TOWARDS A SEARCH FOR NIGERIAN CERAMICS IDENTITY: THE HUNKUYI-EXPERIMENT

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Abstract
This paper was inspired by attending the 2011 China Jingdezhen International Ceramics Fair and the World Mayor's Summit on Ceramics, People's Republic of China. The paper presented is titled: ***The Role of Ceramic Technology in Enhancing Cooperation for Joint Development: A Case Study of the Hunkuyi Experiment****. The Hunkuyi Experiment was a preparatory studio experiment to sell Nigerian traditional pottery techniques to the United States of America in 1979; to give credence to the article, a historical perspective of the writer and his work from Secondary School days through his University Education became appropriate. The paper shows the dynamics of cultural interplay between Nigeria and the United States of America where Frank Giorgini and Abbas Ahuwan represented their countries in the project. The thrust of the paper is focused on the techniques of construction and firing of pottery in their countries of origin. It is clearly illustrated that where different cultures meet, there is bound to be synergy, which gives birth to a new product. To have a successful interplay, the individual cultural units involved must have their identity – which the paper attempts to establish, thus Towards a Search for Nigerian Ceramics Identity: The Hunkuyi-Experiment.*

Introduction
Although making pottery is perceived to be a feminist occupation in my community, my exposure to the craft has broadened my perception thereby viewing clay works generally as a humanistic profession. Of course, it is no doubt that the profession is cross-gender and non-respecter of persons. According to McKee (2007), since the first piece of clay fell into a fire and was transformed into a glasslike material, people have used clay for domestic wares, ritual tokens and decorative items.

Over the years, I have come to terms with the fact that clay is for the people and of the people. By implication, clay defines culture. The writer's philosophy on clay derives from the Chinese raku-tea party concept; where the elegant crackled surface of the Raku vessel form simple shapes that serve the high and lowly during a tea party celebration. I contrast this with the African clay musical instruments which advocate a communal spirit in the society as exemplified in the rites of passage experiences – birth, marriage and death. Participants during a firing, gather round a fire place with music and refreshments, telling stories. Consequently, artifacts made of clay are of no functional significance until they go through the firing stage during which period any substance that is not clay-related is consumed.

Suffice to say, a pot shard, clay vessel or any fired clay product is pure and has a soul. It is unadulterated. This is why clay products are 'pure'. Therefore, the process of producing pots is internally and externally purifying. This state of sanctification has made clay artifacts reliable to its users in all ramifications for generations everlasting. Without being contradicted, pottery is divine with a living soul second to man, which is why archaeologists and ethnographers rely on it to tell the stories of consumed civilizations. Unlike clay products,

iron, textiles, wood and polymer products rust, decay, disintegrate and disappear over time. Fired clay is awesome, useful and forever.

It will interest the reader how this philosophy is connected to the early life and training of the writer. From a modest family background in a purely agrarian community, he was sent to school to learn how to read and write. Nobody anticipated that the "journey" would be this long and with so many stories to tell. It was unimaginable that an extra-curricular activity of making pots in the famous Abuja Pottery training Centre (later Ladi Kwali Pottery Centre, Suleja)(See Plate 1) located just across the Government Secondary School, Abuja where I attended, would occupy a central part of my professional, academic, and a life-time pursuit. From what was thought to be a hobby at that time later evolved into a specializing area in the Bachelors and Masters programmes. The Bachelors programme, completed in 1972 in the UK represents classical British ceramics in contrast to the American ceramics (in which I was introduced during my Masters studies), I was confronted with a palette of mixed cultures with a high degree of freedom. It became clear that having been trained in the two alien cultures I needed to develop a philosophy which related to my own cultural background in order to avoid any contradiction into the way forward. This background forms the theoretical framework of the Hunkuyi-Experiment as will be discussed in this paper.

The Abuja Secondary School Background

Destiny designed and fashioned my educational experiences to take a position in the creative world of ceramics. If I had not gone to Government Secondary School, Abuja where Ladi Kwali Pottery Centre is cited across the road, the story of my life could have taken a different turn. It was here I met Michael O'Brien and Michael Cardew. The Abuja experience was crucial because it was the decisive factor in my taking to a career in ceramics. The total Abuja experience prepared me to train in Britain at the West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham. This was the preamble to the Hunkuyi-Experiment.

