

# Analytical Study of Ethno-Archaeological Ceramic

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## Abstract

*The recent decade witnessed a remarkable development in the field study of ethnoarchaeological ceramic, as more sophisticated reading has been presented with the framework of social theories and analyses and held multiple variables and different levels of mutability as a way to present a thoughtful understanding of social boundaries. The progressive stage of sequential development is included in the perception of ceramic changes, attached to technological changes, ceramic use, distribution, and social limitations. A number of Malaysian and Southeast Asian studies have coupled with culture and technical framework to examine manufacture variability, the dynamics of culture transformation among generation, and from another hand, the articulation between ceramic technology and social networks.*

*The present article is a theoretical review of ethnoarchaeological issues conducted mainly to remedy ceramic issues within the cultural view. Such a study is an interactive part reflecting on the previous studies presented in the scope of ethnoarchaeology. The course aims to review several cultural issues that emerged in the ceramic field and link them to the influential external factors that cause the formation of several ceramic technologies. The current study contributes to the present social understanding of material culture and society from ethnoarchaeological perspective.*

**Keywords** — Ceramic, ethno-archaeological ceramics, ethno-archaeology, social identity, ethno-archaeological theories.

## INTRODUCTION

(Size 10 & Normal) Archaeologists use a number of methods to measure social and economic status among agricultural societies. The three most common methods depend on variation in residential architecture (McGuire and Schiffer 1983), burials (Bartel 1982), and household artifacts (Jones 1980). Pottery, one of the ubiquitous of household artifacts, provides another means to that established methods. Technically, some researches associate social status to ceramic vessel size (Blitz 1993), style/decoration (Pauketat and Emerson 1991), volume (Nelson 1981), and quantity of vessel types and forms (Cowgill; Altschul, and Sload 1984); however, most important ceramic vessels, in fact, are regarded the means

(Braun 1983) that are used to process foods, which vary in cost and availability. There are also many studies that were designed mainly to demonstrate the cross-cultural use of food, especially luxury or high-cost foods, as a social status marker (Blitz 1993).

In the context of ethno-archaeology, a general overview of the mainstream of the archaeological ceramic studies (Krishnan 1997) has come to include ceramic ethno-archaeological research as a part of their broader literary corpus.

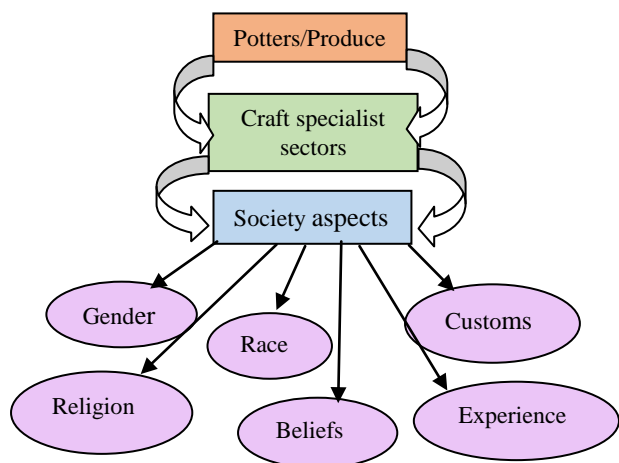
## METHODOLOGY

The present study is designed to be carried out generally through suitable methods to provide valuable pottery information.

The study intensively has been drawn with all tools assigned for the research method to display the fundamental issues of ceramic production. Thus, this study contained a variety of ways were employed to achieve all objectives, as such tools began with the library research to gather the necessary information and then to do an interview with the specialist's persons representing some handicraft institutions and government officials; in addition to providing us with fundamental informants such potters; and fieldwork fieldwork conducted in several rural districts of Malaysia as a close simple of Asian conventional production. The fieldwork steps of data collection consisted of observation tools to transform visual feedback and interview with certain respondents within the initial months of research sites visiting.

Additionally, intensive interviewing of selective of producers, entrepreneurs, ceramists, pottery makers, and earthenware are highlighted with those who do not involve directly in such industries or relate with the feedback of data closely; while, concentrate on conducting an intensive interview with one group of selected cases among the key informants. The gathering materials obtained initially through making interview with officials who represent some active agencies that have vital role in improving craft industries (Fig. 1), as for instance of institutions, the Business and Development of village industry Holding/Company, the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation headquarters (MHDC), the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of National and Rural Development (MNRD). Thus, the bulk of initial data reveals the effective role of agencies in improving the traditional industries of handicraft and the government's political strategies

were drawn to develop the rural districts. For the aim of pursue the craft activities in certain regions and gain the intended information of ceramic, giving insight sometimes in what benefit upgrading the current industries status and communities, it was significant to scan the areas and visit some several active villages/ far distance. It was also necessity to observe other appearances surrounded the industrial districts such socio-economic variables which are presumed to have an impact on the social and political system of villages, in terms of their activity in social life and residential occupations.



