

MOVIMA POTTERY

Robert JUDY
Instituto Lingüístico de Verano

The Movima Indians live in the region of Santa Ana in the Department of Beni, Bolivia. Linguistically they are not yet identified as related to any of the surrounding tribes.

They are known in the region for making good pottery. That the pottery is of a good quality may be due to the sponge temper used. This kind of temper is not widely used; it was mentioned by Linné (1925). Later (1957) he described it as a "technical secret" and cited Krause's observation of it among the Carajá Indians of Brazil, and Nordenskiöld's finding it in the Mojo area of Bolivia where the Movimas live.

Of the approximately seventy-five families around Santa Ana, about ten women are known as potters *payakarimpa* ⁽¹⁾. One of them makes pottery the year around as her only means of income. Many of them make pottery for others in exchange for gathering the raw materials. Still others gather their own materials and sell or trade their pottery. The prices range from about fifty cents (U. S. currency) for a small flask-like jar *lotoba* to about fifteen dollars for the large toasting pan *wereicyo*.

The types of pottery are:

1. Jar-like vessel *lotoba* for carrying and storing water. While usually plain, a cover may be made in the shape of an animal, for example, an anteater.
2. Deep bowl *cyapaye* for storing and mixing both dry and liquid food.

(1) For explanation of the phonemes see Roberto Judy y Judit Emerich de Judy. "Fonemas del Movima: con atención especial a la serie glotal", *Notas Lingüísticas de Bolivia* N° 5. Cochabamba, Bolivia: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano en colaboración con el Ministerio de Asuntos Campesinos y el Ministerio de Educación y Bellas Artes (1962), pp. 36. For further vocabulary and ethnographic illustrations see Roberto Judy y Judit Emerich de Judy. "Movima y Castellano", *Vocabularios Bolivianos* N° 1. Cochabamba, Bolivia: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano en colaboración con el Ministerio de Asuntos Campesinos y el Ministerio de Educación y Bellas Artes (1962), pp. 154. *Orthographic changes made by editor*: *cy* = palatal; *L* = voiceless; *v* = bilabial fricative; *mm?* and *nn?* = nasal + glottal stop + nasal.

3. Toasting pan or tub *wereicyo*. The large size measuring more than a meter across the bottom is used only for toasting "chivé" *mo?incyo*, a fermented manioc flour.
4. Deep pot *wusu* for boiling and cooking.
5. Small lamp *lamparina* which burns animal fat.

The clay *so?la* is black in color, usually found under another layer of earth near the river and sometimes covered with water during the rainy season. The Movima say it is the only earth free of sand that they know of; it is identified by its shiny surface when cut with a knife. The clay is gathered during the dry season when it is crumbly and gray in color. The Yacuma (*Yacoma*) river bank near Santa Ana is the best source of the clay for the entire Movima region.

The temper used is a variety of fresh water sponge. The large, white kind *cyayaL* is found on the bottom of the Yacuma River. The women gather it during the lowest water level, August or September. They hang on the side of a canoe feeling for the sponge with their feet and then swim under to bring it up. The sponges are dried along the river bank, then stacked up and burned to ashes. Another variety *bakwammo* forms at the high-water mark on trees. It is smaller and black and breaks off easily when dry. We are told that about ten years ago there was no sponge to be found near Santa Ana and it was brought from up river by ox-cart. The Spanish name "bosta de pez" implies that it is believed that this material is fish dung.

The color of Movima pottery may be red *rapal* or black *runni*. The red paint is made by grinding small, red-iron gravel *cyampapandi* and mixing it with water *tomi*. The gravel is found in rare patches on the surface of the ground in the region. The black color for post-firing treatment is made from the leaves of the sweet potato plant *halala?a*.

Tools for pottery making are simple: a small piece of gourd *do?la* for working the soft clay; a knife *kacyira* for cutting the edges; a small, smooth stone *cyampa di? riLayewamba*, and corn husk *bovibkwa* for smoothing the hardened clay. A clay mold *molde* is used to shape the bottom of a jar-like vessel *lotoba* for carrying on the head.

To prepare the clay *bubunn?kwa*, it is dried, ground in a wooden trough *du?i*, and sifted *korob?i*. The ash temper is also sifted before measuring. One measure *sapamm?mo* of ash is mixed *poi?i* with one measure of the clay. The Movimas say that more ash than clay will make the pottery too porous, whereas more clay than ash will cause the pottery to break easily. The mixture is softened with water and kneaded *ni?i*. It is set aside for two or three days and kneaded again; the process repeated until the clay is pliable *lawita?i*.

