

Nigeria

Ozizza pottery: a Heritage Resource in Afikpo Community, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Introduction

This paper reports on the investigations of potsherds recovered from excavation at one of the 10 rock shelters (*gba-Eju*) in Ozizza, Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria with particular emphasis on their attributes and functions. Archaeological fieldwork was paired with ethnographic investigations in order to understand the longterm development of potting traditions in the area.

Pottery is the oldest crafting tradition among the inhabitants of Eastern Nigeria. Examples of potting communities in Eastern Nigeria are the Inyi in Udi/Awgu highland, Oha Ndiagu on the Nsukka plateau Enugu State, Nunya in Isuikwuato scarplands in Ishiagu in Abia State and Ozizza in Afikpo North, Ebonyi State (Ekechukwu 2002). In some places such as in Northern Nigeria, men are associated with pottery making (especially in digging out clay from clay pits); while in other places, specifically in Ozizza, pottery rest exclusively in the hands of the womenfolk (Okpoko & Okonkwo 2010). According to Oyeoku (2000), pottery production in Afikpo uplifts the status and dignity of women. The art was handed down by Ozizza ancestors called *Ndiegu*.

Scholars such as Ibeanu (2000), Ali (1999, 2005) and Oyeoku (1999) have conducted research on pottery-making within the surrounding areas (Inyi and Afikpo). The primary material for pottery making is clay. Primary clay is found in the parent bedrock at the foot of the hills and slopes, while secondary clay is found around the streams. The potters take preference in the collection of clay in their secondary form than the tedious task of digging out primary clay. Be that as it may, newly procured clay is spread and dried in the sun for two, three or more days. Oyeoku (1999) aptly described this process as weathering, and this helps to improve the clay while increasing its plasticity.

After the sun-drying of clay, the quantity of clay to be used is crushed into small pieces on a crushing hollow formed on a bedrock located close to the house. The crushed clay is then sieved; and the fine clay is poured into a big pot or bowl and soaked in water for a few days until it acquires a sour smell. The process enables the clay to become soft and thoroughly slaked. Thereafter, kneading takes place. The spots where kneading takes place are first swept and smeared with ashes before some quantities of grog are poured out. The clay subsequently follows and finally another quantity of grog is poured. The potters then tread upon them raising their legs alternately until they are thoroughly mixed together. Water is added intermittently to the mixture. This process is continued until the desired workable paste is achieved.

The next stage is pottery formation. The potter usually conceptualizes the purpose of the pot and this concept guides her throughout the production stages. Potters in Ozizza and Afikpo surrounding areas use free hand coiling technique in forming pots. According to Clark (1964) this is achieved by using long coils of clay approximately the thickness of one's thumb. A pot is formed by cutting a lump from the heaped worked clay and by rolling the paste into cylindrical coils of about half an inch in diameter and a foot or more in length depending on the thickness as well as the type of pot the potter wants to form. When it is elongated, the potter uses her left hand to cut it into rolls and places the rolls on the floor in which ash had already been poured. The essence of the ash is to prevent the rolled balls of clay from sticking to the ground.

Once enough coils are made, she picks up one of the rolls in her right hand, smears and squeezes this into her left hand to form a miniature bowl. She picks another coil and in an anti-clockwise direction, adds the coil to

the small bowl. When the bowl reaches a stage that she can no longer carry it on her palm, she carefully places it on a broken neck of an old pot, which serves as a stand. The process is continued until the desired height and size are achieved. The potter then smoothens the inside and outside walls before placing the pot in the open air to dry.

The next stage that generally follows is the decoration stage. Decorations on pottery reflect the overall values of the culture of which they are a part. The most predominant decorations in the areas are burnishing, punctuate, net impression and incision. These decorations are usually functional as they leave rough surfaces which enhance the gripping and carrying of the pots. Burnishing involves rubbing of the surface of leather hard pot with smooth objects like broken pieces of calabash and coconut shells to produce a shiny smooth surface. Incised decoration refers to either a delicately engraved line or a low relief pattern made with broader tools. As observed by Ali (2009) incision can be done with a point or with a broad blade, a piece of bamboo or reed, cut like a bread pen.

