



Gender and Craft Production among the Ron and Mwaghavul of Plateau State in North-Central Nigeria: An Archaeo-historical Investigation

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Abstract	Original Research Article
Craft production is central aspect of the socio-economic and cultural life of many African societies, and on the Jos-Plateau it remains vital to identity, livelihood, and social organization. The paper examines the relationship between gender and craft production among the Ron and Mwaghavul ethnic groups of Jos-Plateau, North-Central Nigeria. Using a gender-as-social-construction framework, the study investigates how gender roles structure the division of labour, transmission of skills, access to resources, and social value attached to different crafts. Drawing from ethnographic literature, oral tradition, and secondary archaeological data, the paper identifies the major crafts associated with each group, including pottery, weaving, basketry, iron smelting, blacksmithing and wood carving. It argues that craft production among the Ron and Mwaghavul is deeply gendered with women historically dominating domestic crafts such as pottery and weaving that sustain household economies and ritual life, while men dominates crafts tied to iron production, wood carving, and external trade. The findings show that gender is not only in a principle of labour division but also a key lens to understanding other influences among the Ron and Mwaghavul. The paper further highlights the need to recognize women's and men's distinct complementary roles in sustaining material culture among the two ethnic groups. Keywords: Gender, crafts production, Ron, Mwaghavul, Jos-Plateau, Division of labour, North-Central Nigeria.	
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Introduction

Craft production has long been an important part of social and economic life in many African societies, serving not only as a means of sustenance but also as a vehicle for cultural expression, identity formation, and social organization. In pre-colonial and contemporary contexts, the division of labour by gender has shaped who makes what, how skills are

transmitted and how material culture otherwise known as craft materials are distributed within and beyond the communities. On the Jos-Plateau of North-Central Nigeria, craft production remains deeply embedded in the daily lives of local groups, reflecting ecological adaptation, historical interaction, and evolving gender relations.

The Ron and Mwaghavul (who are at the centre of



this research) occupy the central and eastern part of the Jos-Plateau and share a long history of trade and material culture, yet they maintain unique traditions of craft specialization. Among the Ron and Mwaghavul, crafts such as pottery, weaving, potash making, basketry, wood work iron smelting and blacksmithing are not gender-neutral activities. Rather, they are organized around culturally defined roles that assign particular crafts to men, women and both, and that link craft practice to age, marital status, and ritual authority.

This study is important because first and foremost, it will help us understand how labour is divided and valued within Ron and Mwaghavul societies. Secondly, it illuminates how craft objects encode social meanings related to femininity, masculinity, marriage, and community, and how contact with the western world have transformed traditional craft economies, and with them, gendered patterns of production.

Drawing on ethnographic literature, oral traditions, and archaeological parallels from the Jos-Plateau area, the paper argues that among the Ron and Mwaghavul, craft production is a gendered domain through which social identity is performed and reproduced. While men are historically dominated crafts tied to iron production, wood work, and engaged in long distance trade, women have controlled domestic crafts like pottery, potash making, basketry and weaving to sustain household economies and other needs. Changes that came with western civilization are, however, reshaping these boundaries thereby creating new opportunities and tensions around who can produce, sell, and control craft knowledge.

The paper is structured as follows: it provides the background of the Ron and Mwaghavul including their location and history. It then discusses their major craft tradition and their gendered affiliations. Finally, it analyzes contemporary changes as well as conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual understanding

Gender

Gender has to do with controversy surrounding

biological and social status indicator (Joyce, 2002). Other arguments goes that it cannot be said to be the same throughout but gendered status however, were invariable by time and place. Gender status is generally influenced by culture change. Whatever roles were attached to women in the society does not affect the social, symbolic and potential meaning of their contribution. As Joyce (2002) points out, “the role of complementarity, that is, that men and women played separate, but equally important roles in the function of a society”. Therefore, the argument that the division of labour between sexes is products of biological difference between men and women because of their differences in strength as suggested by scholars like Lee and Devore (1968), Tanner (1988) and Zihlman (1981) has been contradicted by Muddock and Provost (1979) and (Gilchrist, 1999). They earlier scholars perceived sex and gender as biological and cultural categories respectively. Contrary to this argument, the two biological categories “male” and “female” have been identified to be in part a social construction (Connel, 2002; Cranny-Francis et al, 2003) based on the society’s perception of who is a male and female. Based on this, Connel (2002) defined gender as “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social process. Gender categories are therefore, associated with particular expectations and roles within societies. Simply put, gender is defined on the basis of cultural attributes such as one’s name, dress, social activities among others.

