

TRANSFORMATION PROCESS IN THE CERAMICS OF SAN LUIS JILOTEPEQUE *

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Photographs of the author*

1. INTRODUCTION

Its shapes, its red robe and exotic designs, its pocomames creators and many other attributes that connect the ceramics of San Luis Jilotepeque with our ancestral pre-Columbian Mayan civilization, make us recognize the existence of an ancient tradition expressed in this beautiful artistic manifestation of the Sanluisenseños. It is therefore a matter of great interest, for the student of the social sciences and in particular of the Guatemalan reality, to know the present conditions in which this pottery is developed and, in some way, to concretize its perspectives.

It must be recognized that although in the past there were practically isolated populations in Guatemala whose evolution did not go according to that of the country, this has changed considerably in recent decades. Today we are witnessing a rapid process of transformation of pre-capitalist indigenous societies towards Integration with the country's way of life.

Such a process of integration, in which people are moved above all by the economic needs in which a new and different reality places them; an uncontrolled and unplanned process, inevitably brings negative consequences for the communities that experience it, especially because in that adaptation reaction very important cultural elements must be sacrificed to the population as such, values that are constantly destroyed in the unequal struggle for obtaining the new socio-economic comforts made necessary by external influence.

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The main concern of this research was to find out to what extent this antagonistic process of traditional/Western transformation also implied the other contradictory duality permanence/destruction, implicit in the prevailing mode of production in the country, since, undoubtedly, this expansionism affects the traditional ceramic production of San Luis, as it has happened with so many other cultural manifestations of the country.

The research was initiated in March 1981, with the purpose of observing in what way these changes are being experienced, the causes that originate them and the effects that such transformations imply in San Luis ceramics. Initially, we consulted the various authors, cited in the bibliography, who have studied the pocomames of San Luis, in particular their ceramics and other authors who have generally dealt with the topic of the transformations that folkloric manifestations undergo.

On April 6, 7 and 8 of the same year, I made a visit to the municipality of San Luis Jilotepeque, during which several people and families who are engaged in pottery production were interviewed. The data collected during the entire research process will allow us to form a global vision of the problem at hand. It is hoped that, through a fair interpretation of these data, it will be possible to arrive at valid and useful conclusions, which in some sense contribute to the scientific-social study of the country and redound to its benefit.

2. GENERAL ASPECTS

The eastern region of the country presents very particular and identifiable characteristics, however, the cultural aspects of its population have been quite neglected by social scholars.

The Orientals are largely Ladinos with European features, whose Spanish ancestors settled in the region since the times of the conquest and, for various reasons, in particular the geographical one, they remained quite isolated, being even today an area rich in traditions of Spanish origin, (Morales:80)

The various indigenous groups have undergone many transformations throughout history; vernacular languages such as Pocoman, Chortí, xinca, cakchiquel and others already extinct show the great social mobility and influences of foreign cultures that have pushed and located them in increasingly smaller sectors.

The geographical aspects of the eastern region are well distinguishable: the climate is mostly warm and dry, although in some mountainous parts it is even cold and with different fauna and flora; in general the terrain is rugged and arid, characteristic of desert areas; among the characteristic plants we observe the morro or jícaro tree, the tecomates vine, the legumes, the matlisguate, the guayacán, the manaco, the corozo, the henequén or sisal, the jzote flower, the great variety of cacti, prickly pear, palm, etc.

It is also a less recent volcanic zone than the southern zone of the central highlands; clays and minerals suitable for the production of ceramics abound, which is why this craft has been cultivated and fully developed over the years. (1, Morales: 80)

The Motagua River provides a recently built irrigation system, there are many rivers and streams of reduced flow, but they are quite used by the inhabitants in fishing for shrimp, crabs, small fish, etc.

Due to the lack of moisture the lands are mostly cultivated in the rainy season. The sowings start around the first week of May, mainly corn, beans, tobacco, watermelon are grown.

The raising of cattle and horses is also notorious, as well as that of pigs, although not at the same level as the first, which constitutes activity mainly of the landowning ladinos.

The population increase, coupled with energy needs, has had a severe impact on the ecology of the region. Deforestation and the implicit impoverishment of the land have taken on alarming dimensions; their effects on agriculture are visible, as exemplified by the increase in temporary migration to which mention is made later. The National Forestry Institute has initiated a reforestation campaign, with the help of international entities. The task is too big if it is undertaken without the cooperation of the inhabitants, who for the most part are unaware of the magnitude of the problem; for them, only as one hears the comment “the land no longer produces as it used to.”

