The Ethnohistorical Significance of Ceramic Art of the Southwest Pueblo Indians

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This discussion of the role of pottery making by Southwest Pueblo Indians is designed to familiarize one with the manner in which the ethnohistorical contributions of the Indian can be discovered in this particular craft. Pottery offers in its method of construction, clay utilized, and embellishment clues to the actual identity of the Pueblo Indian and an analysis of their contributions to the multicultural development of our people free from the often erroneous interpretations of the white man.
In 1967, there appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly* an article by the noted historian, Bernard Sheehan entitled, "Indian-White Relations in Early America." He called for a dispassionate and culturally relative recognition of "all the intricate permeations of the intermeshing of disparate cultures rather than the one-to-one moral dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed." Sheehan believed that too few people had heeded the advise of the Iroquoian historian, William Fenton, who had suggested as early as 1953 that an intellectual investigation of Indian-white relations must rest on common ground incorporating history and ethology. The objective was, simply stated, to understand Indians from their perspective. Explicitly, it meant reevaluating tribal, village and band activities to achieve a comprehension of the Indian's role in the development of our pluralistic society. Since written records of Indian thoughts and attitudes are largely nonexistent, it has been concluded by many that actual objects of art best reflect the Indian. Ceramics of the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest surpass many other forms of artistic expression in the achievement of this objective. They are executed with natural materials, molded and baked by traditional methods and decorated with both ancestral and contemporary symbolism that make them a sensitive indicator of an important segment of our pluralistic society.

The concept of fine arts was introduced to the Pueblos during the twentieth century. For most Indians, this was a foreign concept introduced by the white man who tended to distinguish between functional design and artistic endeavor. Historically, the great men of industry in the white community designed machines to perform tasks that did not associate significant symbolism with the structural form of the piece. The Indians, however, found it difficult, if not impossible, to incorporate this disassociation in their manufacturing. According to Dr. Dennis Hoilman of Ball State University, much that the Indian created of a functional nature found design and embellishment originating from an unconsciousness that sprang forth from the
uniqueness of the Indian.

Prior to 1900, Indians had produced great quantities of utilitarian items that have since been classified as art, and many of the things made by Pueblo people, today, are formally and technically derived from them. To understand how this development of fine art encompassed the work made in the pueblos, one must see Pueblo art as resulting from two separate phenomena. The artistic creativeness of the Pueblo people in being able to mold the materials of their surroundings into objects of beauty established the Indianness that characterized and separated their work from all others. The eclectic expansion of art definitions by the non-Pueblo world that redefined the boundaries of artistic expression for the Indian modified their work and often incorporated alien designs and expectations that challenged if not destroyed the legitimacy of their creativity. The past half century for the Indian has been a struggle to balance the demands of the outside world with a tribal consciousness intended to preserve their cultural heritage.

Modern execution of Southwestern ceramic art, as indicated above, was modified by the economic necessity of many Indians to derive an income from their manufacture. This resulted in a lessening of the ceramic's value in portraying the uniqueness of the Indian as the dictates of the non-Indian market required other considerations. This began with the coming of the railroad in 1880 and the arrival of the tourist trade that popularized Indian ware and provided a market for the goods. Most influential in this movement was Fred Harvey and other lesser known entrepreneurs who often dictated to the Indians the subject of their work. Interesting, too, was the role of the trading post in perpetuating the art of the Indian and providing the most direct contact with him on and off the reservation. The various trading posts were generally run by white businessmen who realized the advantage of maintaining the loyalty and friendship of the Indians. In Navajo land, the Hubbell Trading Post
functioned as an important repository for the rugs that were a major artistic achievement of these people. After 1875, the Keams Canyon Trading Post provided a place for the Hopi to exchange their crafts for manufactured wares of the industrial East. About 1890, Thomas Keam was distributing art pottery made by Nampeyo, a Hopi-Tewa, and modeled after Sikyatki Polychrome and other late prehistoric wares. Nampeyo’s combination of craftsmanship with an antique model was the prototype for art pottery revivals at other pueblos and set the pattern for twentieth century Hopi work. Continued success inspired art pottery elsewhere and revivals were seen at Cochiti, Santo Domingo, Zia and Acoma. This impetus provided by the white entrepreneur perpetuated Pueblo art pottery modeled after historic or prehistoric wares. Without this encouragement, it is doubtful whether Indian art would have been able to withstand the inexpensive china dishes and metal cooking wares brought in by the railroads. In the past two decades a great deal of meaningful symbolism in Indian work has reappeared. While it has remained true that commercialism often determined the low-grade output of many Indians there has nevertheless occurred a significant revival in substantial, meaningful Indian crafts that superseded the crass production of earlier years. This significant work can be seen in major Indian galleries from Santa Fe to New York City and in other countries where the work of the Indian is appreciated for its uniqueness and contributing importance to the culture of mankind.

