



Migration and Displacement in the Development of Forms in African Art History: Preliminary Report on the Pottery Traditions of Ishiagu

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Abstract: Pottery communities are known with their forms and styles, an integral practice that interprets the individualistic cultural identity. Migration and displacement outcome has contributed immensely in the spread of diverse pottery culture. Isheagu of Delta state and Ishiagu of Ebonyi state are victims of displacement incidence from Awka many years back due to communal clash. As a result of this, both communities migrated independently at different time, one to the West and the other to the East in search for safety. This study, thus investigates the gradual development of forms in both pottery traditions after migration. Most cultural elements in these pottery cultures under investigation must have gone extinct but pottery making remain an intrinsic value that connects the displaced communities and their origin being able to retain the pottery vocation in a new dimension, from the existing knowledge considering the artistic forms produced in Awka their earliest place of habitation. In this regard, pottery works from Awka serve as a measure to the two Ishiagu communities to compare the diverse exiting forms within the three pottery cultures. It is a qualitative approach, that employs the in- depth interview, focused group discussion and fundamental informants. A good number of works from the three communities were investigated to allow a superficial unveiling of the iconographic content of the pottery forms. The study reveals migration occurrences as a porous channel that engenders the replication of human practices in diverse series. It concludes that prime objects are prototype in the generation of innovative forms in every human engagement.

Keywords: Displacement, Development, Forms, African Art History, Preliminary Report, Pottery Traditions, Ishiagu.

INTRODUCTION:

Migration occurrence has succeeded in contributing to the affluence in diversity of cultures, ethnic characters and races. The resultant of migration is displacement, most especially when it involves involuntary relocation which is unforeseen. The relocation of persons from their original place of habitation involuntarily leads to loss of properties, insecurity and environmental ties which can be described as displacement. Migrations occasion displacement and these two related phenomena remain great markers of cultural change. Bhugra and Becker (2005) defined migration as voluntary or involuntary act of moving from one country, region or place of habitation to settle in a new place of habitation. . Cearnea (2003) describes displacement as the physical ejection of person's from their original habitation in other to pontificate valuable assets and fertile lands. Recently, the news is awash with migration incidences across the globe. On the Cable Network News (CNN) hardly a day passes without stories of migrations and some with disastrous consequences. The most recent being the mass movement of Southern Americans en-route the United States of America. Earlier on the mass migrations of Africans to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea remains scandalous pointing to the inability of African nations to fend for their citizens. This study therefore aims at tracing the development of forms through migration and displacement influence.

CAUSES OF MIGRATION:

In Nigeria, many natural and human made disasters account for mass movement of ethnic peoples from their native lands to seek accommodation outside their original habitations. Such crucial issues susceptible for mass relocation of humans relate to communal clashes, lawless or illegal killings by terrorist groups such as the Jihadist group, Boko Haram in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, Fulani herdsman, and the militant group in the South South region of Nigeria. Some of the ugly incidents created by insurgency as revealed by Joda and Abdulrasheed (2015) which has registered a negative imprint in the Northern part of Nigeria is the capturing of teenage girls from Chibok and several bomb explosion in different locations, which till date many persons feel freighted to live in these affected areas. Aghedo and Osumah (2014) in their narrative on the consequences of insurgencies point to insurgencies as unlawful practice that leads to the destruction of lives and properties. They compel, as they observe, the movement of people from their habitation in search of safety. Evidence of these crises constitutes the origin of Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps in Nigeria. Why natural disaster which comprises of oil spillage, over flooding and land erosion can affect lives and agricultural yield, which can equally cause the exodus or mass movement of people.

