AN ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL OF PROFESSOR ABBAS AHUWAN'S CERAMIC FORMS

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation entitled, *An Analysis and Appraisal of Professor Abbas Ahuwan's Ceramic Forms* has been written by me in the Department of Industrial Design under the supervision of Dr. C.V. Alkali, Professor U.A. Sullayman and Dr. G.G. Duniya. The information derived from literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any university.

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CERTIFICATION

The dissertation entitled, *An Analysis and Appraisal of Professor Abbas Ahuwan's Ceramic Forms* by Jari, Ruth Hafsat meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Art in Ceramics of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Zainab and Ibrahim Mohammed.

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ABSTRACT

The motivation to conduct a research on the ceramic forms of Professor Ahuwan emanated from their uniqueness. After acquiring a sound Western training in ceramic production, Professor Ahuwan turned to traditional pottery, preferring to elevate the aesthetic qualities of wares over their functionality. He continued to teach Ceramics for over forty years to students at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and at other institutions whenever he visited them. Despite this commitment to the development of Ceramics, he remained relatively obscure to researchers and art commentators, accounting for the dearth of literature on his works. This study, therefore, set out to produce an analytical documentation of his work by describing, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating them. The methods of the study were derived from the frameworks proffered by earlier researchers in related areas like Fajana (1996) and Barnet (2003). These frameworks provided steps in retrieving and analyzing data. Thirty works of Professor Ahuwan were studied. The earlier works were utilitarian while the latter were sculptural-ceramic wares with the *Kim Kim* as one of the prominent forms. Their finishing using the traditional method of firing and linear embellishments was meant to evoke aesthetic appeal. These effects were learnt from Mallam Idi, Professor Ahuwan's traditional pottery teacher, who resided in Hunkuyi. Professor Ahuwan eventually called the sculptural-ceramic forms, *Hunkuyi Experiments*. The study established that this term was more a concept than events. It defined him as a post-colonial artist having been liberated from colonial vestiges epitomized in his departure from Western oriented methods of pottery.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Professor Abashiya Magaji Ahuwan was born on 31st December, 1947 at Sakwak in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State to Magaji and Zuga Ahuwan. His mother was one of three wives his father married. Professor Ahuwan's father kept bees for a living. He produced the beehives himself from a mixture of clay and cow dung. He made enough money from selling honey to cater for his family and send his children to school. Professor Ahuwan was sent to primary school at the age of seven, a relatively young age at the time. His father had realized then that Western education, which was new in his part of the world, would be beneficial in future. He wanted his children to be able to read so that he would not remain in the dark, being that he did not go to school himself. When Professor Ahuwan turned seven, his elder brother, Reverend Iliya, was already enlightened having already attended the Bible College in Kagoro and Igbaja. He was already established as a missionary in Kagoro. It was he who sent Professor Ahuwan to Madakiya Primary School. Madakiya was about 10 kilometres away from Sakwak, where Professor Ahuwan lived with his parents. Along with five others who also attended the Madakiya Primary School from Sakwak, Professor Ahuwan trekked to and from school every school day. It was not easy to do that at a delicate age of seven. It was also tough even for the other older members with whom he trekked and they dropped out of school. When Reverend Iliya heard about this, he brought Professor Ahuwan to Kagoro to stay with him and he put him in the Practicing School, which was located at the Sudan Interior Mission (S.I.M.) Teachers' College in Kagoro. By then, he had already spent three years in school in Madakiya. He attended class four at the Practicing School and proceeded to

spend three years at the senior primary school, the ECWA Primary School in the same Kagoro where he completed his primary education.

In the 1960s, Principals of post primary institutions were directly involved in the admission exercises. They would go to primary schools and administer examination to graduating pupils. The Principal who administered the examination interviewed those who passed. Names of successful candidates were announced on radio. This was the manner in which Professor Ahuwan got admitted into the Abuja Secondary School in 1962. Some of the subjects he offered in secondary school included, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Fine Arts, History, Mathematics, and English Language. At graduation, he actually won the best prize in Chemistry. To illustrate how excellent he was in Chemistry, Professor Ahuwan recalled an incident during the visit of the Premier of Northern Region, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, to the school. The Premier was so interested in education that he visited every secondary school in the Region at least once a year. The students always looked forward to his visit because many cows were slaughtered whenever he visited. At this visit, the Chemistry Teacher, an Indian by name Arshel Malik, asked Professor Ahuwan to welcome the Premier using the Morse code developed in 1836 by Samuel Morse. He did that so well that the Premier was highly impressed. The Premier actually shook hands with him.

Professor Ahuwan however, was also very passionate about Art. The Abuja Pottery was directly opposite the Abuja Secondary School. At the time he was in secondary school, the Pottery was a vibrant place. Michael Cardew headed it at the time and did not like children coming to disturb the potters at work. It was when Michael O'Brien

arrived the Pottery to learn how to make pots from Cardew that Professor Ahuwan and other interested students from the secondary school had a chance to sneak into the Pottery when Cardew was not looking. O'Brien was a Painter by training but later became interested in Pottery. At the time he arrived the Abuja Pottery from Britain, Davidson, a fellow Briton was the Principal of the Abuja Secondary School and Olumutami, the art teacher was just being transferred to Minna. O'Brien was employed to fill the vacancy while he still made pots at the Pottery. He liked taking the art students to show them around the Pottery. It was during one of such visits that Professor Ahuwan saw one of the potters, Gugwong, performing what appeared at the time to him as magic. Gugwong had prepared a lump of clay and placed it at the centre of a wheel head. In no time, with the turning of the wheel, this lump of clay grew into a vase. Professor Ahuwan was mesmerized. He began to look for the opportunity to try what Gugwong did. The opportunity came when Cardew went on leave and O'Brien became in charge of the Pottery. Professor Ahuwan was able to make vases using the kick wheel for the first time. Some of the vases he made while still in secondary school are illustrated in Plate 1.



Plate 1: *Three Vases*, c.1965, Stoneware, 30cm high, by Professor Abashiya Magaji Ahuwan

The Abuja Pottery produced very good potters including Ladi Kwali whom Professor Ahuwan met and knew very well. Many of them, particularly Ladi Kwali were widely exhibited abroad through the promotional skills of Michael Cardew. They were also provided the opportunity to teach traditional pottery skills at some of the most famous Colleges and Universities in Britain.

When Professor Ahuwan completed secondary education in 1966, he wanted to join the military. He applied to the Nigeria Defence Academy (NDA). Recommendation letters were usually required from the Principals, so Davidson gave one to him to take to the interview in Kaduna. After the interview, Professor Ahuwan heard nothing from the NDA. It was many years later when he visited Davidson in his house at Crystal Palace in England that he knew what Davidson wrote in the recommendation

letter he took to the interview. He told Professor Ahuwan that by 1965, he had begun to see the signs of civil war in Nigeria. He said that by 1966, the tension was solid enough to be sliced with a sword. He knew that anybody going to the military then would be lucky to survive the war, so he felt that he should not write a favourable recommendation when Professor Ahuwan asked for one. In place of the NDA, Davidson recommended him for an award to attend the Abingdon School at Berkshire in England to study for the Higher School Certificate (H.S.C.). Professor Ahuwan was successful and began school at Berkshire in 1967. Before he arrived, the art programme in the school taught everything else except pottery. At his instance, a kick wheel and kiln were provided for him. He studied History, Geography and English on weekdays and made pots by weekends. The school provided everything related to making pots for him. He obtained the Higher School Certificate in 1968.

When Professor Ahuwan completed secondary school, he maintained contact with Michael O'Brien. At his completion of the H.S.C. programme, O'Brien encouraged him to enroll at the West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham, the same school O'Brien attended. He went further to contact the Principal of the college on Professor Ahuwan's behalf after which he was given the admission forms to fill and subsequently admitted in 1968. One of the experiences Professor Ahuwan still remembered about the college was his sharing a room with Sebastian Blackie, the son of a one-time Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury who became his best friend. He lived in the same room with him for over three years until Blackie got married and he had to change accommodation. Blackie eventually became the Principal of the college and later a Professor at the University of Derby in Britain. Professor Ahuwan also remembered how vibrant the college was in art. It organized exhibitions frequently

and maintained constant contact with London art centres, galleries and museums, which the students visited on regular basis. The college ran a five-year programme; two years as preliminary studies and three years of specialization. Professor Ahuwan chose to specialize in Ceramics and became the best graduating student in this field in the college in 1972 with a second-class upper degree.

Upon returning to Nigeria in 1972, he taught for four months at the Government Girls Secondary School, Soba, before getting appointed the same year at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Again, it was O'Brien who was instrumental to this appointment. He contacted Chris Abashiya who was very close to the Vice Chancellor, Professor Ishaya Audu, and a certain British lady who worked in the Bursary but whose name Professor Ahuwan did not remember. They contacted the Vice Chancellor who instructed the Registrar, Michael Angulu, to issue an appointment letter to Professor Ahuwan. While lecturing in the Department of Fine Art, he met Professor Charles Counts who initially paid educational visits to the department until he too was eventually appointed to teach Ceramics. Professor Counts encouraged him to undertake further studies in Ceramics and recommended the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in the United States of America. Professor Ahuwan was admitted and he graduated with MSc in Ceramics in 1976. Having experienced two types of formal education in Ceramics, the British and the American, Professor Ahuwan was able to conclude that the British laid emphasis on skills while the Americans laid emphasis on creativity. He returned to the United States for a PhD in Educational Administration and Planning, which he obtained in 1981 from the University of North Texas, Denton.

Professor Ahuwan had attained other forms of education through participation at workshops, conferences, exhibitions and through visiting and lecturing at art schools and centres. In 1974, he was artist-in-residence at the Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology, North Bay, Ontario, Canada. The staff and students were excited about his employment of Nigerian traditional methods of pottery. The same year, he visited the Haystack Mount School of Craft, Deer Isle, Maine in the United States of America. It was at Haystack that he met Frank Giorgini. The effect of this meeting is introduced under the Background of the Study. Professor Ahuwan also went on sabbatical leave to the United States of America in 1989 and taught at the Department of Art and Design, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia and at the New School for Social Research, Parsons School of Design, New York City. The same year, he participated at the Traditional Nigerian Workshop organized by Frank Giorgini at Giorgini's studio in New York. In 1992, he attended the Entrepreneurship Development Workshop at the Industrial Development Centre in Zaria. He also attended the Maraba Pottery Workshop in 1996 entitled, *Sanctuary of Our Ancestors*. The Maraba Workshop reintroduced Professor Ahuwan's works to the Nigerian art audience because it led to an exhibition of his works in Kaduna sponsored by the Alliance Francaise. All the exhibits sold.

Professor Ahuwan participated in six solo exhibitions, two two-man shows and eighteen group exhibitions. Some of the solo exhibitions include, the *Nigerian Ceramic Exhibition* held at Culbert House, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America in 1989 and the *Hunkuyi Clay Experiment* at the Alliance Francaise, Kaduna in 1996. Some of the group exhibitions include, *An Exhibition of Fine Arts Teaching Staff* at the British Council, Kaduna in 1974; *Second United States International*

Ceramics Symposium Exhibition in 1975 at Galinburg, Tennessee, United States of America; and the *Vision 2010 Art and Photography Exhibition* at Nicon Noga Hilton Hotel, Abuja in 1997.

