

Engendering Pottery Production and Distribution Processes among the Kisi and Pare of Tanzania

Dr. Shakila Halifan Mteti¹

Abstract

The paper engenders pottery production and distribution processes among Kisi and Pare of Southern Highland and Northeast highland of Tanzania, respectively. The study employed interview, observation and secondary data to examine pottery production processes from a gender perspective. The data indicates that pottery processes among the two societies include clay extraction and transportation, clay processing and pot making, decoration, firing and marketing. The processes involve the interaction between men and women although the involvement of women is more taxing. The processes such as clay extraction, clay transport, clay preparation as well as pot marketing are done by both men and women while pot making and firing are done by women in assistance with their children mostly daughters. This is contrary with the invention of potter's wheel in 1970s where both men and women were trained to make pot using potter wheel. Generally, women have been engaged in all activities in pottery production and distribution. On the other hand, men's engagement in pottery production processes is periodic, and highly determined by economic gains accruing from various pottery processes..

Keywords: engender, pottery production and distribution, Kisi, Pare, Tanzania

1. Introduction

Various studies have been conducted in relation to construction, decoration and function of pottery from different angles including archaeological, ethnographical, and historical and so forth. Through these studies women are frequently reported as potters especially when the potter's wheel is not in use. Yet, it has also been reported that in some societies the process of pottery making is highly engendered in the sense that there are some tasks done by men, others by women, and some by both jointly (Herbert, 1993: 203). In some communities in West Africa, for example, digging clay and making pots are done by men, whereas in the Sudanic belt and Cameroon Highland these activities are done by women (Gosselain, 2008).

Pottery industry in Tanzania has received a considerable attention from archaeology, history and ethnography with a strong emphasis on the historical dimension. Not much has been done on gender (Mihanjo, 2011; Odner, 1971; Omari, 1975; Ngonandi, 2014; Soper, 1971; Waane, 1979; Wynne and Mapunda, 2008). This paper intends to identify the pottery production and distribution processes and explain the interaction between men and women in these processes. The paper states that pottery production processes such as extraction and transportation of clay, clay preparation, pot making, decoration, firing and marketing can hardly be done by the same person, or even the same gender. Often times, these tasks are allocated to different gender, hence reflecting gendered division of labour.

¹ Mkwawa University College of Education, Iringa, Tanzania. P. O. Box 2315 IRINGA

2.0 The Kisi and Pare Potters

The Kisi and Pare live in the Southwest and Northeast of Tanzania, respectively (Fig. 1). Specifically, the Pare people are found in two districts: Mwanza and Same. This paper focuses on the Pare of Mwanza District since they are the ones actively engaging in pottery industry from the pre-colonial period to the present. The Kisi lives along Lake Nyasa, in Kyela, Ludewa and Nyasa districts. The study concentrates on the Kisi of Kyela and Ludewa Districts (Fig. 2) because pottery industry is the only source of income to most households. The districts occupied by the Kisi and Pare comprise both lowland and highland with altitude ranging from 1300 to 2200 meter above the sea level in the highland and 700 to 1000 meter above the sea level in the lowland. In the highland, the metamorphic rocks have led to the formation of thick soils which range from reddish brown lateritic clay, brownish to pink kaolinitic to reddish brown bauxitic crust (Lyimo and Kangalawe, 1997). In the lowland, especially where the Kisi are found, the soils are less leached reddish brown sandy clay loams and sandy clays. The two regions receive rains between 700 and 1600 mm per year which fall in November to April with a break in February. Temperatures are generally warm with prolonged mild temperatures from May to October.

