THE RELATION BETWEEN POTTERY AND SCULPTURE AMONG THE BENIN PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
Pottery is an area of art that deals with the production of household utensils using clay as its major material for production. It is then brought to a state of permanency through "heat treatment". Similarly, sculpture produces essentially "aesthetics" objects also using clay as one of the materials for production. In this realm, terracotta objects/figures are produced. Between the seeming polar ends of form, therefore, pottery and sculpture share commonality of the most frequently used primary material. Beyond this commonality in primary production material, pottery and sculpture share other commonalities that most researchers have scarcely paid attention to. This is even the more so when a cursory look is taken at some of the most studied pottery and sculpture producing traditions in Nigeria. It is for this, that the study focuses on the Bini sculpture tradition with a view to identifying, describing, and analyzing the coherence in Bini pottery and terracotta sculpture traditions in terms of material constituents, production techniques as well as mutuality or otherwise of centers of production and end users.

Introduction
Pottery is generally considered to be containers made from clay. The term "pot" may also be used as an adjective with some objects, such as small figurines. Today, modern pottery can be classified into three aspects. These are commercial pottery or ceramics produced in factories, studios pottery produced by individual craftsmen and "art pottery" which may be either produced commercially or by an individual craftsman. Nevertheless, the potters in this group are the most active in making large quantities of ceramic wares such as plates, platters, dishes, bowls etcetera, Peterson, (2009) http://pottery.about.comlodlrneetingpotters/tp/pots101.htm

Clay has been the most common material to the sculptor and ceramist in the production of their work. It is considered as one of the world's most abundant natural resources. It is commonly found because it is part of the earth's surface on which we tread. Also, Rhode, (1972) states that geological evidences suggest that clay has been formed millions of years ago from the decomposition of granite-like rocks that make up a large part of the earth's crust. Millions of years of weathering by sun, rain, wind and plants have broken down these decomposed rocks which contain feldspar into smaller and smaller particles that end up as clay.

Clay usage is associated with the origin of man, and it shows that clay was one of the technologies explored by man. In the Neolithic times, man used clay to produce different forms of art, which were fired to terra cottas. Diakparomre, (2009) affirmed that the terra-cottas of ancient Greece and ancient China also exemplify some other past traditions of superb terra-cotta traditions.

Similarly, in comparison to other materials for art production, Peter (1988) opines that clay is a relatively cheap and wonderful material to handle. It lends itself to a variety of applications in such as in the production of "aesthetic" objects. Clay is used to produce things like figurine, terra-cotta, the making of models which are subsequently produced by

casting in materials such as plaster, bronze, aluminum, and concrete. While, on the other hand, pottery produces essentially for "utility" like making of bricks, jewelleries, table wares and sanitary-wares, among others. The physical properties that imbue clay with this versatility in the modeling techniques in pottery and sculpture are its plasticity and ability to become hard and rock-like when fired. Plasticity specifically refers to how flexible a clay body is. This plasticity is greatly influenced by certain factors, such as clay's particle size, water of plasticity, and other mineral constituents which include oxides and other organic substances. All the same, over plasticity usually account for excess shrinkage which does affect the utilization of clay to a great extent.

Strong, (1995) notes that right from the ancient days; clay is one of the oldest materials for sculpture, and also it has been the medium in which many sculptures are cast in metal. Sculptors often build small preliminary works called maquettes of ephemeral materials such as plaster of Paris, wax, and unfired clay. Many cultures have produced pottery which combines a function as a vessel with a sculptural form, and small figurines have often been as popular as they are in modern Western culture. Also, stamps and moulds made from clay were used by most ancient civilizations to accomplish sculptural and ceramic pieces.

However, the concepts, techniques, functions, tools and the clays needed for the production of sculpture pieces may not be given all the attention in preparation as the clays needed for pottery production. This could be because of the differences in final output of sculpture and pottery pieces. In spite of these differences, there could be some areas of relationship. It is in this sense that this study focuses on the Benin sculpture and pottery traditions with a view to identifying, describing, and analyzing the coherence of Benin pottery and terracotta sculpture traditions in terms of material constituents, production techniques as well as mutuality or otherwise of centers of production and end users.