Firing is the final stage. Ibeanu (2000), Ali (1999, 2005) and Oyeoku (1999) have revealed that pots and other ceramic wares are typically fired at a communally designated firing area called *Ohuhuite*. In each pottery season (usually in dry season – November to March), a new *Ohuhuite* site is chosen and cleared by all the potters. There were no tales of the activities of the goddess; thus, no sacrifice of any kind is performed. Prayers, according to oral tradition, are only offered to summon God (*Ezeukwu*) to assist them during the firing of pots. *Ozizza* potters believe that the firing of a pot determines to a large extent the success or failure of the art. This process could be exciting and fascinating as well as heartbreaking; hence, every potter is usually very anxious at this stage. The mood of *Ozizza* potters during firing is corroborated by some scholars that potters are always in suspense, not knowing what will befall them during firing (Agu 1990; Aliyu 2001; Ali 2009).

The main focus of this research was to study *Ozizza* pottery to understanding the human occupation in the area. This research work would be the first of its kind, in that no such work has been conducted in *Ozizza*. The study will also strengthen other works already carried out in Afikpo with that of its closest neighbour (Okigwe) in other to reconcile them with the work of Ekechukwu (2002), whose aim is to inventory all the archaeological sites found

at Nsukka-Okigwe-Afikpo cuesta for tourism. After all, archaeological sites are valuable resources and when harnessed will be opened for tourism and thus, answer the clarion call for job creation and poverty alleviation.

The *Ozizza* potters are aged women, as the youths (girls) and married women lack interest in the art of pottery. There is a fear that if pottery tradition goes extinct in *Ozizza*, the art will only be remembered in stories, songs and myths like most African phenomena. This explains why there is a need to document this tradition.

Finally, this research arose because there has not been a systematic study of the archaeology of *Ozizza*, although there had been archaeological research done in the cuesta. Therefore, this study compared pottery wares recovered from our study with the contemporary *Ozizza* pottery wares with a view to identify continuity and change in the study area as well as understanding or to throw more light on the human occupation of the area.

Research methods

This research report is primarily an ethnoarchaeological one employing archaeological survey (archaeological reconnaissance and excavation) and ethnographic method (in-depth and semi-structured interviews) to obtain primary data.

The archaeological survey is vital and indispensable in any excavation or fieldwork and helps in the collection of surface/sub-surface data. Ogundele (2000) asserted that more considerable attention should be paid to surface research, which makes it possible for the archaeologist to have some insight on how man has broadly used space at one time or the other, or the relationships between man and terrestrial space. In October 2012, we did initial research of *Ozizza* for fieldwork preparations as well as to acquaint ourselves with the research study location. We conducted a reconnaissance survey, which allowed us to locate some attractive sites and identify essential individuals for interviews. The reconnaissance survey also allowed us to determine and observe proof of previous human activities in the research location to assist us in determining specific possible sites for the research. The potential sites identified were recorded and mapped for a more comprehensive research study. We subsequently identified both elders and knowledgeable persons in *Ozizza* as essential informants and finally evaluated those that made up the respondents for in-depth interviews. This preliminary study lasted for twenty days.

In the second phase of the fieldwork, which occurred in December 2012, we studied the ethnographic resources (natural and cultural features) in Ozizza and their GPS coordinates. This allowed us to map the site utilising a portable GPS device. In February 2013, we revisited Ozizza and conducted an archaeological excavation. We also surveyed pottery wares currently in use and compared them with those we excavated to determine culture continuity. Conservation practices of both natural and cultural resources were further studied. The visit lasted for four months (February to May 2013). Our concluding visit was in February 2014 when we revisited Ozizza to revalidate our data.

The archaeological reconnaissance lead to the identification of ten rock shelters (*gba-eju* in Ozizza). The depths of the rock shelters (RS 1 to 10), height, length, cavity/width, and degree were recorded. Also, surface cultural deposits identified through on-the-spot assessment and reconnaissance were recorded (see Table 1). The deposits revealed bat guano, fishing nets, a stone tripod stand, potsherds and a pot. However, of the ten rock-shelters, RS/10 has the highest concentration of cultural material, and thus, it was earmarked for excavation (see Figure 1).

N/S	Depth	Cavity /width	Height	Length	Degree	Cultural deposit
Ogba-Eju RS1	0.26m	7.8m	2.14m	8m	50°SE	None
Ogba-Eju RS2	0.28m	10m	1.9m	44m	45°NE	None
Ogba-Eju RS3	0.41m	8.3m	1.9m	4m	60°SW	None
Ogba-Eju RS4	0.24m	4.1m	1.7m	7.8m	30°NW	None
Ogba-Eju RS5	0.09m	8.8m	4m	3.8m	80°NE	Pot
Ogba-Eju RS6	-	8.5m	2.2m	2.5m	50°NE	Pot and potsherds
Ogba-Eju RS7	-	18.6cm	8m	2.5m	90°SW	-
Ogba-Eju RS8	0.23	4.9m	6.1m	4m	20°NW	pot
Ogba-Eju RS9	0.25m	9.50m	2.70m	4.50m	40°NW	Stone, tripod stand, Ash and black coating on the wall of rock shelter, Pot and potsherds.
Ogba-Eju RS10	0.17m	20.00m	3.50m	4.40m	50°SE	Fish nets, Stone, Tripod Stand, Ash, pots and Potsherds.