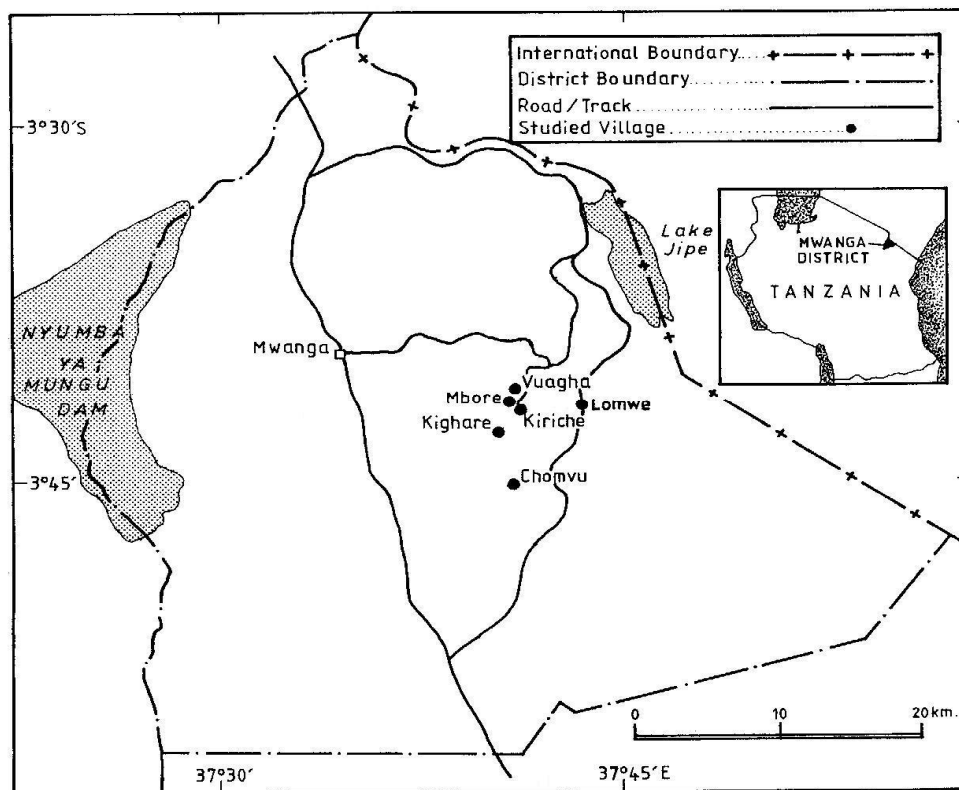


Figure 1: Map of Mwanza District showing the studied villages

Source: Mteti 2015 pg 42

By and large topography has affected road networking among the Pare and Kisi for a long time. Among the Pare of Usangi, for example, it took 16 (1920-1936) years to construct the road connecting the highland and lowland to Moshi and Arusha, which is only 45 km long. Before this road became operational, Pare people used to walk 20 to 25 km to meet their basic needs, including salt, sugar and kerosene to mention just few (Mteti, 2015: 77). In Ukisi, on the other hand, there were three routes connecting it with neighbors. The first passed from Matema to Ukinga, through Ukisi; the second connected Matema and Manda and Upangwa through Ukisi; and the last, connected Ukisi with Unyakyusa.

This last route became very important during the 1930s but declined with time because of poor repair. However, from the 1990s, the route resurfaced and has become popular again, and nowadays it is the main route connecting Ukisi with neighbours (Mteti, 2015: 84).

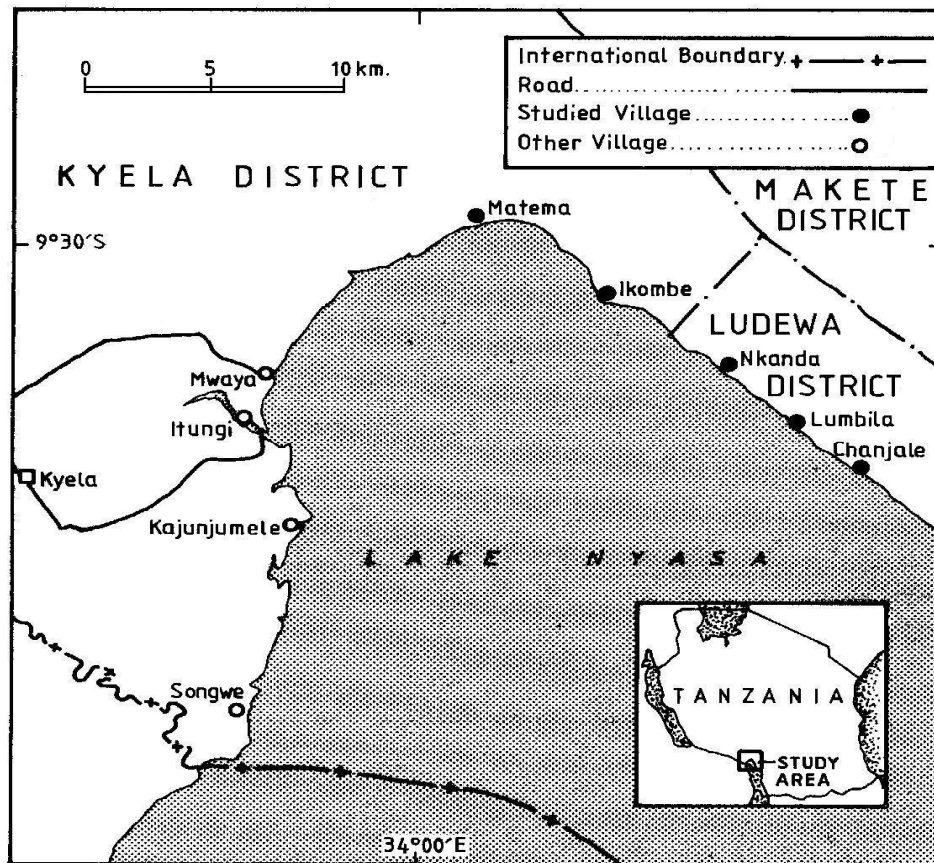


Figure 2: Map of the Northern Tip of Lake Nyasa showing the study area

Source: Mteti 2015 pg 47

Against this background, several adaptations related to potting practices emerged among the Pare and Kisi. The alternation of wet and dry seasons for example, enabled the Kisi and Pare to engage with farming during wet season and potting during dry season. Furthermore, the lithology of the areas restricts the distribution and easy availability of suitable potting clay. Thus, the potters have tended to collect quality clay from specific locations, some of them nearby but others up to seven kilometers away; forcing potters to devise different means of ferrying clay to their workshops.

3.0 Result and Discussion

3.1 Gender and Pottery Production Processes among the Kisi and Pare

Like in most other African potting industries, Pare and Kisi pottery production and distribution involves various processes including clay acquisition and transportation, clay preparation, pot making, decoration, firing and marketing. These processes differ in space and time, as well as gender involvement depending on the method used in making pots whether traditional or modern. The traditional pot making involves the use of hand, no wheel, and often under one household.