**Fig. 1:** A model of generating traditional art production with relevant aspects of the society.

**A. OVERVIEW OF ETHNO-ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Long ago, the deep-rooted of ceramic ethno-archaeology inherited continually to meet with huge expansionism occurred in the late nineteenth century (David and Kramer 2001).

The constructive context of archaeological interpretation relies directly on inferential reasoning (Porr 1999), most of research methods characterize ethno-archaeology with strategical view of research instead of “self-contained discipline” (Krause 1999), however, sometime as a tool assigned for developing middle-range theory (Kosso 1991). Based on that, the chief aim in most ethno-archaeological data accomplished in a large amount of previous studies indicates that these studies endeavour to construct stronger evidences or inferences into available materials rather than present the common-sense explanations of material culture patterning (Arnold III 1998). Interpretive models are structured and/or generated intensively in the ethnological ceramic by ethno-archaeological studies (David 1992). Yet, the several of themes presented in the technological studies such as culture and technology possess ability in restrict technological study of material culture (David 1991).

Interestingly, most recent trends of ceramic as a creative industry indicate that most specialists in

their review of ceramic concentrate on the low-fired earthenware of ceramic.

Ceramic containers often manifest as more attractive and have ability to receive wide attentions more than non-containers (such as cooking stoves, flower pots, figurines, sculptures) or structural ceramics as well (like roof tiles, bricks, concrete, pipes). Generally ceramic was the focal point in the studies that concentrate evidently on the ceramic system through relevant archaeological items. Thus, among interesting social studies there are two kinds of studies possess wide attention, ceramic ethnography, and ceramic ethno-archaeology. The first division is ceramic ethno-archaeology that is generally designed with archaeological questions made almost by archaeologists; whereas, the two art elements such as art history and anthropology are counted effective components in the ceramic ethnography (Berns 1993). It is worthy to note that, the structure of ethno-archaeological research is often characterized through both theoretical and regional differences. However, the distinct aspect of ethno-archaeological research indicates that the differences explicitly are about to be parallel when it is based on the form of dispersed traditional regions and spread broadly over the realm of archaeological research.

**I. Ceramic Production**

Accordingly, the salient function of ethno-archaeological studies directed to study ceramic particularly centralized intensively on two significant issues: the techniques of production and the process-produce of ceramic (Arnold 2000).

Most of studies presented in the field of ethno-archaeological ceramic production structured broadly from various viewpoints (Arnold 2000), for instance, focusing on several techniques used for manufacturing ceramic such as making pots by mould (e.g. Fig.2), hand, or wheel, however some other studies are motivated to investigate about the performance of firing process and facilities conducted for different type of kilns, or through the physical studies (Cleland and Shimada 1998), as other type concentrates on the firing techniques more than other aspects (Gosselain 1992).



**Fig 2:** samples of casting products of cups and pots

Several of studies centralized on the issues of pottery endeavour to arrange a degree of fluidity in the work group organization, in addition to manage various stages of production including specialist ways of materials procurement, forming, and the way of firing. Among the current techniques available for investigation are the techniques of moulds-made production, hand-built traditional ceramic, and wheel

industries (Costin 2000). Predictably, the observation conducted on wheel technique has proved that wheel technique might assist to vary and multiple the volume of production among several communities (LaViolette 2000). However, low-fired of earthenware has obtained adequate attention by researchers besides the types of ceramic mentioned (e.g. Fig.3).



**Fig. 3: combination of samples made by different methods for example, Part A, made by hand built (Coiling) method, Part B, is another method of hand built made by (biting), Parts C,D are samples of vessels made by wheel.**

**A. ANALYSIS AND FINDING OF POTTERY FROM ETHNO-ARCHEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In most archaeological and ethno-archaeological studies style of ceramic is symbolized a focal element, which also includes all types of ceramic such as pottery, earthenware, stoneware and so on. Thus, generally, in a permanent effort to find a common definition of style that accomplish with what has been mentioned in some studies, style is defined as “a way of doings” (Hegmon 1992), by other meaning, style has been also recognized as the means by which individuals communicate social identity (Polly Wiessner 1983). Yet, in the countries of Southeast Asia such Malaysia and other countries style of pottery is multifocal and its meaning is often understood from different vantages. Therefore, the findings of this study by observed concentration on one close group of potters has introduced pottery style mainly as symbolic communication of women’s social identity to verify in particular their social identity. The data harvested from some participant reviewers indicates that most potters of women signify their activities through distinctive form of pottery style which in most cases confirm on their incorporation with the society socially and political alliances.