Table 1: Measurements of the rock shelters and their depth.



Figure 1: *Ogba-Eju* Rock Shelter Ten (RS/10) – the excavated site.

On the other hand, the ethnographic research method provides opportunities for respondents to talk freely and in detail. The semi-structured interview involves a conscious effort to guide and steer the discussion towards the particular interests of the researcher by either using a series of written or memorised prompts, or a carefully planned interview guide (Okpoko & Ezech 2011: 69).

Ethnography has expanded to become established as one of the vital study elements connected with a qualitative research study. This qualitative study method dates to many centuries ago, and first begun with anthropologists (Holloway *et al.* 2010). Ethnographers that usually adopt in-depth interviews and participant observation to accumulate information usually are confronted with the quandary of staying unbiased and also moral in their information collection procedure, along with generating reports that can be reproducible (Eyisi & Okonkwo 2019).

In-depth and semi-structured meetings with a number of rigorously chosen individuals were carried out. A total number of 35 individuals from among knowledgeable persons in the Ozizza community were selected. Their selection was based on their ranks and positions within and outside the Ozizza community. A non-probability sampling method was used in selecting the individuals to be interviewed. Here, we identified one member of some population of interest and interviewed the participant and after, offered an opportunity for the person to suggest another interviewee(s) who might be knowledgeable on the subject. Using this strategy, ten titled men, seven craftsmen, ten pottery makers, and also eight clan heads were recognized and interviewed using an interview guide. 'Snowball sampling often leads the researcher into a realm he/she knows little about' (Okonkwo & Ikegwu 2020).

Ethnographic interviews were conducted in December 2012 and zeroed mainly on understanding past subsistence practices, technological know-how and cultural festivities. The subsistence practice identified was farming. The technological know-how was pottery making, while cultural festivities were new-yam festival (*Iri-ji*), masquerading and *mgba* (wrestling). According to the respondents, perfection in any local craft and *mgba* was by regular participation or by apprenticeship. The clustered settlement in Ozizza gave room for the inhabitants to interact very closely with each other and to share things in common. Furthermore, ethnographic data revealed pottery production processes, decoration, types and func-

tions. Ethnographic method proved to be useful in gathering data for our research as the persons interviewed gave excellent information, provided more in-depth answers and a full range of data. The information was gathered with tape/video recorders in addition to field notes. Photographs, documents, and field observations were likewise made throughout this inquiry.

Execution of the reconnaissance survey and excavation

In order to actualise the purpose of the research during the reconnaissance, the following tools were employed: compass, black and white scale, metal tape, ranging poles and calliper. The compass was used to determine directions which showed that Ozizza lies due south of upper Afikpo. The metal tape was used to measure the distance of all the sites reading from Amainyime town hall (our datum point). Black and white scale was used to initiate the North of each site identified. A Vernier calliper was used to measure the thickness of artefacts found *in-situ* and at the surface collection. These tools were also handy during the excavation in Rock Shelter 10 at *Ogba-Eju*.

Archaeological excavations at *Ogba-Eju* RS/10 began on 03 February 2013 and ended on 28 May 2013. The study being a pilot one, we used a test pit of 2 meters by 2 meters choosing an arbitrary spit level of 20 cm (0-20 cm, 20-40 cm...100-120 cm in an ascending order); at a depth of 120 cm, there was no evidence of cultural materials, indicating a sterile layer; as a result, the excavation stopped at the depth of 120 cm. Materials recovered during excavation include potsherds, charcoal, snail shells, palm kernels, fishnet, tripod stand, polished stone, hook, metal steel, a pot, among others. Due to financial constraints, these materials are yet to be dated. The potsherds (rim and body sherds) from the excavated pit were compared with the pottery tradition of the contemporary Ozizza people focusing on the motifs, techniques and use(s). To effectively do the comparison, we collected some pottery wares from Ozizza potters and thus, examined them with the excavated water pot. The comparison of the excavated water pot and contemporary Ozizza water pots shed more light on the history and activities of potters in the area. This enabled our understanding of continuity and change in time perspective as well as the likely factors that could have stabilised or brought about the possible change in pottery tradition in the study area.