Such gender biases and inequalities come from the sex-role identity used by human beings to emphasize the distinction between males and females (Idoko and Lawal, 2018). Practices which are underlined with gender bias on the basis of sex-role identity are aimed at marginalization of women socially and otherwise. This perception places women as unequal to the men thereby put them as weaker sex that does have the ability to carry out difficult task like their men counterparts.

Gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed roles, behaviours, expectations, and identities attributed to males and females within a given society. Unlike sex, which is biological,

gender is learned and performed. It determines who does what work, who controls resources, and how people are valued in a society. Gender is therefore not just about “men” and “women” as categories, but about how these categories organize labour, knowledge and access to craft technologies.

Crafts

Crafts are often used together with the term Arts because the two depicts identity as well as represents the people’s values (Onyejebu, 2026). Crafts were the basis of pre-colonial economy of most societies in Nigeria. Hence, each ethnic group in Nigeria is often associated with one form of crafts or the other (Oyejebu, 2006). Hand crafts are usually carried out by people at their leisure times especially during the dry season when they are less busy with their farm works. They provide some financial benefits that complement farm products (Gubam, 2021) as well as contribute to national development (Thomas and Luckman, 2018).

Crafts can be pursued out of passion but most people deliberately enrolled themselves as apprentices to learn the job. In most cases, they are family businesses that are passed down within the family from one generation to the other. As pointed out by Onyejebu (2026), “Craftwork can thrive when it is part of a family or community business, passed down through generation. It can also begin as a hobby, sparked by personal interest”. It involves expression of exceptional talent and skills of the individual. The knowledge of some crafts are exclusive preserve of a family, and the knowledge of such crafts are passionately protected through various degree of secrecy, guild membership, initiations and training that are received right from childhood. Among the Ron and Mwaghavul people, both children men and women are engaged in different forms of crafts mostly at leisure hours although in recent times crafts have become full time businesses.

Background on the Ron and Mwaghavul

The Mwaghavul and Ron people are found in Mangu and Bokkos Local Government Areas respectively. They were previously in the same Local Government

until in 1991 when Bokkos Local Government Area was created out of Mangu L.G.A. While the Mwaghavul people occupy Mangu Local Government Area along with the Pyem the Ron occupy Bokkos along with the Mushere and Kulere. Mwaghavul people occupy the northern, eastern and southern part of Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State. Mwaghavulland is situated between longitude $8^{\circ} 30'N$ and $10^{\circ} 10'N$ and latitude $8^{\circ} 30'E$ and $10^{\circ} 00'$. It is bounded to the west by the Ron and Mushere, to the East by the Pyem and Ngas, to the North by the Berom and to the south by the Mupun and Pan. The geography of Mwaghavul land is characterized by granite hills with mostly with flat tops that provided shelter and protection to the people in ancient times against their enemies (Gubam, 2021). Granite hills and few volcanic mountains are dominant in the Southern part of the land. The northern part is however characterized by plain with a few isolated hills (inselbergs). Ronland is found about 80 kilometres South-West of Jos (Mangut and Mangut, 2006; Mangut, 2012). It is situated to the South-Eastern and South-Western parts of Bokkos Local Government Area. The area lies between longitudes $8^{\circ}35'$ and $9^{\circ}00'E$ and latitudes $9^{\circ} 00''$ and $9^{\circ}30'' N$. Ron land is bounded to the north-west by the Manguna Mountains, which stretch southwards, forming the south and south-west escarpments of the Jos Plateau (Mangut, 2006). The area is characterized by massive volcanic activities of the late geological period, which resulted to a number of small cones and a number of isolated hills with pointed top and a few flat topped hills that accommodate and protected the people in ancient times (Morrison, 1976). The plains are interrupted by dotted hills with either pointed or flat tops. Although Ron people claim the same origin and are under the same chieftdom with the Kulere, they have some peculiarities that separates them. While the Ron occupy the plains the Kulere are found in the escarpment although the two groups maintain close relationship. However, it was the colonial masters that brought the two groups together as a single administration referred to as Ronkulere (Mangut, 2006).