In analysing data from ethno-archaeological perspective it has been described that the purpose of communication by an actor with their environment and surrounding, or from other hand with the receivers is to persuade, influence, and manipulate the receivers who develop strategies to resist manipulation (Cronk 1999).

According on the rule followed in theoretical approaches of descriptive data, a sample of individual identity of focus group such Mir. Meor Amirul Din Bin Aris confirms that “potter’s personality is emphasized from through design and ceramic style. This meets with what many of researchers stated that individuals typically are reflected through their craftwork as positive image of themselves, and this would give the impression of affiliation and unite the individual within a single group of other potters (Polly Wiessner 1983). Therefore, in such sense, stylistic similarity observed within group interviewers indicate that presence traits of similarities or converges are more important in order to reflect the social boundaries and the intellectual differences (Wobst 1977).

Interestingly, most specialists have been met in ceramic field are either engaged with producing household products, or occupied in craft centres. As it has observed that producers pay often attention to get aware about the factors might effect on their products, such intellectual orientation led plenty of ethno-archaeologists to investigate about influential factors on pottery and other types of ceramic (Bourges 1996). It is also markedly noted that most recent studies are drawn to study various issues of ceramic and numerous aspects manifold that contain generally producers’ need, consumer’s preferences, and marketing rules (Aronson; Skibo, and Stark 1994). Nevertheless, during pursuing some of potters’ activities it was evident that some of producers are motivated to make various products based on different types of consumers’ preference; as well in some other types of products we can observe the differences among potters from the perspective of social and ethnic identities (Arnold and Nieves 1992). In other side, in what regard to the consumers, it is need to be undergone to closer analyses research investigates the factors might affect them as well (Bourges 1996).

In the data collected from different sites of Malaysia, most interests are directed data to concentrates on categorizing the factors effect on ceramic manufacture more than analysing the producers’ personal skills and associate it with the diversity in pottery design. In other hand, it was noted that increasing the producers number leads to increase the quantity of products (Kramer, 1985). Besides, the variability that occurs due to transformations in marketing status (Arnold and Nieves 1992). Continuously, the variables in techniques of production are measured to identify the homogeneity and uniquely aspect in artistic utilitarian or other type of their products, as these odds might effect on the potters’ utility income and shapes and quality of products (Kvamme; Stark, and Longacre 1996), as among conducted assays these are have focused on the differences among the amount of production resulting from independent specialists than those who are dependent specialists and attached



to other institutions, as those latter in present days are less to produce than independent potters.

## B. DISCUSSION

In the context of the gradual evolution of design as one of significant ceramic issue, analytical patterns are found to be more workable for stylistic analysis that have been specialized for prehistoric ceramics, however, studies, which concentrate on prehistoric ceramic issues, are more motivated to demonstrate the aspects of “cultural” and temporal variability, thus, ethno-archaeology became a major source bases for archeological studies. By other meaning, archaeologists were more aggressive towards ethnographic fieldwork when they are in need to explore the correlations between material and nonmaterial elements of a society (Longacre 1974). Yet, ethno-archaeology quickly became an established subfield of archaeology and enriched our understanding of the connections between material culture and human behavior. Hence, in attempting to obtain the social and behavioral inferences in ceramic manufacture, it is evident that the analytical techniques and inferences are illustrated from through ethno-archaeology.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ethno archeological review is designated for revealing the different technologies which are truly reflecting the diversity of cultural aspects. Through the variability of archaeological assemblages, it is proved that the complexity of the clay materials is being used based on typically traditional methods of techniques and the identical morpho-stylistic types in which are related to.

Diversity of techniques describes that assemblages of synchronic form are highly in relevant with conservative customs of certain regional sites. Styles and functions of certain ceramics are in need deeply for studying the nature of technical traditions. Besides, the importance of analyzing the distribution routine assists in developing the process of pottery production.

Examinations conducted by different ethnical groups of pottery producers indicate that styles and functions, in which relevant to the context of production, are literally related to factors such as socio-economic and socio-cultures. The results of current study concluded strong investigation into the ethno-stylistic and ethno-archaeological variability of ceramic assemblages. The result in current research reflects the mechanisms of analysis done for the evolution of techno-stylistic traits of pottery production. In other hand, it is a good representative study for some field studies in ethno-archaeological ceramic and also better guideline for the future of ceramic technological studies.

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