Over the period of four decades of teaching in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Professor Ahuwan had held several positions. He was head of Department of Industrial Design from 1990 to 1993 and returned for two tenures from 2002 to 2006. He was President of the Ceramics Association of Nigeria from 1986 to 1993. From 2004 to 2008, he became the dean of the Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Professor Ahuwan had supervised over ten PhD and 30 M.A. researches. He had attended several conferences, published more than 29 journal papers and had contributed articles in several books. He had been external examiner to five institutions. He is a member of the Craft Potters Association of Nigeria and the Arts Council of the African Studies Association located in the United States of America. He was made an honorary member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City when his works were acquired by the museum in 1989. He was also a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists, Nigerian Society of Education Through Art, and member of the National Council for the Education of Ceramic Arts. He is a member of the Ceramic Researchers Association and chief editor of the Ashakwu Journal of Ceramics.

1.2 Background to the Study

1974 marked a significant landmark in the Ceramic career of Professor Ahuwan. Prior to this year, he was the typical British-art-school-trained potter who did not have room for anything else besides the norms. In 1974 he had already met Profesor Charles Counts in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. That year, the American State Department decided to invite some skilled Africans selected from all over the continent to tour the United States of America and Canada to demonstrate their skills. Professor Counts, whom Professor Ahuwan described as an "interesting character", inferring that his influence was vast, recommended him to the American State Department and he was included on the invited list. The duration of the visit to America and Canada was three months and the engagement included teaching not only in schools but also at other locations where renowned artists worked. He considered that in order to make an impact, he would certainly not be working on a kick wheel, a familiar method in America and Canada. He therefore, opted to employ a traditional method of pottery to teach how to produce a Nigerian traditional pot, the *Kim Kim*, a percussion instrument. Since taking this decision in 1974 and because of the great impact it had on this tour of America and Canada, Professor Ahuwan had maintained the same traditional method in creating his works.

The musical instrument, *Kim Kim*, was common in Sakwak where Professor Ahuwan was born although it was not indigenous to it. Indeed he observed that he could not remember seeing any family producing pots in Sakwak, rather, there were excellent builders of barns for storing grains. The pots used in Sakwak were therefore, either bought from Atakar or Kafanchan, the neighbouring towns. The *Kim Kim* was employed to create music during dry season after the harvest when inhabitants of the

town could rest from farm work. It was played by women in the night by a fireplace or in moonlight to entertain both men and women who danced to the music created. Its present use has however, been diversified to other occasions such as during worship in some Churches. There are different variations of the *Kim Kim* but generally, it looks like a pot with a narrow neck and two openings, one at the top and another at the side. Rhythmically slapping the two openings or hitting the side of the pot with palms at chosen intervals can create varied sounds.



Plate 2: *Kim Kim*, Year of Production and dimension unknown, Terracotta, by Frank Giorgini

In preparing for the trip to America and after deciding to employ traditional methods in his demonstrations, Professor Ahuwan set out to look for a traditional potter who could instruct him on how to produce traditional pots from building to firing. He went round the surrounding villages in Zaria looking for a good potter and ended up in Hunkuyi. He found many potters but one of the best was Mohammed Idi. Many Hausa potters specialized in making pots to be used in graveyards and not for cooking or storage. The pots were broken and the pieces used to cover the trench in which the

dead body is laid in the grave, so that the excavated soil would not have direct contact with it. Idi's pots were exceptional and not meant for this purpose. They were masterpieces used for cooking and storing water or grains.



Plate 3: *Pot*, c.1974, Terracotta, 25cm high, by Mohammed Idi

Having found Idi, the subsequent challenge for Professor Ahuwan was how to get him to Zaria to teach him. He met Professor Counts who was at the time the head of Ceramics Section, where Professor Ahuwan taught. He suggested to Professor Counts that Idi should be given a one-month casual appointment, which could be extended, as a studio assistant to teach traditional pottery to staff and students of the section. Professor Irene Wangboje was then the head of department. Both Professor Counts and Professor Wangboje agreed to this proposal and Idi was employed. That was the first time a traditional potter would be engaged in the department. That was how

Hunkuyi, the village Idi hailed from, became part of Professor Ahuwan's work and that was how the works he produced during this period were referred to as the *Hunkuyi Experiments*.

One of the schools Professor Ahuwan visited during the 1974 tour of America and Canada was the Haystack Mountain School of Craft, Deer Isle, Maine. Frank Giorgini was then a student at the school. Professor Ahuwan remembered him to be a student who seemed from a distance, not to show much interest in the demonstrations he gave the students but who in actual fact, was keenly observing him and taking mental notes of every detail. Giorgini also began to recognize the huge economic potentials of the *Kim Kim*. When Professor Ahuwan left Giorgini began making and selling the *Kim Kim* to musicians. He became successful selling them as he continued to introduce innovations to them such as fitting them with electronic microphones.

When Professor Ahuwan returned from the trip, he felt that his works would benefit better if he allowed the environment of Hunkuyi to be part of his experience rather than Idi coming to Zaria to teach him. He therefore, acquired space in Idi's house and made it his studio. Since then he had produced profound works worthy of assessment.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

It could be argued that an artist does not necessarily earn attention because of the number of years he or she has put into practice. Professor Ahuwan has been teaching Ceramics for over 40 years but as Jari (2014) observes, many, if not all the books published on Nigerian artists do not mention him including a comprehensive one published recently on over 100 Nigerian artists (Offoedu-Okeke, 2012). An artist may

put in several years producing mediocre work. It should still be possible to discuss him or her for the mediocre work produced. In the case of Professor Ahuwan, he produces profound works as illustrated by two examples earlier mentioned yet such works have not been comprehensively discussed. The first example constitutes the works he created and showed in the United States of America some of which were acquired by the famous Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1989. The second example includes the works, which he exhibited at the Alliance Francaise, Kaduna in 1996, which sold out. There have also been some interventions by Professor Ahuwan, which require appreciation and documentation such as his initiative to engage a traditional potter to demonstrate his techniques to students who were undertaking formal Western training and his introduction of *Kim Kim* to American students. Addressing these concerns will lead to the appraisal of the works of Professor Ahuwan with the view to documenting and properly locating his contributions to the practice of art and design in Nigeria.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to analytically appraise the works of Professor Ahuwan. The objectives are to,

1. describe the works,
2. analyze the works,
3. interpret the works,
4. evaluate the works, and
5. produce an objective documentation of Ahuwan's works.

1.5 Research Questions

The questions the research attempts to address include,

1. can the works of Ahuwan be described;
2. can they be analyzed;
3. can they be interpreted or should they be interpreted;
4. can they be evaluated; and
5. can an objective documentation of Ahuwan's works be produced?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Investigating the works of an artist or designer has the potential of revealing several things of significance, especially if such a designer is Professor Ahuwan. Through the study of his works, a little about his background has been revealed. It is established for instance, that the courses he took in secondary school were a combination of science based and arts based courses. Indeed he was the best student in Chemistry and he also offered Biology, Geography, Mathematics along with other arts courses. If such combinations were possible during his days in secondary school, why are they not possible presently? Is the change to the present combination where arts students are restricted to arts courses and those in science are restricted to science courses a good development or a bad one? This research did not set out to answer these questions but it provides clues as to whether or not the product of the older system was a great achiever.

The *Hunkuyi Experiments* of Professor Ahuwan are probably revealed in their full extent for the first time in this research. They illustrate the possibilities that abound in imbibing methods, which are local but effective. Several researches have been made

on how to produce colourful local glazes (kindly refer to the works of Yusuf, 1990; Ewule, 1990; and Ebeigbe, 1990), and several researches have also been made on how to improve methods of firing which can fuse these glazes successfully (please refer to the works of Ali, 1991; Alkali, 1995; and Areo, 1993). Achieving desired results has however, remained a challenge as glazed wares continue to maintain earth colours and firing continues to be expensive. The *Hunkuyi Experiments* show works, which are produced cheaply, fired cheaply, and although they maintain earth colours as well, their finishing has a variation of sheen pleasing to behold. There is therefore, in the *Hunkuyi Experiments* of Professor Ahuwan, an alternative to studying Ceramics using local materials and methods.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Having spent four years studying for a B.A. in Ceramics and being in the third year studying for a Master of Arts in the same field, the researcher has spent over seven years cumulatively as a student and yet she cannot authoritatively claim that she knows the works of her teachers. This is caused by the rare encounter with the works since exhibitions of such works in the institution are hardly held. A study such as this is therefore, justified since it becomes one of the avenues for many to encounter the works of Professor Ahuwan whom many students know only as a teacher, a former head of department or a former dean of faculty and not as a Ceramic artist.

The research focus of a department such as the Department of Industrial Design may need to be tailored towards the study of the works of lecturers like Professor Ahuwan. His engagement with the *Kim Kim*, illustrates how, if the information about his interventions in the United States of America with this musical instrument were

available much earlier to many Nigerian Ceramic artists, there would have been several Nigerian versions of Frank Giorginis opening up ceramic related industries and employing labour, thereby creating wealth.

This research is also justified because it documents an aspect of the history of Ceramics development in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria particularly the aspect of the employment of a local craftsman, Mohammed Idi, as a studio assistant to demonstrate local pot making methods to staff and students. The result of such an intervention has already been referred to.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The researcher was not able to determine how many works Professor Ahuwan had ever produced. He was not sure himself since he did not keep an exhaustive record of the works. Attempt was made to establish where they were located and visits were paid to the locations to document and appreciate them.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Retrospective exhibitions were once popular in Nigeria. They were organized by groups on behalf of artists or by the artists themselves. In 1993, at the age of 47, Obiora Udechukwu organized a retrospective exhibition of his works under the title, *So Far*. When Jimo Akolo turned 60 in 1995, The Eye Society in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art staged one for his works in Lagos and Zaria. The National Gallery of Art was at the vanguard of organizing these exhibitions for artists it deemed worthy of them. In 1997 it staged arguably one of its most ambitious projects, the retrospective exhibition for the Zaria Art Society, which held in Zaria. It attempted to bring together as many works of all the members of the society as it could back to the society's founding location. They were exhibited in the huge lobby of the Kashim Ibrahim Library of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The living members of the society who were healthy enough and willing to travel were also brought together at the exhibition as well as the conference, which accompanied it. A comprehensive book on the accounts of the society was published which has become an invaluable reference material for researchers who seek to investigate issues relating to the society. The popularity of the retrospective exhibitions was therefore centred not only on the assemblage of the representational works which reflected the artists' development but also on providing literature on the understanding of the artists and their works.

For some reason, these retrospective exhibitions have ceased in Zaria. Since many of the practicing artists in Zaria teach at the University, some people have blamed this

ceasing to the publish-or-perish syndrome which has caused artists seeking promotion at their teaching appointments to spend more time writing journal papers than organizing exhibitions of their works. The consequence of this is the paucity of knowledge about the works of artists like Professor Ahuwan among art students in Zaria. Little has been written on his works either by himself or by anyone else. The literature, which directly relates to his work, includes Okpe (2003) and Jari (2014). These materials are reviewed along with others from related areas of study.

