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Review

Ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The advent of ceramic ethnoarchaeology into Zimbabwean ceramic studies dates back as far as the late 20th century. Despite this it has witnessed a gradual appreciation into the mainstream ceramic studies especially towards addressing archaeological problems and developing prehistoric models. Following this, considerable aspects have been put under study even though mostly fragmented. Among these include vessel production, vessel consumption, disposal patterns, symbolism and social boundaries. In light of this, this paper provides an overview of these researches and their contribution towards development of Zimbabwean archaeology. It is also the motivation of this paper to advance the notion that it is high time Iron Age archaeologists should swallow their 'pride' and embrace this emic approach towards meaningful ceramic studies that strive to recreate the humanistic side of the story that has lacked in most of their researches (Beach 1980; Pikirayi 2007).

Keywords: Zimbabwe, Ceramic ethnoarchaeology, Ceramic studies, Production, Consumption, Disposal, Symbolism, Social boundaries.

INTRODUCTION

Ceramic ethnoarchaeology has largely contributed to the understanding of human behaviour, technological as well as environmental changes that transpired in the archaeological record, especially that of the African continent. Studies undertaken across the continent have revealed that contemporary traditional societies aligned to the archaeological record have the potential to recreate the possible operational contexts which governed the lifecycle of prehistoric pottery. Surprisingly even though Africa has become the main research area of ceramic ethnoarchaeology (Stark 2003), Zimbabwe is still lagging behind and chiefly this is a result of cynicism regarding the prowess of this approach towards meaningful ceramic studies.

This paper reviews aspects to do with Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeology focusing on low-fired earthenware in the form of pottery vessels. It highlights the necessary atmosphere that archaeologists need to create as well as attitudes they need to carry in order to appreciate its possibilities towards understanding relationships between ceramics, their makers and their users in the future studies.

Background to ceramic ethnoarchaeology

Ceramic ethnoarchaeology is fashioned from ethnoarchaeology which is mostly viewed as a research strategy to solve archaeological problems or means to create ethnographic analogies that provide 'food' for archaeological thought (David and Kramer2001).Thus it can be simply defined as the study of archaeological ceramics using ethnographic data. Through ceramic ethnoarchaeology, archaeologists have been able to gain a better understanding of the relationships that possibly existed between ceramics and the social institutions that governed their lifecycle in the archaeological record. Use of the ceramic ethnoarchaeological approach towards ceramic studies in archaeology was initially developed in the western world but however with progression of time especially the last decade it became extensively used in Africa particularly in West Africa following its diversified culture history (David and Kramer 2001; Stark 2003). As a result a wide range of topics have been pursued, among these include technology, taxonomy, division of labour, ethnicity, distribution, vessel function, stylistic

change, longevity, recycling and disposal (Kramer 1985; Stark 2003). However most studies have been concentrated on production of ceramics whereby aspects such as behavioural factors that influence selection of raw materials, firing of clay pots, spatial organization for production of ceramics and division of labour have been tackled (Stark 2003). Simultaneously this approach has been used to infer on the use-life and symbolism of ceramics whereby aspects such as cultural transition through marriage, migration, conflict and ritual contexts have been studied (see Collet 1993; Ndoro 1996; Stark 2003; Marufu 2008; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013).

Introduction of archaeology as a colonial package has influenced most of Zimbabwean ceramic studies to be conducted using etic archaeological approaches hence emphasis has been limited on typological characterisation and descriptions of pottery. Notable works are those of Hall and Neal (1902); Randall-MacIver (1906); Caton Thompson (1931); Huffman (1970); Soper (1971); Phillipson (1977); Nyanhete (1988); Muringaniza (1989); Manyanga (1995); Pwiti (1996); Chirikure, Pikirayi and Pwiti (2002); Soper (2002); Msindo (2005); Sinamai (2008) and Machiridza (2012). These have been mostly carried out to establish group identities, chronology of prehistoric events and technological changes that transpired in the archaeological record. On the other hand ethnographic approaches have been separately employed in which descriptive accounts of pottery production, use and symbolism have been mostly perpetuated by anthropologists and amateur archaeologists. Among these include Martin (1941); Aschwaden (1982); Ellert (1984); Davison (1985) and Jacobson-Widding (1992). Nevertheless the need for a holistic approach on which to conduct analogical comparative analysis with pottery recovered from the archaeological record especially in the last quarter of the 20th prompted archaeologist to combine both the archaeological and ethnographic approaches towards meaningful ceramic studies.