I gained admission to Abuja Secondary School in 1962, graduating in 1966. The Art Masters were Mr. A.O. Olumotanmi and Michael O'Brien. These Art Masters saw the potentials in me as a creative student. Mr. O'Brien, a painter, came from Britain to train under Michael Cardew. As a trained painter and teacher, Michael O'Brien was requested to teach Art at the school on a part-time appointment when Mr. A.O. Olumotanmi left on transfer. This created for me a legitimate access to the Pottery Centre to watch potters like Ladi Kwali, Lami Toto, Asibi, Mohammed Tanko, and Gugong Kagoro at work. Saidu Na'Allah, Agustine Kauta and Musa Abun, my student colleagues, took interest in this art form and graduated from the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria specializing in Ceramics. Musa Abun was briefly the Director General of the National Museum and Monuments before his untimely death in December, 1986, while Na'Allah became the MD of Plateau Ceramics under Solomon Lar's administration. When he later returned to the academia, Na'Allah became the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration) of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi.

I, Abashiya Magaji Ahuwan through the support of the Principal of the School (Garth Davidson), was given a grant under the auspices of the Ford Foundation to study for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) at Abingdon, Berkshire, United Kingdom. After the completion of the HSC, Michael O'Brien decided to assist in my sponsorship to West Surrey College of Art and Design, where I specialized in ceramics. I graduated with a 2:1 honours degree in June, 1972. My mentors at Farnham included Henry Hammond and Paul Baron.

Work at Abuja Pottery

The Abuja Pottery Centre was established by Michael Cardew in 1952. He was sponsored by the British Colonial Office in London (Maloney 2010). The first thing that excited my imagination was watching potters throwing on the wheel. Taking a lump of clay, centering it, opened and making a vessel out of it! It was like a mystery to me which formed a lasting impression in me and the bases of my interest at the Pottery Centre. It was my ambition to unravel that mystery observed in clay. I worked hard to learn how to throw table ware and useful objects like flower pots. I didn't have enough time to learn how to make forms like plates and bowls. However, I attempted making flower pots in 1964 (See Plate 2 a flower pot form I made and cherished).

The glazes at the center were made from locally sourced materials. They were chun blues, tenmoku and white tinged stoneware glazes fired between 1250^0C to 1300^0C. Cardew being the teacher he was used to give lectures to all workers in the establishment. My background in chemistry, where I received a prize for the best student, gave me an added advantage during such non-conventional lectures. Those lectures prepared me in teaching the theory of glaze calculations in later life in the University. Besides throwing, most activities like glazing, firing and clay preparation were a preserve of the professionals within the establishment. Nonetheless, one learnt much about the various operations of studio ceramics. Again one had to get organized to cope with the dual role of being a student at the secondary school and the Pottery Centre.

When Michael Cardew retired, Michael O'Brien was appointed the pottery officer in-charge of the Centre. He single-handedly taught most of us how to throw on the wheel. He relaxed some of the rules where we were allowed to do some glazing and assisted in stoking the kilns during firing. Being a painter, Mr. O'Brien was conscious of colour and compositional renderings in his pottery forms and decorations. His work represents a classic example of British Art School product.

Training in the United Kingdom and Cardew Studio

I left Kano airport a day before the declaration of the Nigerian Civil War in January 1967 to Abingdon School, Berkshire. The subject combination I took consisted of Art, Geography and History with a Minor in English. Having decided to take to Fine Art, I was admitted to the West Surrey College of Art and Design, (W.S.C.A.D) after graduating from Abingdon. The programme at Farnham is a five-year programme – 2 years foundation course and three years specializing. The foundation course was devoted to drawing and occasional educational visits and intensive lectures in Art History. Specializing students had intense practical experience in the studio. in my case, I acquired a skill in throwing and other skills in clay preparation, glazing and glazes, decoration, firing, display techniques etc.