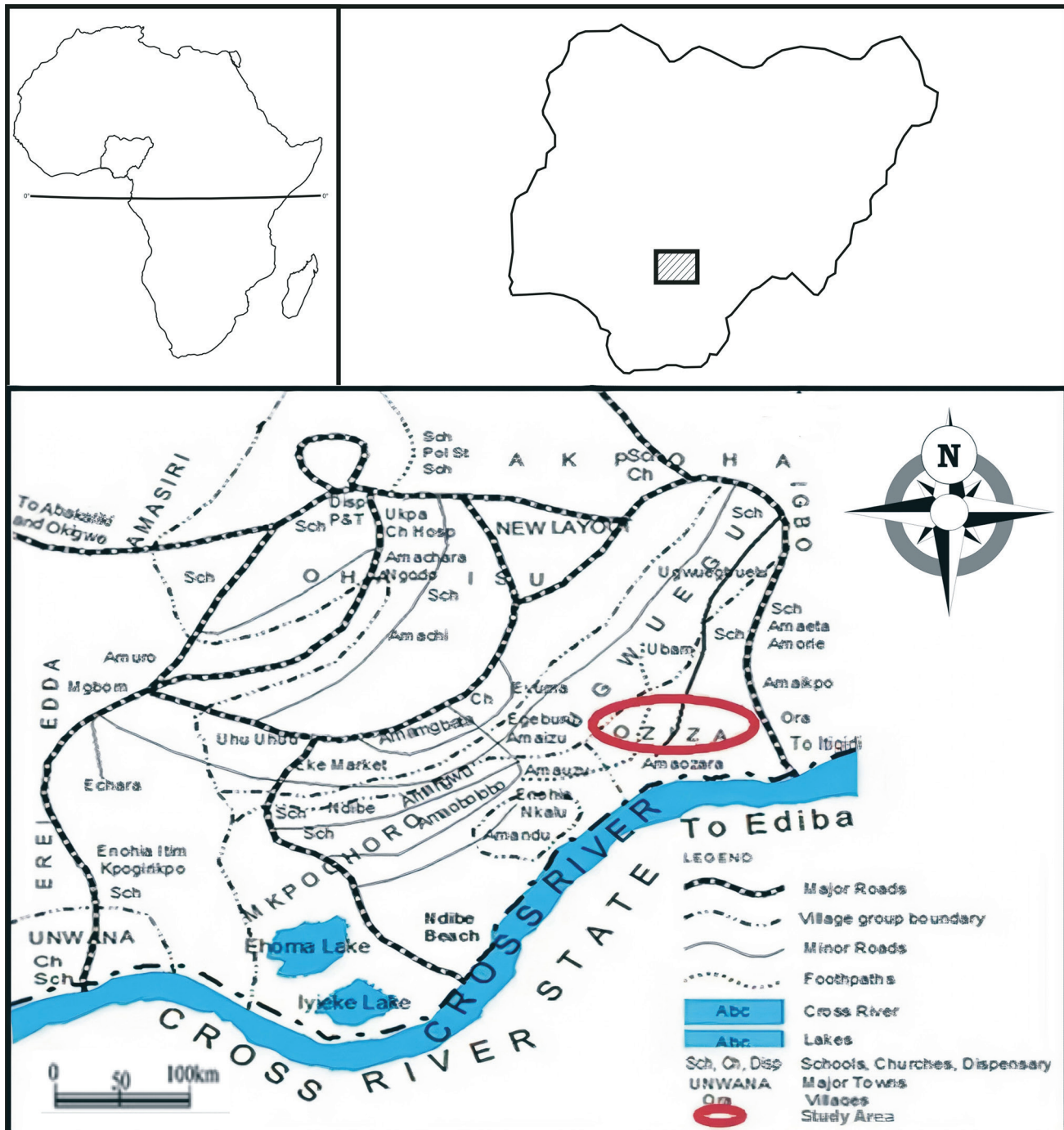


Figure 2: Map of Afikpo showing Ozizza archaeological site.