History of ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe the use of ceramic ethnoarchaeological approach towards understanding of ceramics is still a developing feature (Lindahl and Matenga1995). Early work date back as far as 1972 when Thomas N Huffman carried out a research among Shona potters in the township of Pumula in Bulawayo. Though the sample was not typical since the pottery was largely manufactured for commercial purposes in an urban set up, the study of the Shona vessels gave promising results as it demonstrated that understanding of functional types of ethnographic pottery can aid in reconstructing vessel classes of archaeological pottery. Also it demonstrated that quantitative characterisation of pottery shreds was less meaningful as compared to characterisation of complete vessels on the basis of weight, size and decoration as it produced a picture of an assemblage that closely equated with the actual vessels (see Huffman 1972). Later on Huffman (1980) carried out another ceramic ethnoarchaeological survey but this time focusing on the Ndau of south-eastern Zimbabwe and other mixed groups outside Zimbabwe borders. His study demonstrated that stylist differences aided in discerning social boundaries between potteries of various ethnic groups which could serve as identity markers of these respective groups. Bwerinofa (1990) extended the prevailing focus towards traditional pottery manufacture in Makonde area hence he derived promising results that are very useful when interpreting archaeological ceramics.

Shortly, Collet (1993) initiated a new perspective hence he discovered a strong relationship that existed between a woman and her pots. This was characterised by triangle decorations on two of the most popular household pots, locally known as the *hadyana* and *shambakodzi* which corresponded to chevron patterns on aprons worn by women. Thus he suggested the form of these vessels to represent the body of women especially their curvilinear form. Likewise given a context in which production of pottery was not supposed to be polluted by presence of men he concluded pottery as woman's property, a stance which was also adopted by Ndoro (1996).

Lindahl and Matenga (1995) carried out an ethnoarchaeological study in Buhera district in south-eastern Zimbabwe. They based their research on traditional methods for the study of vessel shape and ornamentation whereby they employed both petro graphic and ethnographic studies. Through ethnographic observations Lindahl and Matenga (1995) discovered that similar clay was still used to manufacture pots just like in the archaeological record, an aspect which was also confirmed by petro graphic studies which in overall pointed to continuity in terms of raw material use.

Another aspect they discovered was that unlike in some parts of Africa as discovered by Cruz (1996) pottery production was mostly carried out indoors rather than outdoors and at the same time it was taken as a party time activity in which production was all year round. On vessel function the authors discovered two basic classes of pottery.

The fist class was composed of vessels solely used for cooking purposes. These included the *shangwa* used for cooking food stuffs like sweet potatoes, the *hadyana* and *chimbira* respectively used for preparing relish as well as children's porridge. The *shambakodzi* specifically used to cook sadza and lastly the *chishangwa* used to cook groundnuts.

On the other hand the second class was composed of vessels for storage purposes. This included the *gambe* and the gate used for storing beer as well as the *nyengero* and *chipfuko* used for serving beer and lastly

the *shangwa* and *chirongo* used for storing dried food and carrying water respectively.

In trying to answer the question, "*What happens to a ceramic vessel when it is broken down"?* Lindahl and Matenga (1995.101) considered a number of factors from which the most contributing were effects from human and animal activities. They discovered that vessels buried as grave goods had a better life span than household vessels as well as the fact that the most part of a pot which was prone to damage was the rim in which they attributed use as the most contributory factor. They traced on how broken shreds found their way to the midden hence they suggested household maintenance as the most contributing factor.

Further they discovered that at the midden they were chances of further disposal especially by domesticated animals such as dogs. Apart from that heavy rains could further dispose or erode the shreds as well as fires resulting from ashes removed from fire places. On the other hand the remaining broken pot could continue its use however if severely broken it would end up temporarily discarded.

Thus the ethnoarchaeological survey proved to be effective towards meaningful ceramic studies as it unearthened the social and technological factors that possibly governed Zimbabwe culture ceramics in the archaeological record.

