

Cooking pot for githeri/irio

Stew/soup cooking pot

Porridge cooking pot

Fig. 10: Gikuyu pots (Source: Brown 1989c)

Among the Akamba, decoration is in the form of a potters' mark, which also serves as an identification mark (Fig.11). Each potter designs her own mark which then serves as a trademark and guarantee of the vessel's quality (Gill 1981). Although this kind of embellishment was traditionally not part of the Gikuyu potting system in Murang'a, Kamau (1992) found that 65% of the potters she studied added personal marks to the Gikuyu form of decoration to distinguish their wares. According to her, such

markings are "mostly incised when the potter is involved in collective potting or hired labour; hence the need to distinguish each individual's work" (Kamau, 1992:72). It would appear, therefore, that the Gikuyu potter's mark does not serve the purpose of guaranteeing the vessel's quality as does the Kamba one. However, Leakey (1977) reports that some women in Kiambu put their own potters' mark on the pots they made. He, however, does not say what purpose the mark served.

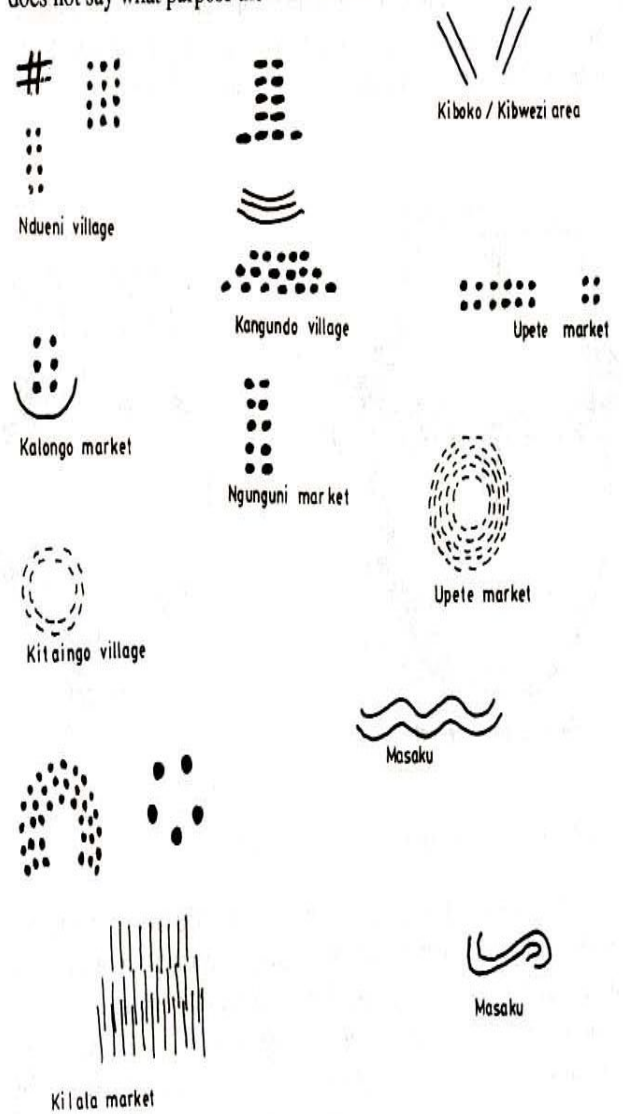


Fig. 11: Kamba potters' marks (Source: Gill 1981)

Additions to the surface include joining formed clay elements to the vessel and applying treatments that alter its colour. Here in Kenya, the first type of decoration is restricted to the so-called Dorobo of Samburu District. These people manufacture pots which are decorated with narrow bands of clay applied vertically (and sometimes horizontally around the pot waist) on either side of the neck and extending down over the body (Brown 1989b; Clarfield 1989). These bands are occasionally undecorated but are generally impressed with the fingers or punctured with a line of small dots made with a stick (Brown, 1989b:78) (Fig.12).

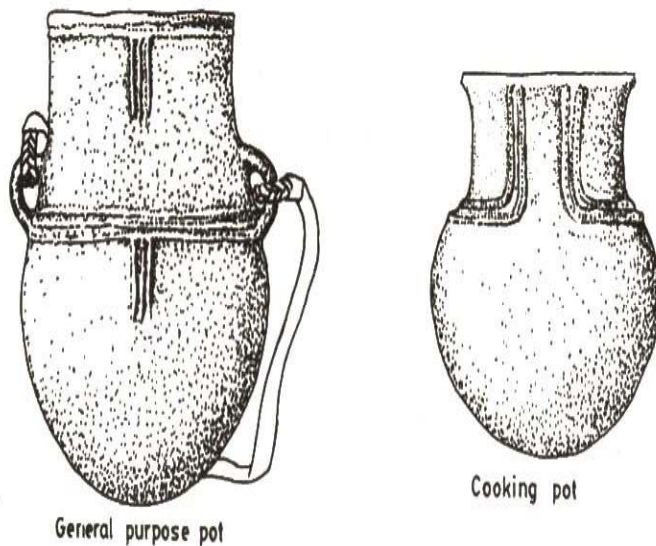


Fig. 12: Samburu Dorobo pots (Source: Brown 1989 b)

Colour additions could be in the form of painting or slipping. Traditionally, only slipping was practised in Kenya and this also seems to have been very rarely. A slip is a fluid suspension of clay in water that is applied before firing to form a thin coating. According to Herbich (1981) any vessel types not intended for post-firing treatment, are covered with a slip of finely ground red ochre. This is done over burnished areas which are immediately burnished again.

### c) Drying and firing

After fabrication, pots have to be dried before being fired. Potters are aware that this is an important process because any mishaps could lead to the destruction of the product, either during the drying itself or later in firing. Traditionally, therefore, Kenyan potters maintained a close watch over this process. This was to ensure that the wares did not dry too quickly or that they failed to dry completely. Pots are, therefore, dried away from direct sunlight to ensure even drying and thereby prevent them from cracking. Thus, potters dry their wares indoors or under rockshelters (for example, the Pokot). In cases of indoor drying in a habitation house, part of the house is set aside especially for that purpose. Pots can also be dried under the eaves of houses or in specially constructed shelters, as practised by the Agikuyu of Kiria (Wandibba 1994). In either case, Gikuyu potters pile their pots one on top of another in an up-side-down fashion. Traditionally, the drying period was much longer than is the case now when pots are made with the next market day in mind. Thus, although some Luo potters would have preferred to have their very large pots dry for at least four weeks before firing them, they take the risk of drying their wares for a minimum of two to three days (Herbich 1981).

Once the pots are deemed to be dry, they are ready for firing, the final stage in the manufacturing process. Kenyan potters do not fire their pots in kilns. Instead, they fire them in open firing, a method known as bonfire or clamp. Firings done this way are always short and generally achieve relatively low temperatures. In the absence of kilns, Kenyan potters fire their wares in a shallow depression or some flat area cleared for that purpose. The identification marks of the latter usually include a hardened and discoloured earth surrounded by ash. However, among the Agikuyu, this space is demarcated by potsherds which also serve as vessel props.