Location and Brief History of Edos (Binis)

Edo State is where the Binis are found and the state lies in the South-South part of Nigeria. It is bounded in the south by Delta State, in the west by Ondo State, in the north by Kogi State and in the east by Kogi and Anambra, and the south by Delta State. The State is one of the more homogenous states in Nigeria, lzoya, http://www.edocommunityberlin.com/index.php?option+com/index.php?option+com. He continued by saying that the sculptural and linguistic affinities that exist among the various groups in the state point to this fact. A lot of the communities in the State trace their roots to the ancient Benin kingdom. Customs, burial rites, diet and traditional modes of dress tend to be similar throughout the State. The political pattern and behaviour were based on a system under which both monarchial and republican ideas flourished in an integrated manner. The main ethnic groups in Edo State include: Edos, Afemais, Esans, Owans and Akoko Edos. Virtually all the groups traced their origin to Benin City hence the dialects of the groups vary with the distance from Benin City. The Binis (Edos) speaking people occupy seven (7) Local Government Areas out of the eighteen (18) Local Government Areas of the Edo State therefore constitute 57 54% while others constitute the 42 46%.

From the earliest times of civilization, specialized professional guilds or societies were set up to promote the highest ideals in the various arts. These guilds were accorded royal patronage. To this day, some of these guilds, like those of wood carvers and bronze casters, are still operating at Igbesanmwan and Igun streets in Benin City. The indigenous artists in Benin have since evolved a peculiar house style in brass casting and created the largest brass industry in the African continent. The Benin bronze works are the most favored and renowned art works of Edo State. Many of these artworks were looted by the British forces during the invasion of Benin Kingdom in 1897; http:J/www.edoconmunityberlin.comJindex.php?optioncom/index.php?optioncom

However, this experience did not discourage the teaching of art both in informal and formal educational systems. Pottery and Sculpture were taught in schools in Edo State and the state did produce some of the best crop of outstanding contemporary artists in Nigeria.

Some of these renowned artists are Sir Victor Uwaifo (who is a multi media artist), Festus Idehen, Dr. Colette Omogbai-Onyeka, Tayo Aiyegbusi, Osagie Erese, Kiem Emoda, Roseline Thomas—Osakwue, Cliff Oguigo, High Priest Osemwingie Ebohon, late Felix Idubor and Professor Solomon Irein-Wangboje, who in their lifetimes stands proud as some of the world's best.

In addition, art galleries are located in the state capital, Benin City, especially on the Airport and Mission Roads axis. The bigger and popular ones like Idubor Art Gallery on Sakponba Road, Victor Uwaifo Gallery along Ekenwan Road, Wangboje Creative Arts Centre on Owoseni Street and Ebohon Cultural Centre off Dumez Road all in Benin City attract tourists and art buffs all year round. Also, arts and craft shops are found in the major towns of Edo State.

Discussion on the Relationship of Pottery and Sculpture Production among the Benin People

Traditional Centers for Production of Pottery and Sculpture among the Binis: Pot making and production of sculptural pieces has been part of the art practices among the people of Bini. The sculptural production includes terracotta and bronze pieces. Clays are the main materials used to produce maquettes and sometimes full sculptural pieces before a case is taken. Sculpture production was practiced and it still being practiced in many traditional centers. Some of them are represented or found as mud sculptural pieces of worship in shrines. But, as time went on the mud sculpture has been gradually overtaken by bronze casting which is seen as more superior to mud sculpture, the main center for bronze among the Binis is the popular Igun Street and Igbesawan Street both in Binin City. Meanwhile, pottery on the other hand is still being practice in some few traditional centers and these include: Ikpoba hills and Oka village. However, the introduction of enamels and western based ceramic wares into our markets has reduced the interest of consumers on traditional pottery in almost every locality in this country including Edo State.