2.2 Review of Literature on Professor Ahuwan's Works

Ahuwan (2014) recounts the highpoints of his stewardship as a ceramics student and artist. Much of what is discussed has already been stated as part of the introduction and background to this study. The paper is incisive particularly in its details regarding locations, dates, and people Professor Ahuwan had had experiences with, in the course of being a student and an artist. It opens with his experiences at the Abuja Secondary School and the Pottery, followed by his training in the United Kingdom, his return home and engagement in Zaria, his training and workshops in the United States of America and the Hunkuyi-Experiment. Ahuwan is very generous in offering credit to Mallam Idi, his teacher at Hunkuyi. He lists numerous things he learnt from him, from how to prepare clay to how to use perforated drums to fire and obtain interesting finishing.

The Hunkuyi-Experiment, as recounted by Ahuwan, presents two levels of comprehension. The engaging narrative forms one level of understanding, while the second level encapsulates a concept akin to the *Natural Synthesis* of the Zaria Art Society of the late 1950s. Ahuwan advocates the return to one's roots in order to

create a design, which has a "fulfilling effect to the soul and spirit, and the mundane senses."

Okpe (2003) opens his discussion on the works of Professor Ahuwan with a brief statement on his educational background. He then provides a scope for his paper, stating that he was not concerned with the utilitarian aspect of the works but with their form, function and tradition. He proceeds to provide information on other artists who have, in his word, "drifted" from employing the wheel and kiln technology in the production of functional wares to the employment of "free-standing form development in order to meet the dynamism of changing culture of ceramic art appreciation." He associates this "drift" to the interaction potters have with sculptors which has affected their forms. He mentioned Demas Nwoko who claimed that he was dissatisfied with the result he obtained from firing using the university training method he received because the wares always ended up with uniform colouring. Nwoko, he states, preferred the employment of traditional open firing methods, which gave a variety of colouring on a ware. Okpe also refers to Magdalene Odundo of Kenya and Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla of Sudan as potters who although practiced in the United Kingdom, have adapted a variety of methods from their traditional backgrounds. Odundo for instance, employs the typical African building method along with different firing techniques while Abdalla employs methods associated with the traditions of the Nile Valley. Okpe then summarizes the experimental enquiry of Professor Ahuwan in pottery, tracing how he started throwing with the kick-wheel in Zaria and how such enquiry took him to various locations around the world including the United States of America and Hunkuyi in Nigeria. He notes that this enquiry produced results especially on the surface treatment of wares such as the variety of

colours and finishing. Okpe seems to suggest that traditional pottery forms of the Mwona and the Ilorin Yoruba of Nigeria influence the anthropomorphic shapes, which Professor Ahuwan's wares sometimes assume. According to him, "Mwona make anthropomorphic vessels of this kind for divination, protection and curing and the burnished red pot and lid of the Yoruba people in Ilorin, Nigeria." Okpe therefore, recommends that formal art schools should provide opportunities for students to imbibe both Western and traditional methods of pottery as a consequence of what he has seen Professor Ahuwan achieved.

Okpe (2003) is one of the first direct efforts to awaken interest in the study of Professor Ahuwan's works. It was published as a precursor to a bigger project, which is yet to commence after twelve years. While it is a laudable effort, its central concern is to debate relationships between ceramics and sculpture, which is why the publication is specific on Professor Ahuwan's works only in a few paragraphs. It is however, illustrated by three of his works which were produced in 1998. This research therefore, remains indebted to Okpe's work in terms of inspiration but attempts at providing detailed information on the understanding of Professor Ahuwan's works.

Jari (2014) presents Professor Ahuwan as one of three treasures in the Zaria Art School. The other two are Gani Odutokun and the act of retaining works of graduating students. He opens his discussion on Professor Ahuwan with lamentations on the dearth of literature on him. He then proceeds to provide Professor Ahuwan's educational background. Jari describes in some detail how he creates his works. He states that the works are fully constituted by indigenous content, as Professor Ahuwan

does not use the kick wheel, glazes or modern kilns. He uses the hand-built technique and fires his wares using the open-firing technique where corn horst, cornstalk, cow dung, firewood or sawdust is used as fuel. Jari states that Mallam Mohammed Idi, a Hunkuyi potter, taught Professor Ahuwan how to employ these Nigerian Pottery techniques. Until Idi passed away, Professor Ahuwan maintained his studio in Hunkuyi because of the quality of clay he found there and because he wanted to stay in touch with his teacher. Whenever Professor Ahuwan starts to create a new pot, he first inverts an old pot on which he piles up clay, which he prepares himself. He beats the clay evenly around the base of the old pot. The new ware therefore, initially takes the shape of the old one until it is detached from the old. Professor Ahuwan works on it to change the shape or maintain it as it is. He could create openings on the pot, add protrusions or studs or embellish it with motifs or shapes. The oxidation during firing in open-fire creates interesting finishing on his wares, which usually end as terracotta. Jari observes that Professor Ahuwan's more recent works are created not as utilitarian objects as some of the older wares were, but as aesthetic objects. Jari's last part of discussion on Professor Ahuwan centres on his encounter with the *Kim Kim* and how he taught its creation to students in the United States of America to the benefit of Frank Giorgini, an account earlier narrated in this thesis.

Jari (2014) is not published exclusively on the works of Professor Ahuwan. It is an inaugural lecture, which reveals six decades of Zaria Art School treasures. The part on Professor Ahuwan is just a few pages, but well illustrated. Like Okpe (2003), it provides the reason for undertaking this research as it bemoans the reluctance of academics to discuss one of these treasures of the Zaria Art School. The intention of this research is therefore, to provide fresh insight into Professor Ahuwan's works.

2.3 Review of Literature on Related Studies

Alkali and Ahuwan (2014) write on the contribution of Yakubu Levi to the development of contemporary Nigerian Ceramics. Their paper treats this subject under a couple of sub titles such as, "Personal Profile of Levy Yakubu", "His Professional and Scientific Innovations", "Levi's Works: A Cross Breed of Traditional and Contemporary Ceramics", The Intellectual Content of his Works", "His Personal Identity in Pottery/Ceramic Art", and "Honours and International Exposures". The paper is well illustrated with 36 images of Levi's works. Their main reason for writing the paper is attributed to the absence of any document, which sufficiently captures Levi's contribution to ceramics in Nigeria.



Plate 4: Levi Yakubu. Source: Alkali and Ahuwan (2014) p106.

Alkali et al narrate that Levi was born in 1954 to Tiv parents. He graduated from the Department of Industrial Design of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1979. He has also undergone other training programmes in Ceramics and Administration. Alkali et al state that Levi inherited a rich pottery tradition from his family but eventually set up his own pottery industry in Makurdi, Benue State known as the Dajo

Pottery Limited to which he is the President and Chief Executive Officer. This pottery was established 19 years ago and has been active since then. It produces wares but also provides training to members of the public and organizations such as the Nigerian Army Rehabilitation and Resettlement Scheme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme. Apart from providing these training services, Levi has served as a consultant to organizations such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and he has been a visiting lecturer to several institutions especially in the United States of America.

The Dajo Pottery has developed several colourful glazes, insulators and burners. It is also collaborating with the Chinese Government to set up a ceramic research centre in Nigeria. Alkali et al observe that Levi expresses himself "through a combination of various clays, unusual forms, unique approaches and design techniques". His wares are therefore, unique but with the flavour of both formal and traditional pottery approaches. Many of his works have indigenous motifs and symbols and many portray Tiv mythology.

Alkali et al claim that Levi is "the most decorated and celebrated ceramist in Nigeria and indeed Africa". They state that he has exhibited widely in countries like Spain, Germany, Indonesia, South Africa, United States of America and China. Some of the numerous awards he has received include, Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) conferred on him by the Nigerian government and the Ceramic Golden Excellence Award in China.

Alkali et al (2014) is a useful publication to this research. It provides insights into steps to be taken to investigate works of hard working ceramic artists like Professor Ahuwan. Such steps are considered and adapted in this research. This research goes further to discuss the works of Professor Ahuwan and present them for better appreciation of readers.

Okunna (2012) attempts to catalogue the achievements of Ladi Kwali in modern Nigerian Ceramics. Ladi emerged from a grounded traditional background. Okunna narrates that she was born in Kwali near Abuja in 1920. The tradition in Kwali at the time she was growing up encouraged women to produce pots for a livelihood. Ladi became very good in it to the extent that her wares were sold out before they were taken to the market. Okunna observes that Ladi's pots, before she joined the Abuja Pottery, maintained the form of Gbagyi pots but were embellished with motifs, which were unique to her. They were hand-built, not thrown; they were fired in open fire, not in kilns; and they were not glazed although they could be finished in a manner that would suggest as if they were glazed. Some of the motifs she commonly employed to embellish her pots included geometric patterns, scorpions, lizards, crocodiles, snakes, chameleons, birds and fish.



Plate 5: Abuja Pottery in the 1950s. Source: Liz Moloney, *Michael Cardew and the Abuja Potters* http://www.ceramicstoday.com/articles/cardew.htm Retrieved, 16th June, 2015

Okunna writes that Michael Cardew established the Pottery Training Centre in Abuja in 1951. Ladi Kwali joined this pottery centre as a worker in 1954. This new job provided Ladi new ways of making pots. She learnt to throw on the wheel, glaze her work and fire in a kiln, methods which, although an experienced traditional potter at the time, were alien to her. Okunna reports that Ladi learnt fast because she was eager to explore the new ways of making pottery. Although she did well in this exploration, Cardew still encouraged her to continue producing her traditional wares and even dedicated a room called, "Darkin Gwari" (which is Hausa for "The Gwari Room") to her for such purpose. Occasionally, these traditional wares were glazed and fired in kilns giving them a unique blend of the traditional and the modern. Okunna further reports that these new wares created by Ladi in traditional methods but finished in Western styles included water jars. The water jars although were aesthetically pleasing to behold, could not function properly having lost their evaporative cooling process to glazing. Another innovation to her work included the production of the

base of the pots as flat rather than round to give them stability. Okunna states that Ladi began to exhibit her works in London through the assistance of Cardew by 1958. She began to demonstrate her pot making techniques to foreign audiences by 1962. These expositions and demonstrations continued over the years in different countries. They brought her fame and honours some of which include Member of the British Empire (MBE) awarded by the British Government in 1962; an honorary doctorate degree awarded by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1972; the naming of the Abuja Sheraton Hotels and Towers Conference Centre after her; and the printing of her image on the N20 note.



Plate 6: Ladi Kwali Building a Pot. Source: Cardew (2002) p168.

While writing the abstract to his paper, Okunna (2012) expresses the wish that there were many more "Ladi Kwalis". There probably are several Ladi Kwali living and working quietly in different parts of the country. Visibility created by researches like this one, is what is required, to expose them. This researcher thinks that Professor Ahuwan has also contributed significantly to the development of modern Nigerian Ceramics. This study helps to create visibility to his works.