Ozizza town: geographical location

Ozizza is a town in Afikpo North and is located on the axis of 50, 54N and 70 560E. The town is a sub-group of Afikpo, situated on a hill, with undulating plains, and lies between N900E north of Upper Afikpo. It is located East of Ugwuegu and Ukpa rock shelters with a total area of 24.32 km². It has four sub-groups of villages namely

Amainyime, Amaori, Amaeta and Urrah. Ozizza town is an Igbo-speaking enclave that settled at this present position many generations ago (see Figure 2). The principal occupations of Ozizza settlers are farming, fishing, hunting and pottery making. The people also engage in wrestling, especially during festivities. Ozizza has unique and similar geomorphology and two central lithological units

characterise the geomorphology: (a) Siliceous sandstone and carbonaceous shale (b) calcareous sandstone and grey shale (Andah & Anozie 1980/81). Ozizza has undulating topography with sandstone forming prominent ridges. The cuesta where the *Ogba-Eju* (rock shelters) are located possessed a robust scarp features that caused the shale to be underlaid with much broader flat flowing lowlands which are flooded during the rainy season.

The vegetation cover of Ozizza falls within the Guinea Savanna zone. Tall trees and grassland characterise it, as exemplified by the presence of raffia palm, silk cotton tree; shrubs and bamboos found especially at Amaeta village. The road to the village is always flooded during the rainy season and the only access to the village during rainy periods is by canoe. High temperature and climate fluctuations also characterise Ozizza, but the wind action is stable. The Ozizza community has large hectares of land for farming and thus, has many foodstuffs with a pleasant climate. Ozizza cuesta has fatty mineral deposits. During reconnaissance, coal deposits were found at Amaori village; while shale and grained sandstones were found at *Ogba-Eju*. Ibeanu (2000) reported that coal, shale and grained sandstone deposits were found at Okigwe cuesta, precisely at Ihube and Ugba junctions. All these mineral deposits have not been utilised for commercial purposes.

Data presentation and analysis

A total number of 290 artifacts (see Table 2) were recovered from the excavated rock shelter (RS/10); however, the focus here is on potsherds. The potsherds were sorted into decorated (n=95) and undecorated categories (n=57). The findings from the excavated materials implied that although there was continuity in the pottery in the area regarding production and body design, there was a gradual change in the design of the body by the people, time and space. It is hoped that more information will be revealed when these materials are dated. The findings reveal a good number of potsherds, the most common feature of body design are undecorated, followed by punctuate, while other classifications were virtually absent. It would be noted, therefore, that technological advancement could have led to the inclusion of burnish in the body design which was absent in the older methods of design. This is attributed to the desire to inculcate desirable attributes such as colour and to increase the strength and hardness of the pottery material. Motifs observed are undecorated, burnished,

punctuate, groove, punctuate and criss-cross, punctuate and incision. The excavated potsherds had unburnished, burnished and composite (burnished and dotted lines).

Furthermore, results from the excavated materials showed evidence of unburnished bodysherds. Also, burnished body design occurred in all the spits except in spit 100 cm-120 cm where the identified body applique was composite (burnished, dotted line, burnished and incision). It is argued here that the method of design stems from the applications used by the early inhabitants, and differences in the applications could be attributed as a result of modernisation which geared towards the need of the modern man in a global environment. The only body applications used in almost all the levels was burnished undecorated. In essence, ethnographic data as well as our observations revealed that the burnished motif is a particular body application in the area for continuity and change of pottery making in Afikpo, Abakiliki formation.

The most common rim design application in contemporary Ozizza pottery represented by the surface level collection was composite (groove, incision, net impression and perforations) whereas the potsherds recovered from excavation have rim applications as unburnished with the horizontal incision. In some instances, we had unburnished as the only common application. Other observed applications were in the rim: horizontal incision, dotted and burnished. Spit level 20-40 cm did not observe any of the applications since no rim was recovered (this may be attributed to the sedentary life of the occupants of the rock shelter). However, in spit level 1-20 cm, the observed motifs are vertical or curvilinear or oblique with burnish, as well as groove, multiple incision, net impression and perforations. These results confirmed change and continuity of pottery tradition in Afikpo. This change is from a simple rim design to more complicated and sophisticated design applications. The intentions of the producers could be to confer more security (tamper-proofing) on the pottery.

The pottery neck did not experience much change since the only classification observed was only in spit level 80-100 cm. Therefore, the neck of the pottery produced in Afikpo, Abakiliki formation was not accorded any significance by the buyers and producers alike.