Pottery pieces serve mostly the purpose of utility more, even though aesthetics is also useful. In the traditional setting, the pots serve as containers for storage, ceremonial activities like sacrifices, initiations and other domestic purposes that satisfy household utility. While sculptural pieces mostly serve as symbolic and aesthetical pieces as the case has always been. In most cases, it is important to note that although sculptural terracotta pieces are difficult to come by in the Benin traditional centers yet, the traditional bronze casters at Igun Street and Igbesawan Street make use of clay especially, adobe clay for the production of molds for casting, in sculptural practices amongst the Binis.

Clay Preparation for Sculpture and Pottery

Today, the preparation of clays for production of sculptural pieces and pottery still remain the same. For sculpture clay, very large fragments and impurities are removed, and little grog is added to prevent the art piece from having cracks during firing. Pottery pieces are appreciated for their smoothness and as such, the preparation of clay for pottery takes a lot of carefulness. The clay is well kneaded and wedged as to remove air bumps that may have been trapped inside the clay. The potters also make sure that the clays for pottery are very p1astic. But if not, very plastic clay is added to the less plastic one. On the contrary, if the clay is too plastic less plastic clay is added to it also. Madam Alice Ogbogodo explained further that sometimes the reason for addition of more plastic clays to less plastic clay is to get workable clay. Also, grog may be added to very plastic clay as to check for shrinkage and give strength sometimes.

Materials and Tools for Preparation of Sculpture and Pottery Pieces

For sculpture, the materials and tools used for the modeling of sculptural pieces are not quite different from the once used for pottery production. However, one that can be singled out as a not common sculpture is the one known as shred (broken piece of fired pots) and called 'Arheh' in Bini language. It is a seat upon which the pot is built. Grog and quartz are added to empower the clay so that it can stand some degrees of temperature, especially for pottery production. The potters also make use of some other tools in the course of building pots: 'Agbe', 'Ukoko' and

'Ukpoko'. The Agbe is of two types: a twisted twine and corn fruit comb according Madam Alice Osagodo. She also explained further that the curves created by the removal of the corn's fruit are smoothened with the aid of a 'Ukpoko' and can also be used to smoothened the rim of the pots.

For sculpture production little quantity of grog or quartz is also added to clay to help the clay stand a considerable high temperature, according Papa Josiah Asemota. For pottery, the clays are kept in polythene bags, tired and covered with a basin for them to age. By this, clays become more plastic and smooth according to Mrs. Blessing Osariemen. She went on to say that sometimes, when the clays are too soft to handle and manipulate the clay is exposed under a shady place to allow air pass through it so that it can be hard enough to work with

Production Technique for Sculpture and Pottery

When the clay has been prepared a considerable fat coils rolled out in readiness to build the pot. The pot built by pressing the coils rolled upon one another in ring-like movement and smoothened together on the broken pot (Arheh) from where it grows into a full pot. The 'Arheh' (broken piece of the fired pot) helps in the control of form and the shape of the pot. As the process of formation is on, the coils are laid upon one another on the 'Arheh' (broken piece of fired pot) and coils are smoothened with the fingers, especially with both thumbs. After this, the pot is exposed to air as to get a leather hard state and at this point designs are created on pots, according Mama Esther Asemota.

For sculptural production "adobe" clay is used for production and the clay is called "Obue" in Bini Language. The "adobe" clay is mix with water to make the clay workable so that it can be manipulated to different shapes, either into human form of any other form of choice. After the production, the sculptural piece is allowed, to dry. However, the rate of drying depends, on the size of the work, but, sometimes, the sculptural pieces are dried with fire in a locally made oven. When they have been dried the sculptural pieces are covered with melted wax. During waxing, different designs are created up the body of the sculptural piece depending on the choice of producer or the consumer. 'Thereafter, waxed sculptural piece is covered with red clay to give it a finishing touch. Mr. Osaro Esosa, who is bronze caster in Igun Street, was asked further to explain why terracotta sculptural pieces are not commonly found among the Binis' sculptural pieces? He then answered by saying how can one run after lesser option when there is better one? The better option he ascribed to bronze pieces.