Modern potting on the other hand means that potting takes place in a workshop built specifically for that purpose, often wheels are used in the process and various pottery designs including decorative pots. Ethnographic data show that pottery production among the Kisi and Pare is identifiable under three categories: solitary, group and workshop. Solitary pottery production includes potters who produce pots within their households often using traditional methods. Group potters are those who unite and form a potting group which often employs traditional methods. Such groups include Huruma² in Ukisi; Mshikamano³ and Mbore in Upare. Workshop⁴ production, on the other hand, applies to potters who have organized and formed potting groups and often have advanced to the level of using wheels. These include the Ufinyanzi Kirongwe Usangi (UKU), Ikombe pottery industry and Taswira workshops. Throughout the paper solitary and group potters are termed as traditional while workshop production is termed as modern.

3.1.1 Clay Acquisition, Extraction and Transportation

O. Gosselain notes that clay is not hard to find because it is abundant sediment everywhere and because potters adapt, in practice, to a wide range of clay materials for making their pottery products (Gosselain, 2010: 195). This does not mean that clay is extracted anywhere or anyhow. Kisi and Pare have been extracting clay along river banks, backwater areas, alluvial plains or hillsides. They believe that these environments are more likely to contain good clay than others. Good potting clay must possess the required physical properties including plasticity, texture and colour corresponding to the potter's personal preferences. Potting clay is often discovered by mere chance through such activities as farming or digging of wells, pit latrines, house foundations, and numerous other such activities. As such, discovery of good potting clay is gender and age neutral. It simply requires that the person should be aware of the quality of potting clay. Even when the discoverer is not so conversant with best qualities, she or he can either inform an expert for verification or, if she or he is a potter, can test the workability of it by making a few experimental pots (Interview: Mwajuma Hussein Mathewa, 2011).

Once a clay source has been identified and its workability proven, the source remains public, unless it falls in someone's land, in which case the land owner will have the liberty of placing condition she or he wants. Such conditions can include restricting the exact area to dig, the amount of clay to be taken per person, or per day, or sometimes the owner demands compensation often in forms of pots, cash, or other materials per a given volume of clay. In worst cases, the land owner may completely deny access to his or her land; either for all potters in the community or some individuals, families or clans (Mteti, 2015). Restriction on public land applies only to "foreigners", that is, people from distant villages.

For example during the interview at Mbore and Ikombe villages it was noted that every village has its own source areas. People from outside are not allowed access as it is considered as "trespassing". But even with this kind of restriction, we can still see that the two peoples (Kisi and Pare) have been practicing what Nyerere had called traditional African socialism or Ujamaa based on communal ownership of resources (Nyerere, 1968). Interestingly, the clay pits that were in use during the time of this research (2010-11) have been in use for decades. For instance, Kifinyu and Kwa Kidafa (among the Pare) and Ikombe (among the Kisi) were in use since pre-colonial times (Interview: Zainab Hassan Katulwa, 2011). That is to say, the communal ownership of clay sources is not only practiced across families and clans, but also across time.

² "Huruma" means "sympathy" a name that was given to a group of women potters who decided to cooperate for the purpose of making pots not only for increasing their production but in anticipation of high income and for helping people who were living with HIV/AIDS.

³ Mshikamano is a Swahili word which connotes "unity"

⁴ Workshop in the sense that potters are making their pots in the building that was built for that purpose using the wheels and making various pottery designs.

Through observation and interviews, it has been noted that the plasticity of clay requires addition of tempering material and some refinement. This in turn, depends on the kind of production technology and mode of firing. The finishing of wheel-formed pots for example, is preferably done using fine plastic pastes. In this regard, there is a correlation between local environment and the technical ability of the potters in collecting and processing of raw materials. The Pare, for example, has been mining clay from Kwa Kilonzo, Kwa Kidafa and Kifinyu. The latter two are ancient sites while Kwa Kilonzo was added after the villagization policy (Interview: Mwajuma Mathewa, 2011). These sites are rich in fine Kaolin clay which is highly valued for its red colour after firing (Mruma, *et al*, 1999). This is an added quality to the common properties of strength, fine texture and plasticity or malleability of the potting clay.

The Kisi potters, on the other hand, have three types of clay: the actual moulding clay, which is blackish-grey in colour; the finishing clay, which is whitish-grey; and the decorating clay which is red in colour. The whitish clay which is very important for finishing is obtained higher up in the mountain. This kind of clay is very expensive; therefore it is kept in a pot and is always hidden and guarded against theft. The red clay, known locally as *Lila*, is obtained from Kisi's neighbours, the Kinga, who sell or exchange it for pots (Interview: Angelina Mbalila, Neema Tweve and Evaline Mbimbi, 2010). Before the introduction of monetary economy in Ukisi, the exchange rate was ten *vikalango*⁵ for one *kikalango* full of *Lila*. This amount of *Lila* would last for one whole year (Interview: Angelina Mbalila, Neema Tweve and Evaline Mbimbi, 2010). With the introduction of money the price changed. At the time of this field study, the Kinga were still coming to the Kisi's households walking round with *Lila* to sell to potters at a price of 1000/= Tshs (USD 0.50) per *kikalango*. When the clay is deemed adequate, the next requirement is to determine its location according to land owner and its distance (Gosselain, 2010). It has been noted that before villagization (1970s) in Tanzania, clay source would be located next to a household but after villagization resettlement, the relationship between residence and clay sources varies greatly as the village relocations did not necessarily follow availability of clay, hence some clay sites are up to 5 kilometers away from homestead or workshops in which case potters are compelled to use animals of burden or lorries (Mteti, 2015). Also before the 1970s Kisi and Pare potters had free access to clay but after villagization land was mainly used for cultivation.

