

Historical Background of the Pottery Industry in Taboc, San Juan, La Union

Jaylord Martin¹, Vince Paolo Obille¹, Maria Alexea Apigo^{1*}, Andrea Concepcion Gongora¹, Roselyn Joyce Labsan¹, Maria Elizajhen Navalta¹, Fernando Oringo²

¹Student researchers, Lorma Colleges Special Science High School

²Research Adviser, Lorma Colleges Special Science High School

*apigoalex@yahoo.com

Abstract: Pottery had been known from the beginning of time. It all started with a mud that indicated the emergence of civilization leading to development of culture. Pottery was introduced from different civilizations and was accepted, developed, changed – adapted. Taboc, San Juan, La Union was one of the places where in the culture and the art of pottery were flourish and modernized. The researchers aimed to determine the following research problems: 1) The evolutionary changes in pottery over the years. 2) The lived experiences of the potters in Taboc, San Juan, La Union. 3) The unique features of Taboc, San Juan pottery in terms of: a) Design b) Uses c) Structure. The researchers discovered the existence of a 100-year old potter who made an important role in the said locality. A semi-structured interview was conducted. The researchers then learned the etiology of the pots in Taboc, San Juan, La Union. The collected records were categorized based from the purpose of the study. Patterns of historical foundations and cultural significance of pottery in San Juan, La Union were identified by the researchers. Results also showed the symbolism of pottery in daily lives of the people of San Juan across all ages. The recovery of the forgotten history that shaped Taboc, San Juan’s economy, that defined San Juan “The Golden Town of Pottery in La Union” a very long time ago. Proposed programs in promoting pottery as a significant element of tourism industry in San Juan was provided by the researchers as a recommendation.

Keywords: Pottery; San Juan; Taboc; Culture; Tradition

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Pottery is one of the most useful arts and crafts. Pottery can be functional, meaning it can be used for everyday use or for decorative purposes. It has been around since the beginning of time because of the need to have plates and bowls to eat. Another main use was containers for storage of foods, liquid and dry goods. Most palayok (pots) were produced and used for daily cooking activities, though small pots with incision might have been intended as grave furniture. Other forms include pouring vessels, jugs, dishes, vases and native dippers (tabo) others were made as

ornamental ware like goblets, footed dishes, and globular bottles.

And in the early period it is very sacred, why, because they served as burials and was used in religious rituals.

According to Scheans, in the Philippines pots are built in two ways: from the base up or from the rim down. But when Chinese traders started trading in the Philippines their beliefs, culture and art was introduced. The Filipinos adapted it which then became part of their lives (their culture, art, beliefs, etc.). One of it is the pottery, the techniques of how Chinese create a pot, a porcelain, everything was introduced and taught to Filipinos. It spread throughout the Philippine islands.



Nowadays, there are already some pot makers who find the task a lot easier when using the advance technology that can produce piles of creations with ease and uniformity.

Basically, it takes a skill to make a pot or any related products. It is just counting the years of practice to perfect the process without the benefit of written manuals.

Hence, in the Philippines there is a project of the Department of Trade and Industries called One Town One Product (OTOP) where every town has its own product to showcase to tourists. San Juan's products include the following: Yellow Corn and Pottery. These products gave the researchers the notion to generate the idea of creating a historical research to explore San Juan's rich culture in pottery. Not only is San Juan famous for its big waves, which is excellent for surfing, but also for its hidden treasure that lies within Taboc, San Juan. The researchers are very much interested to know the process on how the pots are made, why San Juan is famous for it, and how pottery came to San Juan. The researchers are also interested to know why the people of Taboc, San Juan are still applying the traditional way of making pots, when it's already the 21st Century and technology is ruling over all types of businesses

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the following queries:

1. What were the evolutionary changes in pottery over the years?
2. What were the lived experiences of the potters of Taboc, San Juan, La Union?
3. Are there unique features of San Juan pottery in terms of:
 - a. Design
 - b. Uses
 - c. Structure

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study aimed to determine the evolutionary changes in pottery over the years and to determine the unique features of the potters of Taboc, San Juan, La Union.

To the respondents, for them to be aware of the changes in pottery over the years and for them to know the unique features of their products. This would also help them think of new ideas on how they will make their products more unique and special.

To the Researchers, this study will also serve as a source of encouragement and inspiration, to also know the history of pottery in Taboc, San Juan, La union and their product's uniqueness.

1.4. Scope and Delimitation

This study focused in the pottery of Taboc, San Juan, La union. The main purpose of this study is to find some significant difference between the pottery in Taboc, San Juan and the pottery in other municipalities in the Philippines. The study also considered how pottery affect the Damilians or potters in their life.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

The intricate designs of pots are sometimes inspired from the cultures, traditions, and history of a certain region. These designs reflect the peoples' behaviour throughout the years, and their stories are preserved within the designs of these pots. The story of ancient Southwest cultures can be told through the pottery they crafted. While a constant for Pueblo people, ceramics evolved to reflect the historical and cultural circumstances of their lives. According to Lekson (2009), who also is a professor of anthropology, there is much more to the history of the ancient Southwest cultures than archaeologists have traditionally thought. Pottery held a sacred place in ancient Southwest culture and its function was ceremonial as well as utilitarian.