Firing Techniques of Pottery and Sculpture among the Bini Potters and Sculptors

When the pottery pieces are bone dried, they are arranged on bamboo sticks and covered with grasses before fire is lighted on them, for pre heating for about two hours. When it seems the pots have been pre heated enough, then the bamboo sticks are removed for hard woods that can produce better heat for another two or two and half hours. Papa Benjamin Osamede noted that the difference between firing for pottery and sculpture is in the pre heating process. He stresses further that in those days, when his grandmother used to fire his sculptural, pieces together with his grandmothers pots, the problem they used to have was the duration of the time for pre heating for his sculptural pieces. She prolonged the time just because 'of his sculptural pieces. The researcher asked him a question do you think what your grandmother did was it right? He then replied by saying that it was because his sculptural pieces were heavier, as such one expect that the pieces cannot dry at the same time with pottery pieces.

Types of Pots and Sculptural Pieces Produced by the Benin Potters and Sculptors: According to Madam Alice Ogbogodo, the pots produced are of different types and they serve different purposes but, to a great extent, the pots can be interchanged for one another in terms of usage. The 'Uwawa" can be used for cooking, although it original use is mainly for sacrifice, "Akhe" and "Ukodo" are mainly for drinking and storage of water respectively.

Do Pots and Sculptural Pieces Serve Same Purpose? A group of old men were asked this question; does the Bini tradition allow the use of pots for the purpose that sculptural

pieces would have served? One of them nicked named Papa Idemudia answered and said that pots are made to accommodate content but not to stand in place of sculptural pieces. Therefore, there is no relationship in function at all, and the others nodded their heads in support of his answer. The same question was also asked to another group of women and their reply was that they have not seen such a thing happen before. They continued and said something which was later interpreted to mean 'when has pottery women activity has started taking over activity of men in our tradition'. Another person among them then continued by saying that inter changeability of usage does not work in issues like this, at best a miniature sculptural representation would be made as a symbol to stand for a better sculptural piece instead of using a pot. .

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper shows that the production of pottery and sculptural terracotta is strongly practice amongst the Binis of Edo State, and the evidences arc shown by some of the pictures available in the picture page. However, bronze casting has gradually taken over sculptural terracotta production among the Binis. Grog and quartz are used by potters and sculptors in the production of sculptural pieces and pots. The techniques of production is quite difference, while potters work progresses from coils the sculptors are using stamping method in terms of clay usage. Also, most terracotta sculptures are produced not as end products, but they are waxed after they have been pre-heated. In the same vein, pots are not left in their raw state before firing, Mama Esther Asemota testifies to this by saying that inside of pots, especially for serving pots are coated with oil and this serve the same purpose as the waxing does for sculptural pieces. She stresses further by saying that oil coated on the inside of the pots helps to seal the pores left on the pot that drying could not take care of. Besides that both products are subjected to pie-heating and to avoid explosion during firing.

This paper has been able to prove that there are quite number relationships between the production of pottery pieces and sculpture pieces amongst the Benin people of Edo State. But, one of most significance is one that discusses the preparation of clays for terracotta pieces that are needed to be fired must be prepared the same way pottery clays are prepared if the sculptor desires the pieces to survive. It also imported to note that if fragments within a clay body are not properly removed during firing of the pieces, crack and even shattering of the pieces in the kiln may be experienced.

This paper therefore recommends that more study should be done on some other traditional centers as to find more similarities in the production of pottery and sculpture pieces. Also, sculptors should please bear in mind that any piece produced for firing, the preparation of its clay must be given the same attention as will be given to clay for pottery production.