In the past when forested and woodland areas were plentiful, wood was the usual fuel. But today, with very few trees left, potters have had to resort to whatever material is available to them, including grass, cow dung, coconut fronds, shrubs, bark, leaves and stalks of grain.

Potters use a number of factors to determine when the firing is complete. The most important of these appears to be colour. Light brown

and various shades of red are an indication that the pots have been fired. Other factors include consumption of a predetermined amount of fuel, appearance of the flame and embers, and timing (Gill 1981; Kamau 1992; Omollo 1988).

Potters sometimes subject their wares to post-firing treatments. Such treatments are applied to pottery either to improve appearance, seal surfaces to decrease permeability, or perhaps to increase strength (Rice 1987). The most common treatments involve applying a variety of organic materials to the pot while it is still hot. Among the Luo, for example, as the red-hot pots are removed one by one, they are splashed with an infusion made by soaking and/or boiling the bark of *Bridelia scleroneuroides* or *Albizia coriaria*. The liquid sizzles and froths on the pots, turning them instantly from an orange-red or reddish-brown to a mottled black or brown colour (Herbich, 1981:13). On the other hand, Pokot potters burn the leafy twigs of *Diospyros scabra* inside the pots before the pots are removed from the firing. The material, which produces dense smoke, is used to blacken the inside of the pots and help seal the pores (Brown, 1989a:58). On their part, Endo potters believe that pots coloured red from the fire are likely to break if people with evil eyes see them. Pots fresh from the fire are, therefore, sheltered from public view, to 'dull their colour and to give them protection'. Thus, a potter immediately coats her cooled pots with dung (Welbourn, 1989:61). Gosden (1982) reports that potters near Iten coat the still hot surface of their vessels with resin to harden them and give them a shiny finish. On her part, Gill (1981) found that Kamba potters coat the insides of their pots with heavy fats or cook a sticky meal of sweet potatoes and allow it to sink into the pores of the vessel. The potters also smear the outside of the pot with vegetable gums to help seal the often very porous walls. Finally, Ogiek potters sometimes smear cow dung on the outside of the pot to help harden it. This is done after the red-hot pots have been taken out of the firing, but before they have cooled completely (Kratz 1989).

## Production and Social Organization

Archaeologists interested in this aspect of ceramic production have focussed their attention on interaction, learning, and stylistic variability.

The basic question has been, what factors bring about homogeneity or heterogeneity in ceramic styles? To find answers to this question, one would need to look at who makes the pots, the learning processes involved, the organization of the actual potting activities, the stylistics of the wares produced, and post-marital residential patterns. What does the Kenyan ceramic ethnography tell us about these issues?

### a) The Potters

In Kenya traditional potting is almost exclusively a woman's job. Apart from the Bukusu and Logoli communities, all the other potting communities only have women as potters. In cases where men also do potting, there is a gender specialization regarding the types of vessels made. Thus, Bukusu and Logoli men make only those pots associated with male-dominated activities such as beer drinking and purification rituals (Barbour 1989; Wandibba 1989, 1997). They never engage themselves in the manufacture of water or cooking pots, which are used in the domain of activities traditionally ascribed to women. However, in all the communities where potting is exclusively a woman's job, women make the whole range of the pottery repertoire required by their community.

Despite the fact that potting is predominantly a woman's job, not every woman in any one potting community is really engaged in the craft. In fact, only a small proportion of the women are involved in this trade. Indeed, in her study area Herbich and (Herbich and Dietler 1989) estimated that all pots were made by a group of women who constituted less than one percent of the population. Nevertheless, potting is not a specialized craft in the full sense of the word for no woman engages in it on a full-time basis. Indeed, potting is usually undertaken in combinations with other domestic chores or in between such chores. In fact, during planting, weeding and harvesting, potting may be suspended all together (Omollo 1988). Furthermore, no potter lives on earnings derived only from the sale of her wares and has, therefore, to engage herself in other income-generating activities to supplement income from pottery. Although in the past the craft was in some areas sometimes restricted to some clans, today it is open to anyone interested.

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## b) Learning Processes

The studies done so far suggest that a variety of means exist by which potters acquire their knowledge. In some communities, potting skills are passed on from mother to daughter. For example, Logoli girls start to learn to make pots at about the age of twelve and are usually taught by their mothers (Barbour 1989). In this kind of system, the learners acquire the skills through observation and imitation. But even in such communities, any other woman interested in becoming a potter would be free to do so. Thus, although potting among the Pokot is more often passed on from mother to daughter, any interested woman may, in theory, approach a potter to be taught the craft (Brown 1989a). Such women usually learn by first watching a potter at work and then trying it out themselves. On the other hand, among the Akamba, young girls voluntarily become potters and receive instruction from either their mothers or from older women in the village. The young girls learn by observation, experimentation and participation in the manufacturing process (Gill 1982).

Among the Luo, daughters also learn potting from their mothers. However, as will be shown later, on marriage, such a woman will be required to learn anew from her mother-in-law or co-wives (Herbich 1981). In some other communities, the situation is not that clear-cut. For example, among the Endo (Welbourn 1989) women who decide to become potters are sometimes daughters, daughters-in-law and sometimes just unrelated women who are interested in taking up the craft (Welbourn 1989). Jane Kamau (1992) also reports that among the Agikuyu of Gakaigo sub-location, those interested in potting learn from either their mothers, mothers-in-law or friends. The age at which the learning takes place also varies from community to community. Thus, among the Ogiek (Kratz 1989) most potters learn when they are grown girls or young women. On the other hand, some Endo potters learn when young and then take their skills to their new home whilst others wait until their children are older and they have more time (Welbourn 1989).

## c) Organization of actual potting activities

As already stated, the most important ingredients in the manufacture of pottery are clay and temper. For most potters here in

Kenya, both the clay and the tempering materials are found within the vicinity of their homes. However, in the case of Kiria potters the source of the clay is 10 km away while that of the temper is about 40km away. Traditionally, these potters relied on donkeys for transportation of both materials, but now use motor transport for the temper (Wandibba n.d.). In either case, the potters do not acquire the materials directly from the sources but through third parties who exchange the materials for cash. To ensure regular availability, the potters stock-pile both materials. In the neighbouring Gakoigo sub-location, the potters import temper but utilize clay from nearby marshes (Kamau 1992). On the other hand, at the beginning of this century, potters in Murang'a area lived in the neighbourhoods of the tempering material (Routledge and Routledge 1910).

Kenyan potters generally make their pots in their homes. There are no workshops as such and the potter or group of potters decide on the spot for the work, which could be even inside the potter's house. Nonetheless, once a spot has been chosen, it becomes the usual potting area. There are, however, some potters who do their work away from home. For example, the Adawida have their potteries located in rock-shelters away from human habitation (Soper 1989). The same is true of Pokot potters who generally use huge overhanging rock-shelters as their potteries. In this regard, Jean Brown (1989a:54) observes that part of the rock-shelter may be screened off with poles and brushwood to form an enclosure in which the potter works and where unfired pots can be left to dry unobserved. Like other traditional potters in the country, both the Adawida and the Pokot believe that pots in the process of manufacture must be protected from any ritual impurity that could bring about cracking and breakages during the firing process. Siting potteries away from home is one way of guaranteeing such protection.