According to Forman and Gordon (1986), Landscape is a heterogeneous land area composed of a cluster interacting ecosystems that is repeated in similar form throughout. Turner et al (2002) define landscape as an area that is spatially heterogeneous in at least one factor of interest.

Cultural landscape is a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and



the wildlife or domestic animals therein), associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

Character-defining feature is a prominent or distinctive aspect, quality, or characteristic of a cultural landscape that contributes significantly to its physical character. And using patterns, vegetation, furnishings, decorative details and materials may be such features.

“Of all the arts, ceramics is the most fundamentally linked to the physical make up of the planet that we inhabit and best illustrates the link between science and art. It can be seen as an artistic expression of the geology of earth.” M. Blakely, ‘ceramic landscapes – the idea’

Geology is the study of all the parts of the Earth and its history. The science of geology has found that mountains are formed in different ways. Even as mountains are being formed, other forces are at work wearing them down. The relationship bet. Geology and ceramics dates back at least to the sixth century BC. In fact, the Corinthian vase painting known as the “Monster of Troy” establishes a link among ceramics and the early days of paleontology. Formed by the weathering and erosion of rock strata, clay seemed to be a perfect material to work with to create this series. The earth constantly recycles and rebuilds surface layers. As sand, silt, and clay weather away from older deposits, and new layers of sedimentary material form, occasionally an organism gets buried between the layers.

Lapita art is best known for its ceramics, which feature intricate repeating geometric patterns that occasionally include anthropomorphic faces and figures. The patterns were incised into the pots before firing with a comblike tool used to stamp designs into the wet clay. Each stamp consisted of a single design element that was combined with others to form elaborate patterns. Many Lapita ceramics are large vessels thought to have been used for cooking, serving, or storing food. Some of the designs found on Lapita pottery may be related to patterns seen in modern Polynesian tattoos and barkcloth. In addition to vessels, a number of freestanding pottery figures depicting anthropomorphic and zoomorphic subjects have

been unearthed at Lapita sites, as well as a single bone image representing a stylized human figure.

Pots are considered useful in the field of gardening. They serve as containers for plants, they help beautify the landscape and sometimes they are used as practical materials for growing plants. Ollas (pronounced “oy-yahs”) are unglazed clay/terra-cotta pots with a bottle or tapered shape that are buried in the ground with the top/neck exposed above the soil surface and filled with water for sub-surface irrigation of plants. This irrigation technology is an ancient method, thought to have originated in Northern Africa with evidence of use in China for over 4000 years and still practiced today in several countries, notably India, Iran, Brazil (Bulten, 2006; Power, 1985; Yadav, 1974; Anon, 1978 and 1983) and Burkina Faso (Laker, 2000; AE Daka, 2001). Ollas may be the most efficient method of local plant irrigation in drylands known to humanity due to the micro porous (unglazed) walls that do “not allow water to flow freely from the pot, but guides water seepage from it in the direction where suction develops. When buried neck deep into the ground, filled with water, and crops planted adjacent to it, the clay pot effects sub-surface irrigation as water oozes out of it due to the *suction force which attracts water molecules to the plant roots*. The suction force is created by soil moisture tension and/or plant roots themselves.” (AE Daka – 2001.) The plant roots grow around the pots and only “pull” moisture when needed, never wasting a single drop.

1.6.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants and Setting

The participants of the study are the traditional clay pot makers of Taboc, San Juan, La Union were asked to answer the questions of the researchers. This study was held at Taboc, San Juan, La Union.

2.2. Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview was conducted in accordance to the study. A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where one person,

the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important. (Longhurst, 2003as cited by Clifford et.al., 2010)

2.3. Design

This ethnographic research made use of descriptive qualitative design. Ethnographic research is a systematic approach about the social cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings. (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010)

A qualitative descriptive study is a comprehensive summarization, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals. It is an approach that is very useful when researchers want to know, regarding events, who were involved, what was involved, and where did things take place. (Lambert & Lambert, 2012)

This method served as a guide in gathering the data required to analyze, describe, record and interpret conditions and situations evaluated by the researchers. Likewise, this method assisted the researchers to determine the evolutionary changes of pottery, history of pottery and the lived experiences of the potters in Taboc, San Juan, La Union.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Approval to administer the study and interview was permitted by the school Principal. The researchers then, conducted interviews to the traditional clay pot makers of Taboc, San Juan, La Union.

2.5. Treatment/ Analysis of the Data

The data gathered were analyzed, interpreted and translated in relation to the objective of the study.