However, migration can also occur individually, a situation whereby an individual decides to experience livelihood outside his place of origin in the quest for greener pasture, and in some cases marital union. Thereby out of necessity such a person moves out of his or her habitation to another settlement that may be rural or urban. Prior to all these factors that engenders the movement of humans, there is bound to exist, cases of cultural change, displacement of culture, or cultural shift, assimilation of a new culture in the host community and changes in cultural identity which comes to play in the reflection of things these persons engage in. The communities under investigation here, the Isheagu of Delta State and Ishiagu of Ebonyi State were said to have migrated from Awka in the present day Anambra State. The reason for their migration out of their original settlement about three hundred years ago from Awka was because of communal strife as my informants state it. In different time, the Isheagu of Delta state migrated to the West why that of Ishiagu of Ebonyi state moved to the East.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE POTTERY TRADITION UNDER STUDY

The communities where the Isheagu of Delta State and Ishiagu of Ebonyi State migrated from were potters which are Awka *Ifite* in Aguleri where Isheagu of Delta state migrated from and the people of Ishiagu of Ebonyi state initially migrated from Isuochi in Abia State to Ishiagu in Awka, a place called Selechi Igbo where they acquired the art of pottery making, before migrating to Ishiagu in Ebonyi State. Correspondingly, they have in both places where they settled, continued the practice of pottery. Equally, the localities where they left from Awka, have sustained the pottery practice. A preliminary observation suggests that there are consistencies and departures in the pottery traditions from these three centres. The observations from the preliminary investigation brings to the fore the necessity to investigate the way migration has impacted on the two Isheagu communities. Pertinent to the observation is what Kubler (1970) identify as prime objects that are often trailed by replications and deviations as such phenomena demonstrates. Foregrounding such changes is the dynamics of acculturation; a sense of assimilation and integration of the host community (Bhugra 2001, p.112). On this ground, Bhugra and Becker (2005, p. 3) established that the interaction of migrants' origin within an integration of a new culture results in their cultural practices the phenomenon of displacement. Displacement is a process whereby immigrants experience a loss of cultural identity.



Figure 1: Map of Awka

A preliminary cultural observation that is noteworthy on the phenomenon of displacement appertains to the Isheagu of Delta State and Ishiagu of Ebonyi State. Both communities are, therefore not shielded from the effects of migration and the vestigial index associated with displacement. Both communities have experienced changes in their cultural identity, alteration in the language they speak and their festivals. This reality as observed is extended to their culinary taste. For example, *ukwa* (bread fruit of the Igbos) in Awka, is a delicacy highly appreciated and even in Ebonyi State, but in Isheagu of Delta State, it becomes a forbidden food that can lead to the death of anyone that eats it, most especially when such individual passes through a certain river that leads to Isikite one of the villages in Isheagu.

But interestingly, their art practices such as the pottery art and the blacksmith remain a strong cultural practice that still connects Awka, their place of origin. No doubt, the process in migration and attendant displacement of art styles from one generation to another, results in some of alteration. Whatever object made in a place establishes a signal of a repeated version of what the culture had offered in the past. This simply means that Awka being a place of origin of both Isheagu communities on the east and west divide will still bear traces of their original abode. In as much as the process of migration results in some cultural disruption, it is expedient to observe that the art of pottery in both communities remain a constant practice till date; making it an intrinsic identity of the Isheagu of Delta State and the Ishiagu of Ebonyi State.

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW OF ISHEAGU IN DELTA STATE

Isheagu, an Igbo speaking community in Delta State is traceable to Awka in Anambra State of Nigeria from where the people migrated. Isheagu is one of the notable communities among the sixteen communities in Aniocha south local government area of Delta State. It occupies an area of 41.60 square kilometers with a population of about 680,000 people. It is an organized town no doubt, with a proof of a welcoming signage strategically positioned at the entrance of the community, with a caption that labels them as the “Hospitable people”.

The town comprises of six villages namely, Ogbeonishe, Umueze, Isikiti, Ogbetiti, Umuoma and Umuenuelichi. No doubt their tradition embraces the entirety of knowledge, beliefs, values, morals, laws and art practices.

