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Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization

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Nuria Ciofalo
Editor

Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization

Springer

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West Hills, CA, USA

ISSN 1574-0455 ISSN 2197-7984 (electronic)
International and Cultural Psychology
ISBN 978-3-030-04821-1 ISBN 978-3-030-04822-8 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018963993

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

This book emerged from four corners, (1) my interest and commitment to dedicate my life and vocation to the understanding of indigenous cosmogonies and praxes; (2) the conviviality forged with indigenous communities in Mexico and Hawaii; (3) intergenerational relationships with the Mayan Lacandon community of Lacanja Chansayab, and (4) the collaboration with young and adult leaders of the Lacandon Rainforest over 8 years.

I was born in a colonized country, Mexico, as a child of European colonizers who delegated the raising of their children to their indigenous domestic workers. I learned to love my *Nahuat* (Aztec) surrogate mother more than my biological parents. Becoming increasingly aware of the violent injustices caused by colonialism that have fortified the still existing racism against the peoples who inhabited the American continent before the Europeans arrived, I learned to deeply despise my parents, my family legacy, and myself. As Fanon and Memmi so clearly analyzed, the colonized personality of the *Criollos* (the colonizers' children born in stolen lands) splits in two: one, the colonizer's and the other, the colonized personality. Turbulent confrontations and tensions with the effects of this split, that helps to maintain a racist system for the benefit of the colonizer's elite, nourished my deep interest to learn from indigenous cosmogonies and ways of life. As a child, I craved to spend time in the town of my indigenous caretaker, *Ofe*, who taught me to understand her Nahuat language and culture, and to love her family. My parents sent me to a German school built in the city of Puebla, where I was raised and where the Volkswagen plant settled. My parents hoped that this European education, intended to be for the children of the German plant's White collar elite, would fortify my colonizer's personality and win over the colonized in me. This education gave me a scholarship to earn a psychology degree in Germany. However, it only strengthened my doubts of the validity and applicability of this discipline in the indigenous communities in which I wished to practice. Several years later, I worked in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the state of Oaxaca relating with *Zapotec* children and families who were facing pervasive environmental impacts caused by the oil company owned by the Mexican government, *Petroleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX). Instead of treating families to heal their psychological suffering, I felt the need to

build solidary relationships with these communities and fight injustice, human rights' infringements, ecological degradation as well as to learn from their rich cosmogonies and praxes that have resisted these violent acts. A psychology learned in the West was of no use in these indigenous communities but only one that could be informed by their own culture. Coming to the conviction that I needed to acquire knowledge in systems rather than individual change as well as in indigenous psychologies, I went to Hawaii for graduate studies in community psychology, rural and regional planning, and to learn from the inspiring Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

Along the road toward the forging of academic and community collaborations that may trace possibilities for the co-construction of transformative systems change, I encountered mentors who guided me in this journey. Eduardo Almeida and Maria Eugenia Sanchez Diaz de Rivera taught me how to build deep horizontal relationships based on daily affective conviviality with the Nahuat community of San Miguel Tzinacapan, Puebla, in which they have lived and practiced for more than 40 years. I developed affective relationships with indigenous communities in Central, Northern, and Southern Mexico, presented at conferences with indigenous partners and friends, and wrote on indigenous women's ways of knowing in collaboration with Kumiai and Mayan Lacandon cultural healers.

My first encounter with the community of Lacanja Chansayab happened 8 years ago. This book emerged from a deep interest to learn from their Mayan indigenous psychologies. It is a collaborative project that is allowing us to learn from each other and to co-construct a vision of the world in which, as the Zapatistas have loudly voiced, many worlds are possible. One of the co-authors, Ernesto Chancayun, was 17 years old when I first met him. He introduced me to his community and has kept in touch over the years. Ernesto fulfilled his dream of earning a university education and staying in his community to make a difference. He shared this dream with me the first time I met him, when we were resting at the top of the Bonampak pyramids, inside the Temple of the Murals.

Working at the Lacanja Elementary School, one of my young students introduced me to his father, Mario Chambor, a talented artist who collaborated with me and the school teachers producing community theater based on ancestral legends that convey their cultural values of deep respect for animals and nature. A year later, Mario accompanied me to present our work at a community psychology conference in Miami. There he had the dream he shared in this book. Years later, I met a youth collaborative dedicated to raise environmental consciousness and promote international policies that can protect the rich biodiversity still existing in their Lacandon Rainforest. We worked together to find ways in which we could ask for international solidarity to make their vision come true.

Most recently, we gathered together to co-write this book. We had long conversations over many hours sitting outdoors in the midst of the rainforest within a cacophony of birds and insects that accompanied us. We talked about what indigenous psychologies meant to each of us; the historical factors that have caused the imposition of other ideologies on indigenous cultures; the pervasive effects of colonization that are still present in manifestations of coloniality of being, feeling,

and acting caused by globalization; the popular power that indigenous communities have to resist them, and how their cultures have survived and are still alive and thriving in spite of these predatory acts. We had long and painful discussions about the use of terms such as "Indian" and "indigenous" as descriptors of their identity. The young co-authors expressed these were descriptors given to them by the colonizers but that they would prefer to be named according to their languages such as Lacandon, Tzoltzil, and Tzeltal. The common understanding was that we remain conscious of the colonial context and resist perpetuating factors that maintained it, but we would use the term of "indigenous psychologies" to embrace all that manifested in their commitments, passions, dedications in their professional and everyday life as well as collective memory, spirituality, dreams, and imagination.

Chapter 1 introduces the historical context of colonization and the possibility of co-creating decolonial approaches to knowledge and praxis generation embracing indigenous ways of knowing as well as praxes that have informed the design of localized indigenous psychologies around the globe. Within the boundaries of this book, some limited examples of these psychologies are presented briefly, acknowledging that many more were left out. The chapter concludes with a sketch of the emergence of Mexican psychologies within a conflicting context of colonization and contestation for independent identities.

Chapter 2 expands the study of the ecological and ideological context existing in the Lacandon Rainforest region since the Spanish colony until now, including their own cosmogonies and mythologies that have existed in syncretism or concurrently with colonial religious ideologies. The methodology applied in this work is described and possibilities for the co-construction of decolonial knowledge and praxes are designed and implemented in the consecutive chapters.

Chapter 3 is a testimony of the long process of building affective relationships and community praxis. The title of this chapter is inspired by the collective dreams of a group of Lacandon children who wrote a theater play as a school project. It narrates a story about ghosts, the Mayan God of Death, *Kisin*, the river that crosses their community, and their struggle to send the bad God out of the planet to stop community divisions and nightmares. Throughout the book, in order to respect all religious beliefs, I capitalize the words Gods or Goddesses, independent to which religious system these refer, Christian or Mayan.

In Chap. 4, Mario Chambor describes the dream he had in Miami, where we met to present at a conference, and that he nourished with others with whom he built a collaborative to continue the praxis of cultural celebrations and rituals. The authors propose that these celebrations support the construction of a community school in which generations can learn their culture and language.

In Chap. 5, Ernesto Chancayun shares the thesis he wrote to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Ecological Resource Management at the Technological University of the Rainforest. In this work, he evidenced his deep commitment with his community and natural habitat describing how he conducted relevant research to preserve ecological sustainability.

Chapter 6 is a collaborative project carried on by a youth collaborative representing the three ethnic groups that coexist in the Lacandon Rainforest, all of them Mayan but who speak different languages: Lacandon, Tzeltal, and Cho'ol. The youths, Maria Esther Velasco, Ernesto Chancayun, Marwilio Sanchez, and Carlos Chambor, share their committed praxes to take care of their Lacandon Rainforest. They invite readers to create solidary networks to support international policies that preserve the rich biodiversity still existing in their beloved habitat, as well as in the one world that belongs to all and to which we all belong.

In Chap. 7, the two young authors, Ernesto Chancayun and Maria Esther Velasco, share the ancestral knowledge learned from their grandparents and passed on to generations. Chanuk Chan 'Kin, a mother of four and a talented artisan, shares myths and legends that her grandfather taught her. Lastly, Marwilio Sanchez expresses his deep connection with the Lacandon Rainforest with poems and images. In the conclusive Chap. 8, without decoding the co-authors' contributions in Western, scholarly language, this collaboration is presented as a project of epistemic resistance to bring Mayan indigenous psychologies, conceived as the holistic expression of their passions, interests, dreams, dedications, and commitments, at the center of discourse. These epistemologies allow for the co-construction of a world in a different way, in which many worlds can coexist, and thus reflect possibilities to address the pervasive ecocide and epistemicide still existing in our troubled times.

West Hills, USA Nuria Ciofalo

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Chapter 1
Indigenous Psychologies: A Contestation for Epistemic Justice

Nuria Ciofalo

Cultural and Scientific Colonization

Colonization of the American continent occurred in the name of European kings under the justification of Christian ideology (and, nowadays, in the name of global capital and transnational corporations). The main justification remains the preservation and accumulation of material wealth for the powerful and dominant elites and nation-states. It also happens under the guises of economic, political, religious, educational, and military "protectionism."

Henry (1986) argued that before imperial colonization, religion was dominant in all cultural systems. However, with the emergence of the capitalist world system, colonies and powerful nations began developing in different directions. While powerful countries constructed capitalist systems of production, the new elites gradually came to control the machines of a new and far-reaching imperium. Mythology and the metaphysic worldview of religion were replaced by a market and instrumental rationality to support systems of profitable scientific production, control, and abuse of nature. This violent act has caused severe ecological degradation (ecocide) and cultural genocide (epistemicide) (de Sousa Santos 2016). The colonized countries experienced—and, through globalization, continue to experience—brutal cultural change in the form of structural and symbolic adjustment processes aimed at facing, supporting, and legitimizing the foreign cultural hegemony (Fanon 1963/2004; Maldonado-Torres 2016; Marsella 2015; Mignolo 2011a).

Colonization had a devastating effect through the greedy extraction of not only natural resources but also of entire cultural assets. For some scholars, colonization has not ended. For instance, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) reminded us to ask whether they (the colonizers) ever left the colonies. Similarly, de Sousa Santos (2016) reflected that the still-existing dichotomies of nature/society, savage/civilized,

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_1

developed/undeveloped provide evidence that the colonial past remains in the post-colonial present.

Among feminist scholars, one common shared definition of power is control of resources and domination of others for the sake of a specific group, class, sexual orientation, or gender. Power is withheld by individuals, groups, institutions, or nation-states whose position in it gives them privileges to control economic, social, cultural, religious, and political decisions. This process influences the allocation of resources and restricts opportunities to seize popular power. Domination is the result of the application of power on nature, humans, other-than-humans, and objects. Exploitation, ambition, and greed are the leitmotivs used for the selfish purposes of profit making.

Egocentrism is the psychological stage that relates the perception of the world to one's own values, beliefs, desires, needs, and actions. Similar to this concept, ethnocentrism refers to a tendency or inclination toward perceiving reality from the vantage point of one's own cultural experience. As a result, consciously or unconsciously, we center or anchor our perceptions and affects within a biased viewpoint. The egocentric state described by psychoanalytic theory may end in a narcissistic state of self-centered cognition and affection (Jung 1933; Gruba-McCallister 2007; Watkins and Schulman 2008). Marsella (2003) stated that when ethnocentricity is combined with the power to control knowledge and opinion, the results are dangerous because we are blinded to the possibilities of difference and diversity in the construction of our lifeworld.

Evolutionary scientists viewed the loss of indigenous people resulting from violent and massive colonization and exploitation as only the tragic loss of study materials (Smith 2012). The primary cognitive and affective consequence that remains pervasive today is the genocide caused by territorial expansion and supported by intolerance of otherness. This pervasive ideology constitutes a regime of truth that helps perpetuate conditions of power as a means of silencing other ways of knowing, feeling, and acting. It constitutes hegemonic science manifested mostly in its logical, positivist paradigm. Consciously or unconsciously, people think and act through dominant paradigms and attach affects to them. As Kuhn (1970) observed, paradigms are changes in scientific perceptions (or regimes of truth) and these changes are perceived as threats. Regimes of truth defend against these threats through the imposition and preservation of their paradigms. Because paradigms are anchored in culture, our perceptions of reality and ways of knowing are culturally constructed; thus, it is tempting to be ethnocentric in our assumptions (Marsella 2003). The study of other ways of knowing within the context of cultural difference helps us avoid ethnocentricity and apply self-reflexivity to de-construct our own culturally anchored assumptions. At the same time, as Mignolo stated (2000/2012) it is essential to be aware of the "colonial difference" that is marked by colonization and that has regarded other-than-Western knowledge systems as inferior, barbaric, or primitive (see also Deloria 2009; Smith 2012; de Sousa Santos 2016—among others).

As a means of contesting and resisting the colonizing forces, peoples of the colonies have mobilized to reclaim political, economic, and cultural independence from those countries that have invaded their territories. Although the struggles for

independence in many colonized countries have been, in part, successful, it is an ongoing struggle, as it has been internalized, psychologically and territorially, constituting the coloniality of power, feeling, and being (Maldonado-Torres 2016; Quijano 2000).

Movement Towards Decolonization

Decolonial efforts are proliferating around the world, particularly in countries that have experienced—and continue to experience—colonization. Important contributions have emerged from scholars who are consciously departing from epistemologies produced in Europe and the United States of America (US)—epistemologies that have been considered superior, scientific, and universal. These epistemologies were—and continue to be—used to oppress and dominate as a key strategy of colonization and the formation of imperial expansion, not only of economies but of ways of thinking, feeling, and being.