During the final year, a student takes three months of apprenticeship in an industry or a studio. Mr. Cardew accepted me for a period of three months. It was truly a learning opportunity. He had earlier accepted one Sven Byer from Denmark who was a good potter. In fact I learnt much from Sven. At the end of the three months at Cardew's Wenford Bridge Pottery in Cornwall, I learnt how to organize a studio and the marketing implications. Cardew was a pleasant man. He would take us for fishing, sight-seeing and occasionally to the local pub for a drink after a hard day's work. To Mr. Cardew, being a potter is a way of life. As an apprentice, I made pots when the day's chores had been completed. Cardew kept some of these pieces and the rest were sold. At that time it was fashionable to make bowls, plates and "egg" pots. I also made mugs which were bought by visitors to Wenford Bridge. Soon, it was time to return to Farnham to complete my programme and to get back to Nigeria.

Returning Home on Graduation from Art School

On return to Nigeria in June 1972, I was offered a job by the then North Central State government as Art Master at the Girls Government Secondary School, Soba. Months later, I was offered another job as Assistant lecturer at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the Department of Fine Arts. I took up the job on the 27th November, 1972 believing that I had better prospects in the university system. I have been working there ever since and risen to the rank of a Professor in Industrial Design specializing in Ceramics.

The Ceramics section was started in 1962 by Allen Leary, a British painter and potter who came from New Zealand. J.A. Ukaegbe was the first graduate in Ceramics (1963) in the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University. Before 1962, Ceramics, Textiles and Graphics were considered to be crafts and not Fine Arts. Graduates in the crafts were given Diploma in Design and not in Fine Arts – what S. Suleiman calls European prejudices (Personal communication, 14th June 2014). Admission to the programme was either through a School Certificate or GCE 'O' levels. Professor Irein Solomon Wangboje was one of the first persons to gain admission with a School Certificate. By 1972 when I joined the department of Fine Arts, things had changed

for the better, the crafts were fully integrated into the Fine Arts programme.

The controversy generated on the issue of Zaria rebels is rather interesting. Jari (1998) in Fosu (1986) referred to members of this society founded in 1958 as 'Zaria Rebels'. Oloidi (1998) argued that these students were not rebels; rebels are not usually endowed with essential fortifying instruments of revolution like a strong and uncompromising ideology, assertive personality, intellectual endowment, fearless image and the ability to proceed against all odds, even at the risk of losing those things that make one human. One does not need much valuable endowment to be a rebel. There are many rebels all over the world, but revolutionaries are very few. It takes a revolutionary and not a rebel to make a realistic change in any society. In the same personal communication with S. Suleiman (2004) he stated that the use of labels as 'Zaria rebels' was not heard of. The subject Zaria rebels, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

My work in the early 1970s was the typical finely thrown tableware and some individual pieces but nothing in the way of creative adventure. On reflection, Saidu Na'Allah, started work on composite forms, ideas he borrowed from American Ceramics where he got his doctorate degree. One of my most creative students, one Mrs. Dinatu Nyan made some fantastic abstract forms. Her work truly belongs to the 'Zaria rebels' classification. Otherwise the ceramics pieces made were the usual tableware. The first professional challenge that came my way was an invitation extended to me from the American State Department to an educational tour of the United States and Canada in 1974. This invitation was extended to individuals from other African countries like Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, etc. The first leg of the tour was to the World Crafts Council in Toronto with the theme, 'In Praise of Hands'. After the conference, we visited renowned crafts centres, including the Mountain School of Crafts, Deer-Isle, Maine. We taught summer session in our various areas of specialization. This invitation opened a window of opportunity for me in giving birth to the Hunkuyi-Experiment. I felt strongly that if the opportunity to the United States would be meaningful, I had to be prepared to make a unique contribution to my students. I finally decided to take with me a traditional skill of construction. I knew that would attract much interest and curiosity.

Mallam Idi the Hunkuyi Master Potter

Who was this man that played such a significant role in my professional life and development? Mallam Idi was an Hausa man by descent. He was born in a small town called Tandama, Danja Local Government in Katsina State. From interaction with Mal. Idi, he confirmed that no records were kept of his birth; however, he guessed that he was born in 1940.