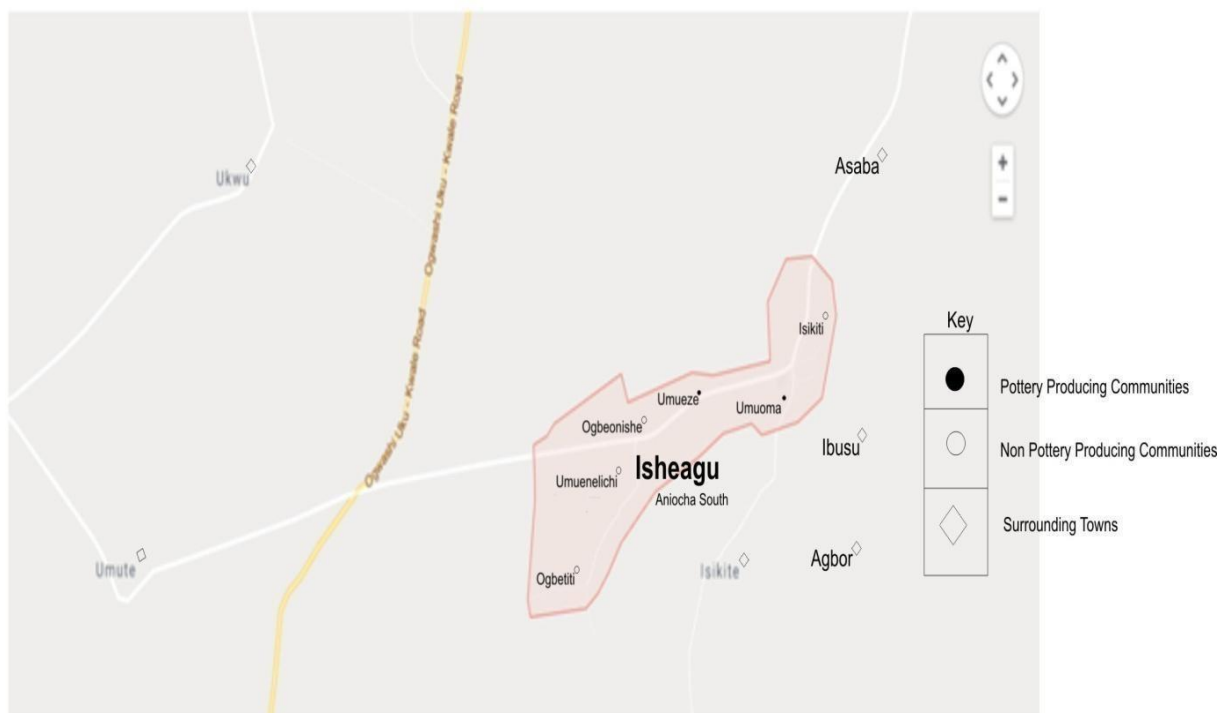


Figure 2: Map of Isheagu, Delta State

The recognition of the town Isheagu today, came to limelight through the bravery of two brothers namely: Omophri and Nwaduri from the *Ifite* quarter in Awka. The word *Ifite* is carved from the word “*Ifiteana*” which means people who germinated from the earth. The historical account of the Awka people reveals that the earliest people of Awka comprises of three groups – Amaenyiana, Urueri and Okpo which were collectively refer to as the *Ifiteana*. The *Ifiteanas* have great passion in the art of pottery, blacksmithing. Theirs skills in this art practices make possible the fabrication of simple tools, for farming, hunting and of course war (Azuka, 2013). Since the *Ifiteanas* of Awka was equipped in these arts, it was not a difficult task for Nwaduri and Omophiri to establish it in the environment they settled which is Isheagu. According to historical narrative gathered, Dr. Isaac Adegwe, the Ogbetite of Isheagu gave a clear account of the historical foundation of Isheagu. According to him, the two brothers Omophiri and Nwaduri were fearless warriors, creative in blacksmith and skillful in hunting. These three qualities were the secrets that enable them in achieving a place of settlement. Both brothers did not just leave Awka, they involuntary migrated due to communal clashes at *Ifitena* quarters Awka, which attracted so much loss of lives and properties. However, their sense of bravery kept them conquering their rivals while in search for a new place of safety. Historical narrative shows they migrated from Awka to a place called Agbala and from there they proceeded to Egbor. In Egbor, they felt insecure and since they couldn't stay they continued their search and arrived at Uni and from there they moved to Obikwele and down to Nsisa.

