

Title: The documentation of Quinoa Ceramics, a traditional art of Ayacucho, Peru.

1. Introduction

Documenting a cultural expression of a traditional art developed since the Pre Hispanic Period in Peru in a place where the people, geography and architecture have not changed so much in time because of centralism of policies in the country-, was a challenge for us. Most of the information we looked for about Quinoa Ceramics was not in books, so we had to look deeper to find important data to register, analyze and systematize in order to document a tangible expression of an intangible heritage that is at the same time antique and contemporary, traditional and modern.

This work was even harder if we consider that all the information rested not only in people but also in nature. In general, the cultures of the Andean regions in Peru are very connected with their environment so most of their raw material is directly extracted from the natural environment with a deep sense of respect and mutual need, without affecting the natural balance in their world. Talking about Quinoa Ceramics, we had to go to the mountains where the colored earth was extracted to be used as a pigment of their work, following a long walking route, to find the earth quarries locals usually visit. The landscape we found was really incredible.

Speaking with the artisans (or artists, or masters, as they are known in the town) was also a great experience of learning about their cultural worldview of everything. This process was very important to understand the social context of the Quinoa Ceramics. Not only their relation with nature, but also the concept they have about family, the roles of the people in their society, their point of view about success, and others topics that are expressed indirectly in this familiar art, where each one in the family has a particular task to make possible all together the beautiful pieces of the Quinoa Ceramics. That's because it is considered as a "familiar art", and the masters are prepared since they are children by their parents, in the familiar ateliers. It is important to understand this way of life that most of the ateliers of the artisans are integrated with their houses, for that reason, the quotidian activities are mixed between home labor and creative activities.

The preoccupation for being accord to modernity, considering that the Quinoa Ceramics is a traditional art, is visible in the exploration of topics. Each family has developed a trend about aesthetics, and they are recognized by locals for these artistic proposals that made the pieces of Quinoa Ceramics unique expressions of contemporary art, and at the same time, remain as a traditional expression of a local culture.

Quinoa Ceramics is the most important expression of art in Quinoa town. In this place, the particular characteristics of the Quinoa architecture and urbanism have been preserved in time. For both reasons, Quinoa town is an attraction for local and international tourists who look for the open ateliers where the ceramics are fabricated. Because of that, the government is interested nowadays in rescuing this particular art, and the Department of Tourism has commissioned us for doing the research and the registration process of Quinoa Ceramics to improve the Interpretation Center of Quinoa.

2. Cultural Context of Quinoa

The Quinoa Ceramics is produced in the Quinoa Town, district of the Province of Huamanga, located in Ayacucho Region. It is located 35 Km. to the north of Ayacucho City, near 45 minutes by car. The location of Quinoa is strategic because it connects the Andean region with the Central Forest, so in this place there is an intense commercial activity

Quinoa is part of the Touristic Circuit in Ayacucho, because in the Pampa de la Quinoa took place the famous Ayacucho Battle for the Independence of the country in December, 1824, and the town is also very known because there are many artists and open ateliers of the local art where you can not only buy pieces of ceramics, but also live the experience of the process of fabricating them. Ayacucho has also other attractions like archaeological centers in Wari and Vilcashuaman, colonial churches in Huamanga, and the traditional celebration of the Holy Week, an occidental catholic tradition that was mixed with local cultural expressions giving place to a local fest. During long time, tourists' didn't visit this region because of the civil war that took place between 80's and 90's. Nowadays, Ayacucho has visitors again, and Quinoa town is an important destination in this region.

Quinoa has 6,200 inhabitants and almost the 80% of the population works in ceramics, Tourism and gastronomy. Most of the local population in Quinoa speaks in the native language called "quechua". The name of Quinoa comes from the *quechua* term "Qenwa", that is the common name of a native plant that habits in there.

Mountains, thin valleys, gulches, plains, small rivers, and Andean terraces compose the varied and uneven geography of Quinoa. During the summer there are precipitations from September to March. Because of the weather, the fields are appropriate for agriculture and livestock, and for that reason most of the ceramic masters and their families also dedicate to these activities for their own consumption.

Architectonically, Quinoa has a particular and traditional image that has remained during the years and gives identity to the urban landscape. The white houses made of adobe with red roofs, small streets with the floors made on stone, the two floors urban scale and the antique use of putting pieces of pottery (churches or bulls) in the top of the roof, are some of the particularities of the town. Most of the houses are opened ateliers where the ceramists show their art to locals and tourists, and at the same time shows their way of living.