The Mwaghavul and Ron claimed migration from the Lake Chad area hence, the similarities in some

aspects of their cultural materials. According to oral tradition, they separated when they arrive the Jos-Plateau area. Traditional crafts were however developed after the early man has started to lead a settled lifestyle and started to think about how to utilize his leisure time positively (Owolabi, 1972; Mangvwat, 1984; Nengel; 2015).

Craft materials form important articles of trade both within and outside their immediate communities. Environmental distinction provided opportunity for people to specialize in the production of different crafts based on the availability of the raw materials. Similar articles were produced from distinct raw materials as provided by the environment. For instance baskets were produced from rafia leaves in the southern part of Ron-Kulere land while same similar articles were produced from some species of grasses in northern and eastern Ron land and Mwaghavul land. Raw materials for the production of some of these articles were imported from distant places when necessary (Gubam, 2014). Points of production were either at home or near homestead or far away from home by individuals or groups. Simple crafts like weaving was carried out at home while complex crafts like pottery, iron smelting and black smiting were done near the homestead. Crafts in Ron

land and Mwaghavul land supplemented agriculture; hence they were/are carried out during the dry season when the people were less busy with their farm activities. These products were articles of short and long distance trade as well as serving domestic needs. Since no society was/is independent other goods were collected in exchange for these craft products. As a result, crafts contributed so much in promoting inter-group relations among pre-colonial Nigerian societies. The Ron and the Mwaghavul, crafts were produced using locally sourced and sometimes imported materials as the case may be. Some of these crafts involve rituals and sacrifices to their ancestors for fruitful production (Gubam, 2014). Among the crafts were potash making, local brewing, weaving, pottery, wood carving, iron smelting and black smiting. Crafts production was usually carried out during the dry season when people were less busy with farm work. Income from such activities was to supplement farm products. Most of these crafts were done by individuals at home or at the production centres except for craft works that were labour demanding and requires a lot of labour such as iron smelting and blacksmithing. For the purpose of this paper, the most popular crafts among the Ron and Mwaghavul will be discussed.



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria Showing the Geographical Location of Ron and Mwaghavul

Potash making

Local potash is an ingredient used for preparing local soup. It is also medicinal as it can be useful in curing stomachache because of its acidic nature and the ability to quickly soften food that might cause problem to an individual in the stomach. It served as substitute for salt in ancient time (Dazyam, 2005). It was predominantly a women's craft. Potash was produced from the stalk of a local crop called accah. (fonio). Accah stalk was gathered and burnt and the ashes was collected in a bag and taken to the production site by the woman. Pounding hollows were chosen and a clay pot preferably a big one was carefully place on it. The pot was carefully broken at the bottom such that it will allow for water to come

down into the rock hollows. Corn stalks or sticks were placed at the neck of the pot and dried grasses place on it. Ashes was collected from the container with calabash and placed on the dried grass and water pour on it on intervals. The water will percolate through the dried grass to the pounding hole. This process was done and monitored for about one and a half week after which the water was transferred to another pounding hollow and allowed to be there for some days so that the water content will be evaporated. When it becomes brown it was then collected in a bucket and taken to another place where it was boiled until the water evaporated. What is left in the pot is the potash. It was usually done on rock outcrops close to the home.

Weaving

Another popular craft of the Ron and Mwaghavul people was/is weaving and it was predominantly a female craft. Although most of the woven materials have been abandoned by the people, the production of a few of them persist but in small scale. Among the weaving industries in the area was weaving of local sack called Chi'ip (in Mwaghavul language) and kashining (in Ron language). Chi'ip/kashining was made from jute fibre procured from the farm and suck inside water in streams/ponds for some day. It was then taken out from the stream/ponds and the impurities removed. It was then twisted into fine twisted fibre ropes which were for making chi'ip/kashining. The manufacturing process of this material was very slow as it required a lot of attention and patience. Although local sacks have since been replaced by modern sacks, information about its manufacturing processes is still fresh among the elderly people - both men and women in the ethnic groups. The first step is the cutting down of the jute. The cutting down of the jute to produce fibre was done by women. According to Nafet (pers.com.2009), the jute was allowed to dry after which it was soaked in the river for a period of one and a half or two months when the fibre (Pisya in Mwaghavul language) was removed. The fibre was then taken home and twisted by both men or women. The twisted fibre were woven into chip by women and a few men. According to Ande (pers. Comm. 2009), Chi'ip was of standard size and was used to measure mainly grains like accha, millet and in some cases beni seed. The same processes are involved in weaving local hand bag called shang (in Mwaghavul language) and bwolong (in Ron language).