Mallam Idi started his training in Bajega a nearby village to Tandama where he was born. He grew up with the craft where skills are passed from father to son and from one generation to the next. His training was in conformity with the cottage industry tradition. In his work, he was one-of-a-kind. Mal. Idi achieved perfection in his craft; unlike the average Hausa potter, his work was made to near perfection. Mal. Idi testified that his pots, no matter how many, would all sell almost immediately after firing. It is interesting to note that even the tools he used were fashioned to his taste. The care he gave to his work, from clay preparation, construction, drying and firing, minimized any losses. Mal. Idi was truly a master potter. Pottery is a seasonal craft where the potters move from town to town in search of good market for their wares. This was how Mal. Idi moved from Tandama to Hunkuyi where he worked till his death in 2009 (See Plates 3 and 4).

In early 1974, Mal. Idi was employed to work as an assistant studio attendant in the Ceramics section when Prof. S.I. Wangboje was Head of department. His employment was a recommendation from Prof. Charles Counts, the then Head of Ceramics section. That was the first time I got acquainted and attached to Mal. Idi as my mentor. He worked briefly for the department and returned to his studio in Hunkuyi. His successful tenure paved way for other potters to be employed in Ceramics section. One Mrs. Kura from Kwoi in Jaba Local Government, a descendant of the Nok Culture, was a beneficiary.

As a teacher, Mal. Idi believed in the power of observation and practical experience on the

part of his student/apprentice. He taught me how to prepare clay – you must allow the clay to dry properly before soaking. He emphasized using the right tools most of which he fashioned himself. He took me to the bush and showed me the trees/shrubs he used in making some of the tools for construction and decoration. He allowed me to watch stoking for firing and in subsequent firings he allowed me to be fully involved. I learnt in the process how to get surface effects from oxidation and reduction – black sheen/ochre red effects. This became the main source of getting rich blends of colours without the use of formal glaze or colorants. I learnt to use perforated metal drums to fire clay pieces. Using the metal drums fires much slower that the conventional technique. Slow firing in the traditional fashion gives richer finished effects to the fired wares. The types of fuel and their quality contribute much to these expected results. Again the freedom in construction using the traditional methods is more natural to manipulation and to the senses of touch. In fact the traditional approach captures the complex nature of form more easily than using the wheel or slip casting. These two factors, experienced while working with Mal. Idi, was a defining moment in my career – the Hunkuyi-Experiment had become established. My appreciation goes to Professor Charles Counts (who mooted the idea and recommended my going to the United States of America), Mal. Idi in particular and all those who could "see" tomorrow through clay. This whole process is a search for the soul, the identity of the Nigerian Ceramics. The problem and a methodology have been defined. It is now time for the analysis with subsequent conclusions and recommendations. Pots produced by this method are to some extent far more superior to the conventional pottery. Products always have a personal touch with a heart-warming effect to them.

Preparation for the United States Outing

The Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was transferred from the University College, Ibadan, in 1952, having Painting and Sculpture sections. Ceramics was later introduced as a supplemental specializing area. I was employed as a Graduate Assistant in 1972 and after almost four decades of engaging in studio ceramics alongside teaching, researching and administrative activities, I developed a professional philosophy upon which the theoretical framework of my practice had been hinged. I came to the realization that by having a soul-to-soul encounter with clay, the intricate tapestry of my creative potentials could be unlocked, fed and sustained. From a pragmatic view point, success in working with clay transcends an artist's physical ability and mental skills into enforcing a tangible emotional experience. While this experience can be nurtured through training, it must be shared through social interaction for the impact to transcend the limits of the artist and become a medium for social change.