Kenyan potters use pinching and/or drawing and coiling methods to manufacture their vessels. The coiling technique involves building up the vessel wall with superimposed rolls of clay. Sometimes coiling may be employed from the beginning. However, more often than not, a vessel is started with a disc of clay, made by pinching, or with a collar of clay. Whereas some potters make their pots in one piece, others do so in two pieces. Luyia and Luo potters, for example, build their vessels in one piece

starting with the base upwards until the pot is completed. On the other hand, Gikuyu, Kamba and Ogiek potters manufacture their pots in two pieces starting with the upper portion, that is, rim, neck and shoulder. Once this portion is completed, including the execution of decoration, it is left to dry until it reaches a leather-hard stage before the bottom portion is added.

Once the pots have been built, they are dried in a safe place away from direct sunlight. Potters are aware that the pots should take as long as possible to dry in order to ensure that they do not crack and break during either the drying itself or in firing. Thus, traditionally pots were dried for up to two or even four weeks. Nowadays, however, the duration is much shorter because pots are generally made with the next market day in mind. The firing takes place near where the pots were made, and the pots are deemed to be fired when they become reddish in colour. Sometimes, the pots are subjected to some-post firing treatment but in other cases they are not.

After the firing and any required post-firing treatment, the pots are ready for distribution. Most of the pottery produced in Kenya is consumed locally through periodic markets held regularly in the areas of production. The wares are generally sold to customers who come from within a five-kilometre radius of the production centres. This is especially the case where the potters are at the same time the sellers themselves, since their involvement in other domestic chores makes it almost impossible for them to travel long distances that would keep them away for a long time. But in situations where pots are distributed through third parties using modern methods of transportation, the distances covered can be great. For example, pots produced in the Lake Victoria Basin by Luyia and Luo potters are not only found in all the major urban centres of Western Kenya, but also in far off places like Nakuru, Nairobi and even Mombasa, which is about 900km from the centres of production. In this case, the pots are transported by lorry, bus or train. In the same way, pots made by the Gikuyu potters of Kiria are transported by vehicles to as far as Nyahururu and Nairobi, about 150km and 80km away, respectively (Wandibba 1994). Similarly, pots made in Taita are sold as far as Malindi, a distance of nearly 300km. But even within the local areas, pots could be transported over comparatively

long distances to satisfy a particular market need. Thus, the pot-making agricultural Pokot take their pots to markets which are 32km away where their kin, the pastoral Pokot, come to buy them (Brown 1989a).

Apart from marketing, pots are also distributed through sales at home and through gift-giving. Pots sold at home are usually bartered for food stuffs, especially grain. Sometimes, such pots may have been bought for cash from the market in the first instance. For example, Herbich (1981) observed that there were some traders who bought quantities of pottery for resale in areas outside the normal distribution areas of the markets, where they would sometimes be sold from homestead to homestead. In the homesteads, the pots were often not exchanged for cash but for grain. On the other hand, among the Endo (Welbourn 1989), pots are partially paid for either by fetching clay or firewood or by giving the potter an equivalent volume of finger-millet for each pot. Traditionally, gift-giving was the main means through which pottery was distributed among the Ogiek themselves. Kratz (1989) records that a woman would simply ask a friend or relative to make her some pot, and the potter would not refuse because she expected some return favour in the future. Today, Ogiek pots are also exchanged through secondary distribution. In this system, even non-potting women may give their pots to daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters or friends, if they happen to have spare ones (Kratz 1989). This gift-giving is also practised by other potting communities, including Babukusu and the Pokot. Among Babukusu, pots are given free to relatives, friends and neighbours. On the other hand, on marriage a Pokot bride, who is the first wife, is customarily given four cooking pots by her mother-in-law, the second wife receives her pots from the first wife, the third wife receives hers from the second, and so on (Brown, 1989a:59).

Most traditional potters in Kenya carry out their craft as individuals. However, group potting is practised by the Agikuyu, Luo and Akamba. Among the Agikuyu, groups of potters come together to pot for a colleague in exchange for money or as part of the communal effort, *ngwatio*, to assist one another (Kamau 1992: Wandibba n.d.). In either case, every potter naturally brings in her own expertise and, may be, even idiosyncrasies. On the other hand, among the Luo, potters tend to live in homesteads clustered around clay sources, with each cluster operating as

a network of potters. Each cluster, therefore, forms some kind of community in which the women carry on their potting activities together. This kind of interaction tends to produce artefacts that appear to be unique to each cluster, what Herbich (1981, 1987) has described as micro-styles. Finally, among the Akamba the most common pottery production unit is a cooperative group of women, ranging from small groups of mothers and daughters to the larger, highly organized twelve-to-fifteen-member cooperatives such as those found in the Mbooni Hills area (Gill, 1981:95).

In the traditional setting, the pottery industry in Kenya was governed by many taboos. Although the adoption of Western civilization has led to the discard of a good number of these taboos, some are still being observed to this day. I have already stated, for example, that among Babukusu women who are still under menarche are forbidden from entering the clay quarry. Many other potting communities also insist that potting can only occur successfully in a state of ritual purity. For example, Brown reports that among the Pokot, pots in the process of manufacture must be kept well away from any ritual impurity as this could cause cracking during firing (Brown 1989a). To ensure this purity, pottery production is sited in a secluded place away from any habitation and where passers-by are unlikely. "Young men, in particular, are likely to have had sexual intercourse the previous night and that would adversely affect the potting" (Brown, 1989a:54). Therefore, young men are chased away if they approach the pottery. But this chasing away is not restricted to young men for other visitors are also chased away. On the other hand, along the coast, a potter who is menstruating is not supposed to fire her pots. In addition, women in that state of ritual impurity are not allowed to touch pots since this could spoil the results (Ndiiri 1992). Soper (1989) also reports that among the Adawida, pots must be kept free of impurity during manufacture. Thus, potters and any onlookers must observe certain taboos. For example, a potter must not eat meat before or during potting and someone inadvertently doing so can only prevent the pots from cracking by pulling a hair from the head of a potter present and adding it to the flames (Soper, 1989:97).

#### d) Stylistics of the Wares Produced

Archaeologists and cultural anthropologists use the term style primarily to mean decorative style, that is, the surface embellishment of an object. For archaeologists, styles - especially pottery styles - have long been important in reconstructing the histories and cultural relation of peoples who occupied archaeological sites (Rice, 1987:245). Archaeologists have, however, tended to avoid explicit definitions of style. Indeed, style has often been effectively either undefined or defined negatively, relegated to the status of an ambiguous residual category for aspects of artefact variability that could not be explained in terms of other attribute sub-systems or agencies (such as function or raw material). Nevertheless, since the 1960s, this concept has acquired increasing importance among archaeologists who seek to explain variability in the archaeological record in terms other than the simple chronicle of events (Rice, 1987:245).