Ndoro (1996) broadened the study on the Karanga but this time focused on the possible meanings and symbols associated with Gokomere pottery. He explored this by comparing the assemblage with modern Karanga pottery however paying particular attention to its decoration and use. Overall he got encouraging results on some variables of pottery like soot which discovered to be difficult to conclude considering function since pottery uses varied with time and need. Thus he encouraged a continuous dialogue between archaeology and ethnography which he believed could help in shedding more light on the meanings and symbolism of ceramics. Pottery and other forms of material culture were also used to determine relations between settlement and funerary contexts of the Musengezi tradition sites in northern Zimbabwe. Using both archaeological and ethnographic approaches Marufu (2008) carried out a comparative study of pottery from the respective contexts paying particular attention to decoration and style hence he discovered that pottery and other material culture recovered from funerary context was much decorated and stylised than the settlement counterpart. Application of the ethnoarchaeological approach to this inquiry proved to be very useful as he discovered that funerary pottery was intentionally selected from household assemblage mostly because of its potential in communicating social messages.

Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010) furthered on what had been previously covered by Lindahl and Matenga (1995) hence they presented ceramics as part and parcel of a technological process. Similar to the prior research, their area of study included Buhera district and extended into Dande lowlands, Murehwa, Gutu, Mutoko north east and Masvingo area near Great Zimbabwe as well as the Mashamba area of the Limpopo province in South Africa. Through merging ethnographic and archaeological approaches Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010) managed to differentiate Early Iron Age (EIA) pottery from Late Iron Age (LIA) as well as establishing continuity and change in vessel forming techniques as they discovered that the modelling technique is still prevalent among the Shona of today. To add more to their discovery they interviewed women potters from the Zimbabwean plateau within the various districts and areas afore mentioned. They discovered that not every woman was able to make pottery but rather it came from zeal and talent and besides, skill was passed from generation to generation through internship from the seniors.

In terms of symbolism the pair discovered a unique practice of giving back to the quarry whereby after quarrying clay a potter had to plough back to the quarry either in form of a bundle of twigs or a lump of clay which was interpreted as a ritual of thanking the ancestors for the clay. They also discovered some differences when it came to the choice of fuel to fire clay pots whereby Venda potters preferred wood and grass unlike the Shona who used tree bark and cow dung. At the same time unlike the shona, to the Venda successful manufacture was guaranteed by consultation of ancestral spirits. Thus they concluded ceramics as part and parcel of forces that initiated culture change.

The pair furthered their interpretation of Southern African ceramics through integrating archaeology, ethnohistory and ethnography (see Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013).This time they used all the data they collected since 1988 to understand the social aspects of ceramic production in the archaeological record. Strikingly, Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013) discovered these ceramics as largely subjected to existing social networks, a reality discovered elsewhere in Africa (see Dietler and Herbich 1994; Cruz 1996; Cunningham 2006; Norman 2009 and Haour etal 2011) where social ties such as marriage propelled both continuity and change in ceramic style and decoration attributes. Thus they concluded Southern African ceramics as subjected to societal networks hence they encouraged Iron Age archaeologists to work towards understanding contextual parameters that govern their production and use life.

Recent research by Nyamushosho (2013) revisited the archaeological identity and connection of the Saunyama dynasty to the Nyanga archaeological complex which had been previously legitimised on the basis of incomplete archaeological enquiry and hazy oral traditions. Using a ceramic ethnoarchaeological approach, he explored stylistic and decoration attributes of pottery vessels from both archaeological and ethnographic contexts which produced results that demonstrated high levels of

continuity from the archaeological record to the ethnographic present even though some changes were notable. The study also crafted the humanistic side of the story that had lacked in most ceramic studies undertaken in the Nyanga archaeological complex as it demonstrated the possible use-life and symbols associated with vessels situated in the complex.

Similarly, after characterising pottery recovered from Old Bulawayo in western Zimbabwe Khumalo (2013) made an attempt to infer on the possible functions and uses of these vessels in the archaeological record. As a result she exploited ethno-historical data recovered from the contemporary Ndebele society hence she discovered a variety of utility roles that ranged from cooking, brewing and storage purposes. Among the pots she explored features the *ukhamba/uphiso* used to serve beer during libations or wedding ceremonies, *mamsamo* restricted to serve beer to grandparents as well as offerings to the ancestors, the *imbiza* respectively used to cook and ferment beer as well as preparing a thick porridge locally known as *isitshwala* or *sadza*, the *isingaczi* both used to store and transport beer or water. Thus further enquiry on the lifecycle of the ethnographic pots prompted her to suggest obliteration by soot as one the reasons probably why shreds recovered from Old Bulawayo were hardly decorated.