The revival of native crafts by the 1960s had flowered into a renaissance. A sudden demand for American Indian art, especially pottery, gave native artisans the opportunity to receive premium prices for their goods. A government-sponsored Indian Arts and Crafts Board had long sought to build a nation wide market for Indian art, but demand outside the Southwest remained small. By 1970, however, Pueblo potters and other craftspersons were able to attend the annual Indian Market in Santa Fe or the native craft fairs in Albuquerque, Gallup, Flagstaff, and elsewhere. Here,
they discovered that their art was beginning to realize a much greater value. This
stimulated craftsmanship and interest. It also informed the Pueblos that their inherited
talents were at last gaining recognition from their fellow countrymen. This played a
major role in encouraging an increase in nonprofit co-operatives that were jointly
owned by the various pueblos. The intention of these was to create a facility that
would celebrate the heritage of the Pueblo people, serve as a central location for their
government councils, and, most importantly, encourage the production and sale of
quality Pueblo arts and crafts.

Beginning about 1970, Pueblo pottery was generally constructed on a smaller
scale, more refined and precise in detail than that of the former traditional work.
Emblematic motifs suggesting ritual significance became commonplace. This would
appear to some extent to be reflective of the political recognition that Indians were
involved in as well as a concerted effort to emphasize their artistic freedom from the
domination of the white community. More and more it became evident that basic
aesthetic concepts and manufacturing methods were becoming identified with those of
ancient times. Many Indians who were truly artists realized that personal rivalries,
technical novelties and often a structural formlessness was the consequence of losing
adherence to tribal art traditions. It was becoming evident to many that vitality and
continuation of the unique Pueblo character of any of the Indian arts could only persist,
as is especially true with pottery, when form and content were somehow meaningful to
both the audience and the artist.
Prehistoric and Historic Origins of Southwest Pueblo Indians

The first human activities associated with the Southwest Pueblo Indians occurred about 12,000 years ago. These are best known from the “kill sites” of the Big Game Hunters whose artifacts such as the Clovis Point (a large lanceolate-shaped projectile) indicated the existence of hunting activities of these people. Archaeology indicates that little change occurred for the next 500 years with the Big Game Hunting continuing on the Great Plains into historic times.

This period was succeeded by the Desert Culture whose expanded economy included the gathering of food stuffs as well as hunting. Basic economic and social patterns characteristic in the Southwest today began with the Desert Culture. Important aspects of these people significant to this study are: The introduction of elaborate rituals concerning the care for the dead utilizing pottery, canal digging indicating a growing control of the environment providing more leisure time for the development of mosaic jewelry making, stoneware and ceramics, and the use of many designs that were to appear later in modified form in Pueblo pottery.

The Anasazi people were the best known of the Desert Culture. Their multi­roomed cliff dwellings, many of which remain today, indicated a people of an advanced civilization. The development of an extensive trade of turquoise beads and mosaic pieces to Aztec and Toltec cities of Mexico substantiate this fact. Bewildering, however, to historians and scientists was the abandonment of their inhabited areas during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and their disappearance.

The boundary between the prehistoric and historic of the Southwest is vague at best. Sometime between 1350 and 1550 the Pueblo people increasingly congregated in villages in certain areas of the Southwest. In the sixteenth Century their contact with the Spanish was almost fatal. Disease and warfare decimated the Pueblos by two-thirds, and ultimately, the Spanish impact proved dominant in the lives of these
people. It included such basic changes as the herding of cattle and pigs, the planting of orchards, and the use of the horse. Perhaps most important in controlling these native peoples was the introduction of the Catholic religion. This transformed the Indians culturally and spiritually. Changes in Pueblo decorative traditions from about the mid-sixteenth century until the late nineteenth century was largely the result of demographic, religious, and political effects of contact with one another and conquest. The numerous Pueblo towns of the sixteenth century were reduced to about thirty by 1900 with negative effects on the quality and quantity of their art.

The diversity characteristic of Pueblo settlements was a consequence of several things. Most importantly, were the availability of raw materials, the geographical isolation of the various peoples and the development of complex centers of settlement characterized by their individual peculiarities. Unifying them, however, was the development of pottery which set them apart from other early people. Pottery in historic times for Pueblo Indians was what woodcarving was to Northwestern Indians and bead and quil work were to the Indians of the Plains. It, simply speaking, provided them with an identity. Unfortunately, it has proven to be an identity often difficult to study due to the scarcity of decorative pottery in historic times. Once the early Spaniards gained control, they empathized the utilitarian use of Pueblo pottery, rather than its artistic or aesthetic merit. This discouraged the Pueblo Indians from expanding their pottery beyond its basic forms. Secondly, Pueblo Indians were discouraged by the Spaniards from burying their pottery, both decorated and plain, in the graves of their loved ones according to ancient customs. The abundance of prehistoric pottery in comparison was due to the numerous examples existing in graves of the dead.
The Southwest and the Pueblo Area