As already observed, most Kenyan potters decorate their pots in one way or another. However, there are differences in terms of technique and motif. Technique refers to the method of decoration whereas motif refers to the manner in which the decoration is done as well as to where on the vessel the embellishment is placed. We have seen that Luyia and Luo potters produce the most elaborate patterns of decoration. Their main form of decoration is that of rouletting, in which impressions are generally produced with a plaited grass or knotted cord roulette. Both the Luo and those Luyia groups bordering them normally decorate their pots all over the outer surface, although the impressions are sometimes interrupted by red-ochred burnished bands on the shoulder of the vessel. Luyia potters would have such bands on the neck instead. It is, therefore, possible to distinguish Luo and Luyia pots using the location of this band as one of the differentiating criteria. For the Abaluyia farthest away from the Luo, namely, Babukusu, the decoration is quite different from that just described. Although they use the same decorative technique, the motif is very different in that the impressions are restricted to the neck area. Just below these and occurring on the shoulder are impressions executed with a carved roulette. Invariably, these carved roulette impressions are interrupted by knobs, a unique embellishment on Bukusu pottery.

The Kalenjin potters who decorate their pots use the twisted roulette. Among the Endo the decoration is restricted to the necks of some vessels whilst for the Ogiek decoration occurs in horizontal and vertical rows. Ogiek pottery also has two or more small lugs which are spaced between the two handles that characterize this kind of pottery. Finally, the Sambuuru Dorobo decorate their vessels with vertical and horizontal ridges which are frequently superimposed with dots.

Down at the coast, the commonest form of decoration is that of incised lines. These occur in a variety of motifs which include hatching and wavy lines (Ndiiri 1992). Most vessels are, however, not decorated.

Decoration on Gikuyu pottery is very simple, and consists of either one or three rows of comb-stamp impressions. The decoration is executed on the shoulder of the vessel. Finally, we have seen that the Akamba decorate their pots with trademarks. These trademarks vary considerably among potters; some are complex geometric figures, while others are no more than a few lines incised into the pot walls (Gill, 1981:150).

This aspect of the production and social organization of ceramics has generally not been addressed in ethnographic studies in this country. However, the two main ethnoarchaeological studies (Gill 1981; Herbich 1987) do deal with the issue. According to Gill (1981), Kamba potters see their vessels as being the same all over Ukambani, their territory. In her study, she came to the conclusion that any variation which exists in the ware was at the individual rather than the community level. To her, this was because: "Each woman has her own well developed potting skill, and from the variety of possible combinations, she determines her own methods for flaring the rim of the vessel, beveling the lip, shaping a long neck, and rounding or flattening the bottom of the pot" (Gill, 1981:210). We have also seen that Kamba pottery is characterized by the potter's mark, which serves to distinguish between the products of individual workers. As Gill (1981) asserts, "Not only do the marks record information about the individual woman potter, but they also reflect ownership of property by Kamba women, and make it possible to trace the movement of any potter's vessels from village to village" (p.207).

In her study, Herbich (1981, 1987) observes that despite certain overall similarities of Luo pottery, the products of different potter

communities can be clearly distinguished on the basis of characteristic combinations of features. These include "decorative aspects (i.e. both motifs and the organization of the decorative field), aspects of form (such as rim profiles, neck heights and height/width proportions), and technological aspects (such as clay and temper inclusions, and details of workmanship" (Herbich, 1987:196) (emphasis in the original). Herbich describes these patterns of associated decorative, formal and technological aspects characteristic of the different potter communities as micro-styles.

Herbich (1987) has also demonstrated that potters are capable of executing a wide range of stylistic variations on their products. She has done this by examining the stylistics on one vessel form (water pot) from one potter community near Ng'iya market in Siaya District. The water pots from this particular community are decorated in the same way as other water pots from elsewhere in the community are decorated. However, a keen observer would not miss to notice subtle differences which are peculiar to this community. These differences result from the decorative arrangements unique to the community. The pots invariably have a horizontal band of reed impressions at the base of the neck which itself and most of the body are covered with cord roulette impressions. Most of the decorative variation can be seen in the number and form of horizontal bands of furnished ochre paint applied to the body. In most cases, the pots carry two bands, but occasionally they have one or three bands. One of these bands is generally placed just below the band of reed impressions while the second one about the mid-point of the body. "The most frequent arrangement is two simple straight bands. However, a large number of pots have bands composed of scalloped, loped, or other (sometimes detached) motifs, often in combination with a straight band" (Herbich, 1987:198).

Stylistic variability can, therefore, be observed even at the micro-level. Such variability could be due to individual potter's expertise, as in the case of Kamba potters, or cell production as just described above. But there are also what I here call macro-styles, which appear to correspond to ethnic groups. I have argued elsewhere (Wandibba 1995) that when one examines the pottery produced by a particular community in Kenya, one cannot fail to notice its overall uniformity in terms of shape and decoration.



This means that such pottery tends to have certain stylistic peculiarities that would distinguish it from pottery produced by another community. Thus, pots made by the various Luo clusters of potters would still exhibit overall similarities that would distinguish the vessels from those produced by the neighbouring Luyia potters, for example. But in such circumstances of contiguous existence, there is also room for cross-border borrowing across ethnic boundaries.

Macro-styles can also be seen in the case of Kamba and Gikuyu pottery. Although the two communities live near each other, the stylistics on their pottery are quite different. Whereas Gikuyu potters decorate their pots with comb-stamp impressions or leave them without any decoration, Kamba potters invariably imprint theirs with personal identification marks. When we move to the Rift Valley, the different potting communities there (the Ogiek, Pokot and Endo) all decorate their pots differently.

A study carried out by Chris Gosden (1982) in Keiyo District would seem to suggest that even when potters migrate to far off localities from their own, they carry on with the macro-style of their community. Gosden encountered a group of potters near Iten who were initially thought to be Keiyo but, in fact, turned out to be Luo. The father of the family had moved into the area after the Second World War and, finding the need for pots, started manufacturing them. The group made pots which are "undistinguishable from the Luo pots that reach the Baringo area from Kisumu..." (Gosden, 1982:16).