Another craft involving weaving is Shillip local rain

coat called (shillip in Mwaghavul language and hala'ah in Ron language) and it was predominantly a women affair. The material used for manufacturing Shillip/hala'ah is spear grass. It was used by both men and women to cover their body against rain (Benas, pers.comm.2008). Making of Shillip/hala'ah was also a slow process that required a lot of patience from the weavers. The spear grass required for weaving shillip/hala'ah was procured from the bush. It was collected and dried. Using jute fibre the spear grass was carefully knitted together. Basket was another craft that was common among the two ethnic groups. It was also women's craft. It was woven from a local material called Kam-lang (in Mwaghavul language) mostly procured around river banks (Nabot, Pers.com. 2011). Basket (called zhig'hi in Mwaghavul language and *chet* in Ron language) was also standardized and was used to measure tubers like coco yam, Nvu'u (rizga) and sweet potato (Ryemshi, pers. Comm. 2008). The difference is that while the Mwaghavul used some straw stalks to make baskets the Ron made it from bamboo. Secondly in the former it was a women's craft while in the later it was predominantly a men's affair. Each of these groups therefore utilized convenient materials that can be found in their environment.

Beer strainer called *njak* (in Mwaghavul language) and winnowing tray called *sighi* (in Mwaghavul language) were also important crafts practiced by these ethnic groups. Beer strainer was made from corn stalk in Mwaghavul land and bamboo in Ronland based on their geographical differences. They were mostly practiced by women but in recent times men have taken over their production. Other weaving crafts include mat, rope and beds (for women).



Local umbrella and local handbag

Pottery

Pottery refers to object made from clay and hardened by fire (Ndera,2006:112). Pottery according to Balme and Paterson (2004:237) are also containers for the preparation, consumption and storage of food and liquid, or for the storage of non-consumable objects or materials. They are treated in such a way that the final product is durable and retain its shape when exposed to water. One cannot say with any degree of certainty when pottery production started in the area but from the presence of large quantity of potsherds found on the surface of the site and oral information collected, it is clear that the Ron and Mwaghavul ethnic groups had a long history of pottery tradition.

Pottery making in these areas is exclusively carried out by women. Women no longer passed on the technique directly to their daughters, rather potters learn the art by watching any one in their area. This was done during the dry season which they considered “resting” period. According to Benas

(pers. comm. 2008), no Ron or Mwaghavul woman is a full time potter. Pottery production was carried out usually on convenient rock outcrops outside the compound. Towards the 20th century men within the two ethnic groups have developed interest and became potters. Such men did so because of the financial benefit. The major tools the Ron and Mwaghavul women potters are clay, a container for soaking of the clay (it used to be carved wooden bowl but now they use basin or any open container), a mortar and a pestle for pounding of clay lumps into the required texture, a sieve for sieving the pounded clay into smooth powder. Here the women used either a wooden container or a rock hollow in mixing the clay. The clay used for pottery making is mined around different river beds. Women potters were assisted in the process by their friends, well-wishers, their female children and in some cases, their male children (who only help them in fetching water). Age does not pose any problem in practicing the art as both young and older women participates in pottery making among the Ron and the Mwaghavul. Here,

an oval shape material cut from calabash or the seeds obtained from a shrub called *chi'it* (in Mwaghavul language) and human hand (thumb and fingers) are used for making the desired shape of the vessel. The wares are then dried for about two to four days depending on the weather condition and on the size of the pot. Firing of the wares is the next step.. One woman can fire her wares, but in order to save time and labour a group of potters can gather their wares in one place for firing. The firing is done in a specially dugged ditch or an open place can be cleared for that purpose. According to Ande (pers. comm. 2009), Ron and Mwaghavul potters produced a variety of wares which were used for different purposes and were sold to consumers from within and outside. This was corroborated by ethnographic survey carried out in the area in 2009 by the researcher. Among the pots produced are; small pot for making soup and boiling herbs for medicine called *tulwa'* and another which is medium size used for cooking food called *tughul gurum* (in Mwaghavul language). Nfwi potters also produce *shiin* (in Mwaghavul language) which is the largest pot and it is used for brewing local beer called *mos* (in Mwaghavul language) and for storing water in the compound. The average diameter of this type of pot is between 18 and 30cm and the thickness is texture, used for cooking food called *tughul gurum* (in Mwaghavul language). Ron and Mwaghavul potters also produce big pot which is used for brewing local beer called *mos* (in Mwaghavul language) and for storing water in the compound.

