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POTTERY

We have reported on a special ritual pot of the Shai people in a previous issue of the Research Review Vol.2 No.1 1965. Since then we have pursued a programme of research into pots and clay work generally. In this issue we report on (1) pots and bowls we have acquired since 1965 and (11) some aspects of our work on pots.

- (1) Large water cooler with handle and designs on the body.
Found in a deserted compound at Zaare near Bolgatanga.
Height 12 ins. Cat. 1 64.325.

- (2) Small pot found in a deserted compound at Zaare near Bolgatanga. Height $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Cat. 1 64.326.
- (3) Men's large food bowl; Bought by owner at Jamasi Ashanti. Obtained from Madam Ama Tanoa of Mampong-Ashanti. Age: c.60 years. Diameter 18 ins. Cat.1 65.54.
- (4) Food Bowl for three. (For men). Potter: Kyerewa of Begoro. Age c.60 years. Collected from Madam Abena Frempona of Begoro. Diameter 13 ins; $12\frac{1}{4}$ ins. Cat.1 65.61a-c.
- (5) Food bowl for two (For men) with designs and lid. Potter: Ama Obese of Begoro. Age: c.70 years. Collected from Madam Afua Sabea of Begoro. Diameters 12 ins. $11\frac{3}{4}$ ins. Cat. 1 65.62a-b.
- (6) Food bowl. Potter: Adwoa Nkroma of Agona Asafo. Commonly used in the Agona traditional area. Local name: Posi. Diameter $9\frac{3}{4}$ ins. Cat.1 65.105.
- (7) Food bowl - used by men - Grooved edge. Potter: unknown. Obtained from Madam Afua Akyea of Abetifi. Inherited property. Used for serving food for husband and guests. Diameter 15 ins. Cat. 65.114.
- (8) Food bowl with grooved edge. (For men). Used for serving food on festival days. Age estimated 40 years. Obtained from Ama Anane of Ahinase, Kwahu. Diameter 13 ins. Cat. 1 65.115.
- (9) Men's food bowl, with designed edge. Potter: Afua Firaye of Assin-Amoaben. Age est. 70 years. Local name = Asafo Agyei. Kwasi Dametey, son of the potter. Diameter 13 ins. Local name: Asafu Agyei. Cat. 1 66.33.

- (10) Soup Pot which style is no more moulded. Corrugated and grooved edge. Potter: Appiaa Yaa of Amoaben-Assin. Age est. 65 years. Local name: Kwansen. Cif. 27½ ins. Diameter 9 ins. Given by Madam Alaba Yeboawa, daughter of potteress. Cat. 1 66.34.
- (11) Miniature soup pot. Commissioned. Used mainly for cooking soup and or herbs for medicine. Potter: Madam Abia Korlekia of Numerse-Dodowah. - a potter since 1892. Local name: Kutu Cat. 1 66.25b.
- (12) Miniature food bowl. Commissioned. Potter Madam Abia Korlekia of Numerse-Dodowah. Local name: Tesaka Cat. 1 66.25c.
- (13) Miniature grating bowl. Commissioned. Potter Madam Abia Korlekia of Numerse-Dodowah. Local name: Kwadasam Kabi Cat 1 66.25d.
- (14) Grating bowl with inside rough and grooved edge. Unglazed. Commissioned. Potter: Afua Kumi of Mpraeso. Local name: Apotoyowa Diameter 10 ins. Cat. 1 65.129.
- (15) Small bowl with design at the base. Grooved and corrugated edge. Used for storage of ground pepper and stew. Potter Aberewa Gyankari of Assin Amoaben. Age est. 70 years. Local name: Ate mieensa. Given by Yaa Nkroma, daughter of Potter: Diameter 6¼ ins. 66.35.
- (16) Small bowl. Used for serving stew. Potter Aberewa Gyankari of Assin Amoaben. Given by Yaa Nkroma, daughter of the potter. Local name: Ayowa koraa. Diameter 5 ins. Cat. 1 66.36.
- (17) Palm-wine pot. Used solely for the collection of the wine from a felled palm tree. Potter Afua Kumi of Mpraeso, Kwahu. Local name: Akotokywa or Ahinawa. Cif. 26 ins. Cat. 165.99.

- (18) Palm-wind pot. Used for collection of the palm wine from the tapping base to the market. Potter: Abena Adwo of Mpraeso. Local name: Odonto. Cif: $34\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Cat. 1 65.101.
- (19) Palm-wine pot with Shai proverbial figures of snake and frog meaning "power is not invested in one object", on one side. Used for the collection of palm wine from the tapping base to the market. Potter: Agnes Ayongo Yumu-Cudjoe of Agameda. Commissioned. Local name: Dame. Cif: $35\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Cat. 1 66.23.
- (20) Two palm-wine pots of typical Shai style. Collected from the pot-firing ground at Hiowe Wem, on the Shai hills. Definitely made some time before 1892. Cif: 25 ins. Cat. 1 66.65.
- (21) Water storage pot. For the collection of water and at times palm-wine. In the case of the latter, from the tapping ground to the market. Potter: Abena Adwo of Mpraeso. Local name: Ahina. Cif: $39\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Cat. 1 65.100.
- (22) Water storage pot. Originally molded on the Shai hills before 1892, Potter: Madam Dagbleke Yomo. Collected from Okyame Tette Adesa of Doryumu near Dodowah. Height: $23\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Cif: $68\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Holds 20 gallons. Cat. 1 66.24.
- (23) Water storage pot (miniature size). Commissioned. Potter: Madam Abla Korlekie of Numerse-Dodowah. Local name: Iikoko. Cat. 1. 66.25a.