As an enormous project of resistance, epistemologies of the South (see Leff 1995; Escobar 2003; Maldonado-Torres 2016; Mignolo 2011b; Quijano 2000; de Sousa Santos 2016—among others) are emerging from these places and their struggles. Catherine Walsh (2007) pointed at the power exercised by processes of neoliberal globalization that regulates scientific theory and its application, judging what constitutes legitimate conceptions of knowledge generation on culture and nature, as well as their relation to political economy (p. 103). In this process, the legitimacy of all other forms of knowing that depart from Euro-American conceptions—valued as rational and scientific—are denied. Other forms of legitimizing knowledge are categorized by race. Eze (2008) named this process "the color of reason" or what Du Bois (1994) called "the color line." de Sousa Santos (2016) added

> Modern western thinking is an abyssal thinking. It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of 'this side of the line" and the realm of "the other side of the line." The division is such that "the other side of the line" vanishes as reality, becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent. Nonexistent means not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being…. It is unimaginable to apply to them not only the scientific true/false distinction but also unascertainable truths of philosophy and theology that constitute all the acceptable knowledge on this side of the line. On the other side of the line, there is no real knowledge; there are beliefs, opinions, intuitions, and subjective understandings, which, at the most, may become objects or raw materials for scientific inquiry. Thus, the visible line that separates science, philosophy, and theology, on the one side, from, on the other, knowledges rendered incommensurable and incomprehensible for meeting neither the scientific methods of truth nor their acknowledged contesters in the realm of philosophy and theology. (pp. 119–120)

Modern science has been used as a strategic colonization tool that, as Anibal Quijano (2000) showed, has become a coloniality of power restricting equal distribution of its potential benefits "…as it was originally designed to convert this side of the

line into the subject of knowledge and the other side into the object of knowledge. The real-world interventions it favors tend to be those that cater to the social groups with greater access to scientific knowledge" (de Sousa Santos 2016, p. 193).

Modern science is compartmentalized into disciplinary boundaries. Anthropology is one of the most important disciplines that has made distinctions between objects of study: the aboriginal, the barbarians, the underdeveloped and uncivilized Indians, and the Western scientists, mostly European or North American men, the superior subjects who study, analyze, interpret, and represent the inferior objects of study—and that includes women of all races. In this process, the knowledge of the objects of the study was and continues to be devalued, ignored, and replaced by the superior knowledge systems of the colonizers. As a result, we must ask: How can we bring to the foreground knowledges that have been placed on the other side of the line—those "rendered incommensurable and incomprehensible"? How can we, on this side of the line, co-construct knowledges that can produce anti-racist and decolonial praxes?

Marsella (2009) reminded us of the abuses of Eurocentric psychology applied to other cultures. Like all social sciences, psychology has contributed to the project of colonization. To decolonize the social sciences in general, and psychology in particular, we must invite dialogue about the opportunities and challenges that address the epistemological hegemony formed within Western regimes of knowledge. Psychology's history has traditionally been described within the context of European history and then, later, of US history. However, other origins have been contested and reclaimed, particularly from geographical locations that have experienced colonization. The dominant discourse of US-Eurocentric science has excluded epistemologies from colonized localities. This constitutes what decolonial intellectuals and activists from the South have termed the "geopolitics of knowledge" (Mignolo 2000/2012).

A decolonial social science must analyze the extent to which a particular mainstream discipline such as psychology has valued only Euro-American theories and practices, making other, non-Western approaches irrelevant, useless, primitive speculation, superstition, sorcery, and, thus, incommensurable, incomprehensible, and invisible. de Sousa Santos (2016) stated

> …despite the apparently unshakable hegemony of the arguments invoked by Eurocentric world history to demonstrate the uniqueness of the West and its superiority, there is room to think of a non-Occidentalist West. By that I mean a vast array of conceptions, theories, and arguments that, though produced in the West by recognized intellectual figures, were discarded, marginalized, or ignored because they did not fit the political objectives of capitalism and colonialism that act as a foundation for the construction of the uniqueness and superiority of Western modernity. (p. 99)

Consequently, we must ask where contemporary psychology falls within this legacy of coloniality and whether other psychologies produced in the non-Occidentalist West and East could be constituents of decoloniality. In this process, we must delink the hegemonic paradigms entrenched in current US-Eurocentric social science (Mignolo 2000/2012). In doing so, the linguistic colonial practice that privileges English as the legitimized and universal discourse must be disrupted to address

the pervasive consequences of linguistic colonization manifested in the coloniality of power, feeling, and being (Quijano 2000; Maldano-Torres 2016; Mignolo 2000/2012, 2011a).

We must co-construct methodological approaches that disrupt those being used in the current US-Eurocentric scientific discourse. We must publish examples of decolonial praxes from which we can develop a decolonial psychology. de Sousa Santos (2016) proposed the use of frameworks based on "ecologies of knowledges" as counterepistemologies that confront monocultures and hegemonic globalization.

> It consists of granting 'equality of opportunity' to the different kinds of knowledge involved in even broader epistemological arguments with the view to maximizing their respective contributions toward building 'another possible world,' that is to say, a more just and democratic society, as well as one more balanced in its relation to nature. Two main factors account for the emergence of the ecology of knowledges. The first of these is the strong political presence of peoples and worldviews on the other side of the line as partners in the global resistance to capitalism, that is, as significant agents of counterhegemonic globalization. The second factor is the unprecedented confrontation between radically different conceptions of alternative society, so much so that they cannot be brought together under the umbrella of a single totalizing alternative. (p. 190–192).

Catherine Walsh (2007) has challenged the construction of knowledge within the ecology of the academy because it is embedded within systems of coloniality that support capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. Other feminist scholars have proposed focusing on everyday conviviality, on ecologies of praxes produced by those whom hegemonic regimes of knowledge have made them invisible. However, in this process, Elena Yehia (2007) urged us to look closely at the actors who produce and reproduce practices of the expulsion of those who inhabit other worlds, ways of being, feeling, and acting.

Epistemologies and praxes from colonized localities have been excluded from the dominant US-Eurocentric discourse. A counterhegemonic praxis would center localized knowledges and different ways of being and acting in the world as the central ecology for co-constructing decolonial epistemologies. Dutta (2016) analyzed the hierarchical systems of academy that produce monolithic narratives judged as superior to other, excluded knowledge systems emerging from peripheral localities of praxes. As academics resisting coloniality, we must create nonhierarchical, reciprocal relationships with the communities in which we practice, as their knowledge systems are regarded as peripheral to the academic, hegemonic center. Almeida and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2016b) emphasized openness, humility, and trust as key ingredients for learning from cultures that have historically been silenced and erased. We must learn from what Vizenor (2008, 1999) called *survivance* practices in communities, constantly identifying coloniality and contesting false universalisms and colonial ideas about the religious, economic, and cultural underdevelopment of non-European societies. Furthermore, Marsella (2009) shed light on the need to critically analyze decontextualized understandings of the psychological, including psychopathology.

In the 60s and 70s, the movement to reconceptualize the cultural and social sciences had a global theme but failed to include the contributions of people of color from dominant countries as well as those kept at the margins, rejected, silenced,

made invisible and unknown (Walsh 2007). In Latin America, innovative psychologies evolved to address the structural factors causing poverty and the exploitation of the majority of the population. These socially responsible psychologies became predominantly interdisciplinary and creative in nature. Psychologists applied strategies, tools, and methods based on popular education and solidarity with those excluded from knowledge production and political action (Almeida 2012; Montero 2008: Montero and Serrano-Garcia 2011).

Currently, social scientists in this Southern region of the world are critiquing Western hegemonic discourse and are committed to de-constructing the still-existing coloniality of knowing and being within Western science and technology (Escobar 2003). These scholars have urged us to reconceive academic disciplines "from below," from the perspectives of those whose knowledge and praxis systems have been erased (Almeida and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera 2015, 2016a; Sanchez Diaz de Rivera and Almeida 2005). In confronting the claimed superiority of knowledge by Western capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy, de Sousa Santos (2016) posited that there are other knowledges in which Western science had played no role. For instance, "…the preservation of biodiversity made possible by rural and Indigenous forms of knowledge, which, paradoxically, are under threat because of increasing science reading intervention (de Sousa Santos et al. 2008)" (p. 201).

Being constantly aware of the "geopolitics of knowledge production" (Mignolo 2000/2012), we must imagine "alternatives *to* modernity" that transcend "alternatives *of* modernity" (Escobar 2003; Mignolo 2005; Yehia 2007). The authors of the Global South proposed that for this to happen, we must listen to the silence in our own theoretical frameworks and in relationship models with those who have been excluded from the benefits and opportunities of modernity, or what de Sousa Santos (2016) called the "ecologies of absences." In counterhegemonic resistance to these ecologies, through a process of deep self-reflexivity, being constantly on guard, questioning our theories and praxes, and imagining that which has not yet been manifested, ecologies of emergencies evolve as a permanent possibility of alternative configurations that avoid one episteme. de Sousa Santos (2016) recommended that in this process we use

> …intercultural translation that questions both the reified dichotomies among alternative knowledges (e.g., Indigenous knowledge versus scientific knowledge) and the unequal abstract status of different knowledges (e.g., Indigenous knowledge as a valid claim of identity versus scientific knowledge as a valid claim of truth). …[It] enables us to cope with diversity and conflict in the absence of a general theory…. it is a living process to be carried out both with arguments and with the emotions deriving from sharing under an axiology of care. (p. 212–213)

Building everyday conviviality with those placed under the oppressive side of "the line," the one that de Sousa Santos (2016) referenced as the manifestation of the margin, the erasure, the absences, we can start including multiple voices. By building relationships with local communities and learning from them, we can co-construct popular knowledge that promotes the co-creation of innovative paradigms for transformative praxes. As de Sousa Santos (2016) proposed, this enables the generation of other knowledges (*otros saberes*). We must disrupt the colonial practice

of privileging English-written psychology literature and practice what Bakhtin (1981) called "heteroglossia" that emerges through the process of dialogic imagination. In this way, polyphony will create innovative possibilities to co-construct diverse psychologies.

A central issue that indigenous scholars have addressed is the imposition of Western paradigms as universal truths representing one science for all, the subordination of indigenous peoples, the inequality of power, and the lack of opportunities to access resources. Indigenous Psychologies are based on plurilogues of decolonial epistemologies and praxes to co-construct a different world in which—paraphrasing the Zapatistas from Chiapas, Mexico—many worlds can exist.

Indigenous Psychologies

> Plurilogue engagements bring these conceptual strategies and understandings of multiple oppressions together to more effectively ascertain the complexities of, and varied strategies for, resisting racialized, heteropatriarchal oppressions of global capitalism and colonialism. Shireen Roshanravan 2014, p. 42

Indigenous Psychologies are systems of knowledge and wisdom based on non-Western paradigms originating in their particular ecologies and cultures (Kim et al. 2006). Indigenous Psychologies de-construct psychological phenomena within political, economic, historical, philosophical, religious, cultural, and ecological contexts. Kim and Berry (1993) defined Indigenous Psychologies as "the scientific study of human behavior or mind that is native, that is not transported from other region, and that is designed for its people" (p. 2; cited in Kim et al. 2006, p. 5). By contrast, psychology, as a legitimized discipline within Western scientific paradigms, has attempted to de-contextualize psychological phenomena and has produced universal theories based on White male regimes of truth. Indigenous Psychologies question the universality of existing Western scientific paradigms and incorporate context, meanings, values, beliefs, and locality into research designs and knowledge generation. Kim and Park stated, "Existing psychological theories are not universal since they have eliminated the very qualities that allow people to understand, predict, and control their environment" (p. 31).

Colonial resistance and the centralization of indigenous ways of knowing were stimulated by the paradigm crisis in psychology experienced from the late 1960s (Kim et al. 2006). The collective contestation is that existing psychological theories are not universal. Psychological phenomena must be understood in their ecological, historical, philosophical, religious, political, and cultural context, and at the same time, global context (Marsella 1998, 2013).

Native peoples of the Americas, aboriginal peoples in Australia and New Zealand, Chinese, Japanese, African, Filipino, Hawaiian, Latin American, and Indian scholars (among others) are contesting the imposition of colonized epistemologies and bringing their own systems of knowledge to the center of discourse. Having been born in Mexico and trained in the West, I discovered a lack of applicability among

mainstream psychological theories and methodologies while working with several indigenous communities in Mexico and Hawaii. Non-Western psychologists have asserted that Western psychological theories and their related praxes are "culture-bound, value-laden, and with limited validity" (cited in Kim et al. 2006, p. 4). In the US, the late 1960s paradigm crisis in Western psychology was influenced by neo-colonial rejection emerging from various countries around the world. Kim et al. (2006) stated that a collective contestation emerged towards the blind acceptance of universal psychological theories

> …since they have eliminated the very qualities that allow people to understand, predict, and intervene in their environment and thus, psychological phenomena must be understood in its ecological, historical, philosophical, religious, political, and cultural context. (p. 5)

Developments in cultural and cross-cultural psychology under Western paradigms have targeted the study of people in context (Tricket et al. 1994). However, indigenous scholars have criticized cross-cultural psychology because it is based mainly on linear models of causality and the imposition of Western standards. Western culture is considered the norm; Western cultural behavior is labeled "civilized or normal" if it aligns with the hegemonic norms and "abnormal, deviant, pathological or primitive" if it is misaligned with them (Deloria 2009; Marsella 1998, 2009, 2015; Smith 2012).

Positivist paradigms are based on a Cartesian dual thinking that separates mind, body, psyche, and spirit. These paradigms are used to understand an assumed universal, cultural behavior. The researcher's power, expertise, and control are emphasized. By contrast, Indigenous Psychologies emerge from paradigms, epistemologies (how we create knowledge), ontologies (what is knowledge), and axiology (the implicit values in knowledge construction) that bring, at the center, interdependence and relationships (Wilson 2008). For Mignolo (2000/2012), relationality is a key strategy for promoting decolonial encounters that can generate other epistemologies (*otros saberes*).

Another critique has been that Western psychologies have focused primarily on the individual. For example, Kim and Park (2006) stated that "In psychiatry, Freudian theory has traditionally dominated the conceptualizations and treatment of the mentally ill" (p. 37). Western, universal generalizations were—and continue to be—imposed as the norm under both Freudian psychoanalysis and hegemonic psychology. Cultural differences are explained based on assumptions of the superiority of one race over other races or what Mignolo (2000/2012) has coined "the colonial difference." These assumptions help justify systems of power, oppression, and the exploitation of others for the sake of monocultural hegemony and the colonization of other races, lands, and cultures (de Sousa Santos 2009; Quijano 2000; Shiva 1997). However, dramatic cultural differences exist. It can be said that Western thinking is primarily individualistic as opposed to non-Western thinking, which has regarded the individual embedded in its social and ecological context under holistic and collectivistic worldviews (Deloria 2009; Hwang 2006; Kim et al. 2006; Marsella 2015; Aluli-Meyer 2008; Mishra 2006; Pe-pua 2006; Wilson 2008).