The average diameter of this type of pot is between 18 and 30cm and the thickness is about 3centimeters. *Yir* (in Mwaghavul language) is another medium-sized vessel produced by the Mwaghavul and Ron potters. It is smaller than “*shiin*” and bigger than “*tulwa*”. Its mouth diameter is about 10cm to 16cm. It is specifically used for boiling water, storing and carrying gruel (called *kunu* in Hausa and *wa'ar* in Mwaghavul language) to farmlands. *Tughul am* (in

Mwaghavul language) is the vessel used for fetching water from the stream or river. It is a necked pot which is also commonly found among other ethnic groups on the Plateau (although performing different purposes). These type of pots have elongated globular, long neck with an averted rim. The length of the neck ranges from 30 to 90mm while the mouth diameter is 10-22cm. Others vessels include *tughul goghor* (in Mwaghavul language), a type of pot used for cooking cocoa yam and cooking jute seeds (*goghor* as ingredient for soup). It is a little bigger than the *tughul gwom* but has a similar shape. Its mouth diameter is between 8 and 15cm. *Tughul nzhirem* (in Mwaghavul language), perforated bowls were used for burying of umbilical cords. It has the same shape and size as the “*tulwa*”. Some of the vessels produced by the Nfwi potters are also used for religious purposes in the shrines especially for cooking food and meat and for fetching water to the shrines. They are called *tughul kum* (in Mwaghavul language) but they can still be the common types of pottery discussed above. It was observed during the research that the pots used for storage and for preparing of food are thicker than other pottery types found in the area. This implies that the potter's conceptualization of the function of vessels they produce is reflected in the thickness of the wares (Okpoko, 1987:451).

The usages of some of these wares have however since been abandoned with the availability of cheap iron or metal pots. Only those used for brewing local beer called *mos* (in Mwaghavul language) or *burkutu* (in Hausa language) storage of water and preparing soup are currently used by the people. The availability of cheap iron or metal utensils could be responsible for the disappearance of most clay pots. The production of locally made pots are only made based on demands by local consumers, traditional worshipers (for use in the shrine) and researchers (whose desire is to keep them for future reference)



Clay pots for cooking cocoyam, fetching water and cooking soup

Iron production (Smelting and blacksmithing)

Oral history and iron smelting evidence like iron slag, fragments of furnaces, fragment of tuyeres, pounding hollows and stone hammers suggest that iron smelting was an important craft work of the Ron and the Mwaghavul people in the past. In Ronland the craft was restricted only to a few places particularly Sha, Bargesh, Manguna and Mangar (Mangut and Mangut, 2006) while in Mwaghavulland it was a popular craft in almost all villages. Iron smelting was exclusively a men affair. Women were forbidden from both participating in this the smelting process as well as visiting the smelting site. Hence, one can be right to say that the traditions of these two ethnic groups like those of other ethnic groups in Nigeria either consciously or unconsciously excluded women from participating in this craft. Iron smelting was often accompanied by rituals from the procurement of the ore, smelting the ore to blacksmithing. The taboos associated with iron smelting among these ethnic groups was crucial in

scaring women away from practising the craft as well as visiting the smelting area. It is a belief among the Ron and Mwaghavul that allowing women to visit the smelting site during menstruation could lead to poor outing. Men that slept with women the previous night were not allowed to participate in the smelting activities because it can also lead to poor yield. While iron smelting was done some distance away from the home to avoid the sight of women blacksmithing was carried out in the settlement area. Although this craft is said to be an exclusive preserve of the men, women at different stages also participated either directly or indirectly. For instance, it was women that transported the iron ore from the mining areas to the smelting site. Women also transported charcoal (which served as fuel for the smelting) to the smelting site. Some women also participated in pounding the bloom as well and even sponsoring iron smelting when the need arose. The bloom and slag were removed through an opening at the top of the furnace. Some scholars have however argued that

restriction against women are deliberate effort to curtail their access to economic power thereby subjecting them to total control by men.

