VIABILITY OF ANCIENT TRADITIONAL CRAFTS IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: A STUDY OF ACTIVITIES OF GIDAN TUKUNYA POTTERY CENTRE

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Abstract
This study looks at the traditional culture of pottery making in the house of Gidan Sarkin Tukunya of Bauchi state. Touched the historical beginning of pottery making in the family, whereby the whole family members participated and production processes are shared between males and females. The materials used include clay, laterite and makuwa are sourced within and outside ancient city wall. The pot making is completely carried out by hand using the combined method of pinch, coil, and mould techniques. Polishing and makuwa application at leather hard stage are the only decoration methods used. Open bonfire is the only method used to fire pots in the house. Cow dung or sawdust are used to make circular bed and pots with heavy pots under and lighter ones on top, covered with grasses and fire set at once. The clay preparation, tools, production methods and firing of Gidan tukunya pottery have little or no difference from the pottery making of ancient time, yet this craft strives and the family depends on it for their livelihood.

Definition of Terms
1. **Bindiga**: Sudden burst
2. **Bakar Chiyawa:** Dark grass/open easily during firing
3. **Danniya**: Applying ashes and water
4. **Fitila**: Orange light during firing
5. **Gado**: Sawdust bed
6. **Gira**: Arranging in circular form
7. **Kanshi**: Smell of firing
8. **Kakkaya**: Surface roughness
9. **Karo**: Contribution of pots during firing
10. **Kome**: Under fired pots
11. **Rauno**: A grass with binding ability during firing
12**. Rufi:** Top part of the pot.
13. **Masa**: A fried cake of rice

Introduction
Pottery is one of the oldest art forms practiced by mankind. Ewule (2003) averred that pottery has its origin almost with the beginning of man and that no art traces the story of mankind on earth as clearly as pottery does. Traditional pottery can be described as clay hardened by the action of fire which in its widest sense includes a variety of material such as brick, terracotta, earthenware, stoneware, bone china and porcelain (Haggar, 1989).

Traditional pottery has served man in many ways ranging from kitchen crockery and hygiene tableware, baked clay for roofing, pottery tiles and likes (Haggar, 1989). Making of pot in Gidan *Tukunya* is almost as old as Nupe quarters situated in Bauchi Local

Government Area. Pottery mainly a womanôs occupation was a great source of revenue to women folk in the past (Idowu CPAN, 2009) Gidan *Tukunya* in Bauchi Local Government Authority in Bauchi State is a cottage styled pottery centre run by a family as its main source of livelihood. The viability of this industry in the face of competing alternatives remains a puzzle.

Historical Background of Gidan Sarkin *Tukunya* of Bauchi State

The nature of Hausa land is the type that names its settlement according to occupation, ethnic origin, learned individual or traditional title holder etc. Nupe quarters by its name suggested that the early settlers were of Nupe origin. *Gidan Sarkin Tukunya* of Bauchi state is located within Nupe quarters, which by its appearance it indicate that is one of the oldest houses in the quarters. The house main entrance is single door leading to a parlour referred as *ñZaureo* in Hausa language and a shop which serves as contact office and show room of the *Sarki*. Inside the house is the large compound with about nine units of houses scatted around, built with adobe dried bricks with various kinds of roofs. Some roofs are in ancient style of *(Azara*,) a spiky wood rafter and the top covered with sand and others roofed with zinc sheets that have changed color overtime.

In those days the tradition of Hausa people whereby a family follows a trend of occupation or trading and earn a title as a result of its originality, mastery of skill and or popularity e.g. a blacksmith and his children, a butcher and his children can earn the title of *Sarkin* Kira and *Sarkin* Fawa. Gidan *Sarkin Tukunya* of Nupe quarters fallows the same trend in which all the family members practiced the same tradition of pottery.

Pottery was predominantly the practice of women in ancient time and later taken over by men (Cooper, 1972). The pottery tradition of Gidan *Tukunya* was first started by a woman named Maryam who came from Katsina about a hundred years ago, married to a man of Nupe origin and settled within Nupe quarters(Hamisu oral interview). Her children followed her trend of pottery making over the years in which one of her grand children and second eldest Alhaji Bala earned the title of *Sarkin Tukunya* of Bauchi.

Clay/Material

Clay is common, abundant and highly precious to potter. Gidan *Tukunya* pottery centre source their clay which is of two types both secondary within Bauchi ancient city wall. One which is light ochre in colour and little sandy is sourced from Comprehensive Secondary School at Kofar Turum. While the other type is dark in colour high in plasticity but contain much more foreign matters, sourced from Gwallaga near the state Ministry of Works Headquarters. Laterite which is used as filler in the clay body is sourced from a place called Janruwa within Bauchi city. Another material used in Gidan *Sarkin Tukunya* is Makuwa (shiny earth) which is sourced from Zungur, Bauchi Local Government Area applied on green wares and give shiny effect after firing.