Items	Surface	0 cm-20 cm	20 cm-40cm	40 cm-60 cm	60 cm-80 cm	80 cm-100 cm	100 cm-120 cm	Total	%
Bottle	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Potsherds	7	36	66	8	17	18	-	152	52.41379
Pot	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	01	0.344828
Charcoal	3	8	3	4	2	1	-	21	7.241379
Metal steel	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Snail shells	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	06	2.068966
Kernel shells	3	26	12	-	-	-	-	41	14.13793
Zinc	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	03	1.034483
Quartzite	-	1	7	1	-	-	-	09	3.103448
Quartz	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	01	0.344828
Rock	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	08	2.758621
Clay	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Plastic	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	02	0.689655
Rock outcrop	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Palm kernel	-	14	-	1	-	-	-	15	5.172414
Aluminum	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	03	1.034483
Hook and net	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Fish net	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	04	1.379310
Coiled wire	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Grind stone	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Tripod stone	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Plants/trees	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	02	0.689655
Tin Tomatoes Can	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Snare	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Polish stone	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.344828
Seed husks	3	7	1	-	-	-	-	11	3.793103
Total	38	104	91	16	19	21	01	290	100.0000

Table 2: Distribution of materials recovered at *Ogba-Eju* RS/10 (level by level).

Pottery Typology

From information gathered via ethnographic study, the pots were classified according to their functions. The hemispherical wide and semi-wide neckless pot *mgbuku/uguru-onu* and bowl *oku* or *ite-ohe* are used for water storage and soup making. Others in these categories are *nja* (i.e. small pots and bowls) and *oshishi* which served as

sacrificial wares and were also used for serving kola nuts. In essence, pots and bowls can be used for any purpose as long as the type meets the purpose. The pottery wares recovered from various spit levels during excavation have similar functions with the contemporary pottery wares of Afikpo community. In-depth interviews with four Ozizza potters and on-the-site assessment revealed that pottery

are hollowares and are grouped into pots (*ite*) and bowls (*nja* or *oku*). Pots come in numerous forms for specific uses. For example, the *ite Mgbuku/Oguru-onu* is used for water storage, *ite ohe* is used to cook soup, *ite iwa* for cassava processing, *ite mai/ite okpogo* is used for preserving local dry gin and *ite erusi* serves for ritual. The bowls or *oku* are used for bathing, with specific forms such as the *njaohé* for eating, *nja manu* used to store palm oil, *mpaleka* for local palm oil lantern, and the *oshishi* is used to both serve kola nut and in rituals.

Ozizza in particular and Afikpo in general have uniform pottery wares. The uniformity was seen from pottery materials excavated from Ogba-Eju rock shelter (RS/10). Hartle (1966) at Ukpa rock shelter (550-1050 BC); Andah and Anozie (1980/1981) at Ukpa rock shelter (150-50 BC), and Chikwendu (1976) at Ugwuegu (1020+90 BC) made similar assertions that the similarity centered on the motifs of decoration. The decorative motifs are burnishing and combination of burnish with groove, incision, criss-cross among others. Their attributes and functions are almost the same. For instance, we observed in the course of our ethnographic research that all Ozizza and Afikpo pottery wares are shaped in the form of globular/oval or spherical necked pot made up of heavy and sturdy rim-sherds with an average diameter of 21 cm. The shape is what one can comfortably call an Igbo ware because similar vessels were equally found in other parts of Igbo communities such as Igboukwu, Okigwe and

Inyi (Shaw 1970; Ibeanu 2000, 1989). Ozizza people in particular, and Afikpo in general also makes hemispherical wide and semi-wide pots and bowls. These pots were used and are still in use within the communities and environs. Examples are *Mgbuku* pots, pitcher pots, *njaerusi*, *mpalaka* and *Ite Okpogo*, used for wine and water storage, fetching water rituals, lantern, ceremonial wares or sacrificial wares. Bowls are *njaoji* and *njaoshishi*. All these bowls (*nja*) serve different functions, according to motive and tradition, as their shapes confer functionality upon a bowl. Arising from the motive and function, we have soup bowl, eating bowl, cassava processing bowl, ritual/sacrificial bowls, kola nut storage bowl, fishing bowls and kola nut serving bowls. Ali (1991) and Oyeoku (1976) reported *njaogodo* (eating bowl with raised pedestal/foot), *Ite Okpogo* (wine pot), and *Ite-mgbere/itemaa* (ritual pot) were also made in other Afikpo communities. It should be noted that Amaeta-Ozizza potters acknowledged these various pots as among their products; however, not all the products were found within those finished wares made at the point of our visits in 2012 and 2013. According to the potters, some pots (ritual/sacrificial bowls) are made on-demand; while pottery wares used on a daily basis (water pots, eating bowl, wine pots, pitcher pots, cassava pots etc.) are produced more often because of their easy sales and uses. Ozizza potters also acknowledged making *njaerusi* towards the *Ihe akwukwo* oat taking at Ogba-Eju boundaries between two communities, Ozizza and Akpoha in Afikpo.