It was against the backdrop of this personal philosophy that in 1974 when I was given the privilege of undertaking a 3-month educational tour of the United States by the US Department of State on Cultural Exchange Programme, I was poised to make my trip an impactful one. In view of the fact that the throwing wheel, upon which I had received my initial 12 years of training, is a Western invention, of course there was going to be similarity in the outputs. I took the challenge to go for acculturation training in traditional pottery; the goal was to tune-in myself to my culture and blend the skills to my studio techniques. It was also my intention to offer my host a uniquely new and intriguing experience and possibly exert a more lasting impact and possibly use the medium for propagating an aspect of Africa's culture. Hence, I went to a village called Hunkuyi to meet and learn from the established traditional potter Mal. Idi. Through this encounter, I was equipped with adequate blend of traditional and contemporary pottery skills. I was emotionally prepared for the adventure to the United States.

The Hunkuyi-Experiment came about through my quest for excellence, enthused by a deep seated passion to make an impact in ceramic art, a position that was further enhanced by my contact with the Abuja pottery. I was challenged to do something outside the norms of contemporary design practice, which I was accustomed to – that is leaving the comfort zone of my standard studio and going to practice traditional pottery at the village of Hunkuyi. The essence was towards incorporating components of the traditional processes into my designs. Although, knowing that the environment and materials were going

to be completely incongruous to a modern studio setting in all ramifications was not a deterrent, instead I thought it was going to have a viral effect on me emotionally and physically. Of course, undertaking such a venture may have a high risk potential given the fact that the practice is more-or-less spontaneous and unguarded while the environment hygienically hazardous. At Hunkuyi, like any typical Nigerian village, one was going to be exposed to the risk of mosquito bites, cholera and other communicable diseases.

In spite of this, I was determined to go to the village mainly to learn the traditional methods of production, which entailed clay sourcing, preparation, construction, drying, firing and finishing which involves burnishing, decoration and colour applications. Within the 3 months of my training, I was able to acquire substantial practical skills. Also, I learnt quite a lot about the psychology of their practice, the economic and social benefits of being a potter different from being a blacksmith, calabash decorator, weaver or wood carver. I also understood something about the management processes adopted by the local practitioners – how they marketed their wares, sustained their practice or even transferred the skills to their younger ones.

These new skills enhanced my proficiency and gave me a higher command of creativity, perception, self-confidence and vision in my practice. This position consolidated all the qualities required to succeed as a creative clay artist and possibly make a mark in the United States. Ironically, just as I had by skepticism of Hunkuyi, I felt that the people at Haystack, Maine, may have had their reservations about me, wondering if anything good could come out of Africa. Just like the saying 'what good can come out of Nazareth?' they were not sure if I had the language skills or could eat their food or could even survive the harsh weather conditions in America coming from the tropics. Despite all the skepticisms, they were still ready to leave it to faith and give me a chance. They anticipated something uniquely African from me and different from their day-to-day studio experiences. It is interesting to note that for real, the proficiency I demonstrated in my unique approach to handmade pottery overwhelmed and sustained their interest. One of the comments acknowledging my contribution came from one in an unpublished pamphlet, Alex (1989) who stated, "Thank you Abbas for travelling so far to bring us your wisdom. Peace and Brotherhood". Consequent to this, the 'Udu' musical drum concept was actualized, given life to the Hunkuyi-Experiment, which has since opened a new door to a uniquely robust pottery (See Plates 5, 6 & 7).

The Impact of Hunkuyi-Experiment in the United States of America

It was while conducting series of workshops in educational institutions across the United States of America that I met with Frank Giorgini. It was during a summer session at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts**,** Deer Isle, Maine. Frank Giorgini registered for my class, where he was first introduced to the processes of African pottery techniques. He took a special interest in the construction of the all-side-hole musical pot called Udu or Kim-kim. The name Udu is the Igbo name for this musical pot while Kim-kim is the Bajju name for Udu from Southern Kaduna.

My approach to teaching was strictly in adherence with what I learnt from Mal. Idi. There are four basic things in constructing a traditional earthenware: locally sourced clay, inverted clay from, decoration and drying/firing. The students were excited with all the processes although the firing appealed to them more than the modern firing precision-equipment like the electric kiln. The traditional firing used materials like dry cow dung, saw dust, twigs of trees, corn stalks and hay as fuel. It is rather comforting to note that all these materials are readily available in the United States. The uniqueness of Frank's work is as a result of a synthesis from the African traditional techniques (as taught by me) of construction and firing blended with the Western techniques, tampered by his creative abilities as an artist-designer.