Clay Preparation

Clay preparation is mostly carried out by the potterôs children, where clay pots that are placed near a large tree and allowed to stay over night. It is then rid of stones and other foreign matter. There after they mix the clay with laterite as filler and wedged the clay thoroughly by hand to ensure workable condition of the body.

Tools

The potters have developed unique working tools which are of different types and perform various functions to the potters.

- *Dundunge* baked clay with convex outer shape very handy and little curve inward inner surface of a sphere which allows fantastic patting of clay.
- *Matattadi* is also an important tool in form of table tennis bat, but with a rectangle shape used for patting and shaping.
- *Tsumma* Rags of different sizes is use as brush to apply slip and also in-between model and mould.
- Polishing stone these are of different sizes some of quartz and some feldspar.
- Knife: for cutting excess clay to make even rim to allow coils of clay to be laid easily.

Production Techniques

The method of producing pots in *Gidan Tukunya* follows the same way ancient pots were shaped using the combination of

techniques such as coil, pinch and mould methods. The production is shared between the males and females members of the family as large items such as big pots for water, flower pots, and charcoal vessel as room warmer are produced by male members while items like *Masa* frying pan, cooking pot, incense burners and clay safes are produced by female members.

Whenever clay is ready the following steps are taken, for items produced by males clay pancakes are made by the children depending on the size of the item to produce. Models are lined about ten in number. Ashes are sprinkled on the models or covered with rag to prevent stickiness. The clay pancake is placed on the model by the children in organize way while the elders use Dundunge tool to pad the clay which form the base called Rufi in Hausa and shape up to belly part of the pot. Thereafter it ôs removed from the model and kept to set, while the work starts on another pot until certain numbers are produced. The second stage begins when the first pots have set awhile, building to form the desired shape start as children had already rolled coils of clay. The potters at this stage display skills as they move round the pot to trim with knife, apply slip using rag and place a coil of clay to build up the pot to the neck with combination of *Dundunge* and *Matattadi* tools in which one is placed inside and the other outside to shape the pot to a perfect round form with stable base which stand well without undulation on the tummy.

The other items produced by maleôs me mbers of the family follows the same stages but the polishing and decoration are carried out by the children under the supervision of the elder women. The female members of the family produce items that are for cooking use such as *Masa* frying pan, cooking pot, incense burner and clay safe which require polishing and some times decoration. Producing such pieces is done by pinching method. For frying pans seven to fifteen cups are produced allow to set for awhile and then joined together in circular shape and polished with stone. The cups have parabolic shape very convenient for scooping and turning of *masa* cake.

Decoration

The decoration is mostly carried out by women and children. They do not have special kind of decoration like incising or raised pattern decoration apart from covering the surface of their wares with Makuba slip which is sourced from Zungur Bauchi Local Government .Prepared by washing to remove large particles and soak in container. When the wares are not quite dry the slip is apply on the surface with rag and later smooth with stone which give it shine and make it less porous.

Firing

The firing in Gidan *Tukunya* has no difference with open bonfire of early time which is used to render pot impervious and give strength. The firing is carried out by women and works are jointly fired, quantity is decided according to contribution rendered in labour or firing materials. There are two firing site within the compound. When pots were thoroughly dried in the sun, the arrangement begins around 5:00pm as firing is mostly carry out in the evening, in the first firing site sawdust was poured to make bed in circular form then string of wood arranged which the potters called ñGiraò in Hausa. Then the po begin with heavy ones in circular form fallowed by lighter ones on top and smaller ones on top of them to form a conical shape. There after the wares are covered with grasses dark in colour called ñBakar Chiyawaò sprinkled all over it, the potters called Danniya meant to enhance burning and control the firing. Water was lastly sprinkled before the fire was set to make it burn slowly.

In the second site the firing arrangement was the same as the first site. The only difference was that cow dung was used instead of wood and the grasses used ò were cal Hausa which has a good bonding and does not open during firing. The firing began in the two sites at the same time; fire was set at the bottom round and burn continuously with out control. Sudden burst was heard during the firing which the potters cal Hausa and attributed to weak pot which was not well dried. A good firing is noticed by the appearance of orange colour flame in between the pots, the *Fitil* pòand also the called changes from smoke steam as the firing progressed indicate good firing as it gives good smell. The firing continues till the grasses are burnt completely while the ashes and charcoals under retained the heat till morning.

The selling of the pots begins in the early morning hours. Buyers come to select the fired

work as they are removed from the firing site. Under fired *Kom* pot are kept for the next firing. Pot which fired well with smoothed surface sell high then the one with the rough surface called *ó K a k k a y a ô*

Conclusion

Product of Gidan *Tukunya* pottery centre are essentially to meet the domestic need of members of their communities to provide storage facilities such as water and also produce utensil for cooking, charcoal vase for room warming and other purposes.