Ceramic ethnoarchaeological studies carried out so far across the Zimbabwe plateau have revealed that contemporary societies connected to the archaeological record have the potential in aiding archaeologists to build a database towards understanding the life cycle of prehistoric pottery.

Theoretical frameworks and Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeology

Theoretically Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeology just like the discipline of archaeology is mostly inclined towards the social theory which basically perpetuates the notion that groups are somehow reflected in the material culture they produce (Wheeler 1954; Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Arnold1985; Huffman 1980; Hegmony 2000; Hodder and Hutson 2003; Stark 2003; Pikirayi 2007; Huffman 2013). This is evidenced by most of the studies undertaken which have been either directed towards developing social boundaries or cultural and technological sequences that possibly transpired in the archaeological record. These works can be further divided into four groups. The first category is composed of ceramic ethnoarchaeological studies that are oriented towards identities e.g. Huffman (1980).This group has contributed less towards revealing the social messages of prehistoric pottery possibly due to the fact that its research questions are limited to similarities and variations in typology. The second group concentrates on technological cycles and typical works are those of Huffman (1972) and Bwerinofa (1990). These works only seek to understand the technical aspects that are enshrined within, ecology, economy and functional properties of ceramics hence contributing less to the social theory.

On the other hand the subsequent group addresses cultural factors that are enshrined within history, politics and society which have greatly enlightened on variability in ceramic systems e.g. Collet (1993); Ndoro (1996); Marufu (2008). Ultimately is a group of scholars who exploit a holistic approach that tries to equally pay attention to all the aspects of the social theory. However besides developing identities, majority of their studies are mostly directed towards addressing cultural and technological sequences e.g. Lindahl and Matenga (1995); Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010); Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013); Khumalo (2013); Nyamushosho (2013). They rely on the direct historical approach technique to record their observations during fieldwork hence they use the data to interpret ceramics depending on the variables under enquiry that usually ranges from vessel production, distribution, consumption, symbolism and discard.

They are two major theorists whose works have extensively influenced the proliferation of the social theory into these Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeological studies. On one hand there is Thomas N Huffman, one of the leading ceramic theorists who asserts that,

> *"Ceramic style can reflect group identity ...ceramic style is complex, it can represent the repetitive code of cultural symbols in the larger, designed field, and can be used to recognise groups of people in the archaeological record."* Huffman (1980:156)

Majority of the preceding and subsequent works that have banked on this theory have been primarily engaged towards the subjects of identity and technology e.g. Huffman (1972), (1980); Bwerinofa (1990); Lindahl and Matenga (1995); Khumalo 2013); Nyamushosho (2013). These have employed a range of methodologies that seeks to quantify both stylistic and decoration attributes of pottery for comparative purposes hence they use the resultant typological similarities and differences to construct identities and technological cycles that range from individual to group levels. On the other hand the works of Pikirayi (1993), (1996), (1997), (1999) and (2007) have broadened the focus of ceramic ethnoarchaeologists to appreciate ceramics style and decoration attributes as communication mediums embedded with social messages. However there is need first to understand the philosophies that possibly governed the life cycle of these ceramics so as to deduce these messages secreted in them (Pikirayi (2007). This methodology has contributed extensively towards the social theory since it has managed to reveal the symbolic messages that are likely to have been communicated by

prehistoric pottery to both their producers and consumers e.g. Collet (1993); Ndoro (1996); Marufu (2008); Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010); Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013) and Nyamushosho (2013).

Therefore it is evident that much of the ceramic ethnoarchaeological studies undertaken so far are dominated by one theory and the only difference that separates them lies in the perspective chosen for enquiry.