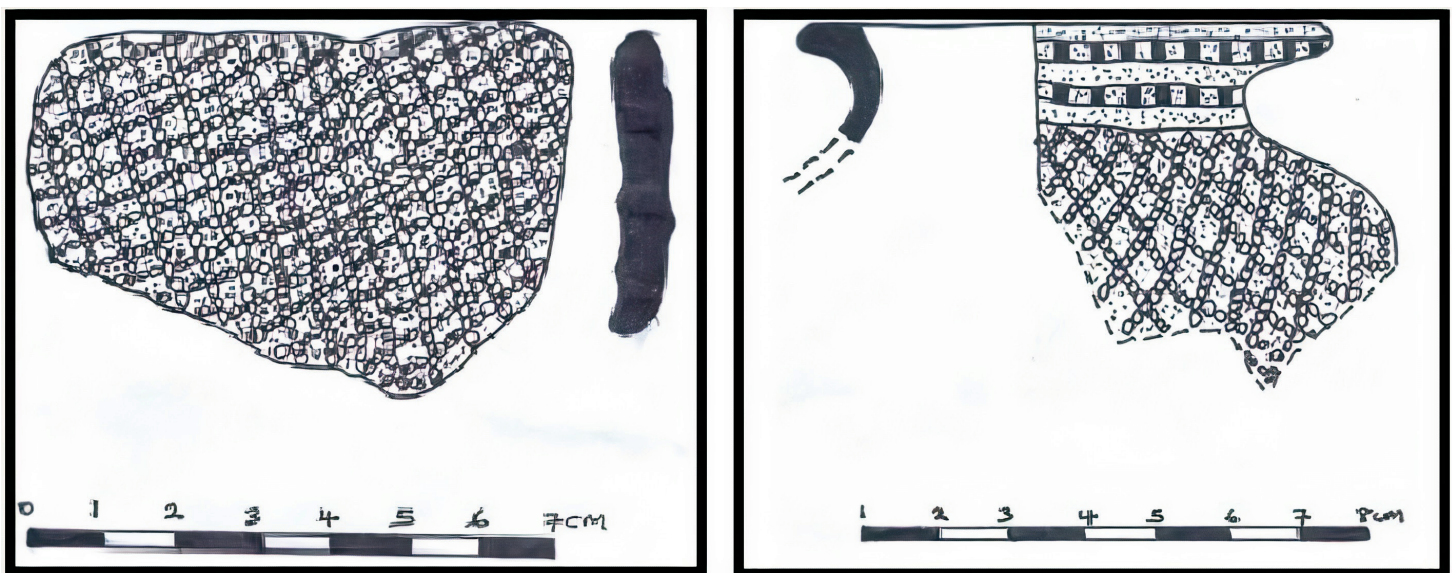


Figure 3: Reconstruction of body and rim sherds recovered from excavation (RS/10).

From the excavated pottery wares, pottery typology focuses on its attributes and functions. Pottery by attributes was categorically captioned type A, B and C. The type A category comprises globular/oval and spherical necked pots called *mgbuku/uguru-onu*. This belongs to the pot, characterised by the thickness measuring 6 cm and 9 cm respectively. It has heavy and sturdy rim potsherds with an average diameter of 21 cm. The vessel is similar to the pots excavated by Ibeanu at Uhuchukwu cave and Ihube in Okigwe Abia State, Nigeria (Ibeanu 2000). The set also has a pitcher pot and medium water pot with the rim measuring 2 cm and 3 cm in thickness and 7 cm and 9.5 cm in diameter respectively. The pot types are heavy with funnel mouths. The second category (type B) is the hemispherical wide and semi-wide neckless pots called *mgbuku/uguru-onu* and bowl called *oku* or *ite-ohe*. Others in these categories are *nja* and *oshishi* small pots and bowls labelled type C, represented with similar criteria; they are also heavy, sturdy and bigger in size. The thickness of the rims are 2.7 cm and 3.3 cm and diameter 8 cm and 7 cm, respectively. Other potsherds recovered from the different spit levels have the same decorative motif with the present potters wares. The people were not into much decoration, and burnish was abundant and most significant. Also common are composite designs.