2.1 San Luis Jilotepeque: some historical-geographical data

A journey of 207 km. from the capital of Guatemala to San Luis is carried out today by the various extra-urban buses that have their route in that direction. The 'Melba' transports are the only direct and regular means of transport between both points. The bus that departs from the Terminal in the capital at 7 a.m. up to St. Louis around 2 p.m. The road is paved until Jalapa, the departmental capital; the last 40 km of dirt are very rough, with precipices and dangerous slopes, if one takes into account the narrowness of the road. Finally, after saving that great mountain massif that still separates and geographically and symbolically isolates the population of San Luis, we arrive at the town, which - according to them and apart from Esquipulas - has the largest and most beautiful church in the eastern region.

Archbishop Don Pedro Cortez y Larraz (1712-1792) arrived in Guatemala in 1768. He arranged as a first task to visit the 113 curates of his large diocese; he offers us the most extensive description of San Luis made during the colonial period and gives us an account of the bad roads and natural obstacles that isolate the population and that, to some extent, protected the culture and survival of the natural.

It seems that the ceremonial center of El Durazno and the current town of San Luis Jilotepeque, the main center of the eastern Pocomames, belonged to the domains of the chief of Mictlán (today Asunción Mita) until the year 1530. The sources do not clarify whether this chief was pocomam; several authors (Fuentes, Guillin, Sandoval) are inclined to think that he was.

... The local indigenous people currently do not have anything that can outline a well-outlined traditional history. However, according to Guillin (1958:49) many indigenous people say that, in ancient times, before the Spaniards came, they used to have a king: Tetekukumam (Guidinelli: 1975).

The town of San Luis was conquered in April 1530 by Captain Pedro Nuñez de Medina. The military force was composed of 50 horsemen, 20 arquebusiers and 100 Tlaxalteco auxiliaries, section of the expeditionary force of Pedro de Alvarado. The Spaniards gave the town the name of San Luis which, according to Sandoval (1937:31), honors San Luis King of France. The Mexicans added Xilotepec (hill of tender corn).

Guillin affirms that it would not be out of place to assume that that same year, immediately after the conquest, a curate church was established.

Linguists consider that Mam, Pocomam and Pocomchi are among the Mayan languages that best preserve their primitive forms.

Several cultural ties lead one to think that the population of the middle valley of the Motagua was pocom^{*}. It is very important to highlight that there is an obvious ceramic connection with the great ceremonial center of Copán.

According to Guidinelli (1975) the relations of the Pocomames groups with Copán must have been intense during the classic period (300-900 AD), and the intellectual center of this entire Mayan area must have had a great ascendancy over them. Even today these relationships are still alive with the same pre-Columbian mental attitude. Rafael Girard (1949:3) (and then Guidinelli confirms it in his fieldwork: 1971) notes; how relationships...

(...) among the pocomames and chortis are active; pottery, the metates of San Luis Jilotepeque, the hats of San Pedro Pinula flood the Chortis markets. The Pocomames still come to the country of the Chortis to celebrate some traditional rites (...)

The Pocomames and Poconchies did not belong to the thirteen tribes of Tecpan that are mentioned in the Popol Vuh (Toltecs from Tula) and that several authors have confused.

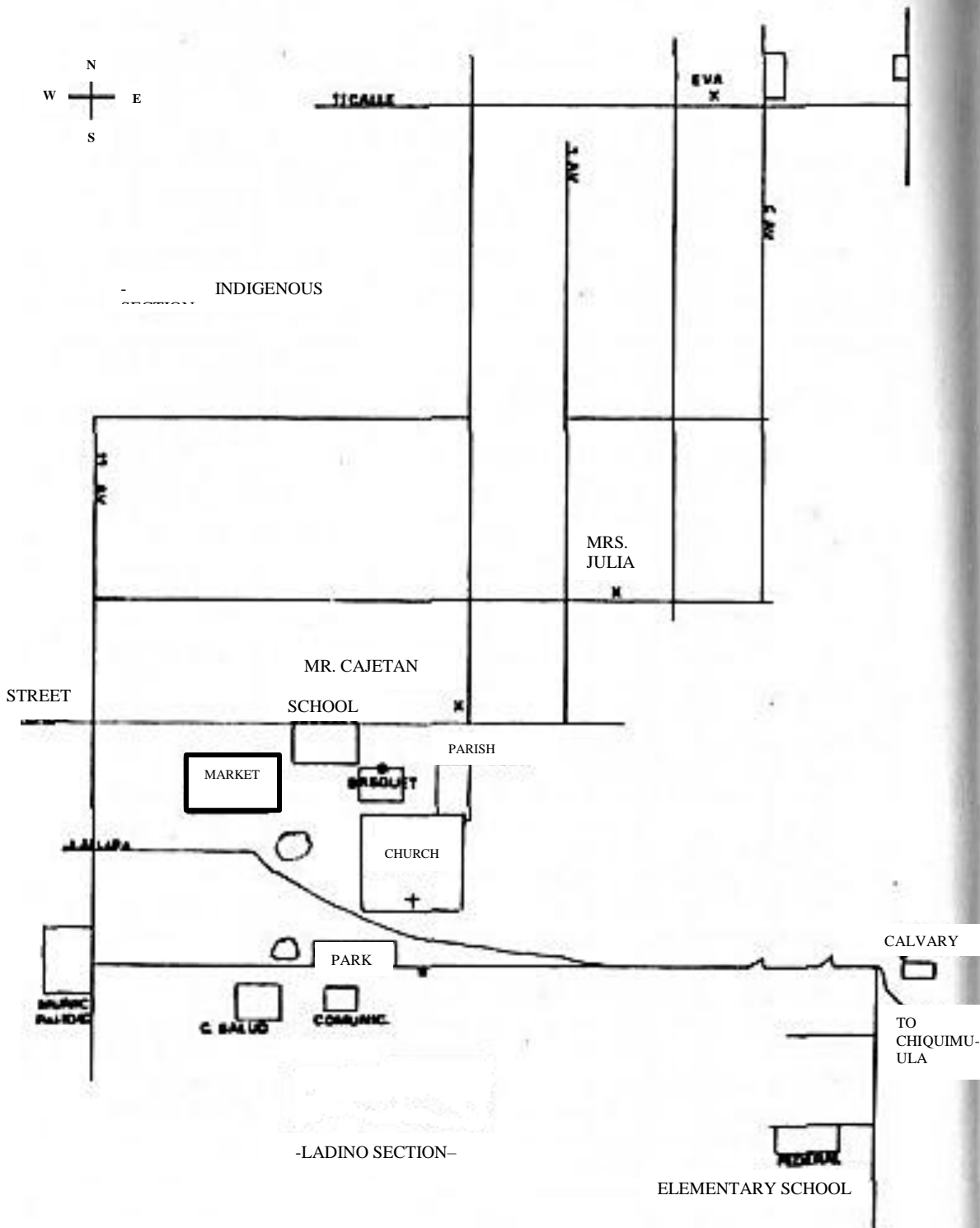
The Annals of the Cakchiquels mention that the invaders came into contact with the pocomames:

“26. Then they met those of Nimpokon and those of Raxchich, whose village is called Pazaktzuy. The pocomames put all their presents in sight and danced their dances (...) (...) They then armed themselves with their bows and their shields and attired in this way they showed themselves before the pokomames. These were filled to the point of terror and ours caught them immediately and tormented them... (1967:19-20)

Finally, it should be noted that the municipality of San Luis Jilotepeque, in the department of Jalapa, has an approximate area of 296 km². The municipal seat is located at 782 meters above sea level, and is made up of the neighborhoods of El Centro, El Calvario, El Llano, Los Izotales, San Sebastián, Santa Cruz, San Francisco and La Bolsa.

The municipality also consists of 15 villages and 8 hamlets and has horseshoe paths and sidewalks that connect its inhabitants with each other and with neighboring municipalities.

^{*} Predecessors of today's pocomames and poconchis.



The road that connects San Luis with Chiquimula and the rest of the eastern area is extremely important, because it is the access road to the most used regional markets and the best condition for the passage of vehicles.

2.2 Your pottery: socio-economic aspects

Currently there is no element that characterizes the Pocomam population of San Luis Jilotepeque better than its pottery production. It is a cultural manifestation of authentic pre-Hispanic character, in which many cultural elements have been merged throughout history. Its utilitarian values are recognized in the various markets of the republic and even abroad. If since distant pre-Hispanic times this traditional product of the Pocomam people was appreciated in relatively remote places, it is precisely because, as Krevolin points out (1971:11,13), this pottery technology does not evolve from one technical plane to another, but rather reflects a refinement within a fixed technology that has been maintained for thousands of years. Therefore, it should be considered as the advanced creation of a people in evolution and with a tradition outside the context of Western civilization.

Certainly, the San Luis jars are very appreciated in the warm areas of the country for their particular qualities, such as the ability to 'sweat', that is, by evaporation they keep the liquid they contain at a low temperature and it stays fresh longer³. Thus, the pottery products of San Luis are traded in places where there is a pottery production, without negative competition. It is interesting to note that even at the point of greatest commercialization of these products in Guatemala, which is the Bus Terminal of Zone 4, the sales are carried out outdoors, along a wide sidewalk and in front of several plastic centers that sell countless products, including plastic jars and other various types of containers, without this harming the commercialization of San Luis pottery.

So, this pottery, like that of other parts of the country where an authentic pre-Hispanic character is found, presents, as Lara points out (1980:29-30), the following elements:

³ The clay used is porous, abundant in the region, and reaches its cooking point at low temperatures. This is very important, since it has the advantage that the cooking is done outdoors and with cheap materials. In addition, the utensils produced in this way resist high temperatures, making them indispensable to pre-metallurgical cultures.

