

Title: Knowledge, Technology and Use: Reflections on the Indigenous Pottery Industry in Western Kenya

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Abstract

To help fill the lacuna that exists in African history and History of Technology in Africa as a sub-discipline, the question of what science and technology means for Africa has already been asked. However, it is not easy to conclusively locate meaning of what is technological within a dynamic and diverse socio-cultural space that is the African continent. The techno-political nature of things makes it even more challenging to adopt a universalist understanding of *things, knowledge of and about things* and their *use* for everyday living. The teaching of history of technology in Africa and production of knowledge about Africa therefore calls for a multi-pronged approach. This should center not only on meaning, effect and use but also acknowledge the socio-cultural and environmental specificity of people and their interaction with *things* for everyday life. *Knowledge, Technology and Use* is people specific. Relying on oral interviews, memory, archival research and observation, this paper will offer an overview of the pottery industry in Western Kenya with the aim of contributing to the efforts of mainstreaming STS in Africa through research and teaching in higher institutions of learning. Africa has to archive its own experiences with technology towards the overall production of Global histories of technology. It concludes that pottery was key to people of Western Kenya for their food making and general food culture. The technical knowledge that manifested through texture, size, shape and use of clay pots portrays the balance between environment, transhumanity and usage in a utilitarian sense.

Key words: Pottery, Knowledge, Technology, Use and Western Kenya