Relevance of pottery to archaeology

According to Clark (1964) the work of the potter is highly prized in Japan and the proceeds from the sale of one pot are often very rewarding. The above statement re-assured us that pottery, as a craft is a valued work not only in the developed world, but also here in Ozizza town of Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebony State, Nigeria.

Among the Ozizza, pottery wares are valuable objects for the promotion of cultural heritage. It is a symbol of material and spiritual heritage, well integrated into the living patterns of the people and inseparable from their spiritual philosophies. It is true that local crafts, of which pottery is a part, are an important element of the people's economy; and if strengthened, they hold the potential to develop and create jobs for Ozizza people.

Pottery is of great value to archaeology. One of the best ways of learning to appreciate pots, of course, is to visit museums and exhibitions (as well as production sites) (Trevor 1966). The value of pottery to archaeology cannot be overemphasized particularly in this part of the world where climatic conditions inhibit the preservation

of organic archaeological materials. As noted by Billington (1962) pottery cannot be destroyed by natural means and that is what makes potsherds so valuable to the archaeologists, who may find in them the only evidence of some vanished race.

Potsherds can also aid in the reconstruction of the people's way of life. The pottery tradition of a people can also give an insight into their agricultural life. As Clark (1970) puts it, this could be gleaned from the use of corn cob in decorating their wares. This type of decoration sets a time limit to the period when such pots were made because corn did not reach Africa until it was introduced from the new world (Clark 1970).

Agorsah (1983) effectively demonstrated the common origin of two settlements from petrographic analysis of potsherds. The discovery of material remains such as potsherds/pottery in an archaeological site is a discovery of great importance; hence, a great wealth of information can be gained from its study. By examining the method of manufacture, an archaeologist will be able to reveal the technological development of the group of people from which the pottery came.

Pottery to an archaeologist is almost an object of sedentism. Its appearance and development signify an important stride in the progress of man and it helps man to probe more about himself (Okpoko & Okonkwo 2010). Again, through a microscopic study of the residue left in a pot, the contents of an abandoned pot can be revealed. Ethnographic analogy can also be made through the typology of pottery. This can further be applied to the site itself where the pottery was excavated; more importantly too, the date of production can be more accurate if there is any decoration on the pot. Put in a summary form, archaeologists use pots and potsherds found in sites to study the culture, chronology, trade, processes of economic organization, etc. of a people. Thus, an in-depth knowledge of the heritage resources of Ozizza people can be obtained through a study of their pottery tradition.

Conclusion

This work is centered on the pottery tradition of Ozizza community in Afigbo North local government area, Ebony State, Nigeria. The study employed ethnoarchaeological method in its data collection; in the course of the oral interviews, we were informed of the existence of rock-shelters which we later studied. The rock shelters were studied and excavation was carried out in one

(RS/10); materials like potsherds were recovered. A total of 152 potsherds were recovered, the potsherds were compared with the pottery tradition of the extant Ozizza population focusing on the motifs, techniques and uses. Analysis of the potsherds further revealed continuity with insignificant change.

As in other parts of Nigeria, only traditional pots can be used to perform certain social, medicinal and ritual functions. In parts of Igboland for example, ‘a type of hemispherical bowl (*Oku*) – in Ozizza, it is called *ite-erusi* and *nja-erusi* (used for ritual and sacrifices) – with all parts of its body covered with perforations acts as a special container for materials used in curing certain ailments’ (Onwuejeogwu 1976). There is still a high demand for traditional pottery in Ozizza because of its relatively lower price and the various functions it still performs in spite of the presence of other types of wares (enamel, plastic and glass wares).

The ingenuity of Ozizza people in the collection of clay, the preparation, kneading, rolling and forming of pots as well as their decoration and firing etc, to a great extent attest to the technological advancement of a people whose culture has survived up to the present. In Ozizza, it is still one of the major occupations by women even though it is still associates with elderly women who are now very few in number. Their products are marketed mainly in Calabar, Cross River State; Aba in Abia State, Abakiliki and Afikpo in Ebonyi State and still flourishes to date, though technological advancement has enhanced its production and use. Pottery wares of Afikpo still catch up with time particularly with those meant for wine storage; local dry gin, cassava processing and ceremonial uses. All these propel their need despite modernity.

Finally, the documentation of pottery tradition in Ozizza now will afford us the opportunity to know the changes and trends in its development. This approach will leave an imprint for our future generations on the craftsmanship of pottery production in Ozizza in particular and Afikpo in general.

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