- It is located in places that, since before the arrival of the Spaniards, were quoted as pottery centers.
- The activity is the exclusive responsibility of women. As for the technique, hand modeling predominates, with the exclusion of potter's stone.
- There is an absence of glazed glazes or paint of another nature, They carry very simple phytomorphic or zoomorphic character decorations.
- The working instruments are very rudimentary, as well as the use of outdoor burning campfire. Marketing, on the other hand, is rather restricted.

The multiple aspects of the life of this pocomam culture are like all of them, in a process of constant change. However, the influence of the Moderna capitalist mode of production is affecting them tremendously as will be discussed in the next chapter. It has been considered necessary to provide the socio-economic data described below, in order to provide an adequate overview.

Regarding the ethnic characteristics of the population⁴, the Spanish historian Francisco de Solano has studied in depth the contributions of Archbishop Cortez y Larraz (REAA: 1969), from where he has taken his data to establish the population of San Luis in 1768 as follows:

St. Louis Ji..... 3280

San Marcos..... 156

3436 people of Pocoman language

If this figure is correct, the population has barely doubled up to 1964, while the Ladino element that according to Cortés and Larraz was almost absent in 1769, a century later constitutes a third of the population.

Referring to the economic life of the parish, Cortés y Larraz writes:

⁴ The following notes were taken from Guidinalli (1975)

The harvests of these territories are corn, beans, reeds, wheat and cattle. Indians are fond of sailing (sic)⁵ and they work palm hats and duffel bags, which by taking them to sell to other towns they acquire many reales (...) (1958:249).

According to baptism records of the parish of San Luis of the year 1800 and some others of the last century, the population was almost entirely Pocoman, except one or two families of Spaniards who owned haciendas in the surroundings.

De Solano (1974:177-180) reports some figures of Pocomames villages in the year 1800. For San Luis the population was 3544. There does not seem to be a substantial change with the data of Cortés and Larraz.

In 1819 the baptisms give us an image of the ethnic composition of this people at the end of the colonial period. This year 104 children were baptized, 12 of whom were Spanish. The people continued to have their character predominantly pocomam but they already lived in the same, or in the surroundings, a hegemonic Spanish minority and another ladino one that aspired the power of the former to have the exclusivity of the exploitation of the pocomam (1979:177-180).

Sandoval (1965:35) provides general population data for 1950. The municipality had 9591 inhabitants.

Rural		Urban
2673	ladinos	1031
2710	indigenous	3177

According to a municipal statistical census of 1964, there are 4,672 Ladinos and 8,278 indigenous people in the municipality.

Currently the indigenous population inhabits the northern part of the town. That is where the pottery production is located. The houses in this part are mostly made of adobe, with tile roofs; others are made of bajareque and interior divisions of reeds. They do not have private drinking water or a sewage drainage system. Water is obtained from the various public jets that are also a meeting point for women. Without a doubt, this section of the village is the one that lives in the most "precarious conditions. It is also here that ceramic production continues to be an economic means of life and where the 'inventions' of new articles have been carried out, which are nothing but a collective response to the demands and impositions of the outside world.

⁵ It is not explained how they could have been boating enthusiasts because there are no navigable rivers in the municipality. However, the inhabitants are very given to fishing, manufacture of ropes, nets, etc.,

The Ladinos are generally located in the southern part of the town, they have houses that are mostly made of clay, with tiles, of a colonial style, with drinking water and drains, electric light, etc. The Ladinos are quite dedicated to livestock farming, agricultural production and the marketing of such products.

At present there is an atmosphere of peace and stability in the population, an outgoing attitude and a great religious activity. A Moderna and wide market is built, because the commercial activity of the inhabitants demands it. The special market day is on Sunday.

In addition to the fair in honor of King San Luis, which is celebrated on August 25, and that of the Virgin of Concepción, from December 13 to 16, other social gatherings of the community are those organized by religious entities, which are few. The Holy Week celebrations, organized by the Catholic Church, have varied a lot. According to some informants, they have declined, as restrictions have been placed on old practices.

3. CHANGE PROCESSES

The manufacture of ceramic items in San Luis Jilotepeque is a truly traditional production, as both archaeological and historical research has already shown. Such products manifest very characteristic features. the use of a convex basal mold in the initial stages of the construction of the vessels, as well as the black-on-red decoration, considered in its entirety, are exclusive to the Pocomam linguistic group. The use of a red engobe very characteristic of pre-Hispanic Mayan ceramics, gives the surface of the vessel the appearance of a glazed finish (glaze) that is obtained through a long and tiring rubbing and smoothing process that also provides the product with a certain impermeability. The designs are very different from their relatives pocomames Chinautlecos: the drawings consist of geometric bands, representations of flowers, leaves, birds, monkeys and other animals. The San Luis women consider the convex surfaces of a vessel as flat spaces on which they execute their drawings; the result is attractive.

The drawings and representations have no relation to the shape of the vessel, Arrot (1967: 38-47) explains that this may be because this decoration technique is a recent copy of European ceramic decorations, introduced about a century ago. Currently, an apparent reappearance of extremely old designs is also developing, which is subsequently referred to in the ethnographic samples (estrellita painting).