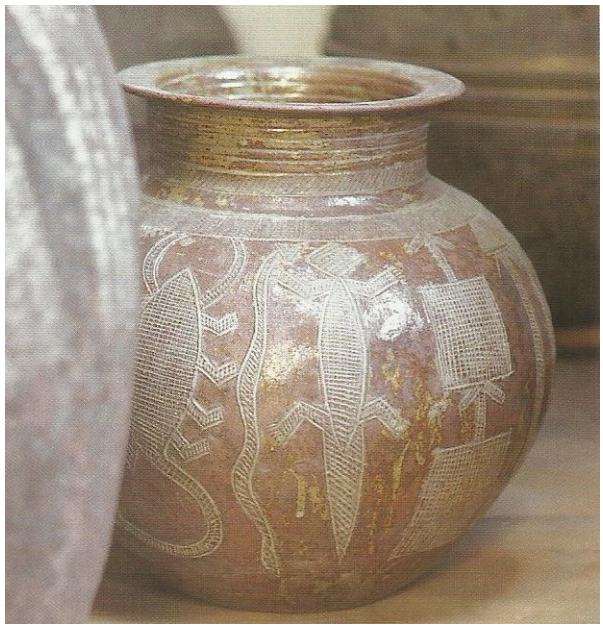


Plate 7: Ladi Kwali's Pot. Source: Cardew (2002) p176.

Onuzulike (2005) opens his discussion on the works of Benjo Igwilo by lamenting the relative lack of interest on the part of Art Historians to document the activities of potters. He blames this attitude to the bad influence of Western critics who prefer to discuss painters and sculptors. After this lamentation he provides information on Igwilo's birth and training. According to him, Igwilo was born in 1938 in Ibolo-Oraifite. His father was a carpenter and for some time he worked in his father's carpentry workshop. He attended primary school at Oraifite and Obosi before attending the Merchants of Light School, Oba where Roland Ndefo, the same teacher

who taught art to artists like Emmanuel Odita, Osaeloka Osadebe and Obiora Udechukwu, taught him art. From 1967, Igwilo attended the Colorado State University in the United States of America where he obtained the BFA degree. Onuzulike explains that Igwilo initially did not want to study Ceramics but eventually ended up liking the course. He reports that his turning point in his training as a ceramic artist was when Maria Martinez taught him American-Indian traditional pottery techniques. After this encounter, Igwilo began to explore the use of *Uli* as decorative motifs on his pots.

Apparently, Igwilo's prowess was located not only in Ceramics but in football as well. He became one of two soccer coaches at the State University of New York while he enrolled for the MFA degree in Ceramics. Apart from graduating with an MFA in Ceramics, Igwilo gained a lot from several ceramic workshops he attended including all that needed to be known about Raku firing which further added new dimensions to his creations.

On completing his studies in 1973, writes Onuzulike, Igwilo returned to Nigeria and took up an appointment with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka as an Assistant Lecturer. At this time, Uche Okeke was the head of the art department. He was at the peek of his propagation of "Natural Synthesis" which was well received by Igwilo. The concept of "Natural Synthesis" preached the employment of modern methods along with traditional ones in the creation of art works. Igwilo consequently was inspired to adapt Igbo traditional ceremonial, musical and ritual pots into his work. These, along with the *Uli* motifs, which he employed, characterized his pots. His engagement in the University at Nsukka was an intensely active one leading to

exhibitions at home and abroad and collaborations with cultural organizations like the British Council, which paid huge dividends for him and for the art department. Onuzulike reports that Michael O'Brien, a student of Michael Cardew, was brought by the British Council to build a kiln in the department because of the relationship Igwilo had with the Council. Some of the students Igwilo taught included, Okpan Oyeaku, Moses Fowowe, Chris Echeta and Emman Okunna.

This researcher has heard about Benjo Igwilo prior to encountering Onuzulike's paper. The paper however, reveals a lot that she did not know about him. She imagines that many ceramic students have also encountered names of ceramic masters but as Onuzulike observes, literature on them is rare. The study on the works of Professor Ahuwan is an effort to contribute to the eventual eradication of this scarcity.

Onuzulike (2000) reviews "Glamour of Creation", an exhibition of Vincent Ali's works at the National Museum, Enugu. The wares Vincent exhibited were mostly utilitarian and they would have seemed ordinary, according to Onuzulike, except for the creative method employed in their production. He reports that the major feature of the wares was the visible clay coils used to create effects in not only building them, but in maintaining the coils as an aesthetic component of their embellishment. Vincent therefore, favoured the hand-building technique over the use of the kick wheel.

Apart from the many utilitarian wares, Vincent also exhibited a few ceramic sculptures, which, apart from their aesthetic qualities, made comments on the state of the Nigerian nation. Onuzulike reports that, "His *Wreck or Peace* is purely sculptural,

its collapsing belly capturing the precarious situation of the Nigerian State where peace presently stands on its toes at the precipice." Another quality of Vincent's wares, which is pointed out by Onuzulike includes his ability to successfully mix industrial glazes with ash glazes, which he developed. The result creates exciting nuances on the surface of the wares. On the whole, even though not directly spelt out by Onuzulike, it is implied that Vincent, like Professor Ahuwan, employs both the traditional and Western methods of pottery in the creation of his works.

Giorgini (2015) provides information about himself, the *Kim Kim* or *Udu* drums, other products he makes and news and events on his activities. His website is basic but effective and easy to navigate. His educational attainments include a degree in Industrial Design from Pratt Institute, New York and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture and Ceramics from Southern Illinois University. Apart from running his pottery, he presently teaches Architectural Tile Design at Persons School of Design in New York City. Giorgini graciously acknowledges the fact that he learnt how to make the *Kim Kim* (or *Udu* as he calls it) from Professor Ahuwan in 1974 while studying at the Haystacks Mountain School of Arts and Crafts, Maine. He reports however, that he has developed it further by introducing innovations in its design, the clay body and the firing which "have improved the sound quality, durability, and versatility of this instrument" to the extent that many renowned percussionists crave his creations. One of them is Jamey Haddad with whom he has patented a brand of the *Kim Kim* known as *The Hadgini*. Almost all his brands of *Kim Kim* are now fitted with internal microphones.

Giorgini maintains that he creates his *Kim Kim* "true to the traditional techniques handed down…from Abbas M. Ahuwan". His website actually contains an illustrative demonstration of how he has kept to the tradition. He inverts a pot on which he piles clay and shapes it halfway. The new half pot form is detached from the old pot and completed through the coiling method. He fires using the open-fire method as well. Many of his products are plane but a few have animal motifs embellished on them.

One cannot help but wish that Professor Ahuwan from whom Giorgini learnt how to produce the *Kim Kim* had a website like Giorgini's or kept records of his work like Giorgini has. An appraisal of his works would have been excitingly colourful.

2.4 Review of Literature on Related Pottery Techniques Employed by Professor Ahuwan

The recommendation by Okpe (2003) to encourage students to create a synthesis of formal academic methods and traditional ones in pottery has led to the investigation of similar recommendations made prior to his. Counts (1994) expresses likeness for the idea of a school of art and design but quickly notes that something is lost in the formal art schools in Nigeria. This "something" is "the good values of the older culture", which Nigeria had before the introduction of Western education. He takes this view from Michael Cardew's mentor, H.V. Meyerowitz. Counts states that Meyerowitz made the following observation in 1935 when he attended a conference on Art Education:

> I pointed to the drums and bark cloths from Uganda, the huge carosses from the pottery from Basutoland, in short, the wealth of traditional forms and designs from all over Africa. And then I compared all this with work brought in from schools and institutions… The Traditional work was good, because it still fulfilled its purpose; the new work fulfilled no purpose at all… I pointed to these masses of bric-a-bra, doilies, embroidered cushions, all copied from

> tenth-rate European designs, and I felt bitterly ashamed of all this trash for which we, the white people in Africa, were responsible and which we, in the name of education, had inflicted on the people of Africa…



Plate 8: Michael Cardew. Source: Cardew (2002) p172

Counts claims that he was a beneficiary of this synthesis between the formal and traditional methods. He states that he had two masters, Marguerite Wildenhain and Michael Cardew. Wildenhain was trained at the Bauhaus. She believed that the potter should have a precise formula in meeting the needs of patrons. This suggests a mechanical way of production. On the other hand, Cardew studied Classics in Oxford and learnt how to make pots from Meyerowitz. His philosophy centred on the creation of each pot as a unique object with aesthetic qualities rather than an object of mass production. Counts observes that "Nigerian artists and academics now are faced with

an important reality; how to keep the best of tradition and yet move into the modern world with the integrity that one's art requires."

It will be recalled that Professor Ahuwan's encounter with Counts has already been narrated. It is beginning to become clearer how the former became interested in exploring modern pottery through traditional methods. The extent to this exploration is what this research seeks to establish.

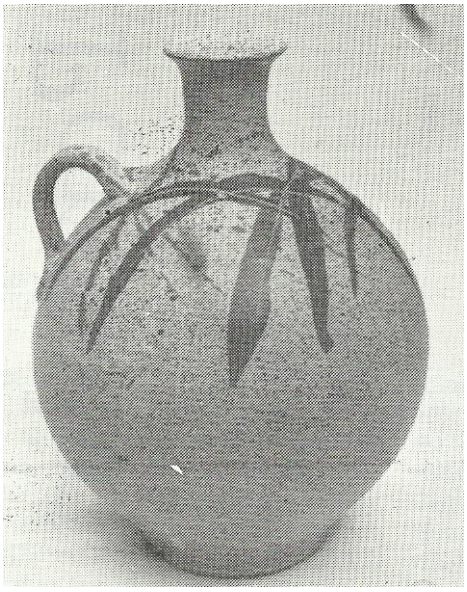


Plate 9: Charles Counts' Pot. Source: Jari and Odutokun eds. (1994) p42.

It has been revealed in Jari (2014) that Professor Ahuwan employs a traditional pottery technique to produce his works, which he learnt from Mallam Idi, a Hausa potter. It is not clear where Mallam Idi learnt this method of pot making from but it fits the traditional pot making method of Ilorin described by Cardew (2002). Usually, after taking a mould from an inverted old pot, the height of the new pot is only half way finished. When it is detached from the old pot, the potter now builds up the remaining half using the coiling method.

Apparently, there are some variations in traditional pot making. Cardew (2002) reveals a few of the methods. He states that the Hausa potter creates a depression on the ground in the shape of a saucer. In this hollowed space he sprinkles dry dust or wood ash and drops a large lump of clay in it. He beats the lump of clay outwards in a continuous manner while adding ash to prevent sticking. As he continues to beat, the wall of the pot continues to grow. Using his bare feet, the potter gradually revolves the pot in the saucer-like hole while he beats outwards. This keeps the thickness of the wall of the pot even. As the pot grows, it widens outwards but at a certain height, it begins to narrow until a tiny opening is created. At this point the pot is left to harden slightly before the neck is added. Cardew observes that the "distinguishing feature" of this method of pot making "is that no water is used except at the very end of the process, and the whole shape is achieved by dry beating, without any coiling."

The Gwari potter first creates a stand slightly over a foot high on which to build the pot. On the stand the potter puts a grass ring or a piece of old cloth. On the grass ring or cloth the potter places a calabash shaped like a saucer, which would hold the pot to be built. A lump of clay is kept in this calabash and beaten with a fist to create a hollow. After this hollow is created, the potter begins to drag the clay upwards using the fingers. As he or she does this, he or she keeps working round the lump until the walls of the pot are thin enough. From this point, the potter continues to build the pot by the coiling method until it is completed.