Yet again, they were not convincingly satisfy pitching their tent at Nsisa, as warriors Omphri and Nwadiri were readily serious in acquiring a land of safety therefore, they began their search. After series of wandering from one place to another in the desert, Nwadiri, the younger brother to Omphiri got to a point where he perceived a peaceful atmosphere, he quickly contacted Omphiri the eldest brother. They felt more convinced and safe in the location when they discovered a stream, they quickly drank from it and discover they were not harm, this prompted them to draw conclusion that the place they located is the land of the living a place free from war. From this exclamation they call the place Isheagu. To authentic this account, Chief Alfred Oyema also gave a similar version of that of Dr. Isaac Adegwe and also brought to light Ogbeneshi as the first village in Isheagu, which was occupied by Nwaduri, and the second village became Ogbetiti which was occupied by Omphiri and with time interplay other four villages added making it six villages in Isheagu. Till date the people of Isheagu still celebrate the heroism of Nwaduri and

Omophiri in ceremonial gatherings. Vital information as regard the creative technicality of pottery making in Isheagu reveals the retention of the art in Isheagu by these present generation after their forefathers must have learnt the techniques from Awka, where they migrated with the culture to Isheagu. The relentless effort of the earliest practitioners of the art in Isheagu, protecting their cultural heritage metamorphosed into a lasting imprint on the potters of the community.

The situation of pot making in Isheagu today is strictly preserved by two villages namely, Umuoma and Umezue out of the six existing villages earlier mentioned. These two villages are known for their undiminished enthusiasm in clay works, spreading the creative skills in order not to extinguish the tradition of pottery making in their community. A notable vibrant potter known as Nwazi Nwaoshule of Umuoma village quarters happens to be the initiator of the art, and because most of the kindred in Umuoma are connected to the royal family, they have the possibility of emerging as king (Obi), since kingship emanate from Umuoma village.

Another advantage the Umuoma village enjoys is that the Obi palace is situated there. This gives more strength to the art, since it encourages the practitioners, and the fact that pottery demands is highly appreciated by the palace. Hence, pot making tradition is originally associated to the Umuoma quarters, but as a result of inter-marriages the art spread to the four corners of the town and beyond. The neighbouring towns that have been influence by their pottery practices is as a result of the beautiful wares encountered and the long years of contact. With this development Umuoma taught Umezue on the art of pottery making. Today, the success achieved in their creative exhibition, it will be extremely difficult to write about Isheagu community and exclude the box marked pottery empty of which these achievement is accredited to Nwazi Nwaoshule the purveyor of the art and of course she can be seen as the Ladi Kwali of Isheagu.

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW OF ISHIAGU IN EBONYI STATE



Figure 3: Map of Ishiagu, Ebonyi State

Ishiagu is one of the largest independent communities in Ivo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria with about seventeen villages. The community hosts vigorous agrarian practitioners and skillfully endowed with creative potters. It is a fertile site situated on the plains of the south eastern savannah on latitude $6^{\circ}05'N$ and longitude $7^{\circ}35'E$. In Ishiagu today, it is essential to stress that twelve out of the seventeen villages are immensely pronounced in Ishiagu due to their population density and of which eleven communities among the prevailing twelve villages are communally joined in genealogy, in terms of being the descendants of member of one family, operating as a uniform group of villages. Till date the children from this lineage constitute the

twelve remarkable villages of Ishiagu and these villages unintentionally retain their names. They are Ngwogwo, Amaonye, Amokwe, Amagu, Ameke, Amata, Ameze, Ihie, Obinagu, Ihetutie, Okweu, and Ogwor.

Each of this village community has its own chronological details that describe their arrivals and settlements in a traditional format. Therefore, a simple device known as the sharing medium was employed to ascertain the period when each village came to connect the existing dwellers. Coherent historical facts gathered orally, unveils that the earliest dwellers moved from different locations at a different period. This interprets that each village has its independent traditional records of incoming and settlement. Underlying these facts it is obvious that the villages that comprises Ishiagu shares a common ideology that uniquely connects them together as a united clan; this is because they practice a democratic tradition that encourages and put into effect in each of the villages, the implementation of a ward and kindred that makes up a village. This culture maintained by the Ishiagu, is a symbolic instrument, that support and sustained the traditional way of disseminating common ideas, interest and things a fact that relates the distinctiveness in family.