This forced potters to seek permission as clay would always be found in someone's land. Because clay extraction is a destructive activity non-potters would not easily permit pot-makers to collect clay from their land. N. Dorsey, for example, reports about an incident that occurred in the 1970s in Usangi of a potter who was caught digging clay in the farm with crops and when the farm owner tried to stop her, the potter beat her. The farm owner took the matter to court. The potter was fined 250 shillings for beating the farm owner (Dorsey, 1994: 294 – 295). This happened in those clay sites located close to the villages. It should, however, be noted that up to now there are some clay sites that are "public", where potters can access clay freely. It should however be noted that both Pare and Kisi have taboos against quarrelling in clay sites or while extracting clay. They both believe that doing so, would harm pots in the process of making them. To observe this, potters are forced to seek permission when they discover clay in cultivable land. Other prohibitions associated with clay extraction include exclusion of certain categories of individuals such as gender during the extraction process. Some potters also perform chants and offer drinks during the opening of a deposit or at the beginning of seasons. Other prohibitions are associated with urinating in the clay pit which is still productive as they believe it can harm pottery making processes. In addition, Pare potters are warned against sexual intercourse on the night of the clay extraction and preparation (Interview: Fatuma Hussein, 2011).

Both Kisi and Pare use pit extraction of clay which involves digging the ground vertically or diagonally until an appropriate layer of clay is reached, often at the depth of one to two meters. Thereafter extraction continues horizontally following the clay layer. This system of extraction is done by women using small hand hoes which are held by one hand while the other hand picks and sort's clay lumps. This is done while sitting. This kind of extraction could be dangerous as sometimes the pit extends horizontally to more than five (5) meters becoming potentially fatal if it collapses (Interview: Zena Ally, 2011).

⁵ Small pots used for cooking vegetable, meat, beans and the like

Reportedly, sometimes men who happen to pass by, for example, during hunting and find the pit had receded further inside, they would cut the walls exposing the clay to the surface (Mteti, 2015).

Before the 1970s when the production was household-based and pots were made for domestic use and a few bartered for grains and some sold for cash, clay was principally extracted by women. After villagization of the 1970s, clay extraction became a responsibility for both men and women. Mteti (2015) noted two factors which necessitated men to engage in extracting clay. First, the distant location of clay pits from residential areas, hence the need for men members of the family (husband and/or sons) to supplement the labour force in ferrying clay; and second, the establishment of workshops which led to the introduction of wheels and the workshop form of pot production, both of which encouraged men to join into the industry, which hitherto had been an all women business. In addition, both wheel techniques and workshop mode of production required large amount of clay to be taken back to the homestead or to the workshops. Clay now used to be stored either outside the house for the case of individual or group of potters or inside a storage house for the case of workshop production.

The storage system required the deployment of more muscular men who could dig and carry clay from the site to the road which could be up to five kilometers away. Sometimes lorries were used, but still clay had to be ferried from the pit to the road and thereafter be off-loaded at destination point. In this case potters were supposed to collect as much clay as possible to minimize the cost (Plate 1). But at the same time solitary potters (women) continued ferrying clay from source to home on head, usually assisted by their children, both boys and girls. Group potters, on the other hand, had their group members dig and carry clay on heads together in their respective groups (Interview: Kudra Salum, 2011).



Plate 1: The Storage of Clay: a) clay stored outside the house and b) bags of clay stored in a storage room.

3.1.2 Clay Preparation

Oral sources and observation indicate that there are two kinds of clay storage, that is, inside and outside the house. The latter type of storage has been the common practice for a long time by both Kisi and Pare potters. This could be due to lack of space within their houses. Traditionally, Kisi and Pare lived in small, thatched-roof, mud-houses. The houses accommodated a small number of people mostly father, mother and young children. The grown up sons usually build their own houses while grown up girls would get married and establish their own families (Kimambo, 1969; Waane, 1979). In such a situation it would be impossible to have another space for storing clays, given the fact that no one could steal it if kept outside. Furthermore, because potting was a dry-season activity, there was no threat from rainfall.

But for them, storing clay outside the house exposed it to strangers or evil persons who could harm it. Such kind of belief existed not only among the Pare and Kisi but also among other potting communities in Tanzania and Africa at large, across religious beliefs. The Pare, for example, who have strongly embraced either Islam or Christianity, still practice rituals and sacrifices (Kimambo, 1969).

A popular practice that has existed for ages, involves the use of a shrub known as *Ithae* (in Pare language) or *Dracaena* (botanical name). These shrubs which are perma-green, sword-shaped, and growing from the central stalks are ubiquitous in Usangi. Michael Sheridan notes that *Dracaena* marks the borders of sacred groves and graves and symbolizes coolness and the place that resulted from having the ancestors' blessing. *Dracaena* is used for the mediation and resolution of social conflict (Sheridan, 2008: 495; Interview: Zainab Hassan Katulwa, 2011). As appears in Plate 2 below, the potters sweep it over the clay to exorcise evil spirits that might have been cast by evil-hearted passers-by.



