

**TRADITIONAL HOUSE SAN LUCAS CAMOTLÁN**



Pic. 1: Photo of object

**FACTS**

<b>Altitude:</b>	1800m above sea level
<b>Building Age:</b>	approx. 50 years
<b>Dimensions:</b>	ca. 7x5x2m
<b>Built surface:</b>	ca. 35m <sup>2</sup>
<b>No. of stories:</b>	1
<b>Typology:</b>	adobe shelter
<b>Climate:</b>	wet, temperate
<b>Topography:</b>	mountainous, rugged
<b>Used Materials:</b>	clay, stone, straw, leaves, timber

**INTRODUCTION**

San Lucas Camotlán was for many centuries one of the most isolated villages in the Mixe region. Only when road construction reached Camotlán in the beginning of this century, villagers were able to step into contact with modern society. Since then modernity has taken form in many ways: the import of new food, new drinks, clothes, a change in construction materials and ways of transport, a shift in the social structure within a family, new job opportunities, but also emigration and social problems such as drinking and related violence.

**SITE / LOCATION**

The research object was set in a small valley patch just below the village centre and the road leading towards the zocalo. A recent landslide just missed the zocalo and this traditional building but created a 20 meter wide corridor of destruction right by the building's side. During the clearing work the building, which was already very neglected, was torn down by its owners. He replaced it by a concrete one with a flat roof. This building was the last one of its kind in the village.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**



Pic. 2: Side below the Zocalo



Pic. 3: Building in village valley

Hardly any of the family houses have running water or electricity, although some do. This building nevertheless did not. The inhabitants had to go to a small river nearby to fetch drinking water and to wash their clothes and the produce of their fields. A small gas lamp or candles were the only source of light in the dark house.

Also the building did only have a sand slab in front of the house



Pic. 4: River as water source



Pic. 5: Electricity for modern houses

to dry coffee beans etc. and a mud path leading to the house, not a concrete slab, which is common with the newer houses.

**SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

The entire family, which usually consists of the grandparents, mother and father and two to four children, lives in this one room house. It is normal that some family members, especially the men and sons live in the nearest big city to work, and return to their home village only occasionally.



Pic. 6 Family in front of house



Pic. 7 Family inside house

The grandparents hold a key position in the family hierarchy. They teach the children customs and traditions, and hold up the family moral. They are advisers and decide in family matters such as marriage or investments. They take part in the education of the children, more so as the mother, who is working in the house and on the field.

**USE**

The house is basically one large room split up in different functional areas. There is a central place for cooking and preparing food, a storage place, an altar and a place to sit. Usually the inhabitants sleep in hammocks, which are stored



Pic. 8 Traditionell cooking place



Pic. 9 Storage place inside house

away during the day. The clear area in front of the house is used to dry produce and to meet during the day.

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

A special feature is the altar and the traditional cooking place. The food is prepared over an open fire within the house.

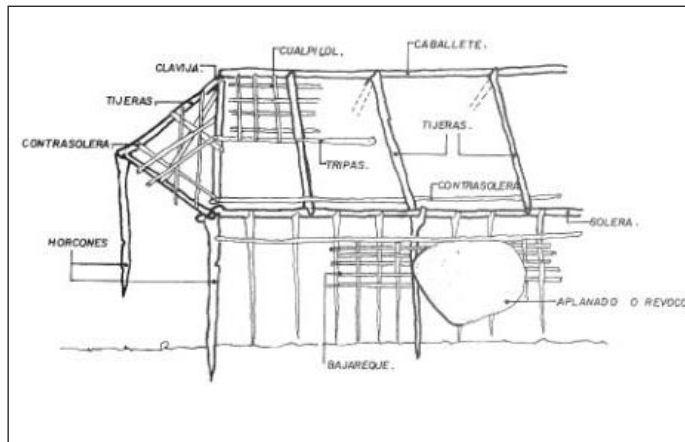


Pic. 9 Altar

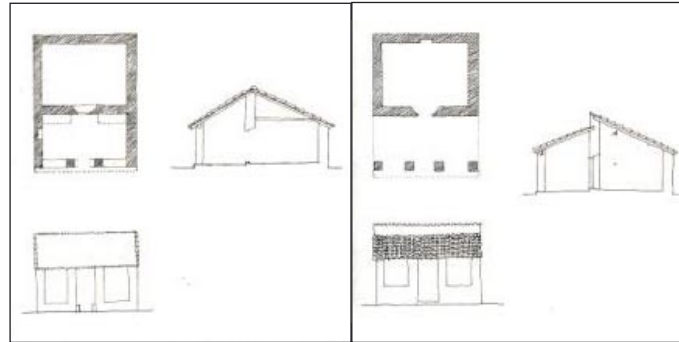
Pic. 10 Altar

**CONSTRUCTION**

The construction process is fairly simple and traditional. At first the timber pillars and wicker-work are built up. Then follows the roof construction, also with wicker-work to connect the grass or palm leaves to. The walls are covered with clay and stones. In the end some timber frames for the door and windows are constructed and the inside furniture is done. A construction like this can take from a few weeks to a couple of months depending on the time of the owner. They are usually build with one or two people and by the owners themselves.



Pic. 11 Scheme of construction



Pic. 12-13: Typical floor plans

**FOUNDATIONS**

Normally the adobe houses have a foundation of natural stone or concrete. But this bahareque house has none. The timber pillars are just rammed into the ground. To give some more stability and to keep the wall from braking out, there seems to be some stone wall construction outside of the house.



Pic. 14-15 Make-shift wall support of stones

**WALLS**

The walls are done in the typical bahareque way. Vertical timber pillars support the timber wicker-work made of small flexible timber beams. This wicker-work is stuffed with a mix of clay and small stones, and then covered with clay. This construction is extremely delicate when in contact with rain. An over-hanging roof structure which protects the walls is necessary. Even with a god roof, cracks and loose patches appear due to the weather and constant maintainance is needed.



Pic. 16 Wall construction detail Pic. 17 Wall

**OPENINGS**

Due to the bahareque construction the few windows in the house are fairly small. There is no glass in the window only timber shutters. There is one timber door with a timber lock.



Pic. 18: Window from outside

Pic. 19: indow from inside

**ROOF**

The roof construction consists of a timber construction and is



Pic. 20 Roof from inside

Pic. 21 Roof from outside

covered with grass (pasto) or palm leaves. This type of cover creates a more comfortable climate and acoustics within the house compared to the common metall covers. The disadvantage though is the need for continual maintainance.

### ENCLOSURE

The property is normally fenced off with a wooden fence construction or just the planting of cacti or other plants in the back of the house. The place in front of the house is open. Animals such as turkey and chicken run free, pigs and more expensive animals are caged in.



Pic. 22: cooking place

Pic. 23 Cooking instrument

### INNER BUILT ELEMENTS / FURNITURE

The cooking place of adobe and the timber storage place form the only inner build elements.

### PROBLEMS / CHANCES

The main reason why this way of construction is not accepted so well is, that insects and mice tend to live in the grass roof and that the roof needs continuing maintainance. Because of the cooking place and open fire within the house, a lot of soot develops. This helps to keep insects away, but also completely covers the walls and ceiling and turns them black.



Pic. 24: roof damage

Pic. 25: soot damage

Advantages of this construction are low construction costs and the environmental friendliness.

#### Images:

Pic.-Nr.: 1-25 Carola Scholz

#### Literature:

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#### Websites:

<http://www.ienegi.com>