We see then that these traditional cultural manifestations fall into what Díaz Castillo (1978:48-9) considers popular arts:

They are cultural expressions of a plastic nature, endowed with aesthetic attributes, whose roots sink into the past and whose actuality is explained by virtue of the function they fulfill within the community that generates them. It is an individual activity carried out within the family, usually in a complementary way to subsistence work. Folk art is a manual, personal and domestic craft. It is learned at home by the example of the elders and occurs in those places where access to sources of raw materials is easy (...)

Sanluisense ceramics will then be considered as a popular artistic manifestation and from now on the various processes that in one way or another affect the existence of this national folkloric element are analyzed.

Guillin (1958:145-7) carried out an extensive study on San Luis Jilotepeque, and his writings, by relating them to the present, provide us with an overview of the changes and perspectives:

In addition to agricultural work and organization, the indigenous people earn money through the following patterns of activity: salaried work in the service of the municipality, the sale of their labor force as a bricklayer's assistant, etc.

In the village there is an indigenous man who makes adobes and another who specializes in making clay tiles. In both cases, the indigenous people work in production but the Ladinos own the land...

The indigenous people can only earn money directly in two ways: through ceramics and by selling products in the market. Pottery is the most widely known "industry" in San Luis. It is completely in the hands of indigenous women, who practice it when their domestic chores leave them free.*

Everyone works at home. There is no organization of potters; neither is the work supervised... Items that are produced in the community:

- 1. the griddle to cook tortillas.*
- 2. the pitcher to carry water. It is the main export item... it is decorated with drawings depicting black flowers and animals (including monkeys).*
- 3. the pot for cooking food, provided with two horizontal ring-shaped handles on each side.*
- 4. the censer for burning copal during ceremonies, decorated with curved lines.*
- 5. the vases. The latter two items are used on guild altars and in the houses of habitation.*

The products of the local pottery are used in all the houses of San Luis, Ladinas and indigenous people; some of them are sold in the village. However, the strongest income derived from the sale of ceramics comes from outside the country, because the neighboring Republic of El Salvador constitutes the best market for this local product. A round trip between San Luis and San Salvador takes seven to ten days. The ceramic vessels were sold in this city in 1948 at the price of Q 0.25 each so that each man received O 4.00 per trip, discounting the expenses made on the way, these expenses were very few because he always took food supplies. Because milpa crops cannot be neglected, rarely more than 8 trips are made during the year. It is interesting to note that with pottery and hat making as auxiliary activities, the indigenous man and woman never "have time". They always have something to take care of and from there they eventually get at least a few pennies in cash. The boys also make fishing nets and mesh bags.

Nowadays the commercialization of pottery is not the exclusive business of men. It is no longer uncommon to see women carrying their bags to the nearest bus stop bound for a regional market. Queen and C. Hill (1978) confirms that San Luis pottery is still the most commercialized in the East, but its transportation on foot is quickly being replaced by bus or truck.

Trade with El Salvador was very intense before the arrival of the Spaniards, and when Guillin carried out his study it was also very intense, but the situation has changed radically in recent years: political conflicts, together with the customs problems of the passage of goods and the increase in taxes, have considerably restricted the market to this country.

The merchants and transporters indicate that now, rather, only sporadic trips are made to fairs such as the one in Nueva Ocotepeque, in Honduras, and some others take a chance on the Santa Ana fair, but what happens now is that they come from there on tourist trips to places like Esquipulas and given the transport facilities, it is to these places that handicrafts are going to be sold.

Millinery and vegetable fiber crafts, to which several authors refer, and which the men performed at the same time as carrying their heavy loads, are rapidly disappearing, especially if we take into account that the activities of the men have varied a lot. In general they travel to El Petén part of the year in search of agricultural work and return, if not with money, with harvest loads.

The prices of pottery products have changed relatively little. However, now there are resellers, people from the same town or foreigners who market the products nationally or internationally and who surely increase prices depending on the growing inflation, in such a way that if in San Luis you get a large pichinga for Q 0.50 it can cost QA 2.00 on the south coast Q 7.00 in **tourist shops** of the capital or Antigua and, in places such as La Aurora International Airport, the same pichinga made pendant lamp costs Q 24.00.

This unrestricted profit goes to the detriment of San Luis crafts, if we take into account that the mud and materials that were previously obtained for free are now sold and the transport rates, both buses and trucks, are rising in a spiral as dizzying as the price of energy worldwide. The trucks charge Q 1.50⁶ per 'lump', which consists of about 20 or 24 large pitchers. The buses charge \$2.00 per quintal, so these artisans are trapped in a vicious circle. on the one hand, transport prices hardly allow them to raise their own, which must remain competitive, on the other hand, their life is getting worse because the needs that capitalism has entailed are not alien to them, their purchasing power seems to decrease and they are heirs of a pottery tradition that in the past has been a fundamental means of subsistence for them.