#### e) Post-marital residential patterns

Post-marital residence patterns organize the distribution of women within a society, and play a critical role in determining the influences to which they are subjected and which in turn are likely to be reflected in the craftwork (see, for example, Deetz 1965). Here in Kenya, all the traditional communities are patrilineal and patrilocal. Thus, on marriage a woman leaves her parents' home and moves into her new husband's home. Among the Luo, custom dictates that a son and his new wife live in his father's compound until the children of that union are ready for marriage. In this arrangement, a new wife lives under the close supervision of her mother-

in-law whose duty it is to ensure that she conforms to the ideals and expectations of the family. If she happens to have entered into a polygynous union, the new wife will also have to contend with the co-wives since these have authority over her by virtue of their seniority. This in effect means that the young woman has to learn things anew. As Ominde (1952:51) has observed, once they get married, Luo girls have to undergo a long process of re-socialization which often involves "unlearning" things learned in the mother's home. Thus, a woman who marries into the home of potters will be expected to take up the craft. This she cannot decline because she has to demonstrate that she does not consider herself too good for that work and also to show that she is willing to take up responsibilities for her new family (Herbich 1981). The acquisition of the new skills is done under the close supervision of a mother-in-law or senior co-wives. Since all the potting activities are done in a group, the young woman eventually comes to conform to the stylistics of that very localized group or cell of potters. As already pointed out, this conformity results in the formation of micro-styles. These micro-styles are perpetuated by women often coming originally from vastly different areas, who have almost all learned their potting after coming to live in their husband's homesteads (Herbich, 1981:19).

Gill (1981) observes that Kamba women marry outside their community of origin, and move from place to place with their husbands. This movement of women is an important factor in maintaining the cohesion of Kamba culture throughout the area. This cohesion can be seen in the similarities of pottery manufacturing techniques, vessel form, and decoration throughout Ukambani (Gill, 1981:209). Since Kamba women learn their ceramic skills before they get married, the observed similarities in stylistic features of ceramic wares from different Kamba settlements have to do with the post-marital residence pattern.

#### Use and Disposal

Both the ethnoarchaeological and ethnographic studies done in Kenya so far have addressed the question of the use of ceramic vessels. There appears to be no doubt that all the pottery made by traditional potters

is utilitarian and is used to satisfy the various household needs in terms of carriage, storage, cooking, and local brewing and serving. Every potting community has names which describe the function served by each vessel form. However, many vessels serve a number of functions other than the ones intended for them. Many pots, therefore, serve intended as well as unofficial functions. Thus, for example, a pot made specifically as a beer pot will more often than not be found serving as a grain storage pot or for brewing beer. Thus, among the Luo, a vessel form known as *dapi*, *mbiru* or *nyambiru*, according to region, is commonly used for water storage and cooling in the home, but in some areas also for brewing beer (Herbich 1987).

Apart from these utilitarian vessels which could serve interchangeable functions, there are special purpose vessels that only serve the designated use. Included in this category would be vessels used in various rituals or in specialized functions. For example, Bukusu potters make two ritual pots, *namunwa ebili* and *kumubende*. The former has two mouths and two necks on one body and is used in ceremonies associated with the birth of twins. On the other hand, *kumubende* is a small pot with an unusually long neck and is used in cleansing ceremonies where close relatives marry unknowingly. These two vessel types are outside the ordinary range of the Bukusu pottery repertoire (Wandibba 1995).

Special purpose vessels include the snuff grinding bowl made by the Ogiek and tobacco pipes that used to be common in Western Kenya. Ogiek potters also used to make tobacco pipes but no longer do so. The widespread adoption of factory made cigarettes has meant that very few tobacco pipes are now manufactured in Western Kenya. Finally, Bukusu potters used to manufacture a special bowl for the straining of native salt and bhang-smoking pipes, both of which are no longer made.

Issues concerning vessel life expectancy, recycling, spatial distribution and disposal are all important to archaeologists. Unfortunately, however, these have so far not received the systematic attention required, even from the few ethnoarchaeological studies that have been done here in Kenya, with perhaps the exception of Gill (1981). Nonetheless, the issues have been tackled in varying detail by different researchers.

The life expectancy of a vessel varies according to its size, location when not in use and use frequency. Among Babukusu, the life expectancy of a pot appears to increase with vessel size and to decrease with mobility and use frequency. Traditionally, these people made six main types of vessels: beer pots, for brewing and serving beer; water pots, for fetching and storing water; cooking pots for *ugali*; cooking pots for foods other than *ugali*; cooking pots for vegetables and meat; and serving bowls. Those pots for brewing and serving beer on festive occasions would normally be the largest in size whereas those used in this way for small parties would be of medium size. All the pots were stored in specific areas of the house, with water pots closer to the door where they could easily be reached by non-residents while beer pots were farther away in an area not easily accessible to anybody. Cooking pots were kept near the hearth. The beer pots were subjected to the least mobility while cooking and water pots, because of the nature of their services, were frequently moved. Because of their frequent use and mostly by different people, the latter two broke quite often, necessitating more regular replacements than for the huge beer pots which were rarely moved. In one home an octogenarian man still had some of his beer pots from the late 1940s when this author was carrying out his research there in 1994.

The research carried out so far indicates that damaged and broken pots are not just discarded wholesale but put to some other use. Thus, among the Akamba slightly cracked or broken pots are used for storage of food and cooking utensils or may even be used as weights to hold down the thatch on the roof of a storage building (Gill, 1981:119). On the other hand, such pots are used for aging the clay among Gikuyu potters and for storing shelled maize cobs to be used as fuel by the Bukusu community. In the latter community, they were also traditionally used for holding ashes used in the fermentation of sorghum and for holding sorghum and finger-millet during the fermentation period. On his part, Omollo (1988) reports that among the Luo, water and cooking pots that are beyond repair could be used for storing non-liquid items like flour for making *ugali*.

Recycling is not just restricted to whole vessels but extended to broken pieces, the sherds. For example, among the Akamba, sherds are used as bowls to feed animals and as containers for carrying hot coals to

light a fire (Gill 1981). Among the Luo, such pieces are, in addition to the uses already cited, used for serving treated water to chickens and for holding cooking pots in position on the fire. In addition, children use sherds for various games (Omollo 1988). In the area around Ng'iya market, potters have found another use for broken pieces of pottery; they use them as grog temper. The use of this type of temper has become so important that the potters even go to the extent of paying for broken pots brought to them or trading two broken pots for a new one (Herbich 1981). Other uses to which the sherds are put include demarcating the boundaries of firing places, serving as lids for other pots, and being used to grind snuff and medicines for external use.

As regards discard, Luo pots are discarded within the homestead. Unbroken pots that can no longer be used are discarded anywhere within the compound, but mostly upside down against the wall, under granaries or abandoned close to the fence behind the kitchen (Omollo 1988). On the other hand, when a pot breaks inside or outside a Bukusu person's house, re-usable pieces are selected and put aside and the rest are swept and discarded on a nearby midden or in the grass on the edge of the courtyard. But if a water pot happens to break on the way, tradition dictates that none of the pieces is collected. Because of this, paths leading to sources of drinking water traditionally tended to be littered with such sherds. In cases of this nature, sherds are discarded away from original use contexts where they are unlikely to be found by a future archaeologist. Finally, re-usable damaged vessels are normally stored beneath granaries or under the eaves where they are protected from damage by wandering animals. From that safe custody, they are used as and when required (Wandibba 1997).