Themes in Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeology

A wide range of topical issues have been tackled by ceramic ethnoarchaeologists. These range from pottery production (Bwerinofa 1990; Lindahl and Matenga 1995; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010); Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013, consumption (Huffman 1972; Lindahl and Matenga 1995; Marufu 2008; Khumalo 2013; Nyamushosho 2013), symbolism (Collet 1993; Ndoro1996; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010; Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013); Nyamushosho 2013, discard (Lindahl and Matenga 1995) and social boundaries (Huffman 1980). Even though most of the components that make up the life cycle of ceramics have been addressed nothing has been researched concerning their marketing and distribution networks (Mtetwa etal 2013). Nevertheless the dominant theme that cuts across most studies undertaken is vessel consumption and various aspects have been dealt with that include vessel use where primary and secondary functions of pots have been explored (Lindahl and Matenga 1995; Marufu 2008; Khumalo 2013; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013; Nyamushosho 2013). This has been extended to vessel recycling either after breakage (Ndoro 1996) or temporal discard (Nyamushosho 2013). Consumption as a subject matter has been widely represented probably due to the fact that the life cycle of every pot is mostly subjected to consumption than any other stage. The subsequent theme is symbolism in which ceramics have been presented with a bias on women hence pots have been largely treated as feminine property (Collet1993; Ndoro 1996; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013). This has been perpetuated in most studies undertaken except a recent one that newly discovered that despite having a curvilinear form just like that of women; ritualistic vessels are exclusively treated as belongings of the ancestors amongst the Saunyama of north-eastern Zimbabwe (Nyamushosho 2013). These studies have also broadened the theme of symbolism hence social messages embedded in prehistoric pottery have been argued to likely have been situational since they communicated differently to both their producers and consumers. Thus symbolism of prehistoric pottery was likely to be a situational status that vessels gained with time and space (see Nyamushosho 2013).

Pottery production is also another topical subject from which a number of issues that range from technology to culture change have been explored e.g. Bwerinofa (1990); Lindahl and Matenga (1995); Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010); Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013). However these studies have only aided towards understanding production phases that probably underwent ceramics from the Zimbabwe culture and Musengezi tradition. Sub-themes are also addressed as part and parcel of production processes and these include division of labour (Lindahl and Matenga 1995) where assistants help with transportation of both raw materials and finished products, mentorship (Lindahl and Matenga 1995; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013) whereby potting skills are imparted from seniors to juniors. The concept of style is also revisited but with a bias on social boundaries e.g. Huffman (1980); Nyamushosho (2013). Lastly the theme of discard is also explored where broken sherds are traced beyond the midden; see Lindahl and Matenga (1995).

Contribution of ceramic ethnoarchaeology to Zimbabwean archaeology

Zimbabwean archaeology has been mostly dominated by studies that are ceramic oriented (Beach 1980; Pikirayi 1999; Mtetwa etal 2013). Surprisingly even though pottery is still produced and consumed by contemporary ethnic groups at a wider scale, ethnography has been partially exploited towards understanding the archaeology of these ceramics (Pikirayi 1997, 2007; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013). Nevertheless despite its limited exploitation by most Iron Age archaeologists perhaps due to its limitations, ceramic ethnoarchaeology has contributed immensely than any other supplementary source of information towards recreating the humanistic side of the story that previously lacked in Zimbabwean archaeology once noted by Beach (1980). To date ceramic ethnoarchaeology has bridged the knowledge gap that previously existed in the works of Caton Thompson (1931); Phillipson (1977); Manyanga (1995); Pwiti (1996); Chirikure, Pikirayi and Pwiti (2002); Soper (2002); Msindo (2005); Gutu (2007); Sinamai (2008) and Machiridza (2012) where insight on choices and constrains in raw material selection, vessel forming processes, firing methods, consumption trends and discard patterns were not revealed. Fortunately these variables are now recognised as key aspects towards understanding technological and cultural contexts that possibly governed the life cycle of ceramics in the archaeological record. For instance through the work of Lindahl and Matenga (1995) archaeologists are now able to go beyond the ethic reasoning capacity that once limited them to appreciate various disposal patterns that pottery undergo following its breakage.

Moreover before the advent of the ethnoarchaeological approach during the last quarter of the 20th century most of the ceramics on the Zimbabwean plateau were treated by archaeologists as mute and

meaningless (Pikirayi 2007) hence they were partially appreciated as communication mediums of intended messages. However through data generated, an understanding has been enabled on the sociological relations that possibly transpired in the archaeological record between the potter and her vessels e.g. Lindahl and Matenga (1995); Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010); Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013) as well as that of the consumer and the consumed vessels e.g. Collet (1993); Ndoro (1996); Khumalo (2013); Nyamushosho (2013). This data has also revealed that symbolism of pottery was likely to have been situational as it varies with space and time.