Plate 2: Leaves from *Ithae* used for the removal of evils in the clay

After the removal of evils or unwanted elements, clay preparation would follow depending on pot making techniques either traditional or modern. Traditional pot making involves the use of the hand to remove such impurities as pebbles, rocks or leaves that are not sorted out while digging the clay. The potters collect the lump of clay together and then drench it with water while kneading with both hands, at the same time removing any observable stones and other impurities. When the clay is thoroughly mixed, it becomes fairly soft. It is then heaped near the potting area, which could be under the shade of trees or in the shade of a house, ready for moulding. This kind of preparation has been in practice for ages. The establishment of workshops and the introduction of wheels since the 1970s in Tanzania has changed the preparation of clay for pot making. The clay is first sun dried and then pounded using a wooden hammer. Pounding clay has been reported as a tough job; as such men have been hired to assist in those groups or workshops with women alone.

3.1.3 Pot Fashioning

When the paste has acquired the desired consistency, the potters begin the fashioning process. While molding and pounding require special tools and devices, it is the potter's hand and fingers primarily required during the fashioning process. However, the gestures employed are also distinctive because of their relatively specialized character like working while standing, bent over, seated with legs spread, or with one leg folded in front (Gosselain, 2008: 36). The Pare for example, handmade technology start with the formation of a lump of clay, on which a through hole is made at the centre making the clay lump look like a ring. The 'ring' is then placed on a fresh banana leaf or an old bag on which the potter starts making pots slowly by pulling the inner part with the right hand, while placing fingers of the left hand outside. Then, the potter places fingers of the left hand inside and pull the outside using the right hand fingers. The process continues by removing unwanted materials that remain during clay preparation, such as small rocks and roots, at the same time elevating it until the required height is attained (Interview: Fatina Hemedi and Happiness Kimomwe, 2011).

Pots are traditionally made in two halves, whereby the top half is made first and consists of the mouth, neck, shoulder and upper part of the body (Plate 3a). This is then put in the sun to dry for one day before it is turned upside down to stand on the rim so that the bottom part is built (Plate 3b). The base of the pot is scraped to remove excess clay and then a lump of clay is rolled and placed on the base and moulded into the lower half of the pot.

Building of the bottom part is done very carefully so as to close the opening. Potters start by placing the whole hand inside the pot slowly remaining with the fingers which are then removed one by one till finally a ragged edge of clay is tapered upward around a single finger. The finger is then withdrawn and the bottom of the pot is rounded off. The pot is left to dry until the next day when it is scraped inside and outside to remove excess clay, and is finally smoothed. The completed pot is exposed to the evening sun or kept inside the house to prevent excessive heat of the sun that could cause cracking.



Plate 3: Pot making a) the top half of the pot and b) the bottom half of pots (the top is turned upside down)

Workshop (modern) pot making, on the other hand, has been characterized by the introduction of the potter's wheel. The technology started as a trial in the 1950s in Usangi. With the establishment of Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO) in the 1970s various pottery industries were opened in various places including Usangi and Ikombe. Most of them, however, were abandoned in the 1980s. Workshops reappeared and became dominant since the 1990s. Under the modern technology, pot making starts with the formation of clay balls, the size of which depend on the size and kind of pots to be produced. The ball is thrown on the wheel where it is pressed, squeezed and pulled gently upwards and inwards into a hollow shape. As the clay is pressed down and inward, the potter places hands on the clay, and the foot on the wheel to support it. The formation of pots involves one session in which a complete pot is produced (Plate 4).

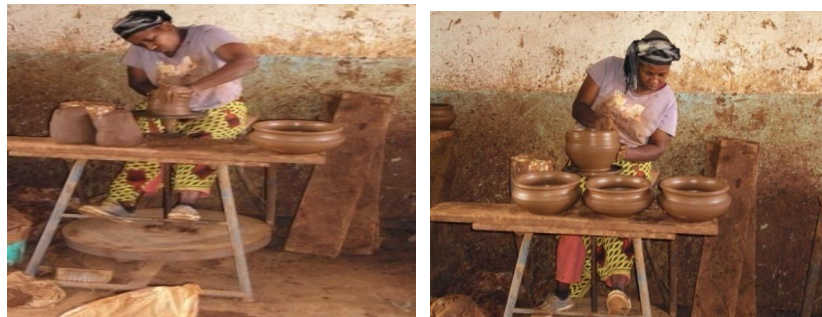


Plate 4: Pot making using a wheel

Kisi potters also adopted potter wheels in the 1970s, but as for the Pare, it was short lived. With the abandonment of the workshop, Kisi women potters continued with their simple technology which has lasted for decades while men abandoned the craft. But unlike the Pare who start the process on banana leaves placed on the ground, the Kisi use a device which acts closely to a potter's wheel known as *Lumenyu*⁶ (Plate 5a).

⁶*Lumenyu* is a circular heavy plate made from clay and fired in the same way pots are fired. The *Lumenyus* are of various sizes depending on the size of pots one wants to make. Potters claim that *Lumenyu* survives for many generations. Most potters

Before use, the *Lumenyu* is sprinkled with ash to stop clay from sticking on it. After the clay heap is placed on the *Lumenyu* (See Plate 5b) a dimple is made in the middle to give the pot an initial shape for the intended types. While one hand pulls clay from inside the other hand rotates the *Lumenyu*. The clay is pulled upward until the potter obtains the required pot shape. The pot is further enlarged by using hands, while at the same time scraping out the unnecessary clay to reach the required thinness. Additional height and thickness is put on the inside upper ends by coils. The free hand continues to support the outside and rotates the *Lumenyu* (Plate 5c).