As part of the cultural context, the social organization of the community has its basis on the family. The communitarian work people from the Andean region is used to, is important to understand the Quinoa Ceramics as a familiar work.

3. Characteristics of Quinoa Ceramics.

We have identify some characteristics of Quinoa ceramics:

Colors: Quinoa Ceramics uses earth colors, making contrast between them. Brown, white, red, ochre are some of the more frequently used.

Topics: The churches are the more common topic represented. Masters also represent animals, religious scenes, local fantastic creatures, and scenes of the quotidian life.

Uses: The Quinoa Ceramics could be decorative or functional objects. The functional or utilitarian objects produced are the plates, pots and pitchers.

Dimensions: The dimensions of the ceramics vary depending on the use. The decorative ceramics that are placed on the top of the roofs are usually small. But, there are really big sculptures; most of them are decorative pieces that represent scenes of the quotidian life.

4. Registration of the techniques processes

The work of registration of Quinoa Ceramics is a work that implied a methodology of ethnographic analysis, being the observation, the conversation, and the documental registration the principal activities, oriented to register the technological processes of ceramics that is developed in the ateliers of the pottery masters.

It should be noted that the Quinoa Ceramics has changed in the last years. We could notice that locals maintained the antique techniques, although some young ceramists have begin to incorporate new technologies as the use of industrial materials, gas hoves and artificial dye.

The Quinoa Ceramics has a technological tradition that proceeds from the Pre Hispanic Period; in conversations with the ceramists we could confirm their interest for recovering the use of colored clay to reach the pictoric tones used by the Wari Culture (600-1200 AC), whom they own selves say that are the descendents. The site museum of Wari, near the Quinoa town, exhibits pieces that are the cultural referent for the ceramists. In addition, the Quinoa territory has many quarries that were used by the Wari ceramists. The work of registration has included the visit to quarries to find the clay types - diatomite and pozzolana- they use, we took pictures of the quarries and they were located in a map. The process of the ceramics begin with the extraction of the raw materials; the dialogue and the visit to these beds of clay let us know about the process of creation and the routes the ceramists use to get their materials.

We could also watch that the ceramics techniques are distributed in activities that each member of the family carry out. We documented this process, takin pictures and interviewing each member. In this regard, the younger children model the figures or smaller details. The wife paint the ceramics, the floral and lineal designs that require much concentration because the precision needed to reach the symmetry in the design. The polishing of the pitchers, plates and pots surface is another activity carried out by the wife. The ceramist master model the big figures and is in charge of the burninf process of the ceramic. We saw some special cases of women ceramists that developed all the process alone, but they are isolated cases.

We could also saw and document the type of ovens used for the baking process of the ceramics. Each ceramist use their own oven, that is designed according to the needs of the pieces that are going to be produced. If one piece is too big, they make a special oven with the specific dimensions. If the pieces are smaller, they use always the same oven. These ovens are fabricated with bricks, they can be cylindrical or rectangular. The ovens have a hole on the base that is used to put the firewood from

eucalyptus trees. It is important to notice that there is huge forest of eucalyptus trees in the town that all the community manage.

We also could prove that there are gas ovens in some ateliers, these ovens are known as “improved ovens” are they were promoted by a NGO and by the government, but they are only used eventually because the high cost of the gas. For this reason, ceramists prefer the use of the traditional ovens.

This documentation of the process has let us understand that the use of traditional materials and procedures are the result of the ceramists need of finding a solution for technical and economical problems. In addition, familiar organization in the distribution of tasks in the process of ceramics production is a fundamental characteristic. It is important to underline that the ateliers are installed inside the house of the ceramists, in their courtyards you can find the oven and there is a place assigned for the dry process of the clay and the molds, and there is also a room for the modeling and painting process. The Quinoa Ceramics is a familiar work.

5. Registration of the iconographic designs

We did a picture documentation of the ceramic pieces we found in the ateliers of the ceramists and in the particular collections that have pieces of antique ceramics in the town of Quinoa. All these visits help us to identify the styles of each ceramist master and its relation with their pre hispanic past. On the other hand, the registration of antique pieces we found in houses located in the rural área, let us realize which are the more antique iconographic designs and which are the new creations, and which are the stylistic contributions of some outstanding masters.

The visual analysis let us identify that the traditional ceramics from Quinoa has as principal decoration, floral topics and herringbone patterns, and that these designs are related to the agricultural activity, that is the principal trade for locals.

