Book two) by A. J. Udo-Ema, Longmans publication. Adam's view of art and art education is unique and has the capacity to bring the needed change in the society. The problem of our society is general lacking of understanding of the meaning of art. Da La Croix et al., (7th edition 877) observes that, "As radical ambiguity invades the meaning of "art", concepts, actions, and their products that might seem pointless or ephemeral or

both, may yet be interesting enough to be recorded, whether or not they satisfy our definitions of art". It is art education which gives the proper meaning and approach to art that the society and even most artists require to give art its proper place, and further boost the expected impact and development in individuals and society.

Adam J. Udo-Ema was at the forefront of pottery, art and education in Nigeria and indeed in other endeavours of life. For instance when he joined the Boy's Scout Movement in 1927, he became the District Scout Master in the second half of 1930s. He was the Group Scout Master for Etinan and in 1944, he was elected District Scout commissioner, Cameroons (British Cameroons). In December 1946 he was awarded a medal of merit for outstanding services to the Scout Movement in Nigeria. Adam was appointed the first African Travelling Scout Commissioner (organizing Regional Commissioner) for Eastern Nigeria in 1947, and also had Gilwell Wood Badge in Scouting and Cubing. He was the then South Eastern State Scout Commissioner in early 1970s and retired as the president of the Boy's Scout Council of the State in 1973 (Ema, 1995:15).

Chief Adam's unique personality, hard work and discipline reflected in all his endeavours. The researcher's personal encounter with him on many occasions and in his home were credible and amazing. Among such moments are, the Art Exhibition titled ETINANART' 87 (1987) which he organized along with others at Etinan Institute when the researcher was an art teacher at Etinan Institute (researcher's alma mater), and Chief Adam who was the chairman of the occasion spoke on Ibibio Art.

When the researcher was handling the Peace Ceramics Project at Ikot Abasi I, Etinan in 1991 as a ceramics consultant/contractor, Chief Adam was always there to give technical advice and other information on pottery practice in Nigeria. Other art projects the researcher had enjoyed technical advise from him, and his upper room where pottery wares were displayed while Adam was discussing of various places and time of his pottery experience. Chief A. J. Udo-Ema States, "Art and culture are twin sisters which cannot be separated. They are never static. And, it is erroneous for people to think that their culture is still what it was fifty or sixty years before. Art and culture change according to the amount of impact they receive from other arts and cultures. Culture grows and is susceptible to influences and changes like any living thing.

Whenever we talk of preserving our art and culture, we have in mind the preservation of the useful elements in them and the adoption and adaptation of those useful elements from other arts and cultures to which we have been exposed. In as much as our education is not isolated and insulated from the British and Americans types for instance, and as long as we have been exposed to their cultures, our art and culture will reflect in some form certain influences of those foreign arts and cultures. What we have to guard against is allowing these foreign arts and cultures to swamp and sub-merge ours".

As Art and culture are dynamic and grow, it is the great desire of Chief Adam that this growth should affect individual and the society in the area of Pottery, Art and Art Education. His exemplary growth in the Boy's Scout Movement, pioneering effort in pottery as first trained Nigeria potter, his gigantic studies in Art and Education are credible enough to be remembered, honoured and respected in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Adam J. Udo-Ema's pottery wares and records of his pioneering effort in Art and Education are not as tall as the totem poles of the North American West Coast,

because of the demand of his areas of interest. However, Adam's contribution to the world of pottery, Art Craft and Education are very significant in the history of pottery, culture and Art in Nigeria, and must be watered to grow well. The generation of upcoming potters and artists will discover and emulate the outstanding effort and experiences of Adam J. Udo-Ema to boast hard work and development in Nigeria.



Fig. 3: Twin pots (unglazed)



Fig. 1: Palm wine pot (glazed)



Fig. 4: The Crab (glazed)



Fig. 2: Crawling Snail (glazed)



Fig. 5 Chief Adams Joshua Udo Ema as Chief Cultural Officer, south-Eastern State Nigeria (1973)

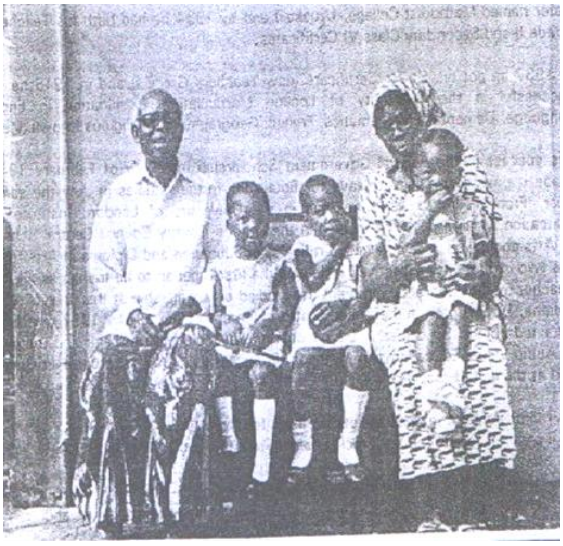

Fig. 6: Chief A.J.U Ema and grandchildren

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