⁶ These prices in transport refer to the route San Luis - Guatemala.

It is worth asking what is the reaction to this problem. The cheapening via the use of inferior materials, the production destined to specific markets, variation ('inventions'), etc., are topics that are analyzed below.

3.1 The positive in the processes of change

In the past, the population of San Luis Jilotepeque had maintained a fairly active commercial relationship with the outside, but had remained within their traditional and pre-capitalist, largely self-sufficient ways of life. In addition, it was geographically and ideologically isolated from the Guatemalan national context. However, this has changed rapidly, if we take into account the recent introduction of new media (radio, television, public transport, etc.) The changes are indispensable, in particular in education. The introduction of capitalist ideological models has awakened the indigenous yearnings for self-improvement, especially economic ones.

As far as the St. Louis pottery industry is concerned, the changes have been very varied. Some, as it seemed to us, are positive and are mentioned below. Thus, we find that previously pottery production was centralized in liquid containers of traditional shapes; nowadays a wide variety of decorative items are produced, such as popcorn, puppies, monkeys, piggy banks, etc., which besides being useful objects (these can serve as candlesticks, piggy banks, container, etc.), has a new aesthetic value and at the same time its own, because the motifs are taken from the context of life itself; they also imply perfection in painting techniques and designs. It should be noted that currently there is a great initiative among Sanluisenñas artisans to "invent" new products that are appreciated in the markets. The reasons for this attitude may be due to the promotion of San Luis ceramics abroad, that is, due to criteria, suggestions and assessments of international people and entities.

Another feature born from this process of change is undeniable: the value involved in the time and labor that is dedicated to the realization of the product. In fact, the making of lamps-jars, highly decorated tableware, etc., "takes a lot of time" and the products are more expensive.

Finally, it should be noted that the aforementioned reaction to the current onslaughts from abroad allows perpetuating this cultural tradition, which is such an important factor of cultural identity.

3.2 Negative aspects of the change

Regarding the more traditional handmade products, we noticed that their quality has decreased significantly. The pitchers, pichingas, tecomates, etc., which are destined for sale in regional markets, in particular on the south coast of Guatemala, since the prices cannot be increased considerably, are painted with oil paint, which is more profitable; the designs are poorly made and the traditional and characteristic red engobe of this ceramic has been tremendously adulterated and is no longer burnished. The old designs, finely painted and therefore need time and skill, are becoming increasingly scarce and are destined to typical shops and **connaisseurs** that they pay well for the product, as mentioned by Erazo Fuentes (1976.20).

The family mercantile industry may not become a manufacturing industry, but it may become a capitalist home-based industry. In this case, the production units dispersed in a multiplicity of small workshops are dominated by a capitalist entrepreneur who provides them with some labor instruments (pays them a salary) and imposes on them the type of use values that they must produce.

The expansion of the market demand, mainly due to the transport facilities, has also given rise to the appearance of resellers, inside and outside the village, who are dedicated to buying from private houses and trading ceramics themselves, in such a way that their prices have to increase even more. In this process, the most affected are the potter producers, because their prices continue the same, despite the general increase in prices that they experience around, as a result of inflation.

This artisanal activity constitutes, to this day, the contribution of San Luis women to the maintenance of the home, and it continues to be, as it has been for a long time, the activity of the most impoverished population group. The lack of a State interest that promotes a positive development of this activity, protects it and gives it the place it deserves within national values, makes this ceramics take wrong and even self-destructive directions, which place it in danger of serious deformation and disappearance, a common case of Guatemalan artistic manifestations.

4. ETHNOGRAPHIC SAMPLE

Before visiting the production center of San Luis, I visited various markets in the capital and the departments and obtained data from other authors such as Reina and M. Hill (1978) and Morales Hidalgo (1980), who have investigated the markets in which this ceramic is marketed. As the various authors consulted have stated, the ceramics of San Luis are distributed almost all over the country, and the place where these goods first converge is the La Terminal market in the capital of Guatemala.

The section of the Terminal where the commercialization of pottery products from various parts of the country is located, is in a building⁷ located at the northern end of the market perimeter. Next to this place, behind the Incatecu footwear factory, approximately 15 Sanluisenos sellers are observed during the first days of the week, ** posted along the wide sidewalk, in front of several plastic centers, with about 40 packages*** containing jars, **pichingas**, tecomates, piggy banks, grinding stones, etc., which are usually sold wholesale within two or three days of market. The sellers are entirely Sanluisenos, some of them, resellers who pay transporters who own trucks Q 1.50 per load or package. Their wholesale prices are as follows:

Big pitcher	Q. 8.00 / dozen
Small pitcher	Q. 6.00/ ”
Big duck jug	Q. 7.00/ ”
Small pichinga	Q. 3.50/ ”
Grinding stones	Q. 6.00 / unit

It was reported that the most important buyers are people from the coast who buy in large quantities; it is also sold at retail to customers usually of "humble condition", who use these items.