Kim et al. (2006) asserted that "In east Asia, the word for human beings can be translated literally as 'humans between.' [It] is what happens between individuals

that makes us human" (pp. 10–11). This conception and development of the self encompasses the individual embedded in the context of family, culture, and nature at large and not embedded in its internal self. The same is true for Native American cultures. For instance, Native American scholars Cajete, Dudgeon, Deloria, Duran, Holm, Meyer, Ryan, Yellow Bird, and Wilson—among others—have highlighted the concept of relationships between human and nonhumans and the natural world at large in the process of knowledge creation, research, ritual, ceremony, and daily living.

The controversy lies in efforts to legitimize Indigenous Psychology as, on the one hand, "the scientific study of human behavior or mind that is native, that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people" (Kim and Berry 1993, p. 2; cited in Kim et al. 2006, p. 5), and on the other hand as a way of knowing that departs from linear and positivistic epistemologies located far from the scientific empire (Duran and Duran 1995; Duran 2006; Duran et al. 2008; Aluli-Meyer 2008; Wilson 2008). Kim et al. (2006) stated

> The goal is not to abandon science, objectivity, experimental method, and a search for universals, but to create a science that is firmly grounded in the descriptive understanding of human beings. The goal is to create a more rigorous, systematic, universal science that can be theoretically and empirically verified. (p. 34)

The authors contradict themselves in their aims to develop, on the one hand, a psychology that is not universal but pluralistic, and on the other hand, a psychology that applies the same Western scientific paradigm of experimental rigor, objectivity, and universality. However, Indigenous Psychologies must emerge out of the particular localities and cultures. Consequently, there are as many psychologies as there are indigenous cultures in the world. Creating alternatives to modernity means co-creating multiple "Indigenous Psychologies" instead of one universal psychology. Indeed, Marsella (2013) suggested that all psychologies are indigenous when these are nested in their own natural and cultural settings and, thus, none of them can be regarded as universal. The emphasis lies in the non-imposition of one science over the other under justifications of hegemonic truth as a means of maintaining the coloniality of power (Quijano 2000).

Indigenous Psychologies contest Western psychological theories because they are not universal but represent the worldview of Europe and North America, centering these cultures' psychology and traditions and colonizing other ways of knowing (Dutta 2016; Nsmenang 1995; Kim et al. 2006; Diaz-Guerrero 2006; Marsella 2015; Wilson 2008—among others). Indigenous Psychologies legitimize peoples' profound understanding of themselves based on their own cosmogonies, cosmologies, mythologies, axiologies, epistemologies, relationships, dreams, and visions of the future. This source of deep understanding makes our presence in the world meaningful and strengthens our capacity to act upon our surroundings.

Each culture produces its own ways of knowing, and if we transport one cultural way of knowing into another, the result is an imposition by force or confusion. In 1990, the Viennese philosopher of science Fritz Wallner proposed that one way to achieve knowledge is through "*strangification*" (*Verfremdung*) (cited in Wallner

and Jandl 2006, p. 57). This is a process involving the application of strategies that transfer "one (logical) system of propositions from their original context into another context and judging this system out of this context" (p. 57). As a result, strangification causes the wrongful judging of a particular system out of its own context. There are three types of strangification: linguistic, ontological, and pragmatic. We experience linguistic strangification, transferring our own language into a "foreign" language; ontological strangification, translating constructs or concepts from one culture to the other; and pragmatic strangification, applying one way of solving particular issues in one culture to another culture.

Wallner and Jandl (2006) concluded that "this type of strangification enables the revelation of (implicit) assumptions as well as showing up the domain of application of a system of statements without falling back to meta theoretical standardization of instances" (p. 57). By the same token, given that science is anchored in culture, "applying a system or a set of methods of a discipline to a very different discipline represents ontological strangification" (p. 57). Lastly, under "pragmatic strangification, the social and organizational context of scientists is observed" (p. 57). This means the application of epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies from one culture to another represents strangification—and, thus, absurdity. Furthermore, it represents violent colonization caused by the epistemological privilege of modern science since the seventeenth century—a privilege that consolidated Western supremacy (Mignolo 2000, 2005, 2009, 2011b; de Sousa Santos 2016). The latter enabled the expansion of imperial possessions by means of industrial and technological revolutions. Other, nonscientific forms of knowledge were—and continue to be—suppressed in this process as well as the people whose social practice was—and continues to be—informed by such knowledges. This was the case with the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Africans, who were violently oppressed as slaves. The suppression of their bodies, spirits, and knowledge systems constitutes epistemicide as an extension of brutal genocide (de Sousa Santos 2016).

"The Indigenous psychologies of cultures that have survived the cruel impacts of colonization and globalization, whose existing knowledge systems are based on deep respect for nature and the sacred, need to be brought at the center of this discourse" (Ciofalo 2017, p. 2). We must talk about Indigenous Psychologies in plural, integrating multiple perspectives to obtain comprehensive and integrated understandings of their epistemologies and praxes. We must resist Western science that has been used not only to colonize cultures but also to control nature, causing ecocide (pervasive ecological devastation), wars, atrocities, and violence (Marsella 2013, 2009; Quijano 2000; de Sousa Santos 2016; Shiva 1997; Ciofalo 2017).

Indigenous Psychologies resist colonization and its pervasive cultural hegemony, which is based mainly on paradigms developed in the colonial empire of Europe and North America. Indigenous psychologists propose that their own religions, mythologies, philosophies, epistemologies, and axiologies form a fertile ground that generates particular and pluralistic psychologies embedded in social and natural sciences. They contest the fragmentation of knowing and propose transdisciplinary and multi-methodological approaches that help create an understanding of the holistic manifestations of our lives and cultures, including affects and emotions.

Decolonizing Emotions

Marsella (2003), a prominent cultural psychologist who has advocated for indigenous ways of understanding mental health in the context of culture, emphasized that in the realm of moods and affection, Indigenous Psychologies have proposed the development of ethnotheories. This implies looking at the ways in which people in diverse cultures define "abnormality." Ethnotheories of abnormality may or may not dichotomize the mind–body interaction. In the West, depression is the opposite of being happy or at least of having a positive emotional experience. The emphasis is seen in the loss of pleasure. The abnormal state relies primarily on the loss of happiness or self-love, considered the basic goals of a Western individual. These are obviously culturally constructed definitions of normalcy. In other, non-Western cultures, emphasis may be placed on the care of children and elders or on an individual's capacity to experience unpleasant emotions such as shame and righteous indignation as morally correct emotions (Deloria 2009; Kim et al. 2006; Wilson 2008).

In Sri Lanka, for example, anthropologist Obeyesekere (1985) showed how Buddhist monks consciously nourish meditation on putrefaction such as excrement and the aging of the body to increase awareness of our material transition in this world. Western researchers have regarded this practice as a manifestation of deep depression or even necrophilia. Psychoanalytic theory posits that the psychic depths hold priority; however, for example, Lutz (1986), a cultural anthropologist, has shown that in the Pacific Islands, particularly in the Atoll culture of the Ifaluk, what is felt introspectively cannot be seen and that is reason enough to not worry about this aspect of the unknown. Meanwhile, for Americans, the private, introspective life is a marker of the self. Introspection is also antithetical to Chinese ethnopsychology, as what is experienced inside an individual is private and approached by other means. However, for Euro-Americans it is the preferred method (Yang 2006). Under the psychoanalytic theory, words are symbols of interpretation to arrive at the unconscious traces or allusions of them. In other cultures, feelings may be expressed in casual conversations or in the form of poetic protest. Under the psychoanalytic theory, the former is considered a repressed expression that may be disguised using casual talk, while the latter may be interpreted as an expression of distress. However, one form needs not to be reduced to the other. Understanding the ethnotheory is crucial for translating cultural, emotional worlds (Lutz 1986).

Asian scholars have asserted that "If one-fourth of the world's population is thinking, reasoning, and feeling in ways different than those we have learned from current psychology (largely based on American samples) then our understanding of human reasoning is at best incomplete and at worst culturally biased" (Peng et al. 2006; p. 248). Misinterpretations of culturally based emotions and affections were generated by the application of positivist scientific paradigms that assumed definitions of "affective normality," based on Western ways of being, feeling, and thinking, constituted a universal standard from which other expressions, originating in different ecologies, were valued (Marsella et al. 1996; Marsella 2000, 2007). If those expressions departed from

the Western standard, these were—and continue to be—judged or assessed as "abnormal." Specific therapeutic or corrective methods were—and continue to be—applied to erase this difference. As a result, one important decolonizing strategy is the inclusion of other kinds of research methodologies delinked from US-Eurocentric paradigms that maintain coloniality in all aspects of being, including feeling and thinking.

In the following pages, I will revisit examples of indigenous research methodologies around the world. These examples will make clear the dramatic differences in the ways in which Western and non-Western individuals make sense of their everyday lives. As a result, diverse "ecologies of knowledges" (de Sousa Santos 2016) as well as affections and emotions form the foundation for the proliferation of pluralistic Indigenous Psychologies as a solidary movement toward decoloniality.

Indigenous Research Methodologies

Maori scholar Linda Tuhawai-Smith (2012) overtly stated that "research" is one of the dirtiest words testifying to the atrocities of the imposition of epistemologies developed in imperial worlds as a means of oppressing others through the de-legitimization of their own ways of knowing and being in the world. Smith (2012) asserted that some Maori, as well as other indigenous peoples, feel that they are the most researched people in the world (p. 83). Colonizers came to new land and embraced the pervasive myth of *terra nullis*, as if no previous residents had lived on the lands they "discovered," thereby entitling the colonizers to name and claim them. They observed and recorded indigenous lives and stories and published them under their names. Smith asserted

> Indigenous peoples were classified alongside the flora and fauna; hierarchical typologies of humanity and systems of representation were fueled by new discoveries; and cultural maps were charted and territories claimed and contested by the major European powers. Hence some Indigenous people were ranked above others in terms of such things as the belief that they were 'nearly human,' 'almost human' or 'sub-human.' This often depended on whether it was thought that the people concerned possessed a 'soul' and could therefore be 'offered' salvation and whether or not they were educable and could be offered schooling. These systems for organizing, classifying and storing new knowledge, and for theorizing the meanings of such discoveries, constituted research. (ibid. 2012; pp. 62–63).

Imperial research has been based on "traveler tales," detailing their experiences with "the savages" and the richness of their lands. These traveler tales provoked the growth of new settlements of people from the imperial zones, who searched for adventure and wealth. The most dangerous tales came from researchers who claimed scientific ambitions. They constructed theories that proved their superior status and allowed them to classify their inferior objects of research. Artifacts from the studied indigenous cultures were extracted and sent to the imperial centers for further study, classification, storage, and display in their museums so that others could enjoy them.

Smith further analyzed the ways in which, during the seventeenth century, the West began recording, collecting, and appropriating indigenous forms of classification and

forms of life as new discoveries. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this recording and collection enterprise expanded so that it was carried out with nature. Flora and fauna were classified according to their uses in the capital accumulation resulting from the greedy extraction of natural resources. "This botanical colonization had been successfully carried out in other places: for example, maize, sweet potatoes, tobacco from South America had been widely distributed. At the centre of these locations was the imperial 'home country"' (ibid. 2012; p. 65). With the intent of controlling the emergence of indigenous rebellion and resistance to the colonizers' imposed culture and rules, colonizers had to address the "Indigenous problem" that, as Smith asserted, "…is still present in the Western psyche. … [and has] been portrayed by some writers as a deeply hatred of the Other" (ibid. 2012; pp. 94–95).

As a contestation, a new form of research, called *Kapapa Maori* research, has emerged. It legitimizes the Maoris' ontology, axiology, and epistemology and establishes principles for conducting research in their communities, led by Maori and for Maori. Similar efforts have emerged in the Pacific Islands, such as Hawaii and Samoa, as well as in the US, with increasing Native American scholarship that is contesting the colonization of culture, spirit, psyche, mind, and nature. This prolific indigenous scholarship legitimizes paradigms based on the interrelationship and care for other species and the earth. For example, Native American scholar Shawn Wilson (2009) has framed research as ceremony and emphasized the axiology of interdependence, with all that surrounds us—including humans, other species, and the natural world—becoming stewards of Mother Earth instead of usurping its natural resources, driven by capitalistic greed.

Research, as a means of the relational co-construction of knowledge, must use indigenous ways of knowing such as storytelling, ceremony, and the awareness of interdependence. Indigenous epistemologies have given humanity imperative decolonial solutions to the pervasive problems that imperialism and capitalism have caused. When these solutions are finally heard and made visible, they are frequently appropriated as new inventions of the West, branded "new age alternatives" to heal the lost relationship with the natural world.

Many indigenous psychologists have developed important guiding principles for the use of indigenous methods. For example, Filipino psychologists proposed the use of *Kapwa* (shared identity, fellow human being) as a guiding principle for treating research participants as equals, regarding participants' welfare as more important than data gathering, and using culturally appropriate methods that adapt to existing cultural norms (Pe-Pua 2006). Wilson (2008) proposed that awareness of interdependent relationships among humans, other-than-humans, and nature is the main guiding ethical value that views research as ceremony and sacred celebration. Lastly, indigenous researchers demand that the language of the people should be the language of the research at all times (Kim et al. 2006; Smith 2012—among others).

Indigenous research views knowledge as praxis, relationship building, the development of shared identity and interdependence, and the raising of critical consciousness. Multi-methods are applied to enhance awareness as one-with-the-other. The researcher co-constructs knowledge in relationship with others and gives it back to the community. The problem definition is co-constructed in the culture itself.

However, issues to be addressed by research must be present in their cultural awareness or identified through involvement on the basis of respectful empathy with the indigenous culture. In regards to ethical issues, manipulation and "drive-by research" (meaning they come, they take, they go), as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) called it, is avoided at all times. Results remain in the community and the participants decide what to do with them.