The Nupe potter has similar pot making methods with the Gwari. The only significant difference is that the Nupe potter, instead of going round the pot, which is stationery while building, the potter sits down and rotates the pot with one hand and builds with

the other. The saucer-like calabash, which is used as the base similar to the Gwari's, is allowed to rotate not fixed as in the case of the Gwari potter. This research attempts at establishing the sources of the methods Professor Ahuwan employed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A few authors are unanimous on the point that it is uncommon to undertake a documentation project on a ceramic artist. Some of these authors' papers have earlier been reviewed such as Okpe (2002), Onuzulike (2005), Okunna (2012), Jari (2014) and Alkali, et al (2014). It may therefore, seem foolhardy to undertake a research on Professor Ahuwan's works since, as has been pointed out, data on them is almost non existent. A quick glance at Professor Ahuwan's curriculum vitae for instance, reveals that he has held at least six solo exhibitions, participated in two, two-man exhibitions and eighteen group exhibitions. There is however, no comprehensive catalogue that exists on any of them. What appear to be available are a few photographs, some in slides and a few in videos. The original works themselves have ended up in private collections, which Professor Ahuwan did not have details of. For instance, the works, which he exhibited in Alliance Francaise, Kaduna in 1996 were sold. Two collectors, who have passed away, Captain Usman Muazu and Colonel Ahmadu Yakubu, acquired many of them. The inheritors of these collections cannot presently be established. Despite these challenges, Professor Ahuwan's contribution to the field of ceramics should not be overlooked. On the contrary, considering his achievements in teaching the production of the *Kim Kim*, the Department of Industrial Design should consider creating its research focus on exposing the works of living legends in the industry.

3.2 Research Design

Many may agree that another term for *research* would be *seeking the truth* about something. In seeking this truth, the appropriate questions ought to be asked. In other words, if the appropriate steps are not taken, the truth cannot be established. To illustrate how important formulating the appropriate steps or designing a research is to Imoisili (1996), he begins his book with a case scenario, which presents, on face value, a researcher who should have been considered to have taken appropriate steps but who, on closer scrutiny, did not. According to Imoisili, the researcher who wanted to establish the ratio of men to women in a town arrived the town on a market day and started counting the number of men and women in the market. A market may appear to be the right place to meet many people in a town but as Imoisili points out, wherever the town is located in Nigeria, attendance at markets is usually skewed towards a particular sex: in towns in southern Nigeria by females while in towns in northern Nigeria by males. He therefore, advises that logic should be employed in the choice of the appropriate strategy in conducting a research. He, along with other researchers like Banjoko and Fajana (1996) suggest that a combination of different research designs can work better in establishing the truth.

Imoisili lists eight different research designs in the humanities, which include, *Sample Surveys, Field Studies, Field Experiments, Laboratory Experiments, Experimental Simulations, Judgmental Tasks, Computer Simulations* and *Formal Theory*. He advises that the researcher should identify the context within which his or her topic falls, whether or not it falls within a *Natural Setting*, *Contrived Setting* or *Non-empirical Setting*. This present topic, for instance, falls within the Natural Setting. *Sample Surveys* and *Field Studies* are the research designs employable for Natural

Settings. Of these two designs, the more appropriate for this study was the *Field Studies* because the study involved a "systematic observation" of the works of Professor Ahuwan. The act of systematic observation necessarily brought the researcher in contact with Professor Ahuwan and his works. *Qualitative Methodology* was also employed because as Fajana (1996) observes, "close involvements with the subjects are emphasized. Qualitative research is said to be more flexible than quantitative research to the extent that the emphasis is on discovery of novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of changing the research plans as unanticipated events occur."

3.3 Sources of Data

One of the earliest researchers into the arts and designs of Africa, according to Saunders (2004), was Professor Roy Seiber who received a PhD in African Art History from the University of Iowa of the United States of America in 1957. In his thesis entitled, *African Tribal Sculptures*, he adopted methods of sourcing data, which have become popular with many researchers interested in conducting research in Art and Design, particularly in Nigeria. He identified two ways of sourcing data, the *primary* and *secondary* sources. The primary source pertains to going to the field to interact with the subjects under study. In the case of this research, it was to understudy Professor Ahuwan as he produced his works. It also constituted the interaction of the researcher with the works of Professor Ahuwan with the view to analytically appraising them.

The secondary source refers to information obtained from literary materials such as books, exhibition catalogues and the internet. It also refers to photographs and videos

related to the topic under study. Works on African art and design such as Fagg (1960), Willett (1971), Leuzinger (1972) and Heathcote (1979) relied on similar sources of data. Indeed David Heathcote, one of the earliest Zaria Art School researchers to undertake studies on African designs, having researched on the Hausa dress embroidery, relied on the primary and secondary sources of data. This research also relied on these two sources of data collection.

3.4 Instruments for Data Collection

The types of instruments to be employed in a given research area is determined by the research design. This research being a field studies research, dependent on the qualitative methodology, was engaged in a descriptive presentation. The instruments employed to obtain data therefore, included, *observation, interview schedules,* and *photography*. These instruments, otherwise also known as techniques, according to Imoisili (1996), "can be used with any selected research strategy with varying degrees of applicability." They were, however, notably favoured while adopting the qualitative methodology, which sought to discover rather than verify facts. The huge number of researchers who employed these instruments in conducting research in the history of art and design confirmed their reliability. Such researchers include, Agberia (2007), Alkali (2009) and Shaaibu (2013) among many others.

The researcher employed observation while understudying Professor Ahuwan at work, producing his works. She also used observation to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate the works produced. Interview schedules were employed in obtaining information from Professor Ahuwan regarding his works and the methods he used to create them. The unstructured interview schedules were preferred as they allowed for

improvising follow-up questions to catch up with leads that he provided. Photography was used to support the documentation process. The works described were illustrated.

3.5 Research Procedure

The areas covered by this study included the documentation of the educational background and work experience of Professor Ahuwan; his ceramic practice; and the analytical appraisal of the works produced. The researcher investigated from Professor Ahuwan's close associates how best to obtain information on these areas and followed leads provided. She paid visits to him to interview him and to observe him at work. She recorded the interviews and observations in audio, still photographs and in video formats for analysis. The researcher established where Professor Ahuwan's works would be found and visited such locations, documenting and categorizing the works in terms of their techniques.

3.6 Population

Of the areas that were covered by this study, the main area was the analytical appraisal of the works of Professor Ahuwan. The population of the study was therefore, the works that were produced by him. The challenge of studying his works has already been explained. Consequently, not many of them were accessible. For instance, only one set of stoneware survived from his very early works, which was illustrated (Pate 1) and discussed at the introductory stage of this research. It therefore, became imperative to study all available works, either tangible or their photographic images rather than sample them. In all, twenty-nine works were studied. They comprised works in his possession, images of works retrieved from him, Frank Giorgini, Tayo Quaye's collection, the Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu

Bello University, Zaria, websites and exhibition catalogues. The format in which some of the images were stored included, photographic prints, videos and slides. They had to be reformatted into digital images for ease of documentation. The procedures described were both studied from videos and the observation of Professor Ahuwan. In some instances, the images and procedures needed to be clarified by him at several brief interviews either at his house, office, Hunkuyi or on phone. At other instances, he was not able to remember the details concerning some of the works such as their titles, specific year of production, where they were produced and their dimensions.

3.7 Conceptual Framework

Analytically appraising the works of Professor Ahuwan was an exercise, which could either be considered to be under the sphere of art and design history or art and design criticism. Barnet (2003) explains the distinction between the two. According to him, the art and design historian may employ tools, which would maintain him or her as a neutral person in the description of works. Such tools as stated by him include,

Visual analysis (formal analysis)
Examination of written documents
Study of the social context, especially the conditions of production (not only conditions in the workshop but also the market for which the work was designed)
Scientific examination, for instance the analysis of paper or of pigments in order to determine the date of production.

The art and design critic, according to Barnet, is more subjective even where he or she works with documents or art forms. He or she is prone to describing what he or she is observing using adjectives, metaphors and similes. The critic reveals the design elements and principles in a work for the viewer to experience what the artist intended. Barnet illustrates this point by quoting Gombrich's description of art critics as follows: "critics…know how to use words to articulate their sensations and they let

us profit in our own sensibility by teaching us differentiations." Barnet provides the tools employed by the art and design critic as follows:

1. Truth
2. Instrumental value (or Utility)
3. Ideology
4. Intrinsic aesthetic merit
5. Expressiveness
6. Sincerity
7. Technique
8. Originality
9. Historical importance.

The conceptual framework of this study was centred on the combination of the two activities. The researcher described the works in a dispassionate manner but at the same time, provided the clues to the readers to analytically appraise what Professor Ahuwan intended in each work, which was described.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSES OF WORKS

4.1 Introduction

Looking at the oeuvre of Professor Ahuwan, it was possible to attempt a categorization. The first category included works produced during his years of studying ceramics and his early period of practice, which dates from 1966 to 1976. He produced mostly utilitarian stoneware, which were thrown on a kick wheel, glazed, using either industrial or locally made glazes and fired in kilns following the Western method of pottery. The second category involved his interest in traditional pottery, which led him to study under Mallam Idi, the Hunkuyi potter, and subsequently produced aesthetic wares, through traditional methods of pottery. The period for this category is from 1974 to 1999. This second category could further be stratified into two stages. The first stage includes the *Kim Kim* pots, which he produced between 1974 and 1990. The second stage includes the sculptural-ceramic forms he produced, from 1989 to 1999. The categories and stages overlap as can be seen from the dates. It should be noted that Professor Ahuwan was not producing wares every year during these periods. There were long spells of incubation such as the times he was head of department (1990-1993 and 2002-2006) and dean of faculty (2004-2008) or when he was performing other administrative duties in the university. For instance, until 2015, when he resumed work, the last time he created any work was in 1999.

This chapter will thus proceed by examining Professor Ahuwan's utilitarian stone wares, the *Kim Kim* pots and the sculptural-ceramic forms.



Plate 10: A Cross Section of Professor Ahuwan's Exhibition at Farnham, 1972
Source: Professor Ahuwan

4.2 Utilitarian Stone Wares

Plate 10 shows a cross section of Professor Ahuwan's exhibition at the West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham, England in 1972. On display can be seen mugs, bowls, jugs and vases, all utilitarian products.



Plate 11: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Mug*, c.1965, Stoneware, about 12cm high

Plate 11 shows a mug, which Professor Ahuwan claims was produced at the Abuja Pottery while he was still in secondary school. The work itself is long lost but the image is captured in a slide photograph. The mug is typical of mugs created en mass in training schools like the Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the Maraba Pottery near Kaduna. It could be a prototype introduced by Cardew, of whom Professor Ahuwan observed, was sent to Nigeria in 1952 to start a pottery in order to produce wares to be used by the British Frontier Force. Its base is slightly wider than its rim. The surface is plain except for a drip-like pattern embellished, perhaps, to break the monotony of the plainness. It appears, from the mass production of such mug, that the size is appropriate for everyday usage; not

too small like the China tea cups and not too big like the large metal cups sold in markets, commonly referred to as "who-send-you-come". The mug maintains a rich lustre even when the clay particles are visible. Professor Ahuwan said that he used a transparent glaze on it.



Plate 12: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Goblets*, c.1976, Stoneware, about 17cm high

The goblets shown in Plate 12 were produced, according to Professor Ahuwan, in 1976 while undertaking an M.Sc. programme at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, United States of America. They maintain the same finishing as the mug shown in Plate 11 except that the decorations on the goblets are more elaborate. Leaf-like patterns of decoration are applied on opposite sides. Professor Ahuwan explained that the general concept of a goblet is taken from the chalice used in celebrating Mass in the Catholic Church. He said that if the sizes were relatively large as in the case of

these goblets, they were used to take wine but if they were much smaller, they were used to hold boiled eggs during meals.