Contributions of ceramic ethnoarchaeology have also developed boundary archaeology in Zimbabwe. Thus data generated has enabled archaeologists to develop and verify social boundaries of ethnic groups in the archaeological record. To date it is clear that among the various ethnic groups that have been accredited to as the terrace builders of the Nyanga archaeological complex in north-eastern Zimbabwe qualifies the Saunyama who previously had been legitimised on the basis of incomplete archaeological enquiry and hazy oral traditions (Nyamushosho 2013). Ceramic ethnoarchaeology has also broadened understanding of ceramic traditions that dominate in southern and eastern Zimbabwean respectively. Previous ceramic research such as, Huffman (1976); Muringaniza (1989); Manyanga (1995); Soper (2002) only presented typological similarities and differences hence focus was limited to issues of identity and technology. Nevertheless extensive work on ceramics associated with these traditions by ceramic ethnoarchaeologists has yielded a lot of information which goes beyond mere typologies as we now appreciate various stages that they probably underwent during their lifecycle (see Collet 1993; Ndoro 1996; Lindahl and Matenga 1995; Marufu 2008; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013; Nyamushosho 2013) where these ceramics are now believed to have been largely associated with women (Ndoro 1996) as well as the ancestors (Nyamushosho 2013). In terms of production we now know that pottery from eastern Zimbabwe was partly produced using either the pulling or coiling method (Lindahl and Matenga 1995; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010). Further enlightenment has been also provided on recycling of these ceramics as either roasting pans (gango) (Ndoro 1996) or domestic cooking pots following demotion from service in rituals (Nyamushosho 2013).

Ceramic ethnoarchaeology has also contributed to the development of mortuary archaeology where ethnographic data from northern Zimbabwe has qualified the potential of ceramics in communicating social messages as the main reason why pottery from funeral contexts is much decorated than those from settlement contexts (Marufu 2008; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013). Studies undertaken elsewhere have also played a pivotal role in the development of the archaeological theory and practice. Thus recent research has exposed the weakness of style in revealing group identities as evidenced by limitations posed when dealing with sophisticated groups such as the Saunyama in north-eastern Zimbabwe where ceramic style goes beyond group identity see Nyamushosho (2013). It is also now clear that classification of ceramics in the archaeological determination is limited since it only considers stylistic and decoration attributes yet vessel size and function is also critical as evidenced by gathered ethnographic data (Huffman 1972).

Challenges of ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe

Due to dynamic changes in culture and technology ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe has been mostly vulnerable to the speedy modernization of rural areas which has resulted in the destruction of cultural set ups in which traditional pottery is produced and consumed. Thus despite continuity in ceramic ethnoarchaeological studies, the degree of “traditionalness” in terms pottery produced and consumed by contemporary ethnic groups remains a subject of debate (Huffman 1972; Lindahl and Matenga (1995; Ndoro 1996; Lindahl and Pikirayi 2010; Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013). This has resulted in cynicism towards application of this approach by most Iron Age archaeologists perhaps due to the fact that potters of today do not necessarily produce pots the same way past societies did. Likewise application of the ethnoarchaeological approach towards understanding ceramics from the archaeological record has been also limited due to frequent displacements and resettlement of ethnic groups that are connected to the archaeological record.

Thus various land reform programmes that have been carried out during and after colonial period have resulted in the creation of cultural melting pots which limit Iron Age archaeologists to consider ethnographic data from these groups as avenues of interpreting Iron Age ceramics e.g. the case of the Rozvi in South-western in Zimbabwe (see Machiridza 2012).

Ceramic ethnoarchaeology has been also affected by the continued adoption and domination of metal utensils into the traditional African kitchen. As a result traditional household cooking and brewing pots in the form of pottery are being easily replaced by metal pots hence their production and consumption levels are seriously decreasing which robs ceramic ethnoarchaeologists the chance to get exposure to all the phases of the lifecycles of these disappearing pots which in the long run poses challenges when faced with archaeological pots that they do not find models to correlate with. Same scenario applies to vessels that serve in rituals which are easily disappearing from the ethnographic record since they were now replaced by large metal containers that serve the same purpose.

Extensive commercialisation of pottery products especially in this era has negatively affected the course of research. Thus most of the traditional potters in Zimbabwe are now producing for commercial purposes hence in order to match demands of their potential buyers so as to earn a living, most potters are now commercialising pottery for national and international tourism hence robbing ceramic ethnoarchaeologists to chance to experience pottery production, distribution, consumption and discard in its traditional settings.

Recovery of archaeological ceramics as broken shreds in most cases has also posed serious challenges towards meaningful ceramic ethnoarchaeological studies. This is because unlike archaeological pottery, ethnographic pottery in most cases is recovered whist still intact or partly broken hence it's easy to reconstruct vessel shapes. Therefore it becomes problematic to rebuild similar vessel shapes that correspond to the archaeological sample. Absence of spatial data on some of the excavated ceramics has also limited ceramic ethnoarchaeologists to situate archaeological ceramics into their ethnographic contexts despite the fact that human character has a spatial character (Ndoro 1996).