⁷ The aforementioned building is called "The Barn". Various handicrafts are sold inside, especially pottery. San Luis ceramics are sold in stalls outside the building.

** The influx of such merchants varies depending on the time of year, but it is regular and permanent.

*** The bundles or loads are self-made loop nets, containing about two dozen large pitchers or their equivalent, wrapped in straw and dried banana leaf. The number of lumps also varies depending on the time of year.

The quality of these products is not very good, the paintings are made by the same sellers with blue, white, light blue and black colors, with oil paints, according to the informants “because that's how the people of the coast like it”.

Very little of this ceramic is found in other market stalls, always of the same quality and at a higher price (Q 1.50 per large pitcher).

In other markets of the capital, this ceramic is almost not found. However, the sellers know where to find it in the Terminal market and are willing to get it for the customer, upon request. Also in the capital, at the airport **The Aurora**, there has been a St. Louis pottery sale for several years now. According to the employee of the business, sales have dropped considerably in recent times due to low tourism, to such an extent that the store is being considered for closure. The items sold there are of very good quality, quite traditional in their shapes and designs. What is most sold are miniatures (pitchers, pitchers, etc.) at Q 1.00 per unit, and which are also sold as a collection. Other prices are as follows:*

Unpainted candle holders without handle	Q. 0.75
Painted candle holders, with handle	Q. 1.00
Small box	Q. 2.25
Big box	Q. 3.00
Large painted pitcher	Q. 10.00
Jugs-tecomate grande pintado	Q. 9.00
Jar-large painted duck	Q. 7.00
Lamp-pitcher with large holes	Q. 24.00

There are also other items, such as piggy banks, small and large sculptures, miniature animals for decoration, etc., that the business owner gets directly from a San Luis artisan who produces especially for her.

* These prices are per unit.

Informant: Virgil Augustine

28 years old, son of an important San Luis merchant named Don Cayetano Agustín, well known in the village. Virgilio drives one of his father's 4 trucks, Every Sunday he makes trips to the capital with about 15 packages and their respective sellers, who he charges Q 1.50 per person and per package, According to Virgilio (and then it was confirmed with the interview with his father) the business of selling pottery has gradually been improving; however, he mentions that in other years, when the political situation in El Salvador was not so dangerous, regular trips were made to Santa Ana and even to San Salvador, They took ceramics to the parties of various towns, where it was very appreciated; for example for the Sonsonate fair they loaded the truck even with 22 packages. Currently they no longer make that trip because, in addition to the political situation, customs taxes have gone up a lot and there are problems in the passage of goods across the border. Instead they go to places in Honduras, like Nueva Ocotepeque, where sales are very good.

On the other hand, he also makes regular trips to El Petén, with people and goods; he trades agricultural products for San Luis in the summer (dry) season. He says that many people have gone to live in El Petén and that almost all the men (except the elderly) are going to work temporarily there, where they have agreed on employment beforehand. According to Virgilio, the lands of San Luis are already very poor and do not produce the same as before and the men, either to get money or to have some harvest, migrate to Petén and then, already back in their village, they dedicate themselves to cultivating their own land.

It is interesting that his family is all originally from San Luis, and yet a 14-year-old nephew, who has always lived in the village, did not know about the handicraft industry of his village, nor was he interested in it, The boy believed that the red color of ceramics was obtained by rubbing the deer's eye.

Virgil introduced me among several people of the village, one of them Mrs. Julia, to whom I refer next.

Informant: Mrs. Julia

About 45 years old, he lives in his small adobe house with cane interior partitions, in the company of his 20-year-old son, who is engaged in agriculture.

Her daughter ran away with “her man” a short time ago and went to live in El Petén. It was the latter who started the production of clay figures, such as monkey ducks, dogs, little pigs, piggy banks of various shapes, etc.

Mrs. Julia has always been dedicated to ceramics, but she only knew how to make pitchers. His daughter, on the other hand, taught him how to make clay figures and, in general, how to make the things that his customers in the markets asked for the most. Currently, the figure that is most in demand and to which Julia Damages is dedicated exclusively (mainly due to the absence of her daughter) are the jug-monkeys and the piggy-monkeys. These figures are very attractive and the motifs (cute mother holding her little monkeys in her arms) are quite tender. The problem for Señora Julia is that they are complicated to make, they take a lot of time and they also use a lot of “red earth” to give them that color. This red earth is expensive for him, they sell it in the village at Q 0.10 a pound. That's why — he tells us - there are people who sell the figures without painting or with very little paint. Also the clay that he uses for the manufacture of the little monkeys is becoming scarce and they sell it in the paddocks. He tells us that today everything is sold.