Since the birth of Ishiagu's community, they are known for their reputable history of togetherness. In an oral interview, Ruth Igwe affirms that the peaceful coexistence of the Ishiagu villages' lies on the belief that Echelle is the source, the father that produced the founders of present day Ishiagu, which is the original eleven villages and of course this establishes more reasoning and resolute perception of harmony among them.

Other convincing elements that solidifies the demonstration of oneness among Ishiagu indigenes, in addition to their link from "Echelle" bores to the fact that they speak the same dialect of Igbo Language; embracing common religious practices that restrict them to Traditional and Christianity devotee, observing and patronizing common cultural belief systems and values, recognizing the need to position a common market (*Eke Market*), at the center of the villages, a channel that ease the coming together of all the indigenes for transactions in every (*Eke Market*) days, and as well not ruling out the beliefs in the land gods (*Ajali*) and the *yam gods* (*Njoku and Aho*).

Channels for Pottery Forms Development

A general survey of art practices, pottery art emerges as the earliest human's endeavor as a means of meeting the daily needs of humans. With the pre knowledge of early cultures to be informed that earthenware's has the ability of preserving water and as well function as containers for cooking (Ember, 2011). In this way the introduction of pottery vessels improved the standard of living, which probably in the early days, humans' must have engage the usage of natural materials like leaves and shells for the collection of food and water. Clay been the principal material for the making of pottery vessels according to Ember (2011) is one of the common substance known to humans.

The universality of clay in all most every place around the world creates an avenue of the displaced persons in exhibiting their talents on what they are familiar with in their previous habitation. The fact that pottery objects permits the daily existence of human's, it becomes paramount for the displaced persons to give quick attention to the development of the art in their new habitations. By implication pottery making grew out of daily necessities. Prior to this rapid spread in different locations, migrated communities like the Isheagu West and Ishaigu East are bound to experience shift in their forms and styles. Klein (2011) presents that pottery making is an important channel that provide samples of cultural exchange. The flexibility of clay allows the potter to have choices of whatever forms to make. Ember (2011) put in that pottery art helps to expose the profundity of human's creativity been an additive and subtractive medium unlike wood carving that is subtractive process. On this ground migrated persons are privilege to delve into diverse styles and forms to suit their new location.

Migration and Displacement in the Development of Forms

The historical account of both displaced communities under study showcases both communities are far apart due to migration incidence, but interestingly, their art practices such as the pottery art remain a strong cultural practice of Isheagu of Delta State and Ishiagu of Ebonyi State, reflecting the strong influence of Awka pottery forms in both migrated communities. The fact is no human lives in isolation. The environment is a great influence on which we become. According to Escobar (2011), a peculiar attributes of humans is that they are ‘makers’, making use of the slightest experiences they gathered in the creation of forms. In this regard, the kind of art forms one ventures into implicates the nature of the environment one finds his or herself. That is why every important art piece can be regarded both as a historical event and as object of solution to some problem (Morphy, 2007). This brings to the fore that an art form is historical because it embodies past histories, and as well it becomes a source of tracing the nature of solutions in a society.