Plate 13: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *MugII*, c.1972, Stoneware, about 12cm high

From this image of another mug presented in Plate 13, it is evident that, Professor Ahuwan, at a certain period in the 1970s, maintained a singular approach to finishing his stone wares. The wares usually ended up glazed but using a transparent glaze in order to expose the natural colouration of the clay body used. There appeared to be reluctance in adding any decoration, as many of the wares were plain or as in the case of this mug and other wares earlier described, with an austere pattern like a leaf.



Plate 14: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Pot*, c.1972, Stoneware, about 30cm high

Plate 14 shows a plain pot with an interesting finish. One of the areas of interest is the upper part, which looks like a lid. Professor Ahuwan explained that the textured pinch-like embossment was part of the pot. The actual lid is at the topmost part of this embossed area. Another area of interest is the manner in which it was displayed. It appeared even as far back as 1972, while Professor Ahuwan was still studying in England, he had begun to explore some traditional pottery concepts. The base on which this pot rests is a string-woven ring popularly used by Nigerian potters to display either pots or calabashes, which generally have round bases. These rings are presently well adopted and used by Frank Giorgini in the display of his *Udu* drums.



Plate 15: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Casserole*, c.1972, Stoneware, about 15cm high

The casserole presented in Plate 15 was also produced about 1972. Again, it is plain, devoid of any decoration. Professor Ahuwan fondly remembered that the lid fitted perfectly.



Plate 16: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Composite Form*, c.1975, Stoneware, about 34cm high

Professor Ahuwan narrated that sometime in 1975, at Zaria, there was a sudden interest in creating ceramic wares, which portrayed a combination of forms, which attempted to show growth. The work shown in Plate 16 is one of such combination of forms. Unfortunately, the illustration, which is all that has survived of the work, is not very sharp. The details of the surface treatment of the ware are not that clear. However, one is able to discern a not-so-perfectly round form, which, for the first time since the analyses of Professor Ahuwan's works began, is glazed in dark tones. It is also possible to make out some linear decorative patterns on the upper half of the form. Two lines are incised, about one centimeter apart, round the form. From this point towards the neck, triangular patterns are created. They face upwards and

downwards in alternate rhythm. The ones with the narrow ends facing upwards have several lacerations within their spaces, while the ones facing downwards are left plain. There appears to be three to four necks and lips to this form but they all assumedly open into a large single space within the form. Its undulating nature suggests that it might have been hand-built rather than thrown. Its finishing is also suggestive of an open-air firing. Although it has a lustre glow, it portrays different nuances of browns and black, which reduction and oxidation create in open-air firing.



Plate 17: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Bowl*, c.1976, Stoneware, about 30cm high

There was much debate between Professor Ahuwan and his wife, Dr. Martha Florence Ahuwan, as to where he created this bowl shown in Plate 17. Both of them eventually remembered that it was created at Charles Counts' studio in Chattanooga, United States of America. When Professor Ahuwan attended University at Knoxville, he used to visit Counts and work in his studio. The work is quite unlike any of Professor

Ahuwan's works of this period. It was as if it was made to appear antique. It is unevenly formed and trimmed with a snake-like pattern, entwined round its lower half. Professor Ahuwan said he used a transparent glaze to glaze the work but it looks like bisque fired terracotta. He also revealed that at this time in his career, he was fascinated by Greek pottery. Indeed, he created several wares mimicking Greek pottery and exhibited them. A cross section of that exhibition is shown in Plate 18. It is possible that this bowl is a copy of a Greek funerary pot.



Plate 18: A Cross Section of an Exhibition of Professor Ahuwan's Wares held c.1976 Showing an Attempt at Copying Greek Pottery



Plate 19: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Drawing of Vase with Plants*, c.1972, Dimension Unknown

Plate 19 may be the only surviving image of Professor Ahuwan's drawings. It illustrates his understanding of form and texture. The species of the plants can immediately be identified as sisal-like, while the vase by its shading, captures the

characteristics of terracotta. The drawing was probably signed at the lower left corner but it is not very legible.

4.3 *Kim Kim* Pots

It was not clear when Professor Ahuwan started making *Kim Kim* pots. From his account however, it would be a few years or months before undertaking the trip to the United States of America in 1974, on the invitation of that country's government, for a three-month educational tour. *Kim Kim* is the name given to the aerophone or idiophone percussion instrument made out of clay by many of the ethnic groups south of Kaduna. It creates sound by the vibration of air, modulated by the rapid slapping, closing and opening of the two holes provided on the pot, one at the top and the other at the side. Another variation has the two holes at the top and bottom of the pot.



Plate 20: Two *Kim Kim* Pots Showing the Two Types in Use in Southern Kaduna Acquired from Atakar Market in 2015.

Professor Ahuwan employed the traditional method of pottery, which he learnt from Mallam Idi, to produce the *Kim Kim*. It should be useful to describe this method before getting into the individual analysis of the works he created in this series. He began work by inverting an old pot. He shaped moist clay into a round padded form and sprinkled grog on it to stop it from sticking on the old inverted pot before putting the clay on top of it. Professor Ahuwan worked on the ground without any rotating disc or turntable. He was therefore, usually in a bent-over position, going round and round the pot as he beat the clay using a flat stone gently and outwards from the top. This act compressed the clay and spread it gently downwards. He took care to spread the clay evenly. He occasionally took measurements with a sharp pin at different sides to ensure that the pin was sunk at the same height at the different points. He continuously trimmed the lower edges of the new form in order to maintain a uniform growth on all sides. After beating the clay with a flat stone to compress and expand the clay downwards, and after obtaining a uniform thickness all round, Professor Ahuwan used a flat wooden paddle to smoothen the surface by the same beating method, all round the form. He further smoothened the surface by using a wet flat stone after sprinkling a little water to the surface of the form. At this point, the bottom half of the *Kim Kim* would have been complete. It was left for a while to stiffen a bit and subsequently detached from the old pot and kept with its wide edge up, ready for further building, using the coiling method.

Before adding the coil, Professor Ahuwan scored the edges and moistened them, so as to have the coil fully stuck to the form. The scoring was done both inside and outside the edges of the pot as well as the top. The coil-clay was also scored before it was laid on the edges and built into the form by squeezing and pinching. This was so done in

order to prevent the coil part from coming off the form when dry. From the point of the first coil, the pot was controlled slowly inwards to eventually create a narrow opening at the top. After each coil was added, the newly built area was smoothened continuously. Professor Ahuwan added a coil at a time, after the new edges were slightly stiffened, following the same procedure as when adding the first coil. He continuously checked to ensure that the wall of the pot was of even thickness all through.

Professor Ahuwan determined what height the pot should attain based on its size and what sound he wanted the pot to create. At the appropriate height, the contour of the pot was directed from inwards to upwards to form the neck. Usually, the neck determined the sustainability of the sound the *Kim Kim* made. The shorter the neck, the less sustained the sound was. It was also not useful to have a very long neck; so the height of the neck should be just right to maintain a sustained sound. Professor Ahuwan observed that most of the *Kim Kim* pots were shaped after a natural gourd.

The lip of the *Kim Kim* was created by first pounding clay into a round shape. After obtaining an evenly round shape of the same thickness, a round opening was cut out of the middle. The open-shaped round clay was left to stiffen slightly before attaching it to the neck of the pot to form the lip. This was attached the same way a coil was attached. The inside of the lip was trimmed to bring it to the same diameter as the inside of the neck. To reinforce the attached lip to the neck, a coil of clay was added round, underneath, where the neck joined the lip. The joint was then smoothened along with the lip and the neck. To obtain sound efficiency, the side hole was created not too close to the neck and not directly on the centre but slightly above the centre.

The side hole was generally about the same circumference with the mouth. After the *Kim Kim* pots had been produced, they were allowed to dry slowly before firing.

Professor Ahuwan also adopted the traditional method of firing. Traditional firing took place in an open area. The area was cleared of all combustible materials and all pots to be fired were brought out and laid near the firing area. A heap of cornstalks was spread on the cleared area as the first stage. Dry twigs of wood then follow. They were laid on the cornstalks methodically to maintain a flat surface. The flat surface was necessary because, after the layer of twigs of wood, the green pots were laid, again methodically, in order for the space to accommodate as many pots as possible. Usually, the bigger pots were laid first on their sides and in lines, one closely behind the other in the middle of the firing place. Some of the smaller pots were placed inside the bigger pots. Others were kept upside down on the sides of the bigger pots. More pots were piled upside down on top of them and these could include other bigger pots.

Depending on how many pots there were to be fired, they were piled on top of one another to create a dome-like mound. When the laying of the pots was completed, more wood was stacked around the mound of pots. The entire pile was then covered with a large hip of dry grass. The mound could actually be climbed over in order to compact the grass around the pots. After the laying of grass was completed, water and ashes were sprinkled on the mound to slow down the rate of burning. The area around the mound was further cleared of all debris after which, fire was set to the mound. Usually, the time for firing was preferable in the evening so that the fire might continue to burn into the night. It could stop burning by midnight and the wares would then begin to cool down until morning. In the morning the wares were

inspected and taken away from the fireplace, the firing having been completed. All the wares became light-brownish terracotta pieces after this bisque firing.

Professor Ahuwan explained that after this first firing, he subjected his wares to a second firing in order to introduce an aesthetic finish to them. The second firing was conducted by first, collecting sawdust and wood shavings. He made a layer of sawdust on the ground in open space, which had been cleared of combustible objects. He placed his wares on this layer of sawdust after which he piled more sawdust and wood shavings on the wares to create a mound. This is carefully done in order to trap some pockets of air within the mound. He set fire on the mound and waited for it to finish burning. When the wares became cold enough, he inspected and collected them from the fireplace. Wherever smoke hit the wares, dark tones were created through reduction process and wherever air hit, oxidation took place to create different light tones of various hues. He cleaned the ashes off the wares and they were ready for display.

The analyses of the *Kim Kim* in this study were undertaken from the observation of photographs as none of them was in the possession of Professor Ahuwan or within reach. The whereabouts of five of them were unknown while two of them were in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Plate 21: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim*, c. 1974, Terracotta, about 32cm high

This *Kim Kim* shown in Plate 21 could be one of the earliest that Professor Ahuwan created. The image was reformatted into a digital image from an old slide, which accounts for the poor quality of the picture. It shows an almost plain *Kim Kim* except for the relief design, in a triangular shape, around the neck area. It also has one handle, close to the neck.



Plate 22: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim II*, c.1974, Terracotta, about 35cm high

Plate 22 shows another *Kim Kim* more decorative than the one shown in Plate 21. Apart from the fact that this *Kim Kim* is not plain, it is imbued with different patterns of colouration. The designs on the pot are created using coils. Six coils entwine the mid section, while four are visible around the lip. A raised coil also marks the edge of the side hole. The subtle dark hues are in harmony with the natural clay colour

patches around the pot. It is as if the appearance of the *Kim Kim* was more important to Professor Ahuwan than its function.