Previously it was her daughter who was in charge of marketing the products in different regional markets, but in her current situation she is the one who is in charge of the entire production process and, when she considers that she already has enough figures, which is every two weeks, she fixes the network herself and loads with it, takes a bus to Esquipulas and sells her product that, according to her opinion, is very liked by the tourists who visit that place.

His economic situation has been worsening, he dedicates himself to pottery because this is the only traditional way of subsistence.

Informant: María Eva Felipa Manuel

She lives in the Los Lzotes neighborhood, northern section of the town. She is approximately 26 years old and all the women in her family are engaged in the pottery production of various items, especially the cajetes, so she is well known in the population. For some years now Eva has been dedicated to making new items that have as a feature a very special design that she calls “little star painting”^{*}.

^{*} The “*little star painting*” it is a design attributed to its ancestors, made of natural black and red earthen paint on a clay background, The effect is three superimposed colors that form a kind of star that covers the entire surface of the vessel.

According to his version, the design is very old and had already disappeared. By chance she found it in a box that had belonged to her great-grandmother, and encouraged by Dr. Guidinelli, who was then her neighbor, she started this new painting technique, which has had a great acceptance, especially among her foreign clients, who make large orders paid well in advance and who have sponsored her quite a lot. Many ideas and modalities have been suggested to him by these sponsors: for example, the design of little stars, instead of doing it inside the vessel as before, is now done on the outside, because that way it can be seen better; the elaboration of wine glasses, ashtrays, sugar bowls, tureens, cup and small plate set, all in a Western way, as well as the elaboration of flower pots decorated with little stars and varnished “to protect against mold”, etc., are some of the additions made to his industry.

Two of its best sponsors are researchers from the Summer Linguistic Institute, who have lived near Eva for three years, both are Americans and through them I was introduced to Eva. They think that their suggestions have been very successful and that the results have been positive, proof of this — they say — is that tableware is very appreciated among the people of the village and that Eva, being the only one who manufactures these items, it is already impossible for her to satisfy the demand for her products.

5. Conclusions

The data collected during the research allow us to understand the situation faced by the ceramics of San Luis. Throughout the work it has been considered necessary to issue opinions that contribute to a better understanding of the issues discussed.

I consider that the ceramics of San Luis has been since very remote pre-Columbian times an essential element of this pocomarn culture, thanks to it it has satisfied its living needs and has allowed it, through commercialization, to carry out its economic activity that until now allows it to face the ever changing situations.

The influence of the capitalist system of production has forced, especially the San Luis woman, to diversify her production, to produce new items that have a greater commercial value in foreign markets and that allow, in this way, to preserve the pottery activity as the viable means of subsistence that it has been until now.

Ceramics has found new markets through various means and this has caused production to diversify according to the market to which said product is destined. Capitalism has brought with it a new valorization of time and work, where everything is measured in terms of money. The finest and most artistically valuable products are destined for the consumer who can pay for them, and the “starting” products for the poor consumer who, like the potter producer himself, has a very low purchasing power.

The absence of a cooperative or entity that somehow regulates the prices and qualities of ceramic production in San Luis has had quite detrimental consequences: the ceramic reseller merchants have raised their prices in accordance with the increasingly critical inflation conditions of the country, but the producer himself, who is no less affected by the phenomenon, is unable to increase his production prices. Most of the products have experienced a deterioration and impoverishment in their artistic and utilitarian qualities. Cheaper raw materials are used that gradually deform and degenerate this artistic manifestation, which has fully entered the sphere of profit.

Being the producers of this pottery the Pocomames indigenous people, who maintain a simple and precarious way of life, increasingly hard in the face of the impositions of the modern world, their integration into the national way of life should be considered as imperative. But this integration does not necessarily imply the destruction of one's own values, but rather a transformation in which these fundamental elements of cultural identity are adapted in a positive way and valued as such.

Two issues are considered very important in the proper treatment of this problem:

- a) The opportunity to obtain an adequate basic education is a right of citizens. Only an education that takes cultural aspects into account can be effective, and only through it can the indigenous person be helped in a positive and fair way.
- b) The need for a State policy that understands the problem of the country's multiethnicity and develops mechanisms for the protection of national values is becoming more and more prevalent.

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San Luis vendor with his merchandise at the Terminal Market, Zone 4, Guatemala City.



"Wholesale" marketing of San Luis Jilotepeque ceramics in an area of the La Terminal market, Guatemala City.



At the La Terminal market in Guatemala City, San Luis ceramics are sold “retail” to customers of "humble condition".



Current figures of the ceramics of San Luis Jilotepeque: pigs, ducks, jugs and pots.



The alteration in the traditional pottery of San Luis has produced a craftsmanship of lower quality than the authentic one.



"Inventions" in the ceramics of San Luis Jilotepeque, Fusion of ancient design with "Moderna" Western forms.

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