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RESEARCH ARTICLE

MBURR (GRINDING STONE) AMONG BURA-PABIR OF NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Grinding is one of the most important conversion processes of grain into flour to make mush, among the Bura-Pabir ethnic tribes of Northeastern Nigeria. This research, therefore, aims to explore the construction of Mburr (Grinding stone) in a pictorial view. The research approach comprised of data collected through photograph and interview. Hence the architecture in the construction of Mburr and their function has mostly been inferred on the basis of grindstone morphology. One of the problems has been that the grinding stones are facing extinction among Bura-Pabir ethnic tribes, the compliance of the modern grinding machine constitute a major factor. There is a need to preserve culture.

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Introduction:-

The Bura-Pabir tribal groups are found on a Hilly area roughly between longitude 12° and 13° degrees east and latitude 10° and 11° degrees North. It is the North East flanked of the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, west of Mandara mountain. In the South and Eastern it is bordered by river Hawul, in the North by the Borno plain and in the west by the Gombe-Maiduguri rail line. The land is referred to as the Biu Plateau with an average height of 2500 ft above sea level. The Hills are made of a number of volcanic cones which rise above the plain. Sandstone or coarse-grained basalt or quartzite, rocks are found all over the plains.

Mburr (Grinding-stone) in Bura-Pabir tribe are tools long-established technological tradition embedded in their culture. In West African cultures, these implements come in a variety of forms and shape differing in functional and symbolic importance. This paper presents data from observations, construction, and method of grinding processing techniques in a pictorial.

1.1 Literature Review

The presence of grinding-stones has been used as proxy evidence for the exploitation of ground cereal grains and the subsequent development of food production in Africa, Willcox and Stordeur (2012). Standardised descriptive and classificatory reports are essential to the study of grinding-stone tools and to understand the links between morphology, manufacture and function, Rowan and Ebeling (2008). Studies of grinding-stone tools that examine their use as aspects of performative and social participation in human relations as “technology produce modern things” Dobres (2000). The best food to the Bura-Pabir is guinea-corn, from which is made mush with Mburr, which is eaten morning evening. This mush, porridge or “Deva” is made from ground guinea corn cooked in water Davies (1956). Grinding stones are slabs of stone that Aboriginal people used to grind and crush different materials. Bulbs, berries, seeds, insects and many other things were ground between a large lower stone and a smaller upper stone. Aboriginal (2008) Grinding technology emerged in the Late Pleistocene across the globe, and the specific tasks

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associated with these implements varied considerably through time and space Piperno et al., (2000), Fullagar (2006), Fullagar et al (2014), Liu et al (2013). Stones can be found in most environmental zones, they are ubiquitous across the arid and semi-arid regions. Numerous shapes and forms have been described.

Method:-

The architecture in design and construction of Mburr (grinding- stone) is mostly carried out by both aged and middle age women. They carefully select a type of rocks found on hills and valleys of the plateau, in a curve or oval shape called Chikwa. Mburr (Grinding stones) are usually made from abrasive rocks such as sandstone or coarse-grained basalt or quartzite. Stones range in size, from very small (150 millimeters across) to very large (700 millimeters across). They can weigh several kilograms. The Chikwa (stone) is scraped in the middle to give a perfect curve shape shown on the figure 1.2.i, the smaller upper stones Hanku (or pestles) can be flat; or rounded. They may have more than one smooth surface and are usually small enough to hold in one hand fig 1.2.ii.



Fig 1.2.i. Chikwa (curve stone) source: author



fig 1.2.ii. Hanku is the pedal that is used in grinding



Fig 1.2.iii. A Ndokura (a small pot made up of clay)



fig1.2. iv. Shimtu Humba (for shifting ground guinea corn)

1.3 The Architecture

Mburr (Grinding-stone) tools that have been obtained from Stone Age gradually improvise technique in the technology and architecture of the Bura-Pabir people. Mburr is an object that is bridging the gap between past and present in communities that make use of the Mburr. The movement, experience, and skill of those who shaped and maintained the tools in the past go on to influence the bodily postures and stances of contemporary grinding-stone users in Bura-Pabir communities as they incorporate Mburr (grinding-stones) into modern by combining the Ndokura, and Chikwa mound together with a stand. Initially the tools are separated. Hanku is used for the grinding as shown on the fig 1.3.v.



Fig1.3:-v. woman practicing grinding technique with Mburr.
Source: author

1.4 Construction

The materials required include Mataha (soft grass), Imi (water), Chikwa (stone selected), Mobu (clay), Nduraku (pots), Shimtu humba (broom for shifting ground grains) and Hanku (grinding stone).

1.4.1 Process:

the Mobu (clay) is carefully selected, cleared of debris and soaked in water allowed to be fermented. Mataha (soft grass) now pounds in a mortar to make thinner and shorter as shown in the fig1.4.v and 1.4.vi.:



Fig 1.4:-v.Mataha (soft grass)



Fig 1.4:-vi.Mataha (soft grass) pounded.

The pound Mataha (soft selected grass) is mixed with Mobu (clay) and Imi (water) to make the paste more sticker and stronger as shown in fig 1.4.vii and fig 1.4.viii.



Fig 1.4:-vii. Mobu (clay paster mixture)



fig1.4:-viii. Mobu (clay paster ready to be used)



Fig1.4:-ix Making of Mbur. Source: author

The construction may take 7-8 days as in every stage the setting is allowed to dry to add more texture to it as shown in fig 1.4.ix and



fig 1.4:-x construction stage. Source: Author



Fig 1.4:-xi complete construction of Mbur

At this stage the construction is complete, the women are testing the performers of the grinding tools fig.1.4.xii and fig1.4.xiii.



Fig 1.4:-xii. Mbur on a test. source: Author



Fig 1.4:-xiii. Grinding of grain on Mburrr. Source: author

Research shows that mushed food or porridge prepared by ground grains with Mburrr taste better and different.

Conclusion:-

Grinding practices in Bura-Pabir settlement have remained stable over the years. Factors such as transformations, technological advisement, and adoption of other tribe cultures have not changed the livelihoods and grinding technology. Despite this, the people of Bura-Pabir sustain their cultural practices. Grinding is a practice with a certain “cultural resilience” Davies and Moore (2016).

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