Plate 23: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim III*, c. 1974, Terracotta, about 32cm high

This *Kim Kim*, shown in Plate 23, maintains the natural colour of clay. There was an effort however, to make it decorative. Tiny incisions at rhythmical intervals are made

within a narrow band around the midsection of the pot and repeated in a wider band about the neck section as if to capture the sound, which the *Kim Kim* makes.



Plate 24: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim IV*, c.1974, Terracotta, about 32cm high

It can be seen once more, in Plate 24, that Professor Ahuwan continues to emphasize the aesthetic nature of the *Kim Kim* over its function. He explained the coil pattern

seen on the pot as mimicking a snake. A close observation of the pattern reveals an attempt to actually render a representational texture of the scales of the snake. It may well be that Professor Ahuwan was captivated by its beauty.



Plate 25: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim* V, c.1974, Terracotta, about 32 cm high

The *Kim Kim* shown in Plate 25, ordinarily was meant to be simple. It has no lip and only a circular line, around the side hole, accounts for anything deliberately decorative. It however, demonstrates how the traditional firing technique can achieve

interesting finishing patterns, which although are largely accidental, are quite effective in beautifying a pot.



Plate 26: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim VI*, c.1989, Terracotta, about 40cm high

One of the most fascinating *Kim Kim*, which Professor Ahuwan had ever produced, is shown in Plate 26. It is no wonder therefore, that it is one of the two in the collection

of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acquired since 1989. It looks different from the ones he produced previously, richly endowed with a variety of elements borrowed from tradition. This *Kim Kim* is provided with three stands as if to emphasize the point that it was meant to be on display. Some of the traditional elements adopted are the several studs that form part of the decoration. They are actually used by traditional potters in many ethnic groups in Nigeria as a symbolic tool to ward off evil spirits. On this pot, they form three lines round the lower part of the pot and three other lines round the upper part. The middle section is left to contain other forms of decoration created as horizontal line incisions and large arrows pointing upwards. Professor Ahuwan explained that the arrows were actually the shape of the windows, which he saw on the Abuja Pottery House. An arch similar to the doors provided on traditional architectural houses encases the side hole. The overall effect of all these elements is the general ambiance the *Kim Kim* possesses as an antique.



Plate 27: Professor Ahuwan creating the *Kim Kim* shown in Plate 26



Plate 28: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Kim Kim VII*, c.1989, Terracotta, about 42cm high

Plate 28 shows the second *Kim Kim* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It is as interesting as the other one shown in Plate 26 although characteristically dissimilar. Its main feature is its long neck, which bulges near the lip. It also has studs but they are quite scanty compared to the other one. Geometric shapes such as triangles, circles and irregular rectangles characterize its main

decorative motifs. Linear incisions are also created to provide texture within some of the geometric patterns.

When Professor Ahuwan was asked if these two *Kim Kim* at the Museum were created solely for aesthetic purpose, he retorted that they could actually function as musical instruments as well. Coincidentally, however, after he had produced them, he turned his attention to producing sculptural forms, which have no utilitarian function. The *Kim Kim* therefore, are the bridge between the utilitarian ceramics and the sculptural ceramics of Professor Ahuwan.

4.4 Sculptural-Ceramic Forms

The works in this series share a few elements with the *Kim Kim*. They are created and fired under the same methods. The differences between them however, are many. They do not necessarily assume the shape of gourds or pots and they do not have utilitarian value, except aesthetical value. They take different shapes inspired by a variety of things including animals like tortoises or decorated gowns. Their surface treatment is intended to fascinate the viewer through the intricate display of textural motifs, tones and hues. The works cannot therefore, be fully appreciated from a single dimension, except in their three dimensionality. In some instances, even the lower part of the form, is highly decorated, giving the impression of a fourth dimension. To illustrate the works, they necessarily have to be shown in at least their front and back views, and sometimes their side view. These works form the most current works Professor Ahuwan produced, between 1996 and 1999.



a. first view



b. second view

Plate 29: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form*, c.1996, Terracotta, about 35cm high

It can be seen in Plate 29 that the sculptural-ceramic form appears like a pot. It is decoratively perforated in several places, rendering it incapable of holding any liquid, granular or powdery substance. It is however, well decorated with linear patterns apart from the perforations. It also has four studs on its sides. Its finishing has subtle tones of earth colours.



a. first view



b. second view

Plate 30: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form II*, c.1998, Terracotta, about 40cm high

The form shown in Plate 30 can be interpreted to resemble different things. It looks like a giant tortoise and it also looks like two bowls, one covering the other. It is however, produced as a single piece, with no opening, except a tiny hole at the bottom, to allow pressure to escape during firing. The three studs upon which it rests, give it the impression of a living creature, the studs being its limbs. The side protrusion thus, appears like its head. The linear textural patterns, convey the impression of a shell. The work is essentially brownish but it has a few dark tones in a few places, really accentuating the living-creature impression.



a. first view



b. second view

Plate 31: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form III*, c.1998, Terracotta, about 40cm high

Professor Ahuwan expressed that he could be inspired by a multitude of things in the production of his works, including extraterrestrial images. The form shown in Plate 31, conjures such an image. It looks like a creature with two heads upon which three antennas each have grown. It rests on three studs suggestive of its limbs. Further limbs are also suggested on its side in the form of three projections at opposite sides. There are also two projections, which could suggest the tail of this seeming creature. The finishing of this work looks similar to the work shown in Plate 30 but the textural patterns are different. The linear incisions are in some areas short slashes while in other areas, they appear to be crosses encased in circles. Somewhere around the middle section are drawn three lines from one end to the other, repeated at about ten centimeters interval. The form may look alive but weird.



a. first view



b. second view



c. third view

Plate 32: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form IV*, c.1998, Terracotta, 16cm high

The work shown in Plate 32 deliberately tries to portray a tortoise. The representation of the head and the form of the work suggest this but there are other several characteristics, which show that Professor Ahuwan was not interested in portraying an exact copy of a tortoise. For instance, there are only three studs indicated to represent the limbs and the shell is not patterned in a naturalistic manner. The shell is decorated with rectangular shapes. When the form is tipped at its side to expose the underneath part, very interesting hues can be seen, ranging from browns, reds, ochres and black. There is also a wide circular hole under the tail-like protrusion, which function is unclear but it certainly must have been useful during firing to allow built-up pressure to escape.



a. front view



b. side view



c. back view

Plate 33: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form V*, 1998, Terracotta 30cm high

This work shown in Plate 33 is one of the few, which Professor Ahuwan signed and dated. In 1998, he made many works in spherical form, with three or several protrusions on its top, like crowns. He once explained that if there were three protrusions, the form was male but if there were more than three, the form was female. The front view shows two tiny depressions. Three concave lines are drawn from one depression round the form to the other depression. At a glance, the view is of a smiling face with the lines as the mouth and the depressions as the eyes but then, as if to remind the viewer that this is just a form, several decorative convex lines are drawn between the concave lines. These decorations are repeated at the back of the form, where also, the concave lines have multiplied. Holes are perforated on both sides, which served as pressure exits during firing but could they also represent the ears of this form? It appears it was fired once, as it maintains a single brown tone.



a. front view



b. side view



c. back view

Plate 34: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form VI*, c.1998, Terracotta, 29cm high

Plate 34 shows a similar form to the one presented in Plate 33. The only difference seen, is in the absence of the tiny depressions and the side holes. The decorative concave and convex lines are almost exactly repeated on both sides on the form in Plate 34. The finishing of this form is also a fascination of different nuances of earth-colours.



a. front view



b. side view



c. back view

Plate 35: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Gown*, 1998, Terracotta, 39cm high

Gown, shown in Plate 35 is another form that looks like the one shown in Plate 34. It was signed and dated by Professor Ahuwan. Its title was also indicated on a piece of paper, stuck to the bottom of the form. The front view shows why it is probably called, *Gown*. It is elaborately and linearly decorated, like the front view of a Hausa gown. The back view is sparsely decorated, again, just like a Hausa gown. The other additional features to this form are the studs stuck to each side.



a. first view



b. second view



c. third view

Plate 36: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form VII*, 1999, Terracotta, 51cm high

The form shown in Plate 36 was signed and dated by Professor Ahuwan. It takes the basic form and colouration of the other forms but looks different at its base. It has a wide hollowed base, like an inverted neck of a pot. It is as if he is emphasizing the fact that the form, although shaped as a pot, does not function as one. The decoration on this part recalls that of the pot shown in Plate 17. On both sides of the form, Professor Ahuwan, probably as an extension of his study of the Hausa gown, creates a spiral motif in the middle as seen on most gowns. An additional fascinating feature is the tiny lines he creates on the surface of the form, giving it a desired texture.



a. first view



b. second view



c. third view



d. fourth view

Plate 37: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *NM2*, 1999, Terracotta, 33cm high

This work shown in Plate 37 was also signed and dated by Professor Ahuwan. He explained that he wanted to capture his fascination with Albert Einstein's formula on the theory of relativity. He actually writes the formula on the body of the work and tries to illustrate how it works on the opposite side of the form. This side shows two cut out arrows, pointing at, but not touching each other. Two lines are drawn crossing over each other at the point where the arrows almost meet and at the base of the form. Two additional lines are drawn by the sides of these other lines, at the lower half of the form. They seem to imitate the electric charge that the two arrows appear to generate. The work is given an interesting base, which looks like two exhausts of a rocket. The general feeling around this form is that of an unidentified flying object.



a. first view



b. second view



c. third view

Plate 38: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form VIII*, 1998, Terracotta, 28cm high

The use of arrows as motifs is again explored on the form shown in Plate 38. This time, however, the arrows are not cut open but decorated with lines. A unique feature of this form is the change, from representing three studs at the top of the form, to representing one, which is incised with dots. The opposite side is busier than the side with the arrows, with curvy and linear decorations. This form, like the one in Plate 35, also has two studs, one protruding from each side.



a. first view



b. second view



c. third view

Plate 39: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form IX*, 1999, Terracotta, 18cm high

One of the most impressive forms of Professor Ahuwan, in the opinion of this researcher, is shown in Plate 39. It is plain, small and almost undecorated but the quality of its sheen, makes it look like a big kernel. Sometimes, the economy of design is effective, as in this case. One side has only one line running in the middle while the other side has two lines. The sides of the form have seven small triangular shapes cut out of the middle of each, giving them a jagged contrast to the otherwise smooth surface. Like the figure in Plate 38, only one stud is indicated on the top of the form. Professor Ahuwan signed and dated this work.



a. first view



b. second view



c. third view

Plate 40: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form X*, 1997, Terracotta, 32cm high

Looking at the work shown in Plate 40, one wonders how much time Professor Ahuwan dedicated to its decoration. The numerous intricate lines are directed in a manner that they become kinetic when glanced for a long time. It could be that the tiny decorative braids sometimes seen on the heads of women inspired him. The dark tone on one side, contrasts so beautifully with the brown on the other side. This time, there is no stud on top of the form but two on each side.



a. first view



b. second view

Plate 41: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form XI*, c.1998, Terracotta, 12cm high

The many times Professor Ahuwan has depicted the tortoise testifies to his affinity to it. Plate 41 shows another rendition of a tortoise. This time, he tries to portray a representational perception of the shell although he bore four holes on it. The head is portrayed representationally too but the limbs and the tail have been stylized with the usual studs. At the time the researcher encountered this form, two of the three stands upon which it is placed, have been broken.