Plate 5: Kisi Pot Making a) a lumenyu; b) lump of clay on a lumenyu; and c) potter makes a pot

When the potter achieves the height and thickness required, a scraper made from old broken knives or old shoe sole is used to further enlarge the inner part by scraping out unwanted thickness and hence smoothing the pot (See Plate 6). Periodically, the scraper is dipped in water so as to lubricate it. The sides are smoothed and made more workable and soft. When initial interior finishing has been completed to the potter's satisfaction, the pot is put in the sun to minimize moisture. Thereafter, the potter increases the height of the pot by coiling until the required height and shape is obtained. Then, the rims and lips are added. The pot is then left overnight before it is scraped again to even up thickness and remove any small stones which might have been overlooked.



Plate 6: A Kisi Woman scraping a pot

interviewed claim to have inherited the *Lumenyu* from their grandmothers who after their death or retirement in potting handed it over to their daughters and when the daughters died or retired their daughters inherited. For example, the observed *Lumenyu* in plate 1a has survived for three generations. I observed similar technique in Ijebu and Abeukota Villages in Ilorin and Oyo State respectively in Nigeria during my two months residence at the University of Ibadan.

3.1.4 Decoration

For a long time Kisi and Pare have been decorating their pots with different motifs. The decorations appear most in drinking, storing, serving, washing and cooking pots. Potters used both traditional designs as well as modern ones copied from European motifs, which are popular with their customers. Traditional pottery decoration designs among the Kisi and Pare can be traced back to Early Iron Age with the existence of *Kwale tradition*. The tradition was characterized by the use of a band of rim decoration, consisting of incised hatching, cross-hatching, alternating blocks or parallel lines (Soper in Chami, 1994: 69; Waane, 1977: 5). Currently, Pare pots decoration is done at the end of the drying stage by burnishing using smooth stones. Again, at the end of firing stage, pots are glazed using leaves of a *nkasha tree*, which when applied to pots while hot, leaves a shining colour as seen in Plate 7. Burnishing has been more common in pots used for carrying and storing water and are generally burnished all over the exterior while cooking pots may be burnished both in the interior and exterior. Burnishing is time consuming and labour intensive, involving not only the porter, but also her children, both girls and boys.



Plate 7: Women potters are applying *nkasha* to the pots and b) Shining pots after the application of *nkasha*

The Kisi pots, on the other hand, are decorated at the end of the shaping process while the clay is still malleable. Various decoration motifs have been observed, including impressions which are done with a sharp edge of a knife to obtain a zigzag line as seen in Plate 8. Also, roulette has been common among the Kisi and appeared in big pots like *engumbe*, *lisyala* and *indeko sya misi*. Made using maize cobs, roulette dominated from the pre-colonial times to the 1980s, when customers lost interest in them.



Plate 8: Zigzag Line Decoration

Besides making impressions, Kisi potters ornament their pots with painting and specific surface treatments. The potter first applies white clay on the surface, and then leaves them to dry under the sun. The application is done by hand and the smoothing is done using special stones (see Plate 9).



Plate 9: Pots with white colour a) before smoothing b) after smoothing

Later, pots are smeared with a slip made from red clay commonly known as *Lila* in Kisi Language. *Lila* is crushed by grinding on a stone and subsequently sieved and mixed with water before it is administered directly on the dried pots which have already been treated to a white colour (Plate 10). After being coloured, the pots are left to dry in the sun for six to ten hours before firing begins.



Plate 10: Colouring the pots red a) a potter is applying the red-colour and b) pots being dried under the sun

Another kind of decoration involves the use of symbols such as slashes, dots and flower drawings as indicated in Plate 11. This is executed by dipping a finger into *Lila*.



Plate 11: Other Kinds of Decoration

3.1.5 Pot firing

The Pare and Kisi fire their pots using bonfires which according to Gosselain (2008: 39) is the simplest and the most widespread technique in Africa. However, despite its simplicity, open-air firing requires a high level of skill and observation to control the temperature range of the atmosphere. Pare potters use small twigs of tree species known as *Mathanzu* in Kipare. This is because the small twigs are less harmful to pots as they are less likely to accidentally hit and break pots. They also produce level of calories of heat that is required by the potters. Kisi Potters prefer firewood from a tree known as '*Nguti*' which is believed to give good charcoal (Interview: Thabita Makoro and Undulege Nyawike, 2010). Grasses, preferably, tall grass and bamboo leaves are also common firing material. The collection of fuel is done after the potters have made enough pots in order to determine the amount of fuel needed, and it is mostly done by potters and their children, both boys and girls.

Since the 1970s, kilns, structures constructed for the purpose of firing pots, were introduced. The use of kilns came along with the establishment of workshops. Firing pots in the kiln requires a high temperature and high technology. The kiln requires firewood which produces high temperature. Also it requires close monitoring of the process. Potters who use kilns claim that most pots turn black. Also kilns require thick pots, but their pots are too light. Potters from Pare argued that they may use kilns for firing cooking stoves. In this case, most potters abandoned it and continued with open fire. The actual firing begins by lining firewood systematically in a shallow hole dug on the ground. Pots are then arranged starting with one pot placed at the centre facing downward, and then others are arranged around it outwards and upwards until all pots have been accommodated. On the periphery, pots are firmly supported by bricks. Then, grass or bamboo leaves are placed on top of the pots and the fire is lit. The fire is normally lit on the side, facing the direction from where the wind comes.