The bloom obtained as a result of a smelt is not workable iron. It is a mass of iron crystals mixed up with pieces of charcoals and other impurities not removed in the slag. To obtain use able iron from the bloom, it has to be broken up and pounded thoroughly to reduce the charcoal and slag to a fine dust, which can then be winnowed away leaving the granules of iron. Among the Ron and the Mwaghavul it was done by means of a stone pounder on rock outcrops which resulted in deep circular depressions. Iron smelting among the two ethnic group demonstrates the level technological of achievement of the ancient societies on the Plateau people. The craft of iron smelting here persisted into the mid twentieth century.

Iron bloom was taken to the blacksmith who then transformed them into objects like hoes, spears, arrows, knives, axes, bangles and bracelets, among other things. The materials made from locally smelted iron were usually heavy and crude. Some of these materials served both utilitarian and ceremonial purposes. For instance, the short handled hoes served as bride price or bride wealth among these ethnic groups prior to the arrival of the colonial masters who introduced modern currency. It served as burial object particularly with the death of a chief priest. More so, short handled hoe also served as currency and a means of measuring wealth by the Ron and Mwaghavul. Iron bracelets were used to make marriage proposal to a new bride and also wore for decoration by both men and women. young and old. Iron materials were treated as precious or special because of the scarce nature of iron ore as well as the high labour requirement. Iron material were therefore highly demanded. It was the major export goods of the Ron and the Mwaghavul. The industry however began to decline when colonial masters began to import iron bars and motor crabs from Europe. The imported iron was cheaper to buy and easier to work than the locally smelted iron. Locally smelted iron was however, valuable than the imported ones (Chirekure, 2015). To further destroy the industries, the British also made some laws forbidding the local people on the Jos Plateau from

indiscriminate cutting down of trees.

Iron smelting involves the prospecting, procurement as well as the processing of the ore to obtain iron. Until the ore is collected, transported to smelting sites, smelted, impurities removed from the bloom and the iron finally worked the iron worked into implements by the blacksmiths the smelting process was not complete. Iron ore was usually obtained from distant places away from the smelting sites.

Black smiting was one of the crafts practiced by the Mwaghavul and Ron people. It was an exclusive preserve of men. Iron smelting and Black smiting are related crafts. The black smiths worked on the bloom of the smelters to ensure that all impurities are removed before it was iron objects are finally fashioned out of the bloom. From the bloom, the black smiths fashion out implements like hoes, arrow heads, spear, bangles, musical instrument, and materials for decoration such as rings. Some of these implements were exchanged for other goods produced by neighboring communities (from both far and near). According to Dikam Dutse (pers.comm.2009) Payments were also made in cash or kind and grains or livestock can be collected from the desperate household. The ability of a person to acquire these skills gives him a lot of privileges in the both the Ron and Mwaghavul societies. The presence of large stone anvils and hammers at the industrial sites at some abandoned settlements visited is an indication of the antiquity of the craft among the Ron and the Mwaghavul people. Black smiting has an old tradition among the Ron and Mwaghavul people. The bloom produced by the smelters was passed onto the smiths who again refined it before transforming it into tools like hoes, cutlass, knives, swords, spear, arrow heads, ceremonial objects like *Ndol* (in Mwaghavul language) and *Kim bang* (in Mwaghavul language) which are both domestic, musical and ritual objects by blacksmith called *Ngu klohm* (in Mwaghavul language). The blacksmiths worked during the dry season when the people were less busy with their farm work. Black smiting was not considered by the people as a sole profession but it only supplements agriculture which is their main activities. The blacksmiths become busier as the rainy season sets in because most of these manufactures were

agricultural tools. The blacksmiths also produce farm implements on request by households whose farming implement needed repairs or complete replacement with new ones. Influences such as marriage and kinship relationship of the customer to the blacksmith could lead to a discount.