The Southwest has been defined as the area bounded by Las Vegas, New Mexico, on the east; Las Vegas, Nevada, on the west; Durango, Colorado, on the north; and Durango, Mexico, on the south. The Southwest has become the home of many modern tribal groups other than the Pueblos: the Pima, the Papago, and Maricopa of the deserts; Tarahumara, Apache, and Yavapai of the mountains; and the Navajo, Havasupai and Utes of the Plateau. The occupation of the pueblo area was sporadic. Population density varied from place to place and time to time. Before 1300 A.D. there were few areas occupied for more than 100-200 years. It was not uncommon, however, for sites to be reoccupied and rebuilt after a period of time.

The Pueblos

The Pueblos are at the same time one and many people. They share a common way of life, possess a uniform world view, and exist on a similar landscape. Nevertheless, they speak a half a dozen different languages and live in more than thirty villages scattered across a 350-mile crescent of land from Taos, New Mexico, to the Hopi mesas in Northern Arizona. Divergent geography consisting of mountains, lakes, and mesas bound the pueblos. The land is stark. Survival depends on water. Consequently, ceremonial dances are utilized to encourage favorable rains so vital to the Indians existence. Additional ceremonies are planned around seasons for planting and harvesting. The need for sustaining crops add to the metaphysical ties of the people to their environment. A duality of existence is portrayed by the sun as Father and the earth as Mother of Indian existence. Every modern pueblo incorporates natural phenomenon into the stories of how its clan gathered from many places to live as one. This location to the Pueblo people is for them “the center of the universe.” Professor of philosophy at Ball State University Mary A. Cooksey recalled
from her extensive studies and personal experiences with Indians of the Southwest the inseparability of the Indian from his surroundings. She indicated that every activity involving an Indian was spiritually associated with something greater than himself whether it be the land, the water, the wind or the sky; a Pueblo Indian was always aware of the significance of a peaceful coexistence with nature. Consequently, it was only natural that this relationship be portrayed in all forms of his creativity.

The Southwest Indians are conveniently grouped for our study into a few significant Pueblos. Some of these Indians have lived in the same villages descending from ancestors that include generations over several hundreds of years. Most Pueblos fall within two language groups, the Keresan and the Tansan. The Zuni Pueblo is a major exception possessing an unrelated language.

Acoma

The Acoma pueblo, which has been occupied since the twelfth Century, is the bridge between the Rio Grande and Western Pueblo culture. It is also the bridge between prehistory and the present in Southwestern pottery making. Archeologists have excavated thousands of bowls from an early people, the Mimbres, who had extensive burial sites along the Mimbres River in Southwest New Mexico. These people developed an extensive pottery making from A.D. 950 to 1150 which provided the foundation for historic pottery of Acoma design. Delores Garcia, a modern day Acoma Pueblo Indian typifies many who see pottery as a personal identification of her people. She says, "we came into this world with pottery and we're going to leave the earth with pottery."

Acoma has been more recently known as Sky City situated above a 367-foot mesa that Puebloans once scaled by a system of ladders and finger-and-toeholed trails. Today, a precarious road leads to Sky City and the city has been recognized as
a National Historic Landmark comprising various stone and adobe houses with approximately fifty residents living there throughout the year. Many more tribal members return for feast days and other celebrations. Central to the livelihood of the residence is the selling of pottery which has become their most readily identifiable trademark. The thin-walled construction and fine-lined designs explain to the observer the popularity of their work. A student of Acoma pottery can distinguish various periods in their technique which helps to date particular pieces. One example is the lengthening of the neck of jars with bolder designs common after 1760. In the late nineteenth Century and continuing until today the use of red-orange and black geometrical and bird designs has remained constant. In fact, Acoma pottery has changed less in the twentieth Century than any of the other Pueblo work with the black-on-white geometric designs attracting the attention of even the novice collector.

**Laguna**

The Laguna pueblo was a traditional Acoma farming area until the 1690s when after the Pueblo Rebellion refugees from several villages established Laguna Pueblo. It continues to have close ties with Acoma in language, customs and pottery. Laguna is the largest of the Keresan-speaking Pueblos consisting of six villages. Historic Laguna pottery was not recognizably different from Acoma pottery until 1830. Laguna potters perfected a variation of white-slipped polychrome with bold and simple designs, often banding the pot with broad stripes and hearts of red. Until, the mines closed, this area possessed some of the world's richest uranium fields. There was a major revival of pottery making in the 1970s with the ware resembling the popular Acoma pottery utilizing polychrome, geometric, and cross-hatching designs characterized by the use of red, yellow, and orange decorations. The inspirations from nature that inspired their work was centered in the figures of the bird, the animal and
various forms of plant life. During the period of 1940-1970, Laguna pottery became practically nonexistent. The traditions of these people were largely continued by the work of Evelyn Cheromiah. Generally speaking, the pottery can be identified as thicker-walled and less precisely executed in design than the here-to-fore mentioned Acoma pottery.