Plate 12: Open Firing a) A Pare woman is checking to see whether pots are well fired or not b) a Kisi woman arranges pots over the twigs. The bricks are used to support pots from moving during the firing process

Pot firing is also surrounded by a series of prescriptions and prohibitions which seems to have nothing to do with the potter's technical behavior. The main concern is in ensuring that people with bad intentions or those in 'impure' state do not jeopardize the operation solely by their presence (Gosselain, 2010:204). On account of this, firing often takes place as early as 5.00 in the morning, by 7.00 the process is over so as to avoid strangers. It is a common belief that if a stranger looks at the pot during the final stage of firing, the pots may form cracks or fail to fire well. After that burnishing begins and it can be done in the open as it is said to be immune to the gaze of strangers (Interview: Mwajuma Mathewa and Fatuma Hussein, 2011).

3.2 Gender and Pottery Distribution processes among the Kisi and Pare

Kisi and Pare make a variety of products ranging from cooking and storage pots to decorative pots. Most of the pots fall under cooking, storing, drinking, and transporting. The morphology of the vessel is the basis for the recognition of its implied function by the maker and the user. In this case, pots meant for cooking have wide apertures while those intended for fetching water have restricted opening. It is against this background of shapes and functions that the Kisi and Pare pots were and still are widely distributed to customers within and outside their areas.

Finished products move from producers to consumers in three ways: 1) the producer distributing products directly to the consumer; 2) the consumer collecting products directly from the producer; and 3) the consumer getting the products through a third party (Mteti, 2015). While big pots are produced mainly for domestic consumption, small ones related to cooking, water storage and flower holding are produced for people outside the production domain. In Upare, pottery traders visit pot makers and place orders of the size, type, and amount of pots they want. In the workshops, some members of associations make as well as buying and selling pots to Moshi and Arusha markets, about 73 to 153 km away respectively. Other traders have their offices or stores near production areas, therefore when they buy pots; potters have to carry them to the offices. While in Ukisi, pots are carried by canoe or boat to Matema market where they are sold directly to customers or pottery traders. Carrying pots to the lake shores is done by all able bodied members of the household, while transporting them from the lake shores to Matema market is done by men.

These can be the husband, brothers, uncles and elder sons; and on very rare occasions, it is done by women themselves. The pottery traders take pots from Matema to markets in nearby towns of Mbeya town, Kyela, Tunduma, Tukuyu, and Njombe or as far as Dar es Salaam. Through interview and observation it has been noted that the price of a pot depends on kind or type, size and place where the pot is sold. Pots bought in source villages are cheaper than those sold outside the villages. Again, pots among the Pare fetch higher prices in different market than Kisi pots. Comparatively, the price of pots among the Kisi today is equal to the price of Pare pots sold in 1990s. For instance, in 2010/11 a cooking pot in Ukisi was sold between Tshs 150/= and 200/= which is equal to what Sheridan (2001) noted in the 1990s of a similar cooking pot in Usangi, and resold between Tshs 300 and 500/= in Moshi and Arusha. The variation of prices between Ukisi and Upare can be attributed to location or proximity of major pottery producers.

Even though the price is low, potters still prefer to sell their pots to pottery traders due to various reasons. First, they would sell their pots in large quantities and get the sum of money at once, which also help them to avoid storage costs. Second, traders often place orders for utility pots with simple designs. Third, potters sometimes have permanent traders which help to avoid the risk of price fluctuation as one potter explained: "I have had only one customer for the last twenty five years with whom I negotiate price. Whenever there was a market fluctuation, we agreed. In this case I do not think of having another customer, (Interview: Zena Ally, 2010)." Such a system also creates trust between them, enabling potters to borrow money from their traders which they would pay back by making pots for them. Potters are also aware that pottery traders buy pots cheaply and resell them highly. On account of that some of them decide to cut off the middleman; they take their pots to the various markets themselves and so get a higher profit margin.

This is often the option taken by group potters such as UKU and Taswira. This also gives potters the power to fix or negotiate prices. Selling to pottery traders whether within association or outside associations, the prices are lower while directly to consumers, fetched higher prices. Such groups have an added advantage as they usually receive orders from different customers, and sometimes they take their products to various government functions like Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair and Nane Nane Agricultural Shows of July and August respectively, where they can get an easy market and higher prices for their products. Generally speaking, potters working in workshops have a marketing advantage as they often receive attention from government, non-governmental organizations and different individuals. They are also in a better position to approach and explore new markets, attract and meet large orders, and do business with diversified, facilitated market networks.

4.0 Conclusion

It is beyond doubt, that gender division in the process of pottery production is very clear. Although the issue of pottery production has attracted the attention of archaeologists, anthropologists and historians working in West Africa, South Africa and East Africa, the field has attracted little attention in Tanzania from a gender perspective. The majority of Tanzanian and foreign scholars have for decades concentrated on potsherds and little attention was paid to the process and the makers of pots before they became potsherds. As a result little is known about gender and pottery industry in Tanzania.