With the exception of a recent publication by Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013), ceramic ethnoarchaeology has also failed to elucidate some aspects of the lifecycle of pottery such as distribution networks. This is because little or not any single research has been carried so far that has yielded information on aspects of marketing, exchange and distribution of pottery yet there is need to know the reasons why pottery from groups such as the Rozvi in south- western Zimbabwe found its way to as far as Murahwa's hill in eastern Zimbabwe. Typical research could also help towards understanding the origins of the Nyanga culture in eastern Zimbabwe which has been cited to be unique when compared to other cultural traditions that operated in the same period of the 2nd millennium AD (Soper 2007). Therefore it is high time archaeologists should try and deduce how pottery was marketed and distributed from its producers to its consumers in the archaeological record.

Lack of long term researches that tries to measure both cultural and technological changes with time and space is also negatively affecting Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeology. Up to date the work of Lindahl and Matenga (1995) which was later modified by Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010) as well as Pikirayi and Lindahl 2013) is only recognised at national level for its long duration. Otherwise the rest of the researches taken so far e.g. Huffman (1972); Ndoro (1996), Marufu (2008); Khumalo (2013); Nyamushosho (2013) have been short term hence limited in their interpretations of culture and technological changes.

Future of ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe

Despite continued scepticism that has haunted most archaeologists for the previous four decades it is noticeable that future of ceramic studies in Zimbabwean archaeology will largely bank on ceramic ethnoarchaeology. This is because most of the researches undertaken so far have been typological oriented (Pikirayi 1997, 1999, 2007) so obviously what now left is to go beyond these taxonomic studies so as to have a better appreciation of the life cycle of these ceramics and most of all to rebuild the humanistic side of the story that has lacked in most archaeological texts as previously lamented by Beach (1980) and Hall (1983). Besides a continued adoption of the ethnoarchaeology approach into most ceramic studies undertaken by Africanise archaeologists especially in western part of the continent is also a pointer to a bright future of ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe. This can be further testified by a growing confidence in this methodology to answer critical archaeological questions by Zimbabwean iron age archaeologists hence it has been used to understand variations in branches of archaeology such as mortuary archaeology e.g. Marufu (2008), boundary archaeology e.g. Huffman (1972), social archaeology Collet e.g. (1993); Ndoro (1996); Pikirayi and Lindahl (2013), geoarchaeology e.g. Lindahl and Pikirayi (2010).There is also possibility that ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Zimbabwe can reveal a lot of information that previous archaeologists have failed to reveal using Iron Age ceramics. There is possibility to learn about marketing and distribution networks of ceramics in the archaeological record. More can be exposed in relation to use of space in production and consumption, use alteration, longetivity, economics and politics of production and consumption which are all limited despite the continued efforts. Also more research is needed on '*why pots are decorated the way they are*' as once queried by Evers etal (1988).

Thus future studies should be oriented towards rebuilding the relations that possibly existed between pots, producers and consumers in the archaeological record. There is also need to consider ethnoarchaeology as a distinct module rather than a subject matter during academic training. So far the author is not aware of any university department in Zimbabwe that offers ethnoarchaeology as a separate module either at undergraduate or graduate level hence this robs most up-coming archaeologists a chance to fully appreciate ethnoarchaeology as one of the possibilities towards meaningful ceramic studies.

CONCLUSION

It is crystal clear that Zimbabwean ceramic ethnoarchaeology is gradually coming out of age. For the past 42 years it has witnessed a proliferation of distinct studies that are oriented towards building analogies that archaeologists can rely onto so as to meaningfully study

prehistoric ceramics. Several studies undertaken so far have played a pivotal role towards revealing the life phases that these potteries probably underwent in the archaeological record. However despite continued research, it is clear that Iron Age archaeology is still dominated by etic ceramic studies hence we are yet to hear about marketing and distribution networks of pottery in the archaeological record, along with many other issues.

Thus given a context in which pottery is still produced and consumed by contemporary ethnic groups in rural areas and an increasing need for meaningful ceramic studies by contemporary archaeologists, ceramic ethnoarchaeology is indeed awaited by a great future.

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