**Santa Clara**

Santa Clara, one of the Tewa pueblos, has popularized redware and carved blackware. Santa Clara is located on a mesa-top built from volcanic tufa. In several respects, it is the best known pueblo because of its long association with centers of Anglo and Hispanic colonization in New Mexico. It was the home of 1500 people before the drought caused resettlement. The carved black ware which began in Santa Clara in the 1920s helped to make this group of artisans the most prolific of all Pueblo groups. The polished black ware was the object of experimentation for other pueblos such as San Ildefonso as early as 1879. The deeper carving than is characteristic of other areas is seen in both black pottery and red ware. The decorative vessel shaped commonly associated with Santa Clara is the wedding vase, a two-spouted vessel, which was used in the traditional wedding ceremony. The best example of the manner in which Pueblo Indians incorporated their traditional past in the design of their work was in the legend of the bear claw that has become distinctly identified with Santa Clara. These Indians believed that a bear led their people to water during a drought and in remembrance of this act of salvation Santa Clara potters began placing bear tracks on their work.
San Ildefonso

San Ildefonso is located between the four sacred Tewa Mountains within the Jemez and the Sangre De Cristo Ranges. Different from pueblos that borrowed heavily from traditional designs the people of San Ildefonso pueblo began in the early twentieth century to devise a distinctive pottery based on late nineteenth inspirations manifested with the introduction of red paint into black designs. Much of the work was undertaken to realize the commercial success of Pueblo pottery at the time. This particular pottery is especially of interest because it was largely popularized by an individual couple, Maria and Julian Martinez. She molded the interesting forms that were decorated by her artist husband. Maria invented a process of applying designs in dull black paint to the polished surface immediately before firing. The result was that in the finished product the design appeared in intaglio on the polished black background. An additional interesting feature was the use of inlaid turquoise and other stones in the work.

Zia

The Zia pueblo is best known for its ancient sun symbol from an ancient ceremonial pot which has become the official emblem for the state of New Mexico and its flag. Rivaling the popularity of this has been the "Zia bird" existing in many polychrome designs. The pueblo exists in land that is agriculturally poor and therefore the people have been dependent on trade for many years. The pottery is strong, thick-walled and decorated with a cream-slip over a brick red body with black mineral designs. Accompanying this are feather symbols and arcs. This pottery as is true with others can be identified as to period. For example, prior to 1800, the jars were spherical with short undecorated necks. The rims were painted red before 1780 and black after. One distinguishing feature is the crushed black basalt temper apparent on
the surface of their ware which appears through the decoration. As was true for many Indian pueblos the modern time has seen pottery grow far beyond its utilitarian purpose to become a way of participating in the larger cash economy of the United States. Interestingly, however, again as is true for other Indian pueblos their pottery has continued to fulfill important ritual needs within the community. As with other Indian pottery there has often been the production of two types simultaneously, one for the market and a more refined sort for their personal use. As the appreciation for fine Indian ware has increased recently it has meant that more of the latter is being produced for sale at the marketplace.

Hopi

Hopi is the only modern pueblo not situated in New Mexico. Living in Arizona, their language is related to the Great Basin Indian people. The Hopis have existed in isolation longer than any other pueblos. Removed from their kin and the influences of the Spanish and the Anglos, the Hopi traditions have remained strong. Traditionally, every Hopi village made pottery. Gradually, however, the mesas specialized in different crafts. The First Mesa produced pottery, the Second Mesa made coiled baskets, and the Third Mesa produced wicker baskets. Women continue to make most of the pottery produced on the First Mesa.

The rediscovery of classic Hopi life happened about the same time that Hopi mesas were being opened up to influences from the outside world. From the Pueblo Revolt in the late seventeenth century to the final years of the nineteenth century, the Hopis lived in isolation from European and American life that had invaded and damaged so many other Indian groups in the last century. Free from the disruptive influences of the Spanish and the missionaries that interfered in the lives of other pueblos, the Hopis were able to continue to pursue their complex ceremonial and
social life without interruption, despite strong Navajo pressures.

Today, pottery from all of the pueblos is largely made for the outside market. However, pots are still made for internal gift giving and ceremonial use. In the last twenty years, more Indians have become active potters. Continuity with past artistic and religious traditions is still expressed as an important aspect of their work.

**Technique**

Fundamental to the construction of pottery is the clay used. This has both a physical and spiritual importance to the success of the project. The sacredness of the soil is indicated by the common practice of many Indians to offer prayer before taking their chosen clay from Mother Earth. It consists of asking permission from her to take part of her body to use for pottery to support themselves and their children. A part of the process is the offering of corn meal in homage to the spirit which reinforces the belief that one must give a part of oneself in return for the gift of clay.