Indigenous scholars contest the dominant Western research as colonizing etic imposed on indigenous cultures. By contrast, Indigenous Psychologies are based on a process of indigenization from within, obtaining emic data from diverse cultural groups and collaboratively developing shared knowledge that is transformative and applied to the co-creation of healing and sacred spaces.

These efforts and revolutionary movements that fall under the umbrella of Indigenous Psychologies are finding an emancipatory language to challenge imperial forms of knowing and being in the world (Ciofalo 2017). These movements are co-constructing alternatives and building partnerships with silenced intellectual traditions to decolonize science and address the imperative issues of genocide, epistemicide, and ecocide. At the same time, indigenous communities have courageously resisted colonization for centuries and have strengthened their autonomous survival in a manner that preserves their own systems of knowledge, ways of being, and cultural traditions (Almeida and Sánchez Díaz de Rivera 2001, 2016a; Ciofalo 2014; Sanchez Diaz de Rivera and Almeida 2005; Sanchez Diaz de Rivera 2013; Gone 2016; Vizenor 2008, 1999). Indigenous psychologists propose that their own religions, mythologies, and philosophies, their own epistemologies and axiology, form the fertile ground upon which to develop their particular psychologies as well as research methodologies. Following this proposal, let us revisit some examples of these exciting developments around the world, led by indigenous psychologists.

Some Examples of Indigenous Psychologies Around the World

American Indian Psychologies

Native American scholar and activist Vine Deloria (2009) engaged in dialogue with the work of Swiss depth psychologist C. G. Jung to understand how European men viewed "the Indian" as a non-being, a primitive. He stated

> Primitive/tribal peoples were believed to represent early man—that was the reason for studying them so intensely. They would give scholars clues about how human society evolved. Jung and others of his generation began to develop theoretical ideas about the undeveloped psyche, he looked for examples still living in the world—the non-Western peoples. He projected abstract doctrines onto contemporary non-Western people, playing on the stereotypes that then existed among educated people regarding these groups. Jung became one of the many scientific voices that helped to perpetuate and intensify the oppression of peoples who merely thought differently and saw the world differently than European peoples. (p. 60)

In his writings and teachings, Jung made derogatory statements about the Native American and African people he had met during his very short trips in search of answers to his Western psychological inquiries. Jung's comparative observations were always measured against an implicit and explicit assumption that the Western psyche was superior and needed only to understand its origins in the undeveloped, barbaric, and primitive psyches of indigenous and aboriginal peoples, who in his time were still living under European colonial rule. The belief that the Western psyche's lost connection with nature was key to the evolution of its race and culture has permeated the colonial narrative. Civilization required the split of mind, body, spirit, psyche, and nature. It has been considered the eugenic goal for all peoples in the world and has been used to colonize and indoctrinate savages.

While describing the Sioux universe as interrelated, Deloria emphasized that the Indians—as he called himself and his people—receive and process information from different sources, such as the external or physical world as well as visions and dreams. The Sioux, he added, also have a different concept of space,

> Behind or underlying this basic notion of space, however, are additional experiences of space, including the 'other' places Sioux people visit in dreams and the acknowledgement of the extra-material dimensions of space that they recognize in ceremonies. In using the Sacred Pipe, for example, Sioux religious practitioner always invoke the powers attributed to each of the directions. (p. 85)

He added that the bowl of the pipe representing the universe is infinite and has powers that can be recollected through participation in ceremony. This perception of the universe is "present in its full dimension [and] simultaneously concentrated into a single point" (p. 86). The Sweat Lodge is one such example, as it is constructed through the formation of a sphere with the earth in one half and the sky in the other. Thus, both of these spaces—the Sacred Pipe and the Sweat Lodge—constitute interrelated physical and spiritual experiences.

Another example of the Sioux cosmogony that differs from Western cosmologies is the deep relationship of self with nature as a sacred space through, for instance, the experience of the vision quest. Deloria addressed the pejorative critique that many Western scholars have made about visions experienced during these sacred events—as being caused by fasting and fantasy projections. Deloria (2009) asserted

> But fasting generally brings on an amazing surge of energy instead of faintness and fantasy. Voices heard during the vison provide specific practical instructions or data that can be verified easily. …All testimony from people, both Indian and non-Indian who have had a vison quest experience suggests, in fact unquestionably contends, that actual physical visitations are made by spirits, birds, animals and other forms of life. (p. 162).

Medicine men can receive powers through these sacred experiences. Songs play important roles in invoking these powers as well as gaining healing abilities. Songs also have the function of expressing gratitude for all the blessings received during ceremonies, the vision quest, dreams, or everyday life. Medicine men also use them to collaborate with animals in healing practices. Relating to problems in translating important Sioux experiences during the vision quest in Western words, Deloria stated

> One central problem in selecting Sioux dream data is that the most frequent translation of the vision experience uses the English word "dream" to describe the psychological state in which the Sioux find themselves in the vision. The Sioux themselves generally use the same words—dream and vision—and sometimes do not distinguish one from the other, making it difficult to separate out grand visions from nighttime dreams. (p. 167)

Dreams can warn about dangers to come and help the dreamer anticipate future events. Regarding the recurrence of mythological symbols in dreams as a central theory of the unconscious in Jungian psychology, Deloria (2009) remarked

> And yet, regardless of the psychic tasks to be accomplished, Western psychologists have frequently chosen mythological motifs with a Greek origin and storyline. They have needed little encouragement to appropriate a symbol from one culture and insist that it is present in other cultures, and it appears they have made Greek mythology the standard against which other cultures are judged. (p. 177)

Indians relate to divine beings such as birds and other animals through dreams and visions. They receive powers from them through dreams that their historical memory has captured by means of traditional songs. For instance, traditional Indian dreams have included snake motifs, such as a snake monster that "'Thick-Headed Horse,' a Sioux man encountered and learned that he was an old medicine man named Big Snake"' (pp. 126–127). Deloria further added

> For the Sioux it is possible in ordinary life for a man to have the power to assume or adopt other forms in which to express himself. That is what Big Snake did; no symbolic or mythological dimension need be involved. (p. 177).

Anyone could receive these kinds of dreams. When this happened, to be validated, the dreams had to be shared with the community. The cosmic energy to which Indians relate has been referred to by some Indian Medicine men, such as "Lame Deer," as the Great Mystery (p. 116). This alludes to a spiritual guidance that clarifies the path one should follow and that evolves from one's deep nature as a call for vocation. Deloria concluded

> The Sioux approached this mysterious energy differently, by recognizing it first in personalities, then in the notions of the natural world. They reasoned that it was necessary first to seek a personal relationship with the Great Mysterious, knowing that physical manifestations would follow. Western science, following Roger Bacon, worked from the opposite direction, believing that humans could force nature to reveal its secrets, which, in the end, did not allow science to consider the concept of personal relationships at all. (p. 187)

Deloria clearly has taught us about the Sioux's rich cosmogony and ways of knowing and being in the world, which White men deeply wish to possess, appropriate, control, exploit, and eradicate. Regarding the application of these knowledge systems to praxes, Wilson (2008) stated:

> In an Indigenous ontology there may be multiple realities, as in the constructivist research paradigm. The difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is "out there" or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth….We can extend this thinking—of viewing objects as the relationship we have with them—on to how we see concepts and ideas. The concepts or ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them. …These relationships are with the cosmos around us, as well as

> with concepts. They thus include interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental and spiritual relationships, and relationships with ideas. Indigenous epistemology is our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities and our places in the cosmos. Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship. (pp. 73–74)

Duran and Duran (1995) and Duran (2006) critiqued the counseling profession because it has been an example of Eurocentric imposition on indigenous communities. Based on positivist-logical paradigms and aligned with Western medical classificatory systems of mental disease, such as the Diagnostic System of Mental Disorders (DSM), the counseling profession has contributed enormously to the psychological, physical, and spiritual oppression of Native American people since colonial times. Duran (2006) advocated for the development of a Native American psychology based on Native American knowledge systems and cosmogonies. Western counselors who are interested in practicing in Indian communities must first immerse themselves in learning and understanding native cultural systems. In this way, Western counselors can be exposed to a process of the hybridization of their own professional assumptions and praxes. The two worldviews differ from each other. Native American psychologists would engage in healing the cultural wounds resulting from historical trauma since colonial times. Consequently, for a healing process to occur, the therapeutic intervention must address the whole system in which the person is embedded. In particular, this includes cultural cosmology. For example, Duran (2006) described a liberation psychology that can provide an approach in which the suffering person understands his/her plight as a product of intergenerational trauma due to the violent genocide resulting from colonization and contemporary coloniality. American Indians tend to internalize oppression, nourishing feelings of helplessness, cultural loss, depression, anger, rage, and a lack of self-worth often manifested in the form of alcoholism, substance abuse, and suicide. Healing the soul's wounds requires raising awareness of these factors within culturally appropriate frameworks (for instance, relating with the spirit of sickness and increasing one's understanding of the reasons why it is visiting the person). In this way, the relationship with the spirit of sickness gives the suffering person insights into the lessons to be learned as a means of increasing personal growth.

Similar to Deloria, Duran engaged in dialogue with Jungian psychology that, to him, appeared closest to Native American psychology. One such convergence exists in the importance of dreams and dream work in the process of individual and cultural healing. Duran (2006) noted that American Indians would feel relief when talking about their dreams, which are not experienced as separate from waking life. In many cases, dreams have healing effects that provide insights into important life decisions. Dreams become the pathway to the spirit world, the "black world," or the "unconscious" (p. 16). The psyche is part of the dream. The dreamer has an active relationship with the dream, and an exchange of gifts often takes place. Duran motivated the people he related with in healing processes to bring a gift to the spirits that had made themselves present in their dreams. These spirits, in turn, provided gifts of enlightenment, the understanding of wrongdoing, and the ability to forecast future events. When the dreamer exchanges gifts with the spirits, the relationship becomes

reciprocal. By relating to the spiritual entities that manifest in dreams (these may be father, mother, grandparents, son, daughter, etc.), the healer can provide a diagnosis. However, the author stated, "…in Native cosmology it is recognized that naming the entity is a naming ceremony and in no way does that imply that the patient is the diagnosis" (p. 17).

In addition, the healing of soul wounding requires treatment in ceremonial practices led by a counselor or psychologist, who learns to participate in energetic fields from traditional healers. Duran (2012) noted that Native psychology views psyche as not separate from cosmology, which, in turn, is earth awareness (p. 11). In Native psychology, as this author called it, the healing container is not the consulting room but "…a ceremonial earth place. The container is a medicine wheel that makes up the ceremonial sacred space" (p. 14). Duran et al. (2008) described healing from a Native perspective as the individual relationship with the cosmos and the search for ways to fit back into it. He highlighted the notion that the Western mental health profession antagonizes the cure against the symptoms and disrupts the balance and harmony that the Native psyche needs to have with "the universal life force" (p. 297).

Duran (2006) asserted that up until today, the relationship between the healing professionals and the Native/Original peoples has been immersed in a "historical narcissism" that validates Western belief systems and delegitimizes those who come from other epistemologies (p. 7). This implies that Western professionals impose foreign mythologies on indigenous mythologies (Duran et al. 2008, p. 291). The author further reinforced the notion that the current mental health ailments Native American peoples face are a product of the historical genocide that continues to impact their individual and community well-being.

Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) wrote extensively about the true history of the United States with a recollection of oral histories and historical memories gathered from Native American people. Her book describes the brutal cultural genocide of the original people of the Northern American continent at the time of the British colonization. The author narrated, in great historical detail, the pervasive effects of the usurpation of native lands, the oppression of Indian tribes, the forced relocation to other lands, and the confinement of indigenous settlements in the form of reservations without respect for the treaties that had been written to defend their sovereignty during independence from the British empire. This violence is still going on in contemporary times. Consequently, it is imperative that psychological processes be understood as embedded in these pervasive historical, economic, and political factors, and that liberating and decolonizing approaches be implemented to address them.

African Psychologies

One example of Indigenous Psychological theories in Africa is Optimal Theory. It was inspired by ancient traditions in African culture. According to these traditions, each human being is seen as an expression of life energy. Variations in individuals are diverse manifestations of this energy. People become alienated from this unity

of consciousness when they perceive themselves as individual selves, building their identities on external criteria. Oppression is the result of suboptimal frames of reference that are self-alienating and result in the alienation of others. All those who internalize a fragmented worldview are oppressed. Liberation occurs through self-awareness and the motivation to move beyond external criteria to a self-definition that generates collective empowerment. It is based on socio-political assumptions and traces the roots of oppression in the human psyche itself (Myer and Speight 1994; cited in Tricket et al. 1994).

In his work entitled, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose through Nature, Ritual, and Community,* Somé (1999) alerted us to the fact that in his Dagara culture, relations with nature, the spiritual world, and ancestors are key factors preserving community cohesion, cultural sustainability, and well-being. This author contrasted the yearning for connection that permeates the Western modern world and its presence in everyday life in non-Western, African rural communities. Without denying the pervasive impacts of colonization, the severe poverty, and the marginalization that have also affected the loss of cultural traditions, certain expectations of proper behavior, as well as a means of knowing the world, still exist not only as historical memory but as responses to everyday community life. Somé described in detail how, for instance, a family problem was addressed by means of divination still practiced by shamans or healers. In addition, spirituality continues to be the spinal cord in many African rural communities and, perhaps in less intensity, in the acculturated and colonized urban hubs of the African continent.

Children are considered very important, as they represent the continuation of the lives of ancestors, who return as newly born spirits. This is why they relate easily to their grandparents, who are getting close to the Other World while the newborns have just arrived from it. Every newborn has a gift to bring to the community. The community's responsibility is to spark children's real purpose in life and encourage them to give their gifts back to the community. If a person cannot recognize these gifts, a crisis would be experienced. The community recognizes that the activity of a Spirit provokes such an individual crisis. It supports the person in crisis by helping him or her relate to the acting Spirit to whom he/she offers gifts, requesting healing and balance.

Art is closely linked to the sacred. Somé asserted that artists are healers because they can produce community healing through creativity. Art objects cannot be stored in one place because doing so would mean that the community is experiencing a deep spiritual thirst that cannot be satisfied. Western museums could be regarded as evidence of this thirst and of the need experienced by the Western societies that created them.