The researchers conducted a semi-structured interview to the traditional clay pot makers of Taboc, San Juan, La Union. Then

transcribed the data gathered and translated it into the English Language. They then categorized the collected records based from the purpose of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Birth of Pottery

"I learned from my mother but I just don't know where she'd learn making pots. My mother is a daughter of a Vigan resident who married someone from Taboc." -Maria Padilla; Potter of Taboc, San Juan (2016)

Pottery made a huge impact in our economic industry. Thus, for the Taboc residents, it created a sensation because it helped them for their source of income. And so, series of pottery stand were put up.

3.2. Dark Ages

The invasion of the Japanese' sent the Filipinos into hiding. Many houses were left, many schools are canceled, many businesses were immediately closed including the family business of Maria, She and her family went into hiding in the mountains, in fear of what Japanese would do to them. It was a hard time to find their food, to earn money so, they entered a job who helps the rebels, who washes clothes of the Americans, and mostly they do farming.

When the Americans ripped the chains of perils of the Filipinos, the Philippines regained its shine as the Pearl of the Orient Seas, the pottery in Taboc, San Juan reclaimed its golden beauty. 1972, the day when the Martial Law was launched, the Filipinos started to live with fear. As for the pottery in Taboc, San Juan, the trading and selling of pots is only limited.

3.3. Renaissance

Maria Padilla resumed her work in making pots when she was already 66 years old, 9 years after the Martial Law ended. But during the reign of the first female president of the

Philippines, Cory Aquino established the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law that promoted social justice and industrialization providing the mechanism for its implementation and to other purposes. Because of this law, Maria Padilla were able to take back their land and resume making pots, their business were a big hit and a success after the tragic wars were ended.

3.4. Contemporary

Since the country's democracy had been declared, people gained more access to a more immense industrialization. With new systems and advancement of the 21st Century, the pottery of Taboc were not only made by clay but by cement also. Using the new technologies made it is now easier to make creative, beautiful and abundant kinds of clay. Buy and sell system is practiced by most of the potters in Taboc, San Juan considering the contemporary period.

3.5. Oldest Potter of San Juan

A woman who lived a hundred years, holds the story, the origin of pottery in Taboc, San Juan, La Union. Maria Padilla was able to witness the different evolution in the industry of pottery. Who, was able to provide for her family all their essential basic needs.

After a few struggles in her life, she was able to continue the regime of pottery. Through her dedication she was able to show and inspire her neighbors into making pots. Without her there wouldn't be a continuation of the making of pottery

4. CONCLUSION

The pottery of Taboc, San Juan, La Union had evolutionary changes over the years. Before, Damilians made use of the natural clay, now, were able to learn and made use of alternative materials to produce a new set of product that are suitable to their everyday lives. As a sign of change, pottery was affected by Industrialization and commercialization because of buy and sell. With the lived experiences of the oldest potter in San Juan, La Union, the researchers can conclude that pottery had greatly influenced the culture of San

Juan, La Union and the traditional way of making pots are currently unpracticed.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, the researchers, would like to acknowledge the assistance of our Research Adviser, Mr. Fernando P. Oringo and our school for giving us the inspiration to accomplish this research paper.

We would also like to acknowledge the participation of Lola Maria Padilla for being our source of information. As well as our parents for giving us the financial and moral support needed. And lastly, God, for giving us the inspiration and proper knowledge during the making of this research paper.

REFERENCES

- Business – One Town One Product – San Juan – Province of La Union:: Official Website. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.launion.gov.ph/page.php?188>
- POTTERY. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1958&context=open_access_etds
- Laetsch, J. (1972, May 17). A Functional Interpretation of Pottery From Batan Island, Philippines. Retrieved from <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/society/pottery-history.html>
- Damili – Red Clay Crafts. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.vigan.ph/arts-and-crafts/damili-red-clay-crafts.html>
- Classical Gold and Pottery from the Pre – Colonial Period. Retrieved from <http://www.metmuseum.ph/permanenttraveling.php?page=classicalgoldwork>
- University Library. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/library/webliography/subject/philippine_pottery.asp



Pottery. (2010, December 9). Retrieved from
<https://kyadcayago.wordpress.com/2010/12/10/san-juan-la-union-dec-4-5-2010/taboc2/>

What are some uses of pottery? (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://www.answers.com/Q/What_are_some_uses_of_pottery

5 Things about Burnay jars of Vigan. (n.d.). Retrieved from
<http://doonposaamin.ph/articles/community-products-to-support/5-things-about-the-burnay-jars-of-vigan>

Landscape of Pottery. (n.d.). Retrieved from
www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/landscape-guidelines/terminology.html

Ceramics. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://depts.washington.edu/matseed/mse_resources/Webpage/Ceramics/ceramics.html

The Ilocanos. (n.d.). Retrieved from
<http://www.ilocanopeople.com/>

Tresures of Ilocandia and the World. (2008, December 28). Retrieved from
<http://www.ilocandiatresures.com/2008/12/damili-festival.html>