Traditionally, the work of shaping objects from clay was the prerogative of women. The Indians believed that the woman was the compiler of things, the builder of objects, one who made things whole. Today, this belief has been replaced with a more equitable approach to the creation of objects which encourages both sexes to participate in the potter's craft.

The preparation of the clay for use by the potter can involve as much as 24-30 hours of work to mix one cubic foot of clay. Once gathered, the clay must be dried and ground and sieved to clean it from debris. Next, it must be soaked and further purified. Sand is mixed into the clay to allow for slower, more even drying to prevent cracks and shrinking. The clay is further worked with the feet for more strength.
“Coiling” is the technique that more than anything defines Pueblo pottery. This involves placing of coils of clay on top of one another building by courses of coiled clay the basic outline desired by the artist. The surface is shaped and smoothed by the hands of the artist without the use of a rotating wheel which is considered the white man's technique. The other common practice is to pinch from a ball of clay the form desired, often that of small pots, figurines and other shapes not conducive to the coiling technique. The finished product can require from a few hours to a week to produce. Besides the use of the hands to form the contours of the piece, potsherds, gourd rind coconut shells, wooden spoons, paring knives, eyeglass lenses and can lids are only a few of the things used to assist in the forming the objects. Final sanding and polishing eliminate the traces of the coiling of this technique. The shine that is achieved is from the hand-rubbing and the thin solution slip that is often applied to the base. The polishing stones are often family heirlooms passed down from generations. Most Indian craftsmen like to think that their pots are unique consisting of a complex interaction of tradition, convention, and the artist's sensibilities.

The procedure utilized in firing much of the pottery produced today is done in outdoor kilns uses once and then reconstructed by the craftsperson utilizing available materials. This ageless practice has produced pottery of a unique nature which can not be duplicated in the more conventional firings of commercial kilns outside reservations. The use of wood and manure in combination produces the heat necessary to successfully complete the firing in the open air along the edge of the mesas. Gusts of wind at the wrong time, reductions in temperature, unexpected rainfall and other natural phenomena place the Indians success in jeopardy, but this has not seemed to temper the desire of many to continue the traditional practices. When their products do not exemplify perfection this is not considered a serious defeat. According to Indian belief, pots are like people and are not destroyed as a
consequence of imperfection in this construction. To assure as much perfection as possible, however, many Indians utilize the blessings of the medicine men. Regardless, firing is sacred. This alone justifies the inconveniences associated with what many modern people might consider unnecessary and wasteful.

Designs find their inspiration in nature. Plants, rocks and other objects are inspirational. Many times the design is from something seen. At other times dreams inspire as well as one’s imagination. Nevertheless, all traditional decoration has a natural origin. In some cases, modern designing is borrowed from prehistoric patterns not only because of their beauty but because of the importance associated with ancestral origins. Scholars often like to think of Indian designing as the painting of their “stories” utilizing bold intuition and careful thought.

The delicacy and the detail found in the work is possible because of the use of brushes made from a dried yucca leaf chewed so that the correct number of fibers extend from the tip. Usually, this is one to twelve. The paints used by the potters to decorate their ware are as unique as the techniques practiced. Black paint is derived from wild spinach or guaco the boiled down residue from Rocky Mountain beeplant and tansy mustard. Red and yellow paint comes from ocher or iron-rich mineral pigments, ground rock and clay. Each pueblo has a set of traditional designs and each potter paints them in an individual way. Testing the artistic talent of the artist is achieved in a ceremonial where the artist must be able to identify his own piece in a large array of pottery. This requires the ability to identify subtleties obvious only to the individual craftsperson. This is sometimes difficult to do because a particular style can display inexhaustible variations in shape, polish, and painting. Commercial success dictates the signing of the piece by the artist so as to make a particular person’s work readily identifiable to the collector.
Representative Artists

Nampeyo

A group of Tewa people who lived near Santa Fe, New Mexico, abandoned their pueblo and moved to the Hopi pueblo after the Pueblo Revolt in 1680 and the Spanish reconquest in 1692. The Hopis, a nonaggressive people, invited the Tewas, known for their abilities as fierce warriors, to help them in dealing with the Ute raiders. The Tewas settled in a village on the First Mesa named Hano or Tewa Village. These Hopi-Tewas were a minority in Hopi society, and after more than 300 years they remain a distinct group separated from their Hopi neighbors and their distant Tewa kin. Nampeyo, one of the best known and revered Pueblo potters, came from this clan. The potter herself remains virtually unknown, although her work has been coveted, collected, and analyzed by non-Indians from around the world. Nampeyo was born around 1860 in the Tewa Village of Hano on the First Mesa. This gracious, yet quiet woman unable to read, write or speak English became the photo-symbol of the Hopi culture used in promotional literature by the Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company to lure visitors to the Southwest. The pinnacle of her career was during the first years of the twentieth century when she produced large and elegant decorated clay vessels inspired by ancient ceramics of the Sikyatki Revival style.