The potters of Isheagu in Delta State and Ishiagu of Ebonyi State might have been labeled as laypersons who tried to develop utilitarian object to meet their immediate needs and comfort, in contrast it goes beyond that, like artist there is this sense of aestheticism satisfaction that is intentionally depicted in their creative expressions. Lagamma (1998, p.20) expressly presents that to converse on forms of creative expression without connecting it to an artist would be an unconceivable omission in the discipline of Western art history. Considering the pottery forms of Awka which is the earliest abode of both Isheagu West and Ishiagu East, there exist a great transformation and diversity in their creative forms due to acculturation and assimilation coming to play in their daily engagements. Ajani and Onodje (2016), shows that what comes to be when people migrate is usually cultural diffusion, at the process of acculturation and deculturation. There is this kind of unique distribution of knowledge by the host community, in which the absorption of a new knowledge results to cultural shift or cultural displacement that projects novel styles and forms. That is to say migration displacement occurrence is more like an exposure to both communities, to a large extent it breaks the limitation of creative expressions, in such that new ideas are incorporated into their art practices. Trinh (1992), relates the high sensitivity of human’s nature, naturally intelligent, that seize the opportunity of constantly dissolving and reforming which reveals a process of “always emerging” and “always in the making”. In buttressing her claim she showcased an idea using two animals from different breed or plants from different species, both animals and plants were placed in order for this plants or animals to reform, which exposes that there is possibility of emerging. For Trinh this simply means the identity of a community does not bring to a conclusion of the creative display of that community. Rather, it is a point of leaving to make an imprint in another settlement to have a new identity. By this implication, displacement is not a final point of struggle rather it is an avenue of departure, a channel where human reforms to create an identity. This positions displacement as a driving force, where by each route taken, is as a collective identity as remark by Trinh (1991 p. 23).

In a way displacement helps in opening up chances, whereby whatever ideas that is constructed at a given time in a culture dissolve as a result of migration to reform as a given identity. Cultural identity as remark by Bhabha (1995) will be ineffectual without displacement; It therefore means humans are unlimited in the reconstruction of forms incorporating the pick and mix blend of ideas to make a new form.

FORMS AS CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The visual intelligibility and continuous display of innovative pottery art forms, by the Ishaigu East and Isheagu West shows great influence of migration on both displaced communities. A critical study of their pottery art shows they have been able to appropriate the culture, norms and belief of their present settlement and as well incorporate their personal styles. This is so because there is free flow of ideas among the existing potters in both communities. By implication African artist are not completely limited only to their community norms and belief (Egowa, 2005). A preliminary investigation shows that some of the pottery forms of these potters are basically

endowed with simple lines and curves to communicate the intention of the producer, which actually does not connect to their cultural ethics and beliefs. Over the years, the unusual combination of designs by these migrated communities culminates outstanding representation of the Ishaigu's which some of their works are uniquely distinct from that of their previous habitation Awka. Most importantly, they have been able to consider the current taste of their patrons in the development of innovative forms. With these creative expressions, the consumer's interest is not just considered alone; rather it also permits the individualistic performance of the potters, their styles and forms thereby showcasing them as a collective identity. Ugiomoh (2004) relates an understanding as regard the location of an art work; he states that an art work creates an avenue, a level of understanding for the art historian to have opportunity of knowing the value content of the object as a product of an age.

CONCLUSION

Cultural diffusion is bound to be of the continuum so far people migrate voluntarily and involuntarily from their places of habitation. It is expedient to state that there exist community that enjoys security and peaceful co-existence, just as some other communities in the Eastern Northern State suffers security instability which has led to so many being displaced. However, Communities where people enjoy co-existence living and security stability, there are evidence of people migrating internally and externally in search of greener pastures daily. In this context, for the immigrants there is every tendency of alteration, the shifting nature in all their engagements in the host community. So many pottery cultures today is as a result of migration incidence which occurs through inter marriage contacts.

Apparently, the divergence of styles by the Ishaigu East and Isheagu West due to the assimilation of a new culture distinguishes each of the three pottery cultures. From their artistic performance one can easily identify the individual culture, although both migrated communities still share and retains some similar forms and styles with Awka, notwithstanding the wares have been developed over the year's registers great transformation from what they were familiar with at Awka. Till date from the investigation carried out in this study, Awka been the nexus of both the Isheagu of Delta State and Ishaigu of Ebonyi State pottery are yet to appropriate new forms in their pottery profession. Negligence of this is most likely because they have not had the opportunity of assimilating with a new culture outside Awka, unlike the Ishiagu's that are privileged to have contact with a new habitation thereby limiting the creative prowess of the Awka potters. Therefore, this study unveils migration and displacement incidence as positive tool for cultural progress, it also shows that all pottery cultures emerges as a result of migration incidence.

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