Forming the pottery *payabunn?*. A ball of clay *pebabunn?* is flattened *lotos?i* on a piece of cloth or a straw mat *powol* placed over a hard surface or, in making a jar-like vessel *lotoba*, over the mold. A coil of clay *davulbubunn?* is laid on this flat base *hapilpinn?* to start the sides *toridi?a* of the vessel and is joined with a pressing, pinching action *koromm?i*. Water is sprinkled on *poi?i* liberally during this process. This coil, now joined to the base, is extended upward by pulling and scraping

LoweLe with the hand and the piece of gourd until the sides have reached the desired thickness *imkatibni*. The uneven top is cut off with a knife *abkatoridi* and allowed to stand for about twenty minutes to harden *alauni*. Other coils are added and shaped in a similar way *cyabpinn?wa?i* until the desired height is reached.

The jar-like vessel *lotoba* and the deep bowl *cyapaye* are sometimes finished off with a fancy lip made by twisting *damoina?a* a coil or pinching it into a "pie-crust" effect.

Handles are fitted on to a special jar *lotoba* made with a narrow neck to carry water on long trips by ox-cart or canoe. With the handle the jar can be tied securely to reduce spillage. Holes are made *to?cyora?i* in the body of the jar near the neck. A small coil pressed into these holes forms a ring handle.

Two lug-type handles are inserted in the deep bowl *cyapaye*, toasting pan *wereicyo*, and the deep pot *wutu*. Like the ring handle these are inserted completely through the wall of the vessel and then joined *cyuiLe* with the wall inside and out.

The surface is finished *iiLoicyoniwa?i* after a day or two of hardening by rubbing *wisba?i* the pottery with a damp cloth *ludaibenn?*. The pottery is smoothed *riL?i* with a corn husk and smooth stone until all the coil lines have disappeared. This is done to both the inside *cyodowi?a* and outside *bann?kwanLe?a* of the jar-like vessel *lotoba* but only to the inside of the other types of pottery.

If the red coloring is desired it is painted on at this time. It is painted on the outside only of the jar-like vessel *lotoba* and only rarely on the deep bowl *cyapaye*, both inside and outside. The reason given is that the red color is "pretty" *hayau*. To make designs on the jar *lotoba*, a thicker paste is made from the red coloring and applied with a stick. The designs are simple, discontinuous patterns of animals, flowers, V-shapes, or dots and dashes.

Firing the pottery usually takes place after sunset when the wind is more predictable. The pot has been previously heated by placing it in the sun *ilna?a* and then, downwind near the cooking fire. When ready for firing it is turned upside down *pa?si*, usually on ground level, and supported by pieces of old pottery *tovihkwa*, chunks of ant hill *bawaskwa*, or pieces of adobe *totokwa*. At first just a few coals are placed under the pot; more are added *itaba* for about an hour. Then the wood *ko?o* is stacked on the fire *ve?e*. As the fire flames up *taleles*, the wood and pot are completely covered with dry cow dung *wakacyiya* or, in the rainy season, pampa grass *dimas*, palm leaves *mumunn?kwa*, or pieces of broken pottery with a small amount of dung over this. When this fuel has been reduced to ashes the pot is covered a second time and left until morning. It is then thumped *dilinn?i* to test for the desired ring *tiniucyeL* of good pottery. Pottery that comes out very white in color is said to be weak from being fired too fast.

Post-firing treatment of blackening the pottery is done to the two kinds of cooking vessels, the toasting pan *wereicyo*, and the deep pot *wutu*. This is done, not by the potter, but by the one who will use it. The pottery, tan after firing, is blackened only on the inside and preferably after the pot has been cooked in once.

Sweet potato leaves *balala?lora* are ground, mixed with water, and this mixture is applied to the inside surface. The pot is then smoked *ri?cyo* by turning it upside down over coals and making smoke with a certain leaf *lomomokwa*. Other leaves are used to seal around the edge of the pot so that no smoke escapes. This process is repeated two or three times until the pot is completely blackened. This seems to make a glossy surface so that food does not easily stick to it. The reason given for the blackening is that it makes the pots "pretty" *bayau* and keeps the surface from wearing away when washed and scraped.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

LINNÉ, SIGVALD

- 1957 — "Technical secrets of American Indians", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 87, pp. 149-164.



Water jars *lotoba* with designs



Large toasting pan *wersicyo*



Deep pot *wusu* cooking the corn drink



Stacking the sponge *eyayaL* along the river bank



Sunning the pottery clay *so?la*



Kneading the clay mixture



Forming the base for a small pan



Forming the clay coil



Joining the coils to the base of the pan



Shaping the coils with the *do?la* to form the side of the pan



Finishing the sides of the pan



Preparing to add the third coil in making a water jar



Smoothing the coil lines from the hardened water jar



Supported by pieces of anthill the pot is heated from a nearby fire



A few coals are placed under the pot



The pot is covered with dry cow dung in the firing process



The fuel is reduced to ashes and the firing is finished



The completed pot is inspected