## Ceramic Change

In terms of ceramic change, archaeologists would normally want to find out the changes that have taken place in the pottery systems over time, and also the factors that are likely to have brought about those changes. To do full justice to the issues in question, it would be necessary for an ethnoarchaeologist to carry out a diachronic study of a potting community. However, Kramer (1985) points out that "Ethnographic studies

tend to be carried out on a relatively small scale over short periods of time, and comparatively little ethnoarchaeological work systematically addresses the question or describes circumstances in which ceramic change occurs" (p.92). The situation here in Kenya is no different from this general observation. Nevertheless, a few issues seem to emerge from the studies done so far.

In regard to techniques of production, it would appear that potters still use methods that were used by their forefathers. In fact, Ndiiri (1992) has declared that at the coast there is continuity in the method of manufacture as well as in some of the decorative techniques and motifs. In addition, the methods of production observed at the beginning of this century by Routledge and Routledge (1910), are basically the same methods employed by present-day Gikuyu potters (Brown 1989; Kamau 1992; Wandibba 1994, n.d.). The same can be said of Bukusu potters whose techniques were first systematically observed in the 1930s (Wagner 1970). Finally, after investigating Luo potters in Siaya for over two and a half years Herbich (Herbich and Dietler 1989) came to the conclusion that technological changes in the system had been minimal and nil in so far as they concern the reduction of labour.

However, some changes have, in fact, occurred in certain aspects of the technological system. Changes can be seen in the way the wares are decorated, in the drying methods and in the fuels used in firing. In terms of decoration, new tools have been incorporated and motifs varied to meet the changing market forces. With regard to drying, one can observe that whereas in the past pots were dried away from direct sunlight throughout, today some potters do so in the final stages in order to ensure that they fire before the next market day. Finally, as regards fuels, the depletion of woodlands and forests has meant greater reliance on less appropriate fuels like grass, grain stalks, maize cobs, twigs and leaves. This has led to the production of products that are generally less properly fired than in the past.

On the other hand, major changes can be observed in the assemblages produced by each community. As factory surrogates have become more and more popular, it has become necessary for potters to eliminate from their assembly lines those vessel types best served by such factory surrogates. Thus, for example, the Bukusu pot for cooking *ugali* was

generally replaced in the 1950s when first the metal karai and then sufuria took over its functions. In the same way, in most Bukusu homes today pots for cooking other meals have also been replaced by mass produced metallic vessels whilst jerry cans have taken over as water carrying containers. Other items which have disappeared from the Bukusu pottery assemblage include eating bowls and salt strainers, while pots are today generally not used for cooking bananas or potatoes. Even beer brewing pots have decreased in numbers following the adoption of metal drums to serve this purpose. The government's ban of traditional liquors in 1978 has also contributed to this decrease (Wandibba 1995). But potters have brought in new forms to serve needs that were not there previously. Most potters throughout the country now make vessels specifically for tourists and also produce flower pots, which were not made traditionally.

Noticeable changes can also be seen in the distribution of the wares. Before the introduction of the cash economy in the country, pots were exchanged through barter, mostly for foodstuffs. Under these circumstances, except for Gikuyu country where production centres were far in between, vessels did not move long distances and were generally consumed within the neighbourhoods. But with the introduction of the market economy and the subsequent establishment of market centres, it became possible for pots to be distributed beyond the neighbourhoods. However, because pottery is bulky, there has been a tendency for wares transported on foot to be distributed within a five-kilometre radius of production centres. On the other hand, those potters with access to vehicular transportation have their vessels traded far and wide, most times not directly but through third parties. In this way, Gikuyu pots find their way to Nyahururu, Nairobi and Mombasa, in the same way that Luyia and Luo pots find their way to Kitale, Eldoret, Nakuru, Nairobi and Mombasa. Some Kamba potters use vehicles to transport their wares to far off markets within Ukambani, sometimes covering a distance of up to 60km.

## Summary and Discussion

We have seen that ethnoarchaeology is a sub-discipline of archaeology that studies contemporary cultures with a view to

understanding the behavioural relationships which underlie the production of material culture. The main objective of ethnoarchaeological studies is to provide information that can be used to interpret and explain behaviour patterns revealed by archaeological materials. Such information can best be gathered by archaeologists themselves, although literary sources could also be a useful source of data. Archaeologists use ethnoarchaeological data mainly for analogy, that is, correlation of observed patterns in the ethnographic material with analogues in the archaeological material.

Ceramic ethnoarchaeology refers to the study of contemporary pottery systems in order to generate data for interpretation and explanation of pottery from archaeological contexts. Pottery is very popular with archaeologists because its study provides information on many aspects of the prehistoric past. As already pointed out, archaeological studies of pottery can be subsumed under four broad themes, namely, production, production and social organization, use and disposal, and change. So, what can we say about these themes regarding ceramic ethnoarchaeology in Kenya?

The processes of production include acquisition of the materials, the actual manufacture of the pot, and drying and firing. In terms of materials, the most important resource is clay. Through tradition and experience, Kenyan potters know that pots can only be made from special types of clay. Such clays are obtained from marshy swamps, termitaria, river banks, stream banks, lakesides and hillsides. The potters also know that some clays require additives before they can be used for potting. Additives used by Kenyan potters include sand, grog and rock. In some cases the potters mix different kinds of clay in order to improve the potting qualities of such clays. Both the clay and tempering materials are either obtained freely or bought. In some cases, the acquisition of the clay is subject to observation of taboos. Thus, people in a state of ritual impurity, such as menstruating women, are not allowed to participate in the digging of the clay. Although for most potters the clay sources are nearby, some potters obtain their clay from very far. For example, there are no clay sources on Lamu Island and potters there have to rely on clay from pate and as far afield as Mombasa.

Both the clay and the tempering materials have to be sorted before being used. Foreign bodies are removed from the clay whilst the tempering

materials are ground and sieved before use. Some potters age the clay before using it. Such potters would appear to be aware that aging improves the working qualities of the clay.

The potters employ the pinching and/or drawing and coiling techniques to manufacture their products. Pinching and drawing are used in the production of small vessels and bases of larger ones. On the other hand, coiling is used in the manufacture of medium and large vessels. The vessels are either built in one piece from the base to the rim or in two portions, starting with the upper portion. The finishing procedures used in Kenya include paddling, scraping and smoothing. As part of the building process, potters generally decorate their vessels in one way or another. The decorative techniques used here include rouletting, incisions and impressions. However, Kamba potters decorate their vessels with a potter's mark, which also serves as an identification mark. This form of decoration was recently observed among the Gikuyu potters of Gakoigo sub-location. It is also reported by Leakey (1977) that the Agikuyu south of the Chania river used to put such marks on their pots.

Traditionally, potters dried their pots indoors or under the shade. Under these circumstances, the pots dried slowly and for a long time. This allowed for steady and consistent drying and, thus, prevented the pots from cracking either during the drying itself or later in firing. However, this long drying period is no longer practicable since pots are now generally made with the next market day in mind. Firing is done not in kilns but in bonfires near the potting sites. The fuels used include grass, coconut fronds, twigs, leaves, shrubs, stalks of grain and cowdung. Due to differential oxidation, pots fired in bonfires do not acquire a uniform colour and tend to have dark spots on their surfaces. Some potters subject their vessels to postfiring treatment, either to seal off pores or to improve on their appearance. A variety of organic materials are used for this purpose, including an infusion of some vegetable material, cowdung, fat and resin.