Local brewing was also a women's affair while leather works was a men's craft. Leather performed a variety of functions like skins used by iron smelters and blacksmiths for to cover the mouth of bellow pumping air into the furnace, for making ordinary and ritual drums, backpack known as *bwon* (in Ron) and *shim bon* (in Mwaghavul) and women to back children (*shim lughut la* in Mwaghavul), used as tied round waist by men for dancing (*nar* in Mwaghavul), men's and women's bag (*kuluk* in Mwaghavul) among others. The skin used for leather by these ethnic groups was made from the hide of a young goat or sheep. The animal was carefully skinned, the skin was dried and treated with palm oil over a period of one and a half weeks or more until it became soft before sewn as *bwon/shim bon*, *shim lughut la*, *nar* or *kuluk*. In recent times the brewing of local beer called *Lighitand Mos* by the Ron and Mwaghavul has been commercialized as it is being produced in large quantities for sale both in the rural areas and major towns of Bokkos and Mangu. From the proceeds women have been able to sponsor their children at different levels of education, build houses and the likes. Local brewing have therefore improve the economy of the two areas. Local beer was/is also brewed by women on special occasions or ceremonies and rituals. It is an important item used by the two groups for carrying out libation which is a sign of respect shown the ancestors by the people.

Wood carving

This was another thriving craft among the Ron and Mwaghavul people. It was a predominantly men's craft. Wood was obtained from carefully selected trees especially acacia and *atili* trees. Wood carvers made pestle and mortar, bed (for men), musical and ritual drums, spoon, gourd, calabash among others. The material used for their production is wood obtained from local trees selected within the communities. Hard wood was the most preferred.

The craftsmen cut the log into the required size of the the material that he intends to produce like mortar, pestles, sleeping bed, hoe handles, drum and so many others. Though wood have become so scarce in the area in recent time as a result of the massive deforestation wood carvers have resorted to importing their raw materials from the lowland part of Mushere, Kulereland, Bauchi area and Jipal and Chakfem. The carvers disposed their products in local markets with Bokkos and Mangu but sometimes the materials are sold at the neighbouring markets. In most cases, would-be buyers do contact the carvers at home to purchase their products.

The situation has however changed over the years as a result of globalization which has brought the Ron and Mwaghavul people into contact with the western world thereby exposing them to western lifestyle. As a result of this, the consumption of locally manufactured good including craft products have been drastically reduced which has affected their production as well. The production and consumption of iron and plastic materials have taken over that of the craft products. This can be attributed to the high production requirement of the local crafts considering the labour, time, sourcing of raw materials and the time. Some of these crafts like iron smelting were destroyed through colonial policies to pave ways for the consumption of imported scrap iron. Coupled with some local unfavourable conditions iron smelting was destroyed in Ron and Mwaghavul land. Though some of them have continued to thrive in local communities in Ron and Mwaghavul land they are merely purchased as souvenirs by local tourists except for those materials without alternatives like blacksmithing products. There are cases where their production can only be commissioned by researchers as means of replicating their production process. If resuscitated these crafts can provide employment opportunities to a lot of youths, bring development to the rural areas as well as enhanced the economic status of the inhabitants of rural areas.

Conclusion

Craft production among the Ron and Mwaghavul people demonstrates that gender is not a fixed

biological category, but a social framework through which labour, skill and identity are organized. The study has shown that women and men play significant but distinct roles in the production of material culture especially from pottery, weaving, calabash predominantly women crafts and blacksmithing, iron smelting, wood work and leather traditionally associated with men. These divisions are not rigid, however, as economic necessity, emergence of new knowledge and changing market demands have created spaces for flexibility and collaboration across gender lines. The findings further reveal that craft production is more than an economic activity. It is a means of cultural transmission, social status and community cohesion. Among the Ron and Mwaghavul, skills are often passed down within families and kinship groups, and the mastery of the craft confers respect and authority irrespective of gender. The study discovers that women's crafts such as pottery and weaving sustain household economies and ritual life, while men's dominated crafts like blacksmithing and wood work are tied to agriculture and political symbols. However, both contribute to the reproduction of cultural identity as well as material wellbeing of the community.

Modernization have reshaped the entire process as younger generation of Ron and Mwaghavul population are less bound by strict gender roles, as both sexes are now engaging in crafts previously considered exclusive preserve of the other sex. This situation suggests that while tradition continues to influence craft production, it is constantly being negotiated in response to present realities. The Ron and Mwaghavul experience therefore confirms that craft is both a reflection of gender relations and a site where those relations are continuously made and remade.

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