During the 1890s, American anthropologist Jesse Walter Fewkes began an archeological investigation of a site ancestral to the Hopis. This launched a new phase in the development of Hopi craft. Fewkes along with a young Hopi worker named Lesou, Nampeyo's husband, excavated pots and potsherds that were related to the past but were products of an artistic explosion, a high point in the creation and decoration of pottery in the New World. Lesou brought Nampeyo black-on-orange shards named Sikyatki Polychrome by Fewkes after the First Mesa prehistoric town. By 1900, Nampeyo had fully revived the neo-classic style with her own interpretations.
known as Sikyatki Revival. She rediscovered Sikyatki clay sources, abandoned the white slip that she had used, and polished the yellow body clay itself. Her potteries became far more than mere copies; she instilled in them her own creativity and expression.

Nampeyo recreated complex, sophisticated designs of the past on black-on-orange and black-on-yellow pots. She popularized various shapes characteristic of early Sikyatki wares, such as the low shouldered, flattened water jars with outflaring lips, low bowls with decoration inside, and seed jars with small openings in center and flattened tops that seemed to defy the laws of structural strength dictated by the clay. Her fine line decoration included stylized birds, bird wings, beaks, and feathers creating a feeling of motion and the sense that these birds could swirl away under their own power. Nampeyo also utilized new versions of old Sikyatki designs such as animal forms. Her renditions of these ancient designs were marked by her creative abilities and technical mastery, unlike any other artist. Nampeyo gave her work a sense of freedom, a flowing quality by the use of space or open background.

Nampeyo taught other Pueblo potters as well as members of her family; however, her unique skill has been only rarely surpassed. Other women of First Mesa have followed Nampeyo and with the encouragement of Fewkes' assistant Walter Hough and Thomas Keam’s guarantee of a market, there has been a renaissance in Hopi pottery making.

The promoting of Nampeyo’s work by the Fred Harvey Company provides valuable insight into the perpetuation of Indian art through white entrepreneurial innovation. During the 1900s as the company grew and prospered, the lavish El Tovar Hotel at the Grand Canyon was completed. The Hopi House was conceived at this time. It was a three-story terraced building characterizing a cluster of Hopi dwellings built near the new hotel by Hopi workmen. The structure consisted of rooms on the
first floor to display and sell Indian crafts of various tribes and pueblos. Hopi and Navajo jewelry makers, weavers, basket makers and potters demonstrated their skills to educate the visitors about “the incomparable ethnological advantages this building affords” so that they “will not grudge any purchase, however large, the attractiveness of the display has led them to indulge in,” according to George Wharton James in his 1912 book *Grand Canyon of Arizona: How To See It*.

The Fred Harvey Company took Nampeyo and other Indians off the reservation three times that are documented: to the Hopi House at Grand Canyon in 1905 and 1907 and to Chicago in 1910. The Indians were asked to bring all the necessary materials for demonstrating their crafts as well as some dance accoutrements, clothes, kachina dolls and whatever they might need in their nontraditional, temporary home. The Harvey Company promised Nampeyo and the others warm living quarters, food and what they considered satisfactory prices for the items they crafted while demonstrating to the public. In one instance, Nampeyo, Lesou, their three sons, three daughters, their eldest daughter’s husband and their child arrived shortly after the opening of the Hopi House on January 7, 1905. They stayed for three months. W. H. Simpson in his work, *El Tovar by Fred Harvey: A New Hotel at Grand Canyon of Arizona*, describes the promotion of Nampeyo and her work while in residence. Harvey’s brochures featured photos of the potter and her family on one of the terraces of the stone structure accompanied by the statement, “These quaintly-garbed Indians on the housetop hail from Tewa, the home of Nampeyo, the most noted pottery-maker in all Hopiland.”

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Nampeyo’s reputation extended throughout the United States and Europe. She was acknowledged by name in anthropological reports which was rare for an Indian craftsman of the time. Nampeyo’s pots have been collected for the National Museum in Washington, D.C.
Well-known photographers have captured her image on glass plates shaping clay with her hands or firing the post with sheep dung. She began making smaller pieces to fill the demand for tourists who sought her out on the mesa and for the traders.