To this knowledge gap, this paper has explained how pottery production and distribution processes are shared between men and women among the Kisi and Pare potters. The division dominates in both traditional and modern technologies. For instance, although traditional pot making and clay extraction are in the hand of women, children both boys and girls carried clay from clay site back home. Also, modern pot making is done by both men and women. Among the Pare, transporting pots to the market or pottery stores or offices is done by the mother, mostly a potter, with her children. The Kisi, on the other hand, transporting pots from home to the lake shores is done by every able bodied member of the household, men and women while transporting pots from the lake to Matema market is the men's responsibility.

The study has also shown that there is a strong family tie in the potting industry whereby all potters who work on individual basis and those who work as a group were trained by their mother on how to make pots. There are also potters who never practiced potting during their childhood but were forced to learn the craft as adults as they needed to earn money to support their families. Potters working in workshops learnt potting from expert by attending either formal or informal training within the workshop or vocational training centers. Interestingly, no potter has claimed to teach her son how to make pots in the traditional way. Majority of potters mostly women learnt potting skills informally at their homes either before or after marriage. This involved learning through observation and being apprentices in various tasks such as clay extraction, clay preparation and doing finishing. This paper establishes that the roles played by men and women in pottery production are divided into three groups. These include women potters who are central players as the locators of clay sites, extractors and supervisors of its transportation back home, or to the workshop. The second group includes children (regardless of their sexes). It is however reported that boys stopped carrying pots and other activities associated with potting soon after they completed their primary education at the age of 14 to 17 years. These are the assistants who provide free labour to their mothers (potters). Lastly, are hired men who dig and carry clay to the road (selling their labour) where it is loaded to the lorry and transported to the workshop.

References

- Bern, M. (1993). Art, History and Gender. In the *Africa Archaeological Review*, Cambridge University Press, (11): 129 – 148
- Chami, F. (1994). The Tanzanian coast in the first millennium AD: An archaeology of the Iron- working, Farming Communities. Studies in African Archaeology 7. Uppsala: Societas Archaeologica Upsaliensis.

- Gosselain, O. (2010). "Exploring the Dynamics of African Pottery Culture." In Rand Barndon, Asbjørn Engevik and Ingvild Øye (eds) *The Archaeology of Regional Technologies Case Studies from the Paleolithic to the Age of the Vikings*. The Mellen Press: Lampeter,
- Gosselain, O. P. (2008). Ceramic in Africa. In Helain Selin (ed.) *Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, Volume 1: 32 – 44, Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg: New York.
- Herbert, E. (1993). *Iron, Gender, and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Livingstone Smith, A. (2001) "Bonfire 2. The Return of Pottery Firing Temperatures". In *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 28. 9: 99 – 117
- Lyimo, J. and R. Kangalawe, (1997). "the Role and Dynamics of Traditional Farming System in Agriculture Sustainability, the Case of Matengo Pits and Ufipa Mounds System" Research Report No 100 Institute of Resource Assessment: University of Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam.
- Mihanjo, E. (2011). "Rural Pottery Enterprises" in *Making Ends Meet: Local Socio-technological Transformations in the South; Based on case studies from Tanzania*. Aalborg: Department of Development and Planning, Aalborg University.
- Mteti, S. H. (2015). *Engendering the History of Pottery Industry in Tanzania: Comparative Study on the Kisi and Pare, 1930 – 2000*. PhD Thesis Submitted for the fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Philosophy, University of Dar es Salaam
- Ngonadi, C. V and P. I. Eze-Uzomaka (2014). Mwangia Pottery Tradition: Technical Analysis and Placement in The East Africa Cultural Sequence. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 91 - 97
- Nindi, S. (2007). *Changing Livelihood and the Environment along Lake Nyasa, Tanzania*. Africa Study Monograph Suppl. 36: 71 – 93.
- Odner, K. (1971). "Usangi Hospital and other Archaeological Sites in the North Pare Mountains Northeastern Tanzania", *AZANIA* 6: 107- 122
- Omari, B. (1975). *Pottery Production and Marketing 1936 – 1975: Usangi Pare Case Study*". M. A. Dissertation (University of Dar es Salaam.)
- Sheridan, M. (2004). Environmental Consequences of Independence and Socialism in the North Pare, Tanzania 1961 – 1988, *Journal of African History* 45: 81 – 102 Cambridge University Press, DOI:10.1017/S0021853703008521, United Kingdom.
- Sheridan, M. J. (2008). "Tanzania Ritual Perimetrics and Africa Landscapes: the Case of Dracaena". In *International Journal of African History Studies*, Vol. 41 (3): 491 – 521
- Soper, R. C. (1971). Early Iron Age Pottery Type from East Africa: Comparative Analysis". In *AZANIA* VI: 39 – 51.
- Waane, S. A. (1979). "The Distribution of Iron Age in East Africa: an Ethnographical Approach" PhD. Thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign,
- Waane, S. A. C. (1977). "Pottery Making Tradition of the Ikombe Kisi, Mbeya Region, Tanzania". *Baessler – Archiv* 25: 251 – 317
- Wynne-Jones, S. and B. Mapunda, (2008). This is What Pots Look like Here: Ceramics, Tradition and Consumption on Mafia Island, Tanzania. *AZANIA* XLIII: 1-17.