Stories contain the collective wisdom that is passed on to generations. Thus, storytellers are the keepers of historical memory and contribute to the sustainment of culture. Somé used storytelling to share important methods and strategies for addressing community conflict. The people residing in a community must come together to address conflict through rituals that promote community support and cohesion.

Elders are key guardians of community health and cultural sustainability. They preserve traditions considered to be, "…the way of the ancestors, the manner in which those who lived before us walked and talked, the knowledge and practices that allowed them to live enough to bestow life upon others" (p. 124). This is a key condition of cultural survival. Somé went on to state, "In Indigenous cultures, this is crucial to life, because to forget the way life used to be is to be endangered" (p. 124). Elders are respected and regarded as the conduits for relating with the spiritual world and with ancestors. Community well-being cannot be created without the presence of elders, who become the main decision-makers, leaders, and mentors to the younger generations. They are involved in identifying what is working and what is not working in the community and they receive inspiration from ancestors to correct wrongdoings and malfunctions. When a person must be reminded of proper behavior, the elder indirectly addresses the whole community. The community carries the recognition of wrongdoing but the expectation is that the person who caused it will come forward and seek spiritual guidance. Acknowledgement of wrongdoing provokes shame that an elder will then address by means of ritual. In this way, shame does not have negative outcomes in the individual or community psyche but, rather, is treated with the intervention of spirits. Reparation is used to correct hurt by deepening the relationship with the person on whom pain has been inflicted. A wrongdoer who is not accountable will cause ill to his or her family and community. Wrongdoers can be found by means of divination and required to sacrifice and provide gifts to the spirits to reestablish harmonious relations with the ancestors. Elders are close to the sacred because they are close to the Other World. They are the keepers of rituals, and one of their important responsibilities is to maintain shrines and communicate with ancestors. Somé contrasted the place elders hold in his Dagara culture with that held by elders in the West, where elders are regarded as a disposable, unproductive sector of society that must be segregated and kept in isolation until they die. The author recommended the revision of the irreparable loss of community gifts experienced through the marginalizing of elders in the West.

Grills (2002, 2006) emphasized the importance of an African-centered psychology that will disrupt the Western paradigm and center on its own cultural paradigm. African-centered psychology is founded in trans-African philosophical principles, values, and traditions that themselves are based on harmony with the universe and the liberation of the Spirit. Its foundation is the recognition of collective existence and the understanding of the self as embedded in community. Well-being is achieved through optimal functioning maintained through collective consciousness and the acknowledgement that everything is interconnected and permeated with Spirit. For Grills, African-centered psychology centers on African epistemology, which posits that the past is as important as the present and that the human being is a participatory vital force. One important philosophy that is central to this Indigenous Psychology is *Ubuntu*, which highlights the fundamental principles of respect, dignity, compassion, solidarity, and survival. The African concept of the self is intimately linked to the cosmos, nature, ancestors, spirits, humans, and other-than-humans. *Okra* is the soul given to humans by divine action. *Sunsum* (spirit) can leave the body, and its shadow contains the metaphysical realm. *Mogya* is the blood that establishes the relationship

to the clan and the ancestors. *Yikyere* is a revelation attained through dreams or divination. These are some examples of the elements that constitute the African consciousness (Grills 2006).

Recent scholarship in South Africa has critiqued the emergence of African-centered approaches in psychology. For instance, Makhubela (2016) considered the notion that the process of decolonization cannot become a particularistic effort to contain psychology within the boundaries of African traditions, epistemology, and cosmogony because this would imply the negation of African contributions to what is now considered Western science. Decolonization means to assert these contributions and identify them within Western science. This author asserted

> Decolonial psychologists in Africa, as Moll (2007) observes, are generally of two persuasions – those who view psychology as an Indigenous area of study marked by distinctive worldviews and lived experiences of the continent (for example, Akotia and Olowu, Baloyi, Bodibe, Matoane, Mbiti, Mkhize, Nobels, Nyasani, Sodi, Tempels, etc), and those who see it as a universal disciplinary practice predicated on and concerned with psychological affairs of Africans yet whose postulates traverse cultures and race (for example, Akbar, Dawes, Fanon, Gulerce, Hountondji, Moll, Mashegoane, Nsamenang, Nwoye, Okpara, Ratele, etc). (p. 2)

For this author, there is a danger in negating the other-than-Western scholarship and the value of its contribution to universal knowledge that could be considered scientific in nature because it is contained in the particularity of cultural traditions. Makhubela (2016) stated that the unique universalizing potential given only to Western scholarship must be decolonized. He referred to Nsamenang and Dawes, who alerted African psychologists about the need to identify aspects of Western psychology that are Eurocentric—such as Piagetian formal thinking being considered a superior cognitive ability—but to not reject all Western theories and empirical findings. Similarly, the goal should not be to develop an African psychology based only on traditions and ancient epistemologies and cosmogonies as if these remained stagnant over the centuries. Makhubela (2016) proposed that it would be more accurate to refer to the precolonial structures or systems of thought that Fanon analyzed. However, through colonization and globalization, the African culture has experienced a dramatic change. Lastly, the author proposed the project of decolonization not as a counterhegemonic strategy against Westernization but as a project of pluriversality, following Dussel's transmodernity project, which can contribute to the dilution of dichotomies and the development of an ethical universalism transcending colonialism, anti-capitalism, and cultural reductionism.

Expanding these contributions to the development of psychologies representing African Americans, Du Bois (1994) wrote extensively about the impacts of slavery on the African-American psyche. He clearly analyzed the ways in which structural racism imposed a veil that could not be surpassed in front of the White world, directing its glance upon the Other who, simply because of skin color, was relegated to the role of outcast, deprived of access to the opportunities designed for the White race. Thus, a double consciousness is created by which the African self seeks to be American without being devalued, oppressed, and exploited. This double struggle has caused the African-American individual to feel ashamed while at the same time

realizing the beauty of his/her race, the strong faith of redemption and emancipation, and the sorrow songs of long-lasting slavery. One reads Du Bois' sharp observations as forecasts of the continuation of a still-existing marginalization not yet addressed by a White supremacist regime still alive in the midst of modern coloniality.

Fanon (1963/2004) and Albert Memmi (1967) conducted a similar analysis of the colonized African psyche and the conflictive dynamic of processes of identification with, and rejection of, the aggressor constituting an interplay of colonized self as well as colonized colonizer, who identifies with the aggressor and subjugates and exploits those of the same Black race.

Na'Im Akbar (1979, 1980) deeply studied the effects of slavery on the African self as well as the impacts of the label "Negro," which had the intention of portraying the African as dead, inert, without the capacity to initiate, and condemned to imitate the White race. However, the awareness of the deep self gives Africans the capacity to energize and focus on self-preservation. Akbar recommended that Africans return to spirituality to regain the original self. This would be the only way to liberate oneself from pervasive mental slavery. For Akbar (1984), one of the most precious gifts of the African self is intuition, which serves as a guide to building empathetic relationships. Important psychological work involves confronting the fact that in spite of historical, economic, and political struggles to improve the conditions of African Americans, the effects of mental slavery are still in full function unless these are consciously targeted (Akbar 1984, 1996, 2004). Many of the current social problems that African-American communities confront involve these inner (psychological) and outer consequences of a still-existing structural racism.

Lastly, James (2017) proposed a decolonial approach toward knowledge and praxis generation based on *Yoruba Orisha* traditions that include rituals, ceremonies, spirituality, and the sacred. This is led by women's ways of knowing that disrupt the damage-based narratives disseminated by Euro-American epistemologies that perpetuate the hegemony of the White supremacist, colonial, universal science practiced in the academy.

Chinese Psychologies

Indigenous Psychologies in China are being constructed under philosophical approaches inspired by Confucian Relationalism. Hwang (1987) applied a model to analyze the deep structure of Chinese cultural tradition, adapting the Freudian method as well as structuralism (Hwang 1987; cited in Hwang 2006). He used a psychosociogram adapted from Hsu (1971) that depicts the levels under which cultural phenomena may be observed (Hsu 1971; cited in Hwang 2006). The deepest level is the unconscious, followed by the pre-conscious, the unexpressed conscious, and the expressible conscious. Other societal structures follow, namely, the intimate society based on relationships, the operative society based on productive functions and job roles, the wider society relating to culture, and, finally, the outer world (Hwang 2006, p. 98). Hwang (2006) further stated that cultures "create the deep structure

of their culture unconsciously with rationality, but the structure cannot be recognized intuitively through the rationality of ordinary people. The structure can only be recognized when revealed and reinterpreted by a researcher" (p. 99).

As cited earlier, the concept of *ren*, the transaction with other human beings, is central to maintaining psychological and interpersonal equilibrium. Ren allows for the alignment of one's behavior with the demands and expectations of culture and society (Hsu 1971; cited in Hwang 2006, p. 98). It can be said that *ren* constitutes the basis of Confucian relationalism that "perceives the self as integrated with society; the self cannot be removed from one's complicated interpersonal network" (Hwang 2000; cited in Hwang 2006, p. 102). Lastly, Hwang concluded that "…the important goals for indigenization of psychology in East Asian societies are to ascertain the deep structure of various cultural traditions, construct micro-worlds as a scientific theory, and use these micro-worlds as a frame of reference for conducting empirical research on people's life-worlds" (p. 104). The latter reference to experiencing the theories developed from the deep structures of society (including the deepest unconscious structures) in people's life-worlds provides a link to the nourishing of conviviality to develop Indigenous Psychologies that emerge from the bottom up—from the experiences and the relationships among human and non-human beings to the building of theories in a different way (*de otra manera*).

Yang (2006) wrote about the Chinese conception of the self as an approach towards co-constructing a psychology informed by Chinese culture as an indigenization movement to contest cross-cultural research applied to non-Western populations. He proposed, "Genuine understanding of another culture requires not differentiating it from others, but examining it from a native's point of view" (p. 327). Yang went on to suggest the "age-old Chinese yin/yang mode of thinking" for understanding the Chinese concept of self that is delinked from Western modes of thinking (p. 329). Under this model, *yin* (the receptive principle) and *yang* (the active principle) are not contradictory concepts but represent a relationship in movement. This conception is incompatible with Western systems that include "concepts, substances, logical opposites, categories, dialectics, and compromises, which are all constituents of the philosophical thinking of essentialism and dualism" (p. 330), whereas the yin/yang mode of thinking is non-essentialist.

Chinese psychologists would seek to understand the decisions and behaviors accomplished by actors who are in relationship with these possible states in particular situations and contexts. This constitutes a meta-cognitive framework that can explain behaviors. Yang (2006) further proposed the study of the historical roots of the Chinese self, which is composed of two elements: *wo* and *wu*. *Wo* means autonomous, powerful I or me, one's consciousness of oneself as a physically separate identity—the awareness of the I or me as the source of self (p. 332). The embodied person entails a mythological existence of *wu*

> …a person who could be in two states of consciousness interchangeably: the embodied and the disembodied state. In the latter state, the person [can] leave the body, sometimes with the help of mythical animals, to converse with mythical figures, including the souls of deceased acquaintances. (p. 333)

Historically, the Chinese person was expected to relate to others in society following *li* and *yue*. The former set the rules or guidelines for proper behavior while the latter related to music as "the vehicle used to arouse pleasant emotions to help people internalize and practice li" (Yang 2006, p. 334). *Li* and *yue* constitute principles of social order and harmony under Confucian teachings. Another important concept based on a pictograph is *xin*. It represents the heart as the organ in charge of thinking and emotion—thus, the pairing of heart–mind.

Yang (2006) concluded that following his historical review of the conception of the self during the Confucian/Mencius Era, the person is at the center of the universe and is valued for what can become the cultivation of self-perfection and the assumption of the role of sage through the exercise of self-restraint. The person must relinquish the private and individuated self—the small self—and embrace a larger collectivity to belong to the big Self. The person is expected to work for the public or a larger collectivity. Only then will he/she be judged good and moral. Chinese individuals worry about issues of sincerity, loyalty, and trust (Yang 2006). The self is always in relationship with others.

Naïve Dialecticism and Taoism

Psychologists from China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have made efforts to pursue emic approaches towards Eastern psychological phenomena. This has led to the proposition of applying naive dialecticism and Taoism to the development of a framework for their own psychologies (Peng et al. 2006). Chinese culture has three main teachings: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Taoism deals with the art of living and an understanding of the nature of the world, knowledge, and human life. There is no equivalent for the word Tao, which means "the way" or "path." "Tao," as expressed in word form, is not the same as the eternal Tao. The construct is, in essence, nameless and embraces diverse meanings such as rules, patterns, laws of nature, and means of understanding. Peng et al. (2006) asserted that "none of these interpretations allows Western audiences to fully grasp the Chinese concept of Tao" (p. 250).

The ontological foundations of Taoism are the concepts of non-duality and of yin and yang. The Tao operates through their interaction. Yin is negative, passive, and feminine, whereas yang is positive, active, and masculine. Neither can exist without the other. The basis of non-duality is the notion of perpetual change. According to Taoism, contradictions can be mutually opposed as well as connected and exist in harmony and dependency. All things in the universe are constantly changing in cycles.

Contemplation leads to understanding; tranquility is achieved when pain and loss are as essential as pleasure and gain. Peng et al. (2006) asserted that "Taoist teachings exist as both cultural ideology and as individual, cognitive representations" (p. 253). Consequently, these teachings are connected to the psychology of Chinese individuals and can be used to understand their behaviors and affections. In doing so, the authors described the main principles of the philosophy of Taoism: (1) the principle of change; (2) the principle of contradiction; and (3) the principle of relationship or holism. The authors said

> Western folk beliefs of knowing, or understanding of the nature of the world and human life are Aristotelian in spirit, emphasizing constancy (identity), synthesis (non-contradiction), and extremes (no middle ground). In contrast, Chinese emphasize a dialectical approach that values change, contradiction, and relationships. These important cultural variations have broad implications for the ways in which psychologists understand and theorize about cultural variation in general. (pp. 256–257)

Chinese epistemology is dialectical based on the yin yang symbol of Tao depicting harmony between two opposites as well as continuous movement that constitute "a synthesis of different ways of thinking" (p. 259) and that, thus, are conducive to the development of Indigenous Psychologies in plurilogue.