The colors in contrast with the background is a characteristic of the pictoric design: white on brown or red, or brown figures on a white background. The brushstrokes are free to design the floral topics, geometrical shapes or herringbone patterns.

In the more antique pieces we can see a great capacity for synthesis in the figurative representations; they defined the faces with points, circles and lines. Nowadays the designs are more complex and the ceramists try to be more meticulous with the human representations.

We can see in the plates the care of fine brushstrokes and the symmetry in the floral designs. We can also see a special skill in the hand painting to create shapes of a perfect symmetry and harmonious compositions.

The more characteristic motifs of the floral designs are the Daisy Flower (*bellis perennis*) and the shrub called sunchu (*Encelia canescens*). Both are plentiful in the district. The daisy flower that grows in the fields, its petals like rose windows are attractive for its representation, for that reason it appears as decorative motif in the center of the plates, irradiating leaves and more flowers.

The sunchu is a shrub that is used as fodder for donkeys, the principal means of freight transport in the rural zone; this shrub use to have three kinds of leaves: leaves with spiral shape in the base, thick leaves

and small leaves as ears. This type of leaves usually is present in the decoration of the body of the ceramics and it is combined with the daisy flowers. These floral designs are compositions that are going to be adequated to the different shapes of the ceramics; according to that, they are placed symmetrically in the plates, pitches, churches and the bodies of the characters. For that reason, they design area is adequated to the dimensions, volum and shape of the ceramics, trying to maintain the harmony in the composition.

The more representative shape of Quinoa Ceramics is the “church for roof”, that is a church in miniature that is placed on the top of the roofs of the Quinoa housesas part of the magic religious rituals of the community. These churches are represented in a free way by each ceramist, some of them do these churches in a very simple way with two belfries, a glabed roof and a big door. Others create complex representations of the cathedral and the important churches of the capital of Ayacucho. In some cases, cerasmists represent small figures in act of procession of religious images at the door of a small church. The creative freedom doesn't have any limits. Floral motifs appears on the walls of small churches.

Another piec of an antique tradition with deep cultural significance are the “conopas”. These are recipients with animal shapes that most of the time are farm animals. These figures are placed on the top of the roofs, next to the churches. The “conpas” are related to the fertility of the livestock. The bulls are the more common animals selected to be represented, but there are also figures of sheeps, deers, turkeys and local camelids. All of them have the same body, the difference is in the head and the painting that represents its coat.

Talking about utilitarian ceramics, the more common pieces are the plates called “chuas” and the jugs called Macma and Urpo. These pieces are related to the festivities, the plates are used for the food and the jugs for the preparation of the “chicha”, a drinking that requires a process of fermentation.

The Quinoa ceramists have succeeded in creating a group of sculptoric figures with a great skill in details: custom, mythological and religious motifs. Some of the figures more representatives are: the Musicians of Quinoa, images associated to the Patronal Feast of the Cocharcas Virgin, the principal celebration in Quinoa town. There are also figures about mermaids (they represent the temptations), the “chuncho” (image of the forest man that visited the town), the “ukuko” (demon with the shape of a bear) and the “jarjacha” (demon with the shape of a two-headed local camelid). The religious images are also common, we can see nativity scenes, angels, christ and the Virgin of Cocharcas.

The documentation of these pieces has let us identify the style and personal creations of some paricular ceramists, the iconographic innovations and the persistance of tradition.

6. Conclusions

- The Quinoa Ceramics is a familiar art, and is transmitted from fathers to sons.
- The attempts of the government and NGO's for the modernization of the processes of Quinoa Ceramics have failed because the traditional processes are cheaper.
- Locals use the raw materials that are abundant and typical in the zone.
- Modernization of this traditional expression of the culture is expressed with the innovation of new topics.

- Quinoa Ceramics mix tradition with modernity; work with art, past with future, objects of art with utilitarian objects, nature with culture.
- Quinoa Ceramics is a tangible expression of an intangible heritage.

7. Bibliography

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8. Images (sent separately)

I001. Location map of Quinua.

I002. Picture of the Quinoa town.

I003. Isabel Cárdenas, Master Artemio Poma´s wife, polishing a “conopa”

I004. Master Artemio Poma´s son, modeling a clay figure.

I005. Master Artemio Poma´s musicians.

I006. A Victor Sanchez´s cathedral on the top of the roof.

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