Examination of the production and social organization of the craft reveals a number of issues. One is that potting is almost exclusively the work of women, and that the women pot either as individuals or in groups. Two is that not all potters learn potting from their mothers. As has been described above, both learning and production can take place in the context

of potting groups whose participants are linked by residential bonds that seem to override those based on kinship. The third point is that pot-users need not make pots themselves. Thus, although Abagusii and the Kipsigis do not manufacture pots, their needs are satisfied by Luo potters who produce for them. In the same way, the pastoral Pokot, Samburu, Rendille and Maasai acquire pots from neighbouring communities engaged in the craft.

As regards distribution, pots are exchanged through formal and non-formal systems. The formal system involves taking the wares to a market or peddling them in the villages. Most of the products are exchanged at nearby periodic markets where they are sold for cash to customers who mostly come from the neighbourhood. However, the markets also have customers who buy pots for resale either at markets outside the potting areas or at far away markets located in the country's urban areas. In the villages, the pots are generally exchanged for foodstuffs. On the other hand, the informal exchange system consists of gift-giving. Those who benefit from this system are relatives, friends and neighbours.

The vessel forms produced by different potters appear to suggest that size variation within form classes is related to differential function, such differences often being paralleled in the potter's terminological distinctions. For example, the Bukusu potters of Western Kenya make necked vessels for water carriage and storage, and for cooking vegetables/meat, but the latter are much smaller in size and the two are referred to by different names.

Sometimes, however, the names may not be different, but the forms will nevertheless be different. Thus, the Ogiek traditionally made three different forms of the honey pot, depending on whether the honey was to be stored in the house, cave or in the forest. Although the three forms are, as it were, ingrained in the potter's mental template, she had no separate names for them and simply referred to the three as honey pot. However, although all the three forms had necks, they varied in size and body form. For example, the vessel for storing the honey in the forest was elongated in form and had a narrow mouth to accommodate a stopper and facilitate sealing before the pot was buried into the ground for safe-keeping. On the other hand, the one for storage in a cave was much bigger and had a rounded

body to enable it stand on its own on a shelf or floor. Finally, the house honey pot (the only one of the three still being made today) has a rounded body and a short cylindrical neck, a tight-fitting leather cover and leather carrying handle (see Blackburn 1973 for more details). It would, therefore, appear that unique functions bring about minor but subtle differences in vessel forms. Function can also lead to the need for functional elaborations. Thus, the Ogiek, for example, traditionally had handles on some of their vessels to facilitate stringing while being carried around. In the same vein, many of their small pots had a pair of holes in the sides for securing leather carrying handles.

Stylistic variations could also be a reflection of the interaction which occurs in the individual's learning in the context of production units. We have seen, for example, that when a Luo girl marries she has to learn anew her potting skills in order to conform to those of her mother-in-law and the senior wives in the homestead. This kind of ceramic organization leads to the creation of micro-styles within the larger ethnic stylistic "homogeneity". Finally, it appears that in broad terms each ethnolinguistic grouping produces pottery which is stylistically unique to that group. However, those communities that live contiguous to each other tend to have pottery systems that share some remarkable similarities. In such circumstances it would be difficult to use pottery as a basis for ethnic identity. But there is also evidence that where two neighbouring potting communities share a market, they may each specialize in selling different wares in order to avoid unnecessary competition. For example, Luyia and Luo potters share Luanda and Kiboswa markets on the boundaries of the two communities. Whereas Luyia potters here specialize in dealing in larger vessels, their Luo counterparts deal in smaller vessels (Herbich and Dietler 1989). This, in turn, means that the consumers from either community acquire their wares from the two communities, thereby leading to some kind of mix in the individual's pottery repertoire within the five-kilometre radius served by either market. It also means that consumers need not always seek pottery conforming to their own ethnic identity, but will buy whatever is available locally even when it has been made by members of another ethnic group. This complicates the issues of ethnic identity and stylistic variability.

Many vessel forms serve both designated or intended functions as well as unofficially recognized functions. Thus, a water pot could also be used as a cooking pot, and a beer pot used for storing grain as and when the need arises. The function a vessel serves determines the longevity of that vessel. Those vessels which are used frequently tend to break more often than those that are not.

With regard to use, we have seen that both damaged pots and sherds are re-used in a number of ways. But they could also lie about unused, both within and outside household structures and this could be for long periods. Recycling also means that sherds belonging to the same vessel may have differing depths. In circumstances where pots broken outside the homestead are tabooed against being brought back, such sherds will be abandoned in non-usual user situations.

Finally, ceramic change can result from a number of factors. One, availability of vessels made of other materials which somehow appear more appealing to the users can bring about changes in forms and in vessel frequencies. Thus, the adoption of factory surrogates by most Kenyans as cooking pots and water carriage and storage containers has resulted in the disappearance of some clay cooking pots and reduction in the number of water pots in households. Kenyans no longer use clay pots to cook *ugali*, for example, and neither do they serve vegetables/meat in clay bowls. Two, cultural encounters bring about new products as the locals respond to the needs of the new culture. It is because of this that Kenyan potters today make flower pots, both for tourists and for locals who have become westernized. Three, vessel forms and types that used to serve purposes which no longer exist go out of fashion and are, therefore, not manufactured. This explains the reason why the Agikuyu no longer manufacture the *gatigithu*, a small narrow-necked pot used only for storing fat, as recorded by Leakey (1977) or clay nozzles used by smiths, because their use is no longer required. In the same vein, Bukusu potters no longer produce *bikhwabi* (bhang-smoking pipes), *binaka* (tobacco-smoking pipes) and *bikhelekho* (bowls for straining salt from ashes). Three, government meddling can also contribute to changes in vessel frequencies, for example, by prohibiting the function a particular vessel served. Thus, since the government imposed a ban on the brewing and consumption of local brews,

there has been a marked reduction in the manufacture of beer pots in Bungoma District. Finally, potters adapt themselves to whatever form of fuel is available when it comes to firing.

## The Past and the Present in the Present

Let me now move to the title of my lecture. In simple terms, the title just means that the present informs both the past and the present. However, in real fact things are not that simple. As archaeologists, our basic data consist of the material remains and associated phenomena bequeathed to us by prehistoric peoples. On the basis of these data, archaeologists have traditionally reconstructed chronologies and distribution maps, explaining any observed changes in terms of diffusion and migration. However, starting from the 1960s, a small group of American archaeologists began to challenge this normative view of culture. Their argument was that archaeologists should stop the practice of just describing change and instead start explaining the processes behind that change. But how does one explain the processes of phenomena that one did not witness? One way of doing this was, according to this new school of thought, to study the processes that accompany the production, use and disposal, and change among contemporary communities. Data obtained from such studies would then assist archaeologists to formulate hypotheses and explanatory models to be used in interpreting and explaining prehistoric change.