Filipino Psychologies

In the Philippines, Rogelia Pe-Pua (2006) has led efforts to decolonize psychology utilizing the *Pakapa-Kapa* approach. Torres (1982) defined it as: "A supposition-less approach to social scientific investigations…. An approach characterized by groping, searching, and probing into an unsystematic mass of social data to obtain order, meaning, and directions for research" (Torres 1982; cited in Pe-Pua 2006, p. 109). The main principle is the understanding of Filipino thought and experience from a Filipino perspective. For instance, Western scientists have regarded the indirect style of communication that Filipinos use as dishonest and as a deceptive verbal description of reality (Enriquez 1992; cited in Pe-Pua 2006, p. 110). However, its culturally anchored meaning expresses "concern for the feelings of others to avoid the other person losing face or getting embarrassed if directly confronted with negativity, conforming with the norm of humility and modesty by not directly recognizing one's own abilities and achievements" (p. 110). Filipino psychologists use concepts that the Filipino people define themselves. One such concept is *kapwa* (shared identity), which is at the heart of Filipino values. Another concept is *pakikisama*, which American psychologists viewed as the value of maintaining smooth interpersonal relations (conformity). However, Enriquez (1978, 1994) clarified that "pakikisama is simply a colonial/accommodative surface value, and that the core value is *pakikipagkawa*, which means treating other person as *kapwa* or fellow human beings" (Enriquez 1978, 1994; cited in Pe-Pua 2006, p. 110). Filipino psychology is based on an assessment of historical and socio-cultural realities, understanding the language anchored in the cultural setting, rediscovering the dimensions of the Filipino character, and explaining psychological concepts and phenomena using a Filipino perspective (Pe-Pua 2006).

Torres (1982) advocated for an anthropological, methodological approach that sets aside theoretical, universal assumptions and that discovers cultural particularities (Torres 1982; cited in Pe-Pua 2006, p. 173). For example, through the use of an adapted version of participant observation, the researcher establishes rapport using informal visits or "*pagdalaw-dalaw*—dropping in." Gradually, the researcher moves

into a more direct interaction in the cultural habitat: "*pakikipanuluyan*—live-in visitor." A deeper approach would involve becoming a dweller in the particular culture ("*pakikipanirahan*—participant dweller") and then entering a state of being accepted ("*pagpisan*—live-in, one of us, participant"). There will be different degrees of trust in regards to the data, depending on the kind of participant observation. A higher data quality is expected when the researcher participant lives in the particular culture (ibid. 2006, p. 112).

Bennagen (1985) advocated that "….one embraces not just the external ways, but becomes one in thought as well as have the readiness of the mind to understand them" (Bennagen 1985, p. 406; cited in Pe-Pua 2006, p. 113). The researcher and participants are perceived as equals, with equal rights in determining the research questions. The questions evolve in the interaction and are not predetermined before the interview takes place.

Several researchers used a variation on the interview method, "*pakikipagkuwentuhan* (story-telling)" (p. 117), in contexts of inquiry about sensitive topics. An example is the approach that De Vera (1976) used when studying extra-marital relations (De Vera 1976; cited in Pe-Pua 2006, p. 117). To discuss this topic, De Vera dialogued with men about Philippine movies, allowing them to talk freely and express their opinions. However, Orteza (1997) criticized her because de Vera did not openly inform participants about her intention to study their own extra-marital relations and not those of the movie actors. Orteza proposed the use of this method in any situation in which people are free to tell their stories in everyday life (Orteza 1997, cited in Pe-Pua 2006).

Another method is the collective indigenous discussion that Enriquez (1994) promoted under the Philippine Psychology Research and Training House. This method has three indigenous elements for discussion: (1) a concept or practice; (2) a drink; and (3) food. Its main goals are consciousness raising, application into everyday life, and open and continuous reflection and discussion. This method is embraced by this organization as well as by the National Association of Filipino Psychology (ibid., 120).

The whole research process is guided by "rules of *pakikipagkapwa* (treating each other as fellow human beings) that produces a story or stories that can be analyzed" (ibid. 2006, p. 122). In Hawaii, a similar method is used, known as the "talk story approach." Because of this similarity, cross-indigenous research can be conducted. Filipino psychology sets an example from which Western Psychology can learn.

Hawaiian Psychologies

Manulani Aluli Aluli-Meyer (2008) proposed the development of "theories from ancient agency so we can respond to what is right before our very eyes…via ideas that were indigenous *and* authentic, old *and* new, cycled *and* creative, ancient *and* developed-this-moment" (p. 217, italics in the original). The author contributed to the development of Hawaiian Indigenous epistemology informed by ways of knowing

orally taught by mentors, friends, and family, highlighting the notion that "*specificity leads to universality*" (ibid. 2008, italics in the original). Native Hawaiian ways of knowing are based on spirituality (*ea*—the animating principles) and a deep respect for the land (*aina*), the ancestors (*akua*), and the family (*ohana*). "Spirit as knowing is a *real idea* that allows us to ritualize ways to collect medicine, read a text, prepare a meal, or communicate with family" (p. 219, italics in the original). Knowledge is attained through relationship with nature and with other humans and nonhumans: "Relationship gave mentors opportunities to practice generosity with others, harmony with land, and ways to develop their own pathway to an idea" (p. 221). The Hawaiian worldview does not separate mind, body, and spirit. Knowing means deep and intersubjective understanding of feelings, emotions, and connections with all our relations as well as with our genealogy and with the land (*aina*). The main aim of our being is to reach wholeness. "If knowledge is power then understanding is liberation" (Aluli-Meyer 2003; cited in Aluli-Meyer 2008, p. 229).

The understanding of the particular cultural ways of knowing and being through the accumulation of experience develops collectivity that is not conceived as universal uniformity. When conflict disrupts family or community wholeness, *Ho'oponopono* (collective dialogues or talking stories) is used to incite collective harmony and well-being. These contributions are nourishing approaches towards cultural healing and are tending the Hawaiian—and our collective—soul.

Indian Psychologies

Mishra (2006) asserted that the Indigenous Psychology in India is rooted in philosophical religious thoughts and ancient sages. Many Indian psychologists accept the authority of the *Vedas* or the *Upanishads*. Several systems of philosophy emerged to provide integrated theories based on the interpretation of the Upanishads (Mishra 2006). In proposing the construction of an Indian psychology by focusing on cognition, Mishra (2006) stated that the closest term to this concept is *jnana*, which means knowledge. He stated that "according to Datta (1932) the word *jnana* stands for all kinds of cognition whether it is veridical (*yatharta*) and non-veridical (*mythia*)" (p. 267). One form of *jnana* is scientific; another is collective and based on traditions. Lastly, another form of knowledge is personal and based on experience. Mishra added

> Consciousness is regarded as the first stage of cognition. This conceptualization goes against the notion of Freud (1915), who showed how complex thought processes could occur without awareness…The unconscious is not the negation of consciousness; instead, it refers to phenomena that are not available to introspection. (p. 267)

In Indian and Buddhists thought systems, the mind is considered a sense organ that can apprehend objects. The mind serves to apprehend knowledge while other organs—such as the hands and feet—serve to apply knowledge. Individuals know about the external world through the sensory and motor organs. "The function of these

senses is presided over by the internal senses that include *mans* (mind), *ahamkara* (empirical ego), and *buddhi* (intellect)…[the latter] has the capacity to utilize knowledge [jnana] in order to think clearly, objectively, and understandably (pp. 267–268)." For knowledge not to be destructive, intellect (buddhi) requires sensitivity. "Pure knowledge is free from all kinds of biases. It has no boundaries of time, place, or person; it is universal in the true sense of the term" (p. 268).

There are two types of self: the individual self (*atman*) and the embodied person (*jiva*). The theory of Yoga proposes that one's being is governed by *purusha* (pure consciousness) and *prakritti* (matter). The former cannot be perceived but is accessible through *prakritti*. *Chitta* is the functional mind that is instinctual and inherited (p. 269).

Consciousness without phenomenal awareness can be attained by following an eightfold pathway that distinguishes four states: (1) the waking state—determined by external objects, (2) the dream state, (3) the deep sleep state, and (4) the transcendental state. Yogic perception can include a state of consciousness (*samadhi*) in which "one can apprehend all objects of the world simultaneously" (pp. 270–272). Meditation can have impacts on perception and consciousness.

Memory studies distinguish between recognition of experiences that occurred in the past and recollection, by which an object can be recognized because it was perceived in the past or because of its own qualities. A healthy body will play an important role in determining which objects are recognized and recollected. Memories can be produced actively or passively. An example of the former is attained through reflection, whereas the former is more spontaneous in the form of recall by association. Indian scholars have asserted that

> Imagination transcends the limits of past experience, and in doing so it not only creates new order into the contents of past experience, but also adds some new dimensions to the objects or events. …Imagination belongs to the territory of the mind in which one can exercise free will. (Mishra 2006, pp. 275–276)

The common characteristics of objects are gathered through the thinking processes and are expressed in words. Thus, Buddhists believe that the thinking process is tightly related to speech, as we attach words to our cognitive construction of common characteristics. Visible and invisible objects can be inferred by means of inductive and deductive reasoning. Mishra (2006) has concluded that Indian theoretical and experiential systems of knowledge are a rich contribution to Western psychology that transcends its perspectives.

Mexican Psychologies

Before the Spanish colonization began with Christopher Columbus' arrival in 1492, a great diversity of indigenous cultures existed across Mexico. Their rich legacies continued to exist throughout centuries of colonial rule. Examples of such contributions come from the great cultures of the Aztecs, Tlaxcaltecans, Olmecs, Totonacans,

and Mayans, among many others (Diaz-Loving 2006). Among the colonizers were the Spanish priests, whose goal was to convert the "primitive Indians" to Christianity and, in the process, kill their Gods, Goddess, language, and culture. Some of them, such as Fray Bartolome de las Casas, a Dominican who settled in Chiapas, recorded in writing the everyday lives of the Mayans, their beliefs, customs, and traditions. In a detailed historical analysis of the function of the Dominicans in Chiapas to oppress and "indoctrinate" the Indians, De Vos (1982; 2015) suggested we must recognize that these priests not only disseminated a universal religion—Christianity—but were priests of a national church and government agents at the service of colonial power-holders anchored in Spain. With this spiritual and psychological colonization, much work would need to be done to reconstruct Indigenous Psychologies based on the philosophies and ancient wisdom of the rich indigenous cultures in Mexico, similar to the work conducted by the abovementioned Chinese and Indian scholars who used their ancient scriptures to construct their own psychological theories and praxes.

Mexican psychologists' contributions have been emerging since the early 50s. Some of them were widely influenced by European and North American psychology. For example, Samuel Ramos (1934), a psychologist influenced by Adler, in analyzing the Mexican self as a historical being influenced by a rich indigenous past that was repressed and devalued through colonization, asserted that the Mexican psyche lacked the capacity for independence and was covered by an inferiority complex (Ramos 1934; cited in Diaz-Loving 2006).

Other Mexican psychologists were trained in the United States and brought behaviorism and experimental psychology to Mexico, claiming it to be the scientific approach *par excellence*. As was the case in other colonized countries in Asia and Africa, psychology as a discipline was imported to Mexico by those who were trained in the West, without a critical analysis as to whether the different cultural context—to which it was exported—was a good fit or, instead, caused brutal strangification and further colonization.

Diaz-Guerrero (1971, 1982, 1994, 2006), the first social and cultural psychologist to have founded a unique Mexican psychology, conducted abundant research in the identity and personality development of the Mexican people. Notwithstanding, this Mexican psychology was still within scientific psychological expectations to prove the hypothesis by means of strict statistical analyses. It was, however, a shift in paradigm in that it centered culture and history as the most important contexts under which to scrutinize psychometrics as well as theoretical constructions. His son, Rolando Diaz-Loving (2006), a Mexican psychologist who continued his father's legacy, stated that Mexicans have been impacted by colonization and then, later, by the struggle for independence from Europe. However, Mexicans maintain a deep psychological dependence on Europe and its colonial regime. In this ambivalence, Mexicans frequently ask themselves the question "With whom do I identify?" In an effort to resolve this confused identity, some Mexicans identify with the conquerors and colonizers (i.e., the Spaniards) and become the Criollos, who are their sons and daughters born in indigenous land and who become colonized colonizers, preserving and maintaining internal processes of colonization. Another group of Mexicans identifies with the *Mestizos*, who are the sons and daughters of

indigenous and Spanish parents, or who may opt to identify with the indigenous people themselves and with their numerous ethnic groups. Diaz-Loving (2006) remarked

> The emergence of the twentieth century saw a civil revolution. At stake, aside from a power struggle, were the identity of a country and the emancipation of an Indigenous Mestizo movement. In its aftermath, Jose Vasconcelos, a writer, politician, and thinker, promulgated the coming of a cosmic race that extracted its strength from its mixed past. The measuring stick for ethnic identity was now Indigenous. No more comparisons were made to the European past. (p. 316)

Rogelio Diaz-Guerrero devoted his life to the understanding of the Mexican psyche and integrated biology, psychology, history, and culture into the analysis of Mexican personality development. This author proposed that culture is transmitted in structures constituting a system of interrelated premises that provide norms for how people should feel, think, act, and relate to others. The psychological structures, transferred by means of a system of interrelated, cultural premises, are internalized by individuals promoting the preservation and maintenance of culture. These cultural psychic structures stipulate the where, when, how, and with whom to play specific roles. Diaz-Guerrero found different personality structures that described specific typologies of the Mexican self: (1) an affiliate obedient type (or, as per Franz Fanon, a colonized type); (2) a rebel type that goes against the norms of society (the emancipatory and revolutionary type); and (3) an authoritarian, aggressive, corrupt, impulsive, pessimistic, uncontrolled, and servile type (or, as per Franz Fanon, the colonized colonizer).