Nampeyo died in 1942 in the red-roofed government house issued to her at the turn of the century in Polacca. To Western traders, the potter was a maker of curios. According to Eastern journalists, she was the greatest Indian pottery maker alive.
Maria Martinez

Maria Martinez is the other Pueblo potter to be universally credited with reviving and revolutionizing pueblo pottery. Maria lived in the Powoghe village of San Ildefonso which in the Tewa language means "where the water cuts through." In 1908, she began making polychrome pottery to sell to the tourist market in the style popular with San Ildefonso potters in the late 1800s. Maria’s pots were modeled after broken pots found by archaeologist Edgar Hewett from ancestral Pueblo ruins. They were thin-walled, hard-fired gray pots decorated with fine black lines. She shaped and polished the pots, and her artist husband Julian Martinez decorated them. Their work was considered the finest of San Ildefonso. During her life, she received numerous honors and awards for her work, including two honorary doctorates. In 1968, the American Ceramic Society gave her its highest award for lifelong dedication to clay.

Hewett’s excavation on the Pajarito Plateau at Tyuoni and Frijoles Canyon near San Ildefonso discovered a type of pottery not historically found in the area. The shards were jet and charcoal black in color and some were polished. Maria also worked on the excavation dusting the pots as they came from the dig. Hewett asked Maria to make the black pottery as she thought it would have looked like. Her husband experimented and discovered a method to make the clay turn black in the firing. By 1910, Maria and Julian made the first black pots undecorated to fulfill Hewett’s request. Maria subsequently hid the black pots believing that they were not traditional San Ildefonso pieces. Hewett later brought a group of museum people to visit Maria, and they accidentally discovered the black ware on a back shelf and exclaimed praise over their beauty and glowing surface. With this encouragement, Maria and Julian continued to experiment with clay. In 1918, Maria produced the first decorated black ware, painted by Julian. The initial pieces had matte backgrounds with polished designs known in Tewa as avanyu. The avanyu, a sacred, horned
water serpent, is a symbol of thanksgiving for water and rain. It became a common motif on Southwestern pottery. Julian kept a notebook of his designs and ideas. He revived ancient designs and transformed them to match his artistic vision. In addition to the avanyu, his trademarks included the traditional Mimbres’ radiating feather pattern and upward zigzags representing the kiva steps. Julian may have been the first of the modern pottery painters to adapt Mimbres motifs to his own art. (Brody, Mimbres Painted Pottery)

Maria’s pots were much finer, more highly polished and blacker than the shards from the excavation. In addition to perfecting the polishing, she was unusually dedicated to the quality of line and form. Maria became highly skilled with large forms, perfecting symmetry without the use of a wheel. The intense silvery black color with or without matte designs brought worldwide distinction to the Martinez family, especially Maria.

Maria realized that while this idea of black pottery may not have originated in San Ildefonso it was traditional Pueblo pottery from the area. Therefore, the connection to past Pueblo people was maintained. It was San Ildefonso pottery made with traditional materials and techniques and painted with designs that represented their existence and beliefs.

She demonstrated to other San Ildefonso potters who were interested the technique and encouraged the selling of pots made by other women of the pueblo. Her inspiration and constant enthusiasm spread. The inventiveness and sharing kept the art alive in San Ildefonso. Her pre-1920s work was unsigned; she believed that what mattered most was that it was Pueblo pottery from San Ildefonso, not that a particular woman made a particular pot. By 1925, she began signing her work due to the encouragement from a trader. From this a relatively new practice of collecting the wares of known potters had an immense effect on the market.
Julian's creativity and Maria's skill made Pueblo pottery an individualized art and a profession. The black-on-black pottery was so popular that by 1925 several of the pueblo families supported themselves from pottery sales. For example, Maria and Julian were able to buy a Model-T Ford with their pottery money. It was the first car in the pueblo. Julian decorated it with matte black designs.

Julian died in 1943. Maria continued making pottery at least into 1978, though on a lesser scale despite eye problems and the dependence on a walker or a cane. She has been described as a remarkably vigorous woman with incredibly strong hands to work the clay. Maria died in 1980. Her legacy has been continued through five generations of family potters. Pottery making continues to involve the entire family. Maria combined progressive and traditional elements of American Indian heritage in her pottery. She led the rebirth of artistic pottery making not only at San Ildefonso but at villages throughout the Southwest. Maria's work crosses cultural boundaries and appeals to many different types of peoples.
The Significance of Pueblo Pottery

Pueblo pottery, as mentioned, originated from the earth and provided a significant bond between the land and the people. Beyond this, the decorative designs enhancing the pottery would eventually incorporate the whole universe in the lives of the Pueblo Indians. Place and people became one, and the joining together of the earth and the soul was indistinguishable to the Indian mind. More specifically, for our purposes, pottery captured a refined sense of order, opposition, and balance. Stephen Trimble in his work *Talking with Clay*, 1987, succinctly summarized this idea when he wrote,

> When potters sit down to outline a design on a slipped and polished vessel, they see with a perspective honed by every other aspect of their existence. Pueblo people start with the boundaries of their world and then work toward the center in reaching understanding. They do the same with their pottery. Over and over again, the potters say that they let the clay form itself to whatever shape it wants, without their conscious control; then they simply paint in the design dictated by the form.