But, how is it that the present is in the present? According to Malinowski (1922), an ethnographic study is a long conversation among the people an anthropologist lives with during field-work and in which he inevitably joins. In this long conversation, it is not only the words that are exchanged but also, from time to time, things, animals, people, gestures and blows, although language plays a most prominent role. For Malinowski, therefore, everything was to be found in that conversation. This means that observation of what is going on among present peoples turns the present into a reality. That is why there is the present in the present, the subject matter of ethnographic studies.

As an archaeologist, I need to understand the present in order to understand and interpret the past. Pottery is a material culture item which is very important to archaeologists. As a ceramicist, I could have studied the item obtained from either an archaeological or ethnographic context. I chose the latter option because it contributes to studies of pottery from both contexts. What then does the Kenyan ceramic ethnographic scene tell us about the archaeological scene? In other words, what can archaeologists learn from the studies so far undertaken on ethnographic pottery in Kenya?

In terms of production, we have seen that Kenyan potters are specialists but who are not engaged in potting on a full-time basis. The potters do not have workshops and generally work where they live. However, contrary to the common assumption by archaeologists that only potters with workshops can produce large quantities of pottery, some Kenyan potters make very many pots. This is especially the case in situations of co-operate or group potting. To accommodate the high number of vessels, special sheds have been put up for that purpose. Since the sheds are built of temporary materials, they are most unlikely to survive into the archaeological record.

All Kenyan potters use bonfires rather than kilns to fire their wares. Kilns are built structures that could easily be incorporated into archaeological deposits. On the other hand, bonfire areas occur simply as hardened and discoloured earth, sometimes bounded by sherds which are used as vessel props. Such areas may or may not preserve into the archaeological record. Vessels fired in kilns would normally be uniformly fired and overall colouration would be uniform. On the other hand, pots fired in bonfires tend to have dark patches due to oxidation and, because of the low temperatures, the baking rarely penetrates the interior. The cores of such vessels would normally be darker than the outside surfaces of the vessels. Thus, the presence of dark cores and darkened patches is an indication of firing in bonfires.

Once the pottery has been fired, the next step is distribution. In Kenya pots are generally distributed through periodic markets located within a five-kilometre radius of the production centres. This means that most of the pottery is locally consumed. It would appear reasonable,

therefore, to advise ceramic petrologists to first search for clay sources in the vicinity of prehistoric pottery sites before going far afield. However, we also have evidence for secondary distribution whereby itinerant buyers acquire pottery for markets outside the immediate areas of production. In fact, where modern transport systems are used, the vessels end up very far from their centres of production. This way, vessels produced in Western Kenya end up on the Indian coast in the extreme east of the country. At the coast, there is evidence for the exchange of pots and clay over very long distances. There is also evidence in Western Kenya that some potters specialize in particular forms in order to avoid competition. Thus, Luyia and Luo potters supplying Luanda and Kiboswa markets specialize in the production of different forms. This has led to the occurrence in the buyers' households of a diverse ceramic assemblage. Archaeologists should, therefore, not always assume that the existence of different vessel forms in an assemblage are an indication of migration or diffusion. They could well be products of the same general area but made by different potters. Finally, the Kenyan evidence questions the long-held archaeological assumption that pottery was made in all prehistoric communities. People with no potting tradition of their own can still acquire pots from their potting neighbours.

With regard to production and style, the Kenyan evidence points to a number of issues. First, both learning and production can occur in the context of potting groups whose participants are linked by residential bonds which supercede those based on kinship, as is the case in Ng'iya. Where learning takes place along kinship lines, it need not involve the mother-daughter model used in archaeological analogies. Second, people belonging to the same ethnolinguistic group tend to manufacture their wares such that there is some stylistic uniformity within their wares regardless of geographic location. However, local clusters within the larger geographical unit could, through interaction at that micro-level, bring about micro-styles that are unique to each cluster and recognizable to the consumers as such. These micro-styles could account for much of the analogy archaeologists ascribe to mother-daughter learning processes. Variability could also be due to the individual's skills and idiosyncracies. In cases where two or more ethnic groups share a boundary, there will be some borrowing across

the border in either direction. As a result of this the wares produced at the ethnic peripheries will tend to exhibit a combination of stylistics which kind of makes them unique. In such cases, it becomes difficult to distinguish stylistics on the basis of the ethnolinguistic criterion as some archaeologists would want to do. Third, some Kenyan potters produce assemblages that are more complex than others in the sense that they have more forms and a greater variety of decorative motifs and configurations. This fact, together with its attendant problems of devising appropriate measures of variability and complexity, underscore the difficulty of comparing archaeological styles with one another.

In terms of use and disposal, we can say the following: One, because of recycling, it is unlikely that the sherds recovered by an archaeologist would be a complete account of the past ethnographic record. It also means that conjoining should not be restricted to pieces recovered from the same stratigraphic context but should apply to all sherds as this is likely to provide information on discard at different time periods. Furthermore, breakage and replacement means that vessels and sherds of different age can enter the archaeological record at the same time and thereby lead to inappropriate groupings. Two, because some broken pots may not be removed from where they broke, archaeologists need to be aware that many potsherds may be lying in places far removed from the pots' original use context. Three, the form and number of vessels vary according to function and use context and also in relation to household size and composition. However, pots serve both designated as well as undesignated functions. This would tend to rule out simplistic correlation between vessel form and function. Finally, odd pieces in a ceramic assemblage need not be an indication of exchange or migration. Bukusu potters, for example (Fig. 4), produce two ritual pots which are very unlike the general pottery repertoire of these people. A future archaeologist encountering a Bukusu ceramic assemblage might be tempted to interpret the two as being foreign when in fact they are not.

Finally, we examine change. The Kenyan evidence suggest that cultural encounters could result in the production of new forms of pottery and also in the extinction of others. Thus, many potters in Kenya today make flower pots and kettles, both of which are alien to traditional potting



in Kenya. In addition, potters at the coast produce such items as jars and incense burners which are imitations of imports originally coming from the Middle East. This means that, sometimes, exotic products are a result of copying from immigrant cultural values, and do not necessarily represent imports. On the other side of the coin, assemblages produced by the same community over time need not remain static. In fact, current potters produce pottery repertoires which are quite different from those produced, let us say, twenty years ago. Many forms have become extinct as a result of being substituted by factory surrogates. These changes do not in any way mean that the new assemblages are being produced by different peoples. Rather, it is a question of the same people responding to different needs. For example, when I first went to Kiria sub-location in 1982, potters were producing only three types of cooking pots. Eleven years later when I revisited the site, two of the types were not being made and instead the potters were producing four new forms to cater for the changes in the family size. Archaeologists should, therefore, be aware that ceramic change could be brought about by many different factors.

Therefore, to understand the complex nature of prehistoric pottery, we need to carry out more systematic ethnoarchaeological studies. The reason for this is simply because the past and the present are in the present.

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