The potters seem too interested in functional wares then decorative pots. The interesting thing about their work is that the potters produced pots of almost the same thickness, shapes, sizes and very pleasing form that takes one time to differentiate. Their works have excellent foot and mouth rims with good body texture and pleasing surface effect. Another wonderful thing is that the potters are very enthusiastic, energetic and happy with their occupation. As it is only their viable means of sustaining their livelihood. Family of over 45 members living within the compound organize themselves in a productive set up and clear division of labour from clay preparation, pots making, firing, and selling. The income realize use to cater for their needs and upbringing of younger ones. With this organization, it is safe to conclude that a pottery centre organized along the lines of Gidan *Tukunya* pottery centre can indeed survive and thrive in this age.



Plate 1: Clay Preparation

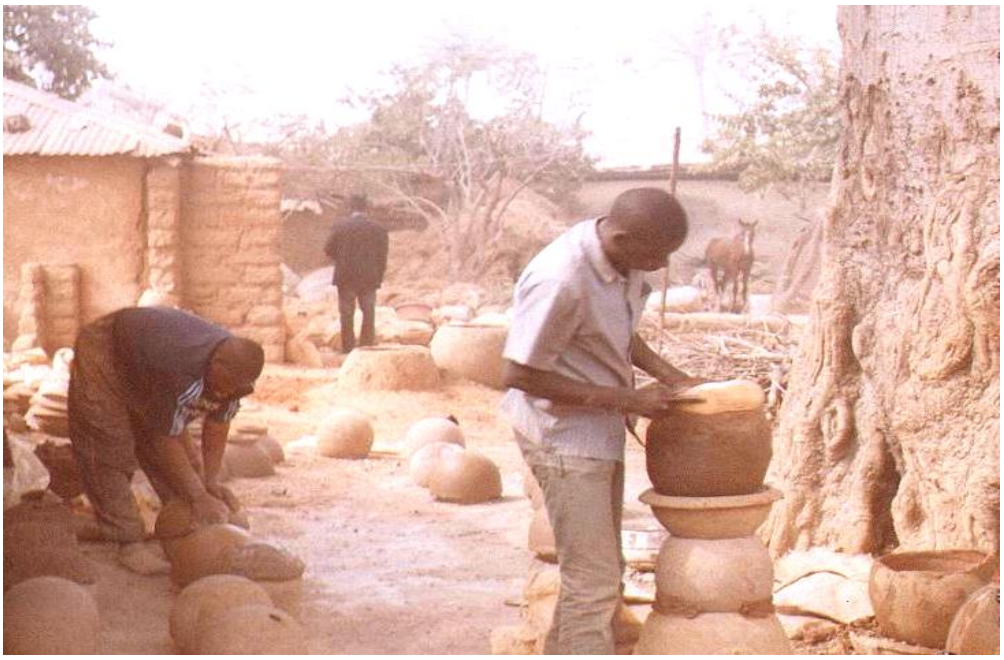

Plate 2: Male potter moulding



Plate 3: Male potter moulding

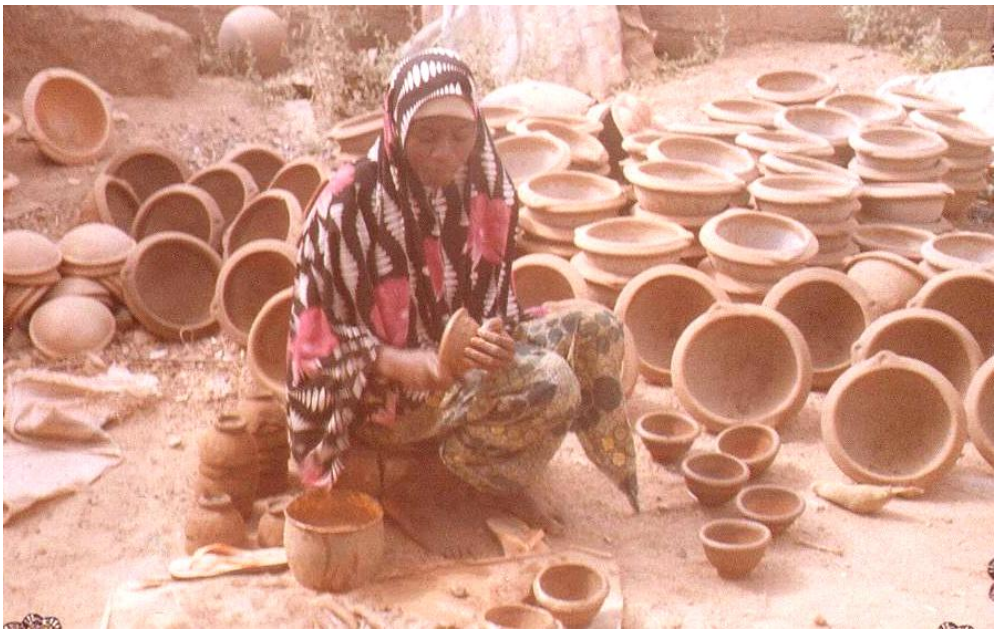

Plate 4: Female potter making Incense Burner



Plate 5: Female potter moulding



Plate 6: Female making Bake cake Pan



Plate 7: Girls Potting in the Compound



Plate 8: Women arranging Wares for Firing



Plate 9: Firing