Firings are usually carried out in the evenings when the weather is expected to be calm with little or no wind. It takes a few hours to complete a firing. The "ritual" of a firing can be spiritually fulfilling and physically satisfying. It was during these processes that Frank got sensitized and challenged toward African traditional methods.

Who is this man Frank Giorgini? He is a sculptor by training, a designer, teacher and author living in upstate, New York in a town called Freehold. Frank came from a comfortable family background where his father and brother belong to the medical profession.

The Udu drum in Igbo culture is used as a complement to music played during social ceremonies and other pastime folklore activities. The Udu drum concept must have come accidentally when a second side hole produced a resonant sound. With the advent Christianity in Nigeria, women choirs in most churches employ the use of the Udu drum in their musical rendition. It is noteworthy that the Udu drum instrument cuts across the denominational differences that exist.

Frank Giorgini perceived the potentials of the Udu drum in modern percussionist music. Towards this end, he developed many design innovations, clay bodies, and firing techniques to improve the sound quality, durability and versatility of this instrument. Giorgini (1985) stated, "The sounds from these hollow clay vessels are so related to their sculptured forms you can almost visualize the drum shapes from their auditory vibrations". Frank decided to trace the roots of Abbas his mentor and Abbas' mentor Mal. Idi by coming to Zaria with his wife in 1985. During that visit he brought an Udu drum pot to me as a gift of appreciation and to receive my blessings. On his return from Zaria, Frank in 1989 decided to organize an Udu workshop on an annual basis. For the first few years the workshop was restricted to participants in the United States. When it became established, participants were attracted from all over the world. It is observed that what started modestly at Haystack has snowballed into an institution attracting international musicians and admirers of the percussionist instrument. In 2009, the Udu workshop at Freehold, New York State, attracted a wide international participation from Canada, Senegal, Colombia, United States of America and Nigeria. The impact of the Hunkuyi-Experiment has been redefined and promoted to higher heights through technical excellence and creativity through hard work by Frank Giorgini.

The Hunkuyi-Experiment: The Journey so far

The Abuja Secondary School/Pottery Training Centre, training in Great Britain, and the invitation to visit the United States of America in 1974, form the pillars of my development in the specialized field of Ceramics. The Abuja experience and the training I received in Britain form the bedrock of my professional training. It was the trip to the United States that created the Hunkuyi-Experiment phenomenon. The Hunkuyi-Experiment is a point of departure from the purely conformist approach to ceramics to a return to the fundamentals of traditional pottery with an eclectic sieving of specific values to enhance creative forms (See Plates 8 – 11). It was a turning point from the long existence of traditional pottery. The Hunkuyi-Experiment has created a hybrid created from the Hunkuyi-Haystack-Freehold partnership. It was first recognized by way of accepting Frank's work by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in their Permanent Collection in 1985. The Udu drums by frank Giorgini are patronized by the following world famous musicians: Paul Simon, Miles Davis, George Jinda, Mino Cinelu, Brian Melick, and Stings. Bashiri Johnson, a famous Afro-American percussionist, played with Michael Jackson using the Udu drum.

While on sabbatical leave to the University of Georgia, Atlanta, in 1989, I took some time to work with Frank Giorgini in his studio in Freehold, New York to produce some works that were accepted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the African Permanent Collection (See Plate. 9). These achievements are attributable to the Hunkuyi-Experiment. Coming back home, the Hunkuyi-Experiment has had a significant impact on the search for Nigerian Ceramics identity. The Zaria rebels myth excluded the crafts in their quest to trace their roots. Taking a critical look at trends at the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, it was in 1974 that Ceramics caught up the rebel-effect syndrome. It brought about critical thinking into clay work. It brought about a break from British conservative view with which the British Colonial Office initially sent Michael Cardew to Africa (at the then Gold Coast) to produce useable ceramic wares for their troops serving in the British Frontier Force. Hunkuyi-Experiment has sensitized ceramic students towards creative throwing (See Plates 10, 11 & 12). It is critical to note