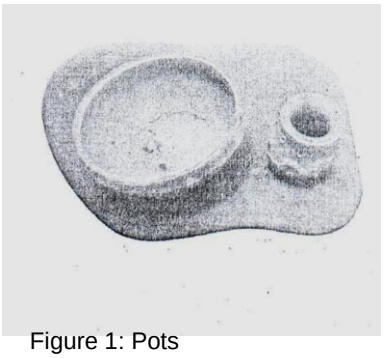

Figure 1: Pots

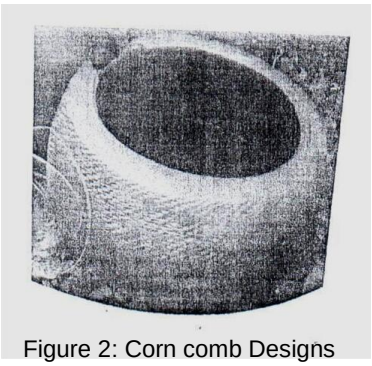

Figure 2: Corn comb Designs

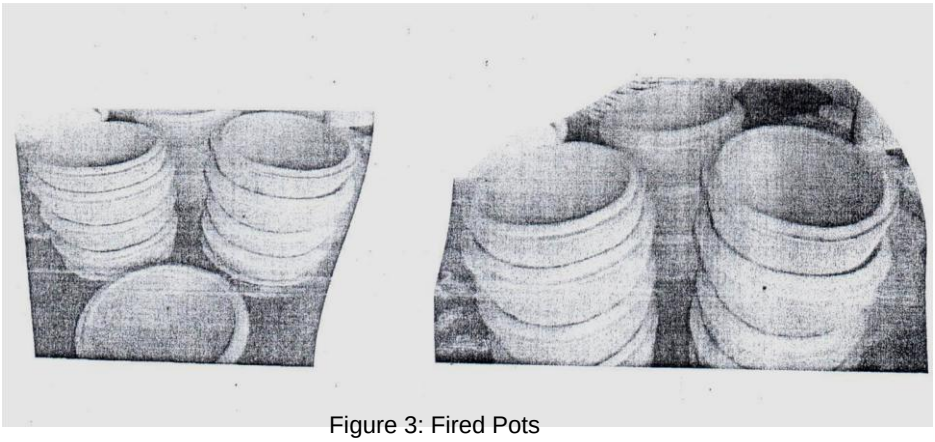

Figure 3: Fired Pots

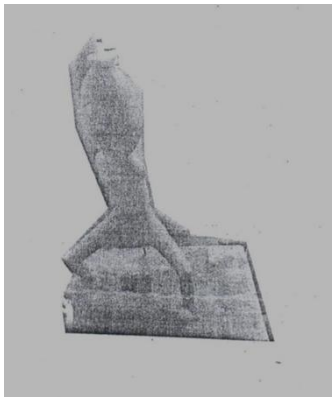

Figure 4: Maquette for mould taking



Figure 5: Maquette for mould taking

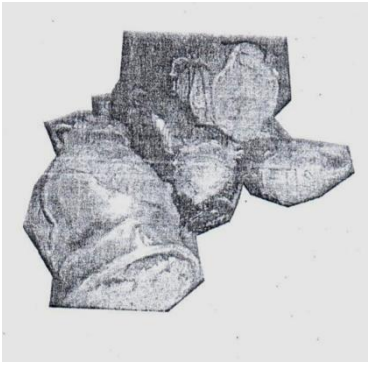

Figure 6: Cast Bronze

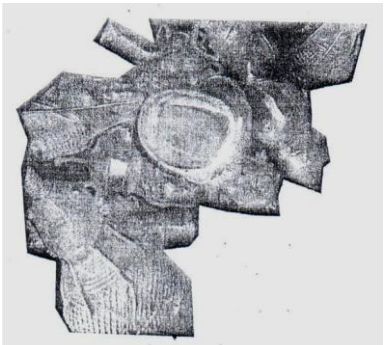

Figure 7: Cast Bronze

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Notes:
Mrs Esohen Enehizina, 56 years old.
Mrs Blessing Osariemen, 45years old
Mrs Esther Idemudia, 54 years old.
Madam Alice Osagodo, 62 years old.
Mama Esther Asemota 63 years old.
Mr Benjamin Osamede, 58 years old.
Mr Osaro Esosa, 49 years old.
Papa Josiah Asemota, 73 years old.
Papa Isaac Idemudia, 68 years old. V