Excavated pottery in Shai, Gonja, and many other parts in Southern and Northern Ghana seem to justify the hypothesis that the tradition of pots and pot making in Ghana is very ancient. Writing in the Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana Vol. II of 1964, Dr. Davies suggested, after examining excavated Gonja unglazed and painted pottery with their intricate geometric designs, that since such pottery has no parallels in Arab world whence merchants travelled to Ghana in the ancient days the technique could be probably typically African.

In Northern and Upper regions of Ghana we have located the following places as other centres of serious pottery: Konkomba, Bugri in Temue, between Garu and Pusiga. It is only in Bugri that attempt to use the kiln method of firing has been made in Ghana. . . . Here they use white engobe in decorating their pots. The Bawku region specializes in food bowls. Zabilla which is between Bawku and Zuarungu makes grain storage pots. The village of Zari is the most outstanding centre of pottery in Bolgatanga. The Navrango region is also important. Fumbisi engages in a special line where the potters imitate the colour and texture of leather in their pots. Until today, Tsutsruga makes clay tobacco pipes. The architectural forms prevalent in the Wa find expressions in their pots. It has been suggested that Wa architecture seems to have been influenced by Islamic traditions. They are also believed to resemble Egyptian forms. Tamale is another region which has pottery.

In most places in the North, the technique of pottery is the coil¹ type.

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1. It has been suggested that this method has been carried over from the art of basketry. The idea is seen also in wheel pottery. Clay coils are built one on another. The "lines" of the coils disappear during further processing in the building of the pots. This method is used in Shai and many parts of the North.

The only centres of pottery we have looked at in Ashanti are Tafo and Pankrono. Tafo used to be a very famous centre and Captain Rattray in the early 1920s, studied and wrote about Tafo Pottery in his Religion and Art in Ashanti 1927.

Tafo pottery has unfortunately almost disappeared. There are at the moment less than a dozen serious potters. There is still something of their type of pottery left and this is evident in the few that are produced today. A few historic pots are still about and in the queen mother's house are a few pots kept as relics. A town Pankrono, only one mile north of Tafo on the great North Road, continues to make palm wine and water fetching pots of a type peculiar to the town. In Ashanti, their pottery technique is generally not coil but modelling² type.

In Southern Ghana, all Shai, Kwahus of Mpraeso and Abetifi, and the Ewes of Kpandu, Koloenu, and Vume, do serious pottery today. The Krobos, a neighbouring Adangme state of the Shais were but are not serious potters now.

Impliments

The impliments used for pottery in all the regions are very simple. They include, smoothing stones, "baling iron rings, empty com cobs, seed pot scrappers, smoothing and shaping sticks and beating or shaping bats.³

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2. Modelling. Generally supposed to be the very first method used in pottery. By skilful use of fingers a hollow is made in a clay and shaping is carried on until the pot emerges. The size of the required pot determines the size of the initial clay ball.
 3. They look like badminton bats. But the flat face end of the bat is smaller and the handle is not as long as that of badminton racket.

Considering the simplicity of the impliments, the clay forms that are produced with them are interesting. Many of them compare favourably with a lot of ceramic ware all over the world.

Raw Materials

In Southern Ghana, the clay for making pots are usually dug from the bed of streams and other water bodies. There are rituals for and prohibitions of, clay pits in Shai, Ashanti and the North. For example, it was insisted upon that girls who had not undergone puberty rites should not enter the pits in Shai. Men were not to go near the clay pits at all. The main stream, from the banks of which potters of Pankrono in Ashanti, get their clay, abhors menstrual blood.

For different kinds of pots, different mixtures of clay are made. Lighter clay is mixed with more plastic one for palm wine pots in Pankrono. Vume potters add ground up baked clay to their plastic clay and Shai potters make their clay suitable for use by adding rock dust.

Techniques

We have seen the Modelling and Coil techniques in Ashanti, Eweiland and Shai, the North respectively. Wheel pottery is new and it is used mainly by those who were trained in Achimota in the early 1940s or those who have had some formal training in school or in the workshops of trained wheel potters. The potter's wheel is not used by traditional potters but the rotundity and perfect symetry in Shai pots, for example is remarkable. We note for example that Andreas Riis, a Basel Missionary in 1853 expressed his surprise in a German E. Missionary Magazine and said "The Shai people are well known potters and as one who knows something of the matter, I had to admire how they form the pots so easily freiland and burn them with straw. They make them as beautifully round as if they made on a wheel."

We are building up source material on all the techniques that exist in Ghana and this material will soon be available in the Institute.

Smoking Pipes

In the course of various excavations we have discovered a number of clay pipes. Smoking pipes, of course, have been found useful by the historian^{4,5} because it is able to help give, for example, rough dates, at least, to ruined towns. This is done by establishing the basic history of a tobacco pipe relic. Examples of excavated pipes from Ladoku, a town near Prampram, believed to have been abandoned round about 1720 has provided simple dating evidence for the development of early styles of pipes in the Accra.

Kinds of Pots

We have seen thirty five kinds in Shai alone, ten in Ashanti, eight in Vume near Tefle and close on sixteen in the North. We evidently have not seen all the kinds that are said to be present in the North yet. Among those we have seen are ritual pots, "treasure boxes", food bowls, soup, water fetching, water storing and grain storing pots, buckets, tobacco pipes and terra-cotta heads.

Among the pots we have acquired are a few with ancient history behind them. For example No.22 Cat. I No.66.24 in I above. Estimated age 90 or more.

4 and 5 Paul Ozanne - Diffusion of Smoking pipes in West Africa.
Paper I.S.A. Source Library Legon.
Evolution of Clay Pipes in Ghana. I.A.S.
Ethnographic Museum.