One of the most interesting investigations concerning the mind of the Indian craftsman was conducted by Dr. Ruth L. Bunzel, an anthropologist who was formally trained at Columbia University and the University of Chicago. She began her field research studies among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona in the 1920s. In her important work, *The Pueblo Potter: A Study of Creative Imagination in Primitive Art*, originally published in 1929, she devoted a chapter entitled "The Personal Element in Design" to investigating the mental processes of artistic Indian work. She pointed out that planning designs was a prior consideration before any Indian began his project. One Hopi that she interviewed said, "Whenever I am ready to paint, I just close my eyes and see the design, and then I paint it." Dr. Bunzel expressed the opinion that in the case of ceramics "each pot is an individual and significant creation"
of the particular artist. She found that all artists interviewed denied copying anyone else's ideas and that their greatest source inspiration was tradition. Furthermore, the artists she interviewed indicated that they had learned from their mothers the technique of pottery making design and style. Much of this was due to a utilitarian need to use similar ceramic containers for purposes that had been true to the particular Indians for centuries. But interestingly, Bunzel found that when it came to designs many artists indicated that their very private dreams were a source of inspiration as well. This explained to a considerable degree the individuality of particular work and the belief, whether true or not, that no one copied from another.

In her work, Dr. Bunzel discovered that this distinctiveness in an individual's artistic creation tended to place an indelible signature on a particular craftsperson's work that was seen to some extent on all of their other accomplishments. One Zuni woman was quoted as saying, "I am the only person who makes a checkerboard design around the rim. I don't have to use any mark on my bowl because I recognize the design."

Dr. Bunzel concluded her work on the importance of symbolism for the Pueblo potter by suggesting that Indian design would never be confined to a fixed symbolism. She found that there was a marked tendency to clothe most designs with significance of a purely subjective character. Therefore, she concluded that the psychological basis upon which symbolism was created would be a perpetual development. This reduced the need to draw distinct barriers between traditional and contemporary Indian work. For many Indian artists, therefore, their contemporary expressions can be judged as only a extension of traditional inspirations.

The purpose of this writing has been to portray the significance of pottery as a vehicle accomplishing this end. The symbolism indicated in the pottery, as well as its manner of construction, has become a way of perpetuating and revealing the Indian
Its reception by the white man has been a recognition of his awareness that this presence is an significant part of his culture as well as their culture. More conclusively, the role that Pueblo pottery has played has resulted in a combining of tribal consciousness and modern consciousness that has provided an intercultural recognition important to a multicultural society.

For several reasons, pottery excelled as a means of expressing the indigenous characteristics of the Pueblo Indians. First, pottery served a utilitarian purpose. The shape that it took and the decoration applied combined to offer a more revealing picture of Indian life and thought. The symbolism represented by the decoration often had a metaphysical purpose that could easily escape the more casual observation. For example, in Acoma pottery, the symbolism utilized on the various vessels was meant to encourage a bountiful harvest. This application enabled one to better understand the orientation of the Indian to his environment.

Second, pottery was particularly important as a means of indicating the Indians' conception of time. The perpetuation of particular patterns of decoration and the methods of construction lasting generations in the Indian community seemed to dismiss the chronological ordering of things from a simpler to a more complex state as was common for the white man. This continuum of form with function as seen in Pueblo pottery suggested that for the Indian the past and the future were synonymous with the present. The techniques of pottery making seemed to suggest a timelessness that life in the modern day pueblos still exhibits.

Third, pottery is second only to silver in providing a supplemental income to hundreds of Indians in the Southwest today. Those who profit to the greatest extent are often the more highly skilled artisans who have successfully reproduced traditional designs and decorations. Consequently, the volume of their work has meant a greater familiarity for many people with Indian traditions.
Finally, pottery making remains a cottage industry practiced in the family tradition that has passed from generation to generation. Largely found on the reservation, this method of manufacturing has freed the potter from outside influences that would have undoubtedly adversely affected the authenticity of the Indian's work. At the same time, the familiarity and respect that the Indian naturally feels from the close association with his peers enables him to possess a self-esteem that might well be lost if he was forced to compete in an alien environment.

Potter Al Qoyawayma in describing the place of pottery in the culture of the Indian said:

I believe that the ancient potters reflected what they saw, and recorded their world, for all time to see. So our ancient potters were historians...the song of beauty and harmony still echoes in these ancient pots. Perhaps that is why many people are drawn to the pottery, they are seeing a reflection of beautiful personalities from our past. The inner spirit of these ancient ones lives on...my creation becomes just one more thread in an ancient woven pattern.
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The pioneering Hopi-Tewa potter Nampeyo. (Museum of New Mexico #36155)