I had the fortune of having met and worked with Rogelio Diaz-Guerrero in the late 70s and mid 80s. One of the projects I conducted in the highlands of Chiapas integrated a set of interrelated cultural-historic and biological premises he developed. I adapted them for the purpose of my study with indigenous populations of the highlands of Chiapas, which were the Tzotzil and the Tzeltal. I was researching the role of play in culture, following Huizinga's (2016) landmark book, *Homo Ludens*. I was working with a group of Tzotzil and Tzeltal children from two indigenous communities, respectively, San Juan Chamula and Zinacantán. I invited the children to play freely during afterschool sessions and observed manifestations of ancestral ritual dances and legends that are still alive in their culture. As Huizinga observed, cultural traditions and oral histories are reproduced freely in children's play. Many anthropologists made similar observations in regards to the reproduction of these legacies in adult play conceived of as dance, song, and music.

As part of my goal to involve their parents, I invited them once a week to discuss the activities conducted with their children throughout the week, as well as the products or outcomes. During one of those meetings, which frequently took place in the main community square located in the center of the town between the main church and the municipal government offices, I started reading Diaz-Guerrero's cultural premises that contained such sentences as: "Children should obey their parents without question; the most important thing in life is having good relationships with one's family and fellow residents in one's community." I loudly read these statements to the involved parents and asked them if they agreed or disagreed with the statements. It impressed me that the audience expressed collective agreement with the

statements if they aligned with the audience's own cultural premises, and expressed disagreement if the statements were misaligned with the same. This was evidenced by their collective response of "*de acuerdo* (agreed)" or "*no de acuerdo* (disagreed)," expressed in full consensus. They discussed the content of such matters until collective consensus was reached and provided a collectively agreed-upon answer or decision. The community residents who gathered in the town's main square manifested a high degree of collectivism when making decisions, such as collectively agreeing or disagreeing with a premise or any other community matter. Similarly, when the children played games, if a game required that one of them be the leader (as is usually the case in Western competitive games), all the children responded that they would play the role together. In both experiences with the parents and their children, there was no "*yo* (I)" but a collective "*nosotros* (we)."

Diaz-Loving (2006) stated that the affiliative personality type represents the majority of the Mexican population and is "… reminiscent of the Hispanic cultural script of *simpatia* advanced by Triandis, Marin, and Betancourt (1984) which bestows a general tendency that emphasizes positive and agreeable behaviors and the avoidance of interpersonal conflict" (p. 322). This construct is similar to the "*pakikipagkawa*" referenced above under Filipino psychology. Diaz-Loving concluded that the Mexican personality is determined mainly by the search for harmony with ecosystems. "The socio emotional self comes through and works for the good of the group, not for personal expectations or gains" (p. 324). Rolando Diaz-Loving (2012—in Caso Niebla, p. 133) asserted that the worst problem Mexican psychologists must confront is

> …the intervention [that] requires knowledge of the ecosystem and the culture in which we are immersed. In the new Philosophy of Life published in the 90's, Rogelio Diaz-Guerrero found the love versus the power factors and stated—among other things—that the Mexican culture is love, that is, we are interested in having fluid interpersonal relationships that are also pleasant; things such as science and objectivity do not interest us much. There cannot be love in science, because it is not about keeping all of us happy nor what we like the most; we cannot vote for a finding to be true or false, it is only a matter of power, of being very right and rigorous. In academy and in science, it is not about democracy, opinion, or subjective well-being; it is about information. In the interpersonal relationships we must apply flexibility, kindness, and camaraderie….when I observe data, it is about power but when I interact with my colleagues, it is only about love. (cited in Caso Niebla 2012, p. 133—translation by the author)

Eduardo and Maria Eugenia Sánchez Díaz de Rivera (2001, 2014) expanded the development of Mexican Psychology by including the voices and worldviews of indigenous peoples as well as transformative community action for committed social and ecological justice. Eduardo Almeida is the founder of an indigenous community psychology based on authentic and equal participation with community members. Almeida collaborated with a team called *Proyecto de Animacion y Desarrollo* (PRADE) (Project of Animation and Development). PRADE committed to live for over 40 years in the Nahuat *(*descendants of the ancient Aztecs) community of San Miguel Tzinacapan of the Northern highlands of Puebla (Almeida and Sánchez Díaz de Rivera 2001, 2014, 2016a, b; Sanchez Diaz de Rivera and Almeida 2005).

PRADE applied participatory action research based on the indigenous people's popular knowledge and life stories: "*Autobiogafías de vida* or *vivencias*," which emerge from placed-based experiences and are informed by people's knowledge systems (Rahman and Fals-Borda 1991, p. 31). The indigenous participants became what Fals Borda (1985) called "organic intellectuals, who generated new paradigms of liberation" (Ciofalo 2017, p. 3).

In Latin America, decolonial feminist scholars have challenged patriarchy and contested assumptions about progress and civilization that justify inequity and engender human and ecological atrocities. Confronting patriarchal hegemony based on rationality and universalism that silence women's and others' ways of knowing and being, "decolonial feminists from the global South are co-constructing knowledge and praxes in a different way (*de otra manera*) as alternatives to modernity" (Ciofalo 2017. pp. 2–3). For instance, Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2015) asked:

> Is it not precisely the living earth, the pathos—that horizontal and solidary commotion, compassion—[our] spirituality, the deepest record of our humanity, the possibility of the tender everyday-life, [and] the creative resistance what we can call the place of the feminine? Is this not the capacity to think with the body, to understand wholeness, to feel deeply? Is it not from here that diversity emerges, the multi-temporality and plurality of which some women authors speak as forms to experience the world? Are these not new forms to live politics? (cited in Millán 2015, p. 169 and Ciofalo 2017, p. 3—the author's translation)

Sanchez Diaz de Rivera added that decoloniality is a living process that does not end in a closed theory because it is based on the feminine co-constructed in plurality. A decolonial epistemology is based on women's ways of knowing that build a non-capitalist society (p. 169—the author's translation; cited in Ciofalo 2017, p. 3).

Concluding Remarks

A decolonial position to knowledge generation centers other epistemologies, particularly those of Indigenous Psychologies, that emerge from multiple localities and are not based on paradigms that promote and maintain the desecration of nature and racial and ethnic inequities. Indigenous Psychologies center in the reality of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America as well as of other indigenous communities around the globe. This decolonial position is informed by the methodological approaches applied by indigenous scholars and practitioners (Deloria 2009; Aluli-Meyer 2008; Pe-Pua 2006; Smith 2012; Wilson 2008—among others) who have co-constructed indigenous knowledges through conviviality, establishing "dignified relationships of mutual recognition and trust" (Almeida and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera 2016b, p. 7). These relationships weave the process of research as ceremony (Wilson 2008). In this way, knowledges are produced based on indigenous cosmogonies and praxes.

As Yehia (2007) emphasized, we must resist the Western codification of indigenous epistemologies and ontologies within the dominant Western discourse as an intent to "legitimize" them vis-à-vis the hegemonic academic apparatus. The aim

should be to understand the perverse impacts that colonization, coloniality, and neoliberalism have had on indigenous communities as a means of promoting cultural and ecological justice as well as emancipatory community well-being (*buen vivir*).

As non-indigenous solidary partners in this process, we must work on the de-powerment of ourselves and the hegemonic system, constantly being self-reflexive, confronting one's privilege, cultivating humility, and building reciprocal and respectful relationships. In this way, we may learn from other cultures' distinctive ways of knowing, feeling, and being alongside human and other-than-human realms. A decolonial position embraces plurivisions and solidarity with the struggle for cultural and ecological justice.

The recent interest in indigenous ways of knowing has produced a wide range of knowledge generation, theory building, and methodological approaches to intervene in praxis. A central issue that indigenous scholars have addressed is the imposition of Western paradigms as universal truths, the subordination of indigenous peoples, the inequality of power, and the lack of opportunities to access resources (Deloria 2009; Marsella 2013; Aluli-Meyer 2008; Smith 2012; Wilson 2008).

These revolutionary movements and contestations of hegemonic psychology are finding an emancipatory language to challenge imperial forms of knowing and being in the world (Ciofalo 2017). Indigenous Psychologists address imperative issues of cultural genocide, epistemicide, and ecocide as a result of coloniality and contribute to decolonization by centering their own ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies, and praxes.

Nakata et al. (2012) suggested that we do not need to reject all that is Western as a means of co-constructing indigenous theories and praxes. These authors recommended that instead of getting stuck in binaries of choice (i.e., whether or not to reject Western epistemologies), we raise awareness of the complexity of the task of recovering traditional knowledge and praxes and contextualize this awareness within contemporary indigenous expressions. This requires an increased understanding of new forms of cultural identity and cultural revitalization.

Yehia (2007) recommended the co-construction of multiple knowledges and embodied and localized praxes as an "epistemology of a praxiography" that allows for the mapping of theories based on one's own actions and ontologies recognizing hegemonic nodes such as race, gender, and class privilege (Mol 2002—cited in Yehia 2007, p. 93).

Paraphrasing Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2015), decoloniality is a living process that does not end in a closed theory. Indigenous ways of knowing, research, and praxes produce open theories as alternatives to coloniality and contribute to the co-construction of "new ecologies of knowledges" that move from "knowledge as regulation" or representation of the other (Western science) to "knowledge as emancipation and solidarity" (Santos et al. 2008, p. li).

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Chapter 2
The Ecological Context and the Methods of Inquiry and Praxes

Nuria Ciofalo

The Historical and Geopolitical Context

The magnificent Mayan culture evolved in a vast territory that included Guatemala, the eastern parts of El Salvador, Belize, and Honduras, the states of Yucatan, Quintana Roo, and Campeche, and the eastern side of the state of Chiapas. This great Mesoamerican culture has been organized for its study into three zones: north, central, and south (Thompson 1964; cited in Muench 2008). The region of the Lacandon Rainforest constitutes the central zone, where during the classic Mayan period (325–800 A.D.), many archeological sites evolved. These included Bonampak, Yaxchilan, Peten, Tonina, and Palenque, where scientific developments in mathematics, astronomy, and architecture as well as literature and the arts took place. However, during the years of 800–925 A.D., the majestic ceremonial places were abandoned and a great exodus of the Maya to Northern Yucatan occurred. During the years 975–1200 A.D., the Mayan culture flourished in this latter region, where the God *Kukulkan*, also known as *Quetzalcoatl* by the Aztecs in central Mexico, was worshipped, among other deities. However, the Lacandon zone was not entirely desolated, as some settlements that were distributed in diverse locations remained. This was the scenario that the Spanish colonizers encountered when they arrived in Chiapas in the year 1524 (Muench 2008).

In his book, *La Paz de Dios y del Rey (The Peace of God and the King)*, De Vos (1982; 2015) extensively described how the history of the Lacandones is testimony to a vast and violent ethnocide that started being recorded when the Spanish missionaries sought to convert them to Christianity and "civilize" them. During the sixteenth century, the Dominicans worked alongside the Spanish conquerors, completing the material colonization through their spiritual and ideological colonization. One of these priests, Fray Bartolome de las Casas, proclaimed that their Christian mission

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_2

would bring peace to the so-called "Zone of War." However, the armed conquest actually brought about genocide.

While many of the natives who inhabited the regions of Chiapas and Guatemala were under the violent force of Spanish colonization, the Lacandones managed to rebel and hide in remote places inserted in the southeastern rainforest. According to de Vos, there is sufficient evidence that the contemporary Lacandones are not the descendants of the tribe to which the Spanish conquerors gave this name because they were found next to the river *Lacan-Tum* (The Site of Stones), where the "savages" worshiped their idols made out of stones. In 1570, a Franciscan priest tried to convert them to Christianity but his efforts lasted for only two visits to their settlement. During the so-called Catholic Holy Week in 1695, another Franciscan priest arrived at the settlement and started a violent invasion. He was assisted by 200 Spanish soldiers whose mission was to bring their God's and King's peace to "the savages" who had resisted colonization ever since the massacres in Chiapas started in 1530. The Dominican priests continued the religious part of the conquest, declaring that they would bring peace to a war zone under which the conquerors were obliging the Indians to become slaves and adapt to their customs (De Vos 1982; 2015).

By the end of the seventeenth century, the only indigenous tribe that managed to escape the colonial violence was the Lacandones, who constantly emigrated to deeper settlements in the rainforest in order to hide from the violent Spaniards. They built a small town called *Sac-Bahlan* (White Tiger) and two other, smaller settlements (*Peta* and *Map*) along the *Lacan-Tum* River—later known as *Lacantun*. The Franciscan priest Pedro de la Concepcion not only invaded their territory in the name of his God and King but also named their territory, *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores del Lacandon* (Our Lady of the Lacandon Sorrows). The priest continued to assign Christian names to the Indians. In addition to the 200 soldiers who entered the Lacandon settlement for the first time, Pedro de la Concepcion requested military help from the colonial town of Ocosingo, from which 900 military soldiers were sent to assist him in his "noble" project to bring these rebellious barbarians under the custody of his God and King. However, 30 years later, the settlement and its inhabitants disappeared. No other historical accounts could confirm that this missionary settlement existed after this time. In 1769, a Guatemalan municipal authority asserted that he had found three Lacandon survivors in another town (De Vos 1982; 2015).

The Lacandon Indians are considered to be the only ones who fought tirelessly against the Spanish conquerors and other colonized Indian tribes. Because of their resilient resistance and capacity to inhabit more desolate areas in the rainforest, they were able to evade the brutal force and determination of the Spanish conquerors and missionaries, who regarded the Lacandon Rainforest as a dangerous and hostile environment and who no longer wanted to venture into its conquest. A number of anthropologists and ethnographers have focused on studying the Lacandones as the last descendants of the old Maya, who were to some extent "untouched" by the pervasive influence of Western colonization. However, there seems to be evidence that the Lacandon tribe was exterminated, with the only conquest possible in the seventeenth century led by the Franciscan priest Pedro de la Concepcion and backed by the Spanish military. Contemporary descendants of the ancient Maya have been

identified as Maya-Cho'ol. On the other hand, the contemporary Lacandones have been considered to be descendants of the Yucatecan Maya from the Peten region, who emigrated to the Chiapas rainforest and appropriated this name. They settled in three main localities adjacent to rivers and lakes: Naha, Metzabock, and Lacanja Chansayab. Other linguistic groups such as Tzeltales, Tojolabales, and Cho'oles have also resided in the so-called *Selva Lacandona* (Lacandon rainforest) and identify as distinct from each other. While numerous documents have reported the history of the Lacandones, none of them—except perhaps the *Popol Vuh*—were written by the Maya, thus, they are biased toward defending the ideology, interests, and power of the European conquerors and scientists (De Vos 1982; 2015).