Plate 42: Professor Abbas Ahuwan, *Sculptural-Ceramic Form XII*, c.1997, Terracotta, about 20cm high

This work shown in Plate 42 was exhibited in Scotland in 1997. All that is known of it presently, is the photograph. The type of complex linear decoration seen on the work illustrated in Plate 40 is repeated here. The form however, is similar to that shown in Plate 30 although this one is slimmer.

Twenty-nine works have been analyzed in this chapter. These are all that the researcher could encounter of Professor Ahuwan's works, either in photograph or in tangible form. Their variety, however, captures the essence of his creativity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 **Introduction**

The need to analytically appraise the ceramic forms of Professor Ahuwan was inspired by the more than four decades of his teaching Ceramics and the seeming lack of interest by other researchers to document his works. This research set out to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate all of his works, which could be located either in their tangible form or in form of images. Professor Ahuwan was not prolific over the entire four decades of his potting. There were times when he was engaged with university administrative duties. At such times, he rarely produced any work. Also, he was not given to documenting his works. Many works, which he parted with, could hardly be traced and images of them sometimes, were not kept. All the same, the works, which were analytically appraised, were produced at different times of his career. They were, therefore, representative of his oeuvre. This chapter will thus give a summary of the study undertaken; outline its findings, from which conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made therefrom.

5.2 **Summary of Major Findings**

The research was centred on analytical appraisal. It however, also reported important Ceramic milestones of Professor Ahuwan. Such milestones included his formal and informal training in Ceramics, his involvement with *Kim Kim*, and his Hunkuyi experiment.

5.2.1 *Professor Ahuwan's Formal Training*

The research listed Professor Ahuwan's formal schools to include, the West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham, United Kingdom, where he obtained his first degree in 1972; the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, United States of America where he received the M.S. in 1976; and the University of North Texas, Denton, United States of America, where he obtained a PhD in 1981.

5.2.2 *Professor Ahuwan's Informal Training*

The study established that the informal training Professor Ahuwan received was from Mallam Mohammed Idi, the Hausa potter, who lived at Hunkuyi, a village near Zaria. At first, Mallam Idi was casually employed at the Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria where Professor Ahuwan worked. Mallam Idi was engaged to demonstrate to staff and students how to produce ceramic wares using traditional methods of pottery. When his tenure expired within a few months of his engagement, he returned to Hunkuyi but Professor Ahuwan relocated his studio there to continue studying traditional pottery methods under him.

5.2.3 *Kim Kim*

The study also reported how Professor Ahuwan popularized the *Kim Kim*, a traditional percussion instrument common with some of the ethnic groups in Southern Kaduna. The thought of exploring the potentials of *Kim Kim* in Ceramics came to him in 1974, when he was preparing to accept the invitation of the government of the United States of America to undertake an educational tour of that country. At one of the locations during the tour, the Haystack Mountain School of Craft, Deer Isle, Maine, he held a workshop and taught American students how to produce the *Kim*

Kim, using Nigerian traditional pottery methods. The study reported how Frank Giorgini, one of the students, turned this encounter with Professor Ahuwan into a flourishing industry, producing the *Kim Kim*, which he renamed *Udu*, and selling to musicians.

5.2.4 *Hunkuyi Experiment*

This research described in detail how traditional pottery was produced and fired at Hunkuyi, which was learnt by Professor Ahuwan and which he eventually termed, the *Hunkuyi Experiment*. The event was not a one-off experience. From 1974 when he first located his studio at Hunkuyi, he kept returning there to work at different intervals, the longest period being 1996 to 1999. The research established that the term, *Hunkuyi Experiment*, represented for Professor Ahuwan not only the actual experience at Hunkuyi, but also a concept. This concept was akin to the *Natural Synthesis* of the Zaria Art Society of the 1950s. It meant the adaptation of one's experience in traditional methods of art creation into modern art expression. For Professor Ahuwan, this adaptation in the production of ceramics by Zaria artists began in 1974, the year Mallam Idi took up a temporary appointment with the Department of Fine Art of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the same year, Professor Ahuwan located his studio to Hunkuyi.

5.2.5 *The Analytical Appraisal of Professor Ahuwan's Works*

In all, thirty works by Professor Ahuwan were studied. Of these thirty, a set of three vases, which constituted one of the works, was discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Twenty-nine were analyzed in the fourth chapter. Fourteen were tangible works while the rest sixteen were photographs. The works were categorized

into Utilitarian, *Kim Kim*, and Sculptural-Ceramic wares. The utilitarian wares analyzed were eight; the *Kim Kim* wares were seven while the sculptural-ceramic wares were fourteen. One of the works analyzed was a drawing. In order to analytically appraise the works, their images were each presented in plates. The utilitarian and *Kim Kim* works were presented in one view while the sculptural-ceramic works were presented in more than one view to assist the reader to conceptualize the forms. Following the objectives of the research, the works were described, analyzed, interpreted and evaluated. These steps were not necessarily applied on each of the wares but generally applied as a collection of Professor Ahuwan's works.

i. *Description*

The utilitarian works were described as bowl, casserole, composite form, goblet, pot or mug, while the *Kim Kim* took the shape of a gourd. The sculptural-ceramic wares took different shapes such as, anthropomorphic, bio-morphic and geometric shapes. The utilitarian works were similar to many of such works produced in art schools with an orientation towards Western methods of pottery. The exception was the bowl with a snake-like relief pattern as decoration, which, as observed, was probably influenced by Greek pottery. Many of the other utilitarian wares were plain except for the mug and goblets, which had simple leaf-like decorations. The *Kim Kim* wares, on the other hand, were unique, quite unlike the traditional *Kim Kim*. Professor Ahuwan tried to make each one different from the other, either from their shapes or from their decoration and finishing. Some had textured motifs embellished on them. All had accidentally created nuances of different earth colours through oxidation and reduction, which occurred when using the traditional firing method. The sculptural-

ceramic wares were also unique, each one with its peculiar characteristic in terms of form, texture and finishing.

ii. *Analyses*

It was observed that the principles of design were more apparent in the making of the sculptural-ceramic wares by Professor Ahuwan, than in the making of utilitarian and *Kim Kim* wares. This is obviously because the sculptural-ceramic wares were meant solely as aesthetically contemplative works with no functional objective intended. Balance was well explored in creating most, if not all the forms. This is seen in the deployment of the stud-like protrusions on many of the works, either on their top, sides or as their tripod stands. Where holes or depressions were visible, they were not haphazardly deployed but methodically, in order to give balance to the ware. Rhythm was also used to great effect, especially in the detailed textured patterns, which sometimes even achieved kinetic impressions. Being like sculpture forms, some of the works were symmetrical while others were asymmetrical; studs or protrusions might be distributed evenly or they might occur in just an area, yet such compositions were harmonious to contemplate.

iii. *Interpretation*

The research established that the utilitarian works of Professor Ahuwan simply lived up to their reference as such. However, some of the *Kim Kim* and the sculptural-ceramic forms had resemblances to other objects. For instance, the two *Kim Kim*, which were acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York appeared like pottery wares used in some ethnic groups in Nigeria to ward off evil spirits because of the several stud-like protrusions spread across their surface. Professor Ahuwan

himself, while presenting the works to the Museum in 1989, alluded to the fact that he used studs to ward off evil spirits. Many of the sculptural-ceramic forms were created after objects in nature. Some appeared like tortoises while others, as explained by Professor Ahuwan, were personifications of humans. According to him, the forms with three or less than three studs on their tops, represented male figures while others with more than three studs represented female figures. There were other forms, which he explained, were created as a result of his marvel at the works of others, such as the form that tried to explain Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

iv. *Evaluation*

This study identified that the Hunkuyi Experiment of Professor Ahuwan was both an event as well as a concept. As a concept, it mimicked the *Natural Synthesis* of the Zaria Art Society of the 1950s, where the proponents advocated for the employment of one's traditional art experiences into modern art expressions. Professor Ahuwan did not attend school in Zaria but he had been teaching there for the past forty-three years and worked with many Zaria alumni. He was also the contemporary of many *Natural Synthesis* proponents. It was not surprising therefore, that he would link the Hunkuyi Experiment to *Natural Synthesis*. Professor Ahuwan, given such background, was a Post-Colonial artist. His *Kim Kim* and sculptural-ceramic forms appeared to be a metaphorical liberation from the West or from colonial vestiges. His abandonment of the kick wheel and the kiln preferring instead to use traditional methods of pottery was typical of artists of this mould.

The fifth objective of this research was to produce an objective documentation of Professor Ahuwan's works. Several steps were taken to ensure that this objective was

achieved. The researcher went to the field and encountered the artist and works first hand. The works were illustrated in photograph form and presented as Plates. This gave the reader evidence of what was discussed and the liberty to refute any inappropriate claims. The style of reportage eliminated adjectives as much as possible, playing down on any exaggerations. While describing the works, only the elements of design, which were visible on the works, were pointed out. Also, in analyzing the works, only the principles of design, which they presented, were discussed. In interpreting and evaluating the works, the researcher relied mostly on what the artist provided as clues, rather than speculate, based on assumptions. It is the belief therefore, of the researcher, that this thesis is an objective documentation of Professor Ahuwan's works.

5.3 **Conclusion**

When this research was conceived, it was imagined that being a virgin area with few reference materials, it would become a dull study. It turned out however, to be exciting. It exposed materials on related areas such as papers written on other ceramics artists. It presented for the first time and in one document, Professor Ahuwan's works, dating from 1966 to 1999. It also presented a comprehensive narrative on Professor Ahuwan's development as a ceramic artist. The research went beyond achieving its objectives to reveal at least one practice, which was prevalent in the art school of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria but which was unexplainably discontinued. This was the practice of engaging, on a short term basis, a traditional artist, like Mallam Idi, to teach traditional methods of art creation to staff and students. His traditional methods of pottery were documented. Mallam Idi died in 2009. It could be partly why Professor Ahuwan did not return to his studio at Hunkuyi

for a long time. At the time of concluding this research however, Professor Ahuwan had obtained another studio space from Mallam Lawal, the son to the *Sarkin Magina,* at the same Hunkuyi and he had begun to produce works again.

5.4 **Recommendations**

This study has not only revealed information on the works of Professor Ahuwan but also his potential to inspire any industrious student to create job opportunities in Ceramics. Similar studies like this are, therefore, recommended in other areas of Industrial Design because they may reveal more opportunities.

The study also revealed how the engagement of a traditional potter to demonstrate his skills to staff and students at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria became beneficial in terms of developing new methods and forms in Ceramics. It is recommended that this practice be restored to regenerate the vibrancy of Ceramics in the University and by extension, in the country.

Several notable ceramic artists have graduated from the Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. It should be possible for any researcher interested in investigating issues, related to their works, to locate at least one of the works of each graduate in the department. It is recommended that a space be created and at least a representative work of each graduate be reserved and kept in this space by the department.

5.5 **Contribution to Knowledge**

This research documents, for the first time, a comprehensive account of Professor Ahuwan's contribution to the development of Ceramics in Nigeria and the United States of America.

The study established that contrary to the reliance on producing utilitarian wares, a ceramic artist could flourish by solely producing non-utilitarian ceramic wares.

The research established that traditionally fired wares could be as aesthetically pleasing to behold as glazed wares.

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