**Voices of the Puuc angels:**

**Rural life among the archaeological ruins in the Yucatán Peninsula**

Interviewee: Andrés Mena

Interviewer: Tomás Gallareta Cervera

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Andrés Mena (AM): Sunday at this time it was on.

**Tomás Gallareta Cervera (TGC): How long do the pieces take to cook?**

AM: it takes 3 hours to accommodate the pieces and ten hours...

**TGC: How old is your oven?**

AM: About 20 years. But we are repairing it constantly. You have to maintain it. Come here, follow me. The goddess Ixchel, the mother of all the Mayan gods. The god of honey, some say it is from Tulum. And that is Kukulcan.

**TGC: Where do you grab the clay?**

AM: We dig it here ... the mud is what has been washed away by the water, the wind, the dust (inaudible).

AM: See how it is going to sponge. In what I'm going to throw there in the water. It sponges. It's done like that. In a while, look there. When it reaches that shape you can mix it with other material and it can be shaped, as you want.

**TGC: what material do you use to give it consistency (to clay)?**

AM: *sascab*, the one that's there. It is mixed at a 1/1. We wait 2-3 weeks and go into the oven. Two weeks to get completely dehydrated. Let it dry

AM: Let me show you some collectible pieces. Look at this. To store things. All these are collector's pieces. This is already more commercial. This, for example, does not open; it is like to put in an office. Look, it is a toucan what he has. This is another piece, look this also opens. All this is from books. And so are all the pieces, the reproductions.

**TGC:What is your name?**

AM: Andrés Mena Sánchez.

**TGC: My name is Tomás Gallareta Cervera.**

AM: From Becal (Yucatán)?

**TGC: No, but my grandparents are from there.**

AM: I have many friends there, a chubby who sold hats in Merida.

**TGC: That's my grandfather.**

AM: Seriously?! A gentleman! Look, just remembering. A good man.

**TGC: He had a shop, The House of the Hippies, in downtown Mérida.**

AM: But more than a salesman a gentleman, as they are rarely seen.

AM: This, the symbol of doctors, two intertwined serpents, but their origin is Greek. The Greeks don’t see two serpents, but a staff, a staff, and a coiled snake. This is going to be this; here comes a snake, the mouth of the serpent. But I'm going to do it like two, I have a granddaughter who is a doctor. I'll show you one. A month ago they took one, made of hardwood. (inaudible). It is a cane. Do you know about wood?

**TGC: I only know if it's hardwood, for example zapote, cedar ..**

AM: This is red mangrove, this can fall and does not crack, nothing happens to the wood. With the tail.

**TGC: Is it Local wood?**

AM: It is from the mangrove that is on the shore of the sea. It does not rot, nothing happens.On sale.

**TGC: Is it ok if I ask you some questions?**

AM: Of course.

**TGC: We are professors (Pack and Gallareta) and these guys (Spearman and Clothier) are undergraduate students, of anthropology. We want to teach them about different Maya traditions and other things.**

AM: Santiago (Clothier)! Come here! Do you speak Spanish? Why are you studying anthropology? (Inaudible)

**Interview [10: 24min]:**

AM: I came here to Ticul (Yucatán) 38 years ago. I ended up as a teacher (inaudible). I finished my career at the Tecnológico de Mérida and then in the 79 'I finished and went to study a master's degree in Mexico City and came to found a technological studies center, I retired here. But I like to be always doing something. I started to play with the clay. I gave it (a pot) to one person and he told me to do another and another and another and little by little I started to do ... ..and when I realized, I already had a little store and that was when I met your grandfather in Becal, and there he helped me network with other people and I went to Chichen, Valladolid, Cancun, but I stopped doing it. Because of things in life.

**TGC: You learned alone?**

AM: Well, I saw people make some pieces and I said, "I can make them better" so I started buying books to document myself, because you have to do it, now I feel very strong on this issue, I can talk about whatever you want, I was given the opportunity to leave America, visit the museums of Europe, which are magnificent and there are many Mayan pieces there. To check and amaze me more. Many German and Russian archeologists do me the favor of coming here and we talk, that helps me a lot because it's culture. And at the same time I work, but I do not see it (being a potter) as a job, I like it, sometimes I give the pieces away, my daughter gets upset but it is the way that the Mayan culture comes out of our environment, seen from the outside, many travel thousands of kilometers to know what's ours, let's make it easy for them, right?

**TGC: Are your designs exclusively from the Mayan culture?**

AM: For the most part, although sometimes I leave that for the moment nothing more if I like it. Do you mind if we interrupt for a moment, I need to give instructions?

**TGC: In your opinion, who gives you the impression that you buy your handicrafts, are local people, from Ticul, people from, say, other towns such as Muna, Mérida or from outside?**

AM: Everything is there, it depends. If you look at how I have Mayan pieces and I have them around in the central of the shop, it is a local craft, the local people have been looking for pieces to decorate their house, either to put a plant or at the entrance of their house, a figure, a bird, well different things. We have to have the styles of what is bought, what relates to the environment. A lot of foreigners have come to visit us, a lot of North Americans because we have them in the backyard of the house and behind them come Canadians. But there's a lot of Italian, a lot of European, even Russians, I tell you. And usually also many people prepared, the European is a very well prepared person but it is difficult for them to take the pieces (to Europe), they mostly take photographs, they leave happy, I'm telling you, it's not a lot, but they do buy pieces.

**TGC: Are you teaching your children or grandchildren your profession?**

AM: I'm sorry about this because there is no interest, there is no interest, sometimes people are paid to take a two-month course, they come just for the pennies and they leave, they do not care, there's no culture and there is no education. In the primary school books, I see that there is a little (of Maya culture) but they do not give importance to it. I imagine that this is global, culture is being lost, I do not know whether to blame the parents or the government that only cares about the superficial. There are so important things in education that have been lost. Back in the day, there was a class called Ethics, and what happened? There are no values. What is more, when they start to sing the national anthem they forget the lyrics. That is unfortunate. As for my family, I tell you that I accidentally got into this and no one else but my daughter is the one who sees and supervises and the girls accompany her. Maybe through them, we continue, but beyond that, there is no interest. It will be lost, the Maya language and other languages are being lost. If the Mayan language lasts 25-30 years, its because it will be in a museum. Maya is no longer spoken.

**TGC: What would you like to see in the future?**

AM: Many things affect us, it's good to know English, but it's dominating us and ours (language) is getting lost, here I can tell you locally that we had a good soda, Cidra Pino, completely displaced by international monopolies and other things that are being lost. And just as in Yucatan, national identity is being lost. This is going to be difficult. The only thing that we will see are the books of the people who have an interest, after that there will be nothing. I see it; we are influenced on all sides by other countries, if we are losing the mother tongue, what will happen to the rest? What is more, they are combining languages, there is someone who speaks Maya and Spanish and combines it, the same thing happens with French and English, or English and Spanglish, the French-English. It is totally lost, its not ours anymore. The regional dress so elegant, we only see it at parties. Even the beans and corn. Due to international interests.