that movements like Cubism and Expressionism in modern Art have been essentially a natural impulse or protest in tracing cultural and traditional identity. Any form of engagement becomes more meaningful and satisfying when it is created on known foundations. This, in my belief is applicable to all artistic pursuits. The satisfaction is essentially for the artist especially in the execution process. The finished product has a fulfilling effect to the soul and spirit, and the mundane senses. My educational background from Abuja Secondary School to the West Surrey College of Art and Design, prepared me to the extent that I could see clearly the background I am coming from. I could also appreciate the new knowledge I acquired from the Western world. This sensitized me and forms the background to the Hunkuyi-Experiment. The African and the Western cultures share in the common denominator of form and colour, from a broad perspective. Despite their differences on specifics, they respect each other though with some defining skepticism brought about by the fear of the unknown.

The Hunkuyi-Experiment has inspired and supported some activities creating an enabling environment toward a search for Nigerian ceramics identity. An exhibition of my work was held in May 1996 with the theme Hunkuyi Clay Experiment, sponsored by the Alliance Francaise, Kaduna. In 2001, the Ceramics Association of Nigeria (CERAN) was created concurrently with Ashakwu Journal of Ceramics. The National conference since its inception has held annually except in 2013 due to the 6-month Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike. The conferences have been circulating within the Nigerian universities that have ceramics departments. The proceedings of papers presented during conferences go through peer reviews for publication in the journal. The writer served as the President of the Ceramics Association of Nigeria from 2001-2010 and the current Editor-in-Chief of the journal. The Ceramics Association of Nigeria is currently registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) as the Ceramics Researchers Association of Nigeria (CeRAN). The current president is Professor T.L. Akinbogun from the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State. Another tipping point of the Hunkuyi-Experiment was the invitation to the 2011 Jingdezhen International Ceramic Fair and World Mayors Summit in 2011 which the writer attended.

The strategy for the experiment is for the Nigerian descendants to perfect an understanding of their identity before the modern technology would give birth to a meaningful design for industrialization. Europe perfected their industrial take off from the cottage franchise. The Hunkuyi-Experiment will take time to achieve its objectives – establishment of studio potteries, mechanized ceramic industries, and training of designers in tertiary institutions. So, conclusively the Hunkuyi-Experiment is still on. We need to understand and appreciate our crafts starting from the materials, production processes, the design and the use of these crafts before we can say the Hunkuyi-Experiment has arrived.



Plate 1: Abuja Training Centre (Ladi Kwali Pottery Centre, Suleja)



Plate 2: Flower Pots; 1964

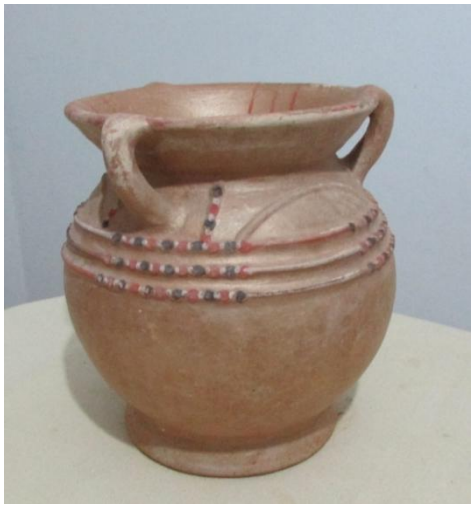

Plate 3: Water pot by Malam Idi; 2005



Plate 4: Cooking pot by Malam Idi; 2007



Plate 5: Initial construction process of a musical pot by Frank Giorgini



Plate 6: Set of musical pots by Frank Giorgini



Plate 7: Stylized musical pot by Frank Giorgini



Plate 8: A pot from a gourd form; 1980



Plate 9: Work by author now at Metropolitan Museum African permanent collection; 1989



Plate 10: Composite form; 1985



Plate 11: Composite form by a postgraduate student; 2010



Fig. 12: Embellished thrown form by a student; 2005

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