In the book entitled *El Libro Blanco de la Selva (The White Book of the Rainforest)*, Muench (2008) asserted that the Maya developed profound knowledge of the ecological cycles and processes of the tropics in general and of the rainforest in particular, of the conditions of the soil, and of the succession process of vegetables through the management of *acahuales*—the secondary vegetation used as a fundamental element of the agricultural production system known as the *milpa* (small cornfield). In this system was practiced the traditional slash and burn (*roza, tumba, and quema*), which left the land to rest for a period of at least 7 years. Nations and Nigh (1980) asserted that "the Mayans cultivated and continue to cultivate corn, beans, chili, pumpkin, yucca, sweet potato, and chayote—among others—in a mixed planting system that requires intense dedication and specific care of the vegetable varieties" (cited in Muench 2008, p. 7—translation by the author). Furthermore, the Maya developed sophisticated techniques to nourish the acahuales with diverse tree species in order to intensify the recovery process during the period of succession and warrant land productivity to better cover their nutritional needs. They also practiced—and continue to practice—hunting of wild game as well as fishing to provide protein sources (Muench 2008, p. 7—the author's translation).

The Lacandones speak a Mayan language that has been identified as belonging to the Yucatec Mayan language. The contemporary Lacandones are considered to have descended from a community that evolved in the year 1640, located on the road between Palenque and Ocosingo, as reported by the Spanish conquerors. In 1740, the existence of a small Lacandon town, located 40 km from Palenque, was reported by a Spanish expedition. Decades later, during the years of the independence movements of Mexico and Guatemala, the state of Chiapas separated from Guatemala and became Mexican territory (De Vos 1982; 2015; Muench 2008).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Lacandon rainforest experienced a dramatic exploitation of its rich resources. In his book entitled, *Oro verde; La Conquista de la Selva Lacandona por los Madereros Tabasqueños, 1822–1949 (Green Gold: The Conquest of the Lacandon Rainforest by the Tabasquean Timber Merchants, 1822–1949),* De Vos (1988; 1996) documented in rich detail, the barbaric invasion of the Lacandon Rainforest by Mexican and foreign magnates, whose unlimited greediness made the rainforest their vast and indefinite supplier of precious woods such as mahogany and cedar—but mainly the former. The Mexican entrepreneurs were mostly descendants of the Spanish colonizers, settled in Mexico for generations, or Spanish businessmen. Some of them made deals with companies

from the United States (US), Canada, England, and France, and in many cases sold their properties to foreign capital. In addition, Mexican government policies greatly enhanced the new conquest of the rainforest by large corporations from Mexico and elsewhere (De Vos 1988; 1996).

In 1821, Chiapas became an independent province from Spain. The region known as the Lacandon Rainforest was considered a vast virgin and desolated area named the "Lacandon Desert." Some residents of the outer rainforest's margins, particularly from Ocosingo and Palenque, still remember that their ancestors traded machetes, salt, and mirrors for tobacco and honey supplied by the Lacandones who were settled in a Spanish mission. However, this mission did not last longer, as the Lacandones escaped and hid in the vast forest. In some Tzeltal villages of the highlands of Chiapas, there still exists historical memory of war struggles with the Lacandones that occurred both before and during the Spanish conquest. This historical memory is represented by songs and dances performed during annual ceremonies (De Vos 1988; 1996).

In 1810, a rich Spanish administrator, Captain Cayetano, decided to explore the rainforest and build roads that could connect Ocosingo with Tabasco, expand agricultural fields, and exploit its richness. It was not until 1826 that Cayetano received official authorization to initiate his exploration. Cayetano used the many rivers of the region as fluvial transport for the extracted lumber to be sent from ports such as Tenosique (located in the state of Tabasco) through the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. As a reward for his effort, he was granted land for agriculture and cattle raising and a 6-year permit to extract precious woods. There followed a series of applications to continue extracting lumber by numerous and powerful national and international firms. Several legal demands were made to manage the greedy extraction, as new trees were not being planted to replace the severe loss of tons of precious lumber that had been carried out through rivers that flowed into the potent Usumacinta River and that were transported through the Atlantic Ocean to Europe, North America, and Canada. Spanish, French, British, Canadian, and US entrepreneurs came to Mexico, acquired large estates (*haciendas*), and built brutal empires in which they housed hundreds of indigenous workers under the worst working and living conditions. These settlements included stores with basic goods that the workers had to purchase using their salaries. In this way, they were always in debt and condemned to work for these violent capitalists until they died (De Vos 1988; 1996).

Further expansions were promoted by a Mexican law in 1883 that provided "colonization contracts" to rich entrepreneurs and granted them free land in exchange for their dedication to extracting Mexico's natural resources and for tributes paid to the government for each tree cut in profitable mahogany and cedar. By the end of 1891, a powerful business called "Colonizing Company" possessed (owned) 3,500,000 hectares (De Vos 1988; 1996, p. 132—the author's translation).

In 1894, Mexican President Porfirio Diaz signed the Law About Occupation and Dispossession of Empty Land Lots of the Mexican United States (*Ley Sobre Ocupacion y Enajenacion de Terrenos Baldios de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*), which gave free access to explorers who were willing to occupy empty lands in order to inhabit and exploit them. This law provoked an unregulated and frenzied invasion of

lands located particularly in the so-called "Lacandon Desert." This invasion was led by powerful international and national enterprises and capitalist speculators. Many entrepreneurs from Tabasco took possession of large estates in the Chiapas rainforest. Meanwhile, capitalists from Mexico City were purchasing large pieces of empty land for resale to international investors. Some of the latter were mainly from the US and opted to extract rubber. Examples of such companies were the "San Marcos Rubber Plantation Company, the Mexican Rubber Culture Company, and the Monte Cristo Rubber Plantation Company." (De Vos 1988; 1996, pp. 145–146—the author's translation).

The rubber extraction is considered to have been the most powerful factor affecting the existing deforestation due to the fact that these companies burned the original vegetation to plant large expansions of rubber trees that caused severe soil damage. In 1930, the novelist B. Traven described the cruel living and working conditions of the lumber and rubber workers. During the years 1902–1909, the rainforest became privatized land. With the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and the First World War in 1914, investors from England and Europe abandoned their businesses, and the exploitation of the rainforest's resources passed into the hands of US capitalists. In 1949, the capitalists from Tabasco also abandoned their investments due to a lack of international demand for their products (De Vos 1988; 1996).

Perera and Bruce (1985) asserted that since the Spanish conquest, the preservation of the Lacandon ethnicity had been possible due to their isolation and the inhospitable and sometimes unhealthy environment resulting from certain epidemics such as malaria. However, in 1940, the Mexican Department of Health managed to eradicate malaria, while road building technology expanded across the state of Chiapas. The latter became the key infrastructure for the precious woods' commercial growth (p. 25). Muench (2008) observed:

> In the first place, this period [from 1822–1949] marked the history of the Lacandon Rainforest, foreign capital was invested in the extraction of the forest's rich resources that were easy to appropriate and without compromise for regional development; the exploitation of the natural capital of the region only served the accumulation process and the capitalist development of the central countries [Europe, the US, and Canada].
>
> In the second place, the forest's extraction implied an intense exploitation of the Indigenous peoples who worked in the logging camps, as lumberjacks, oxherds, muleteers, trail builders, etc., and who worked practically in slavery conditions.
>
> In the third place, the need to use an animal labor force (oxen) for the transportation of wood to the rivers required grassland to feed them; that is, the forest's exploitation introduced cattle raising to the Lacandon Rainforest; equally, the need to produce food supplies for the logging camp workers led to the growing of basic grains, initiating in this way the change of the forest's land use to agricultural production.
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> Lastly, the land's appropriation process through the establishment of immense land estates as private property is an element of great impact in the Lacandon Rainforest. Some of these private properties remained until the decade of 1950, when these were divided and sold to new settlers or expropriated and incorporated as national assets (p. 11—the author's translation).

From 1950 to date, a different problem emerged, caused mainly by massive migration processes from within and outside the state of Chiapas, led by poor indigenous peasants who fought for land and liberty. According to De Vos (1988; 1996), the

severe ecological damage caused by all these invasions and Mexican policies is difficult to assess. However, it may not be as severe as the one caused by the vast migration movements and occupations that followed.

The barbaric and chaotic extraction of the forest's natural resources for over 50 years did not cause the entire territorial colonization of the region. In the 1930s, the Lacandon rainforest was still barely inhabited, except for dispersed Lacandon settlements. There were still vast private property settlements in 1955 but about one-third of the forest was inhabited only by Lacandones and some of the lumber workers who had settled in the region. However, the lumber and rubber companies had opened new roads that crossed the region and connected it to important economic and political hubs, such as Ocosingo and Palenque in Chiapas and Tenosique in Tabasco. The Mexican government proclaimed a colonization policy to allow for new settlements of poor peasants who were fighting for the land rights granted by the Mexican Revolution for decades and without success. To avoid addressing the numerous land claims, the Mexican government offered to let the landless peasants from other regions appropriate the empty land of the Lacandon Rainforest. These masses of poor peasants settled along the abandoned lumber camps or the roads the lumber companies had constructed. During the 1960s, the Mexican government published this law but it had already divided 19,959 hectares in the Margaritas municipality in 1940, as well as 106,352 hectares in Margaritas, Ocosingo, Palenque, and Salto de Agua in the 1950s (Muench 2008, p. 19). The phases of division and the granting of lands to the vast migratory waves of poor peasants followed four chronological phases: (1) the initial colonization phase from 1930 to 1963; (2) the peak of the colonization process from 1964 to 1972; (3) the end of land colonization from 1973 to 1985, and (4) the establishment of the settled population from 1973 to 1985 (PASECOP 1992; cited in Muench 2008, p. 19—the author's translation).

During the first phase, the main settlers were cattle ranchers from Tabasco and indigenous peasants who were primarily Tzeltales and Cho'oles targeting Palenque and Tenosique, as well as indigenous peasants who were Tojolabales targeting Ocosingo and Las Margaritas. During the peak period, a new company called *Aserraderos Bonampak* (Bonampak Sawmill) introduced new technology and initiated the modern exploitation of the Lacandon Rainforest. This company opened new roads and increased access to the rainforest from Palenque. This caused a significant migration increase and the consequent development of new cattle rancher settlements by masses of speculators coming from other states, such as Veracruz, Puebla, and Tabasco, as well as by poor Cho'oles and Tzeltales from the Chiapas highlands and northern regions who came in search of the fruitful promised land, redemption from extreme poverty, and the severely exploitative work conditions in the fields of the rich landowners. In 1967, the Mexican government converted private land into national territory and offered it to more peasants, including Tzotzil peasants and mestizos who were demanding the land promised by the agrarian reform that the Mexican Revolution had initiated. This caused a severe agricultural and cattle raising invasion provoked by the governmental policy *Marcha al Trópico* (March to the Tropics) (Muench 2008, p. 20—the author's translation).

During the beginning of the third period (1973–1985), marked as the end of the colonization process, there were numerous new settlements consisting of Cho'oles, Tzeltales, Tzotziles, Tojolabales, and Mestizos. The Lacandones settled in three towns—Naha, Metzabock, and Lacanja Chansayab—and demanded their land rights. The Mexican government faced increasing demands to obtain formal communal land rights (*ejidos*) from the myriad new settlers as well as those settlers who were considered the original inhabitants of the rainforest: The Lacandones. The Mexican Revolution and the colonization policies gave the indigenous peasants land rights once they had settled and showed proof of productive land use (Muench 2008, p. 20).

To manage these increasing demands, the Mexican government created new laws. In his book, *Una Tiera para Sembrar Sueños (A Land to Harvest Dreams),* De Vos (2002) stated

> In 1972 [the Mexican government] created the so-called *Zona Lacandona* [Lacandon Zone] with an area of 614,321 hectares, promulgating it as "communal land that belonged from time immemorial to the Lacandon tribe" (Diario Oficial, March 6, 1972, pp. 10–13 in De Vos 2002, p. 27). [The Mexican government] intended in this way to stop the high advancement of the spontaneous colonization of the northern and eastern part of the rainforest and closed its center to all forms of human penetration. Two years later, in 1974, it created by presidential decree the *Compañía Forestal de la Lacandona*, S. A. (COFOLASA) (the Lacandon Forest Company) with the goal of eliminating private lumber exploitation but to control and manage it under its own benefit. Lastly, in 1978, it made a last attempt to protect a still-existing nucleus of the virgin forest against imminent human invasion and created the "*Reserva Integral de la Biosfera Montes Azules* (RIBMA) (The Integral Reserve of the Biosphere Montes Azules) ," assigning it an area of 331,200 hectares (*Diario Oficial*, January 12, 1978, pp. 6–8; cited in De Vos 2002, p. 27—the author's translation).

The granting of the enormous amount of land to the Lacandones created intense social conflict in the region. The Mexican government strategized the resolution of these conflicts by expanding land regulations assigned as natural protected areas. However, it did not take into account the fact that there were already many settlements in the two areas. The very same Lacandones, to whom the initial large extension of land was assigned, saw this award restricted and polarized as the new colonies moved toward the protected areas that were within a closer distance of their settlements. This was the case when Tzeltal settlers occupied Velazco Suarez, now called Nueva Palestina, and other settlers from various regions occupied Frontera Corozal—previously known as Frontera Echeverria—which were within the national protected areas and thus were considered illegal. The Mexican government had no other option but to recognize these settlers' continuous land claims. In 1979, these two settlements were recognized as common land (*bienes comunales*) under the 1972 decree that gave the two communities the right to vote in community assemblies, though only the Lacandones could be assembly presidents. De Vos (2002) stated

> The new *comuneros* [community members residing in communal land] were baptized as "tribe" by the authorities and headed by a "leader," named by the southerners [also known as *derechosos*—those who hold rights], and who received the award with encountered affects. How would it be possible to administer such a vast territory? What will be done with the almost 40 Tzeltal and Ch'ol colonies anchored in the zone, now as illegal paratroopers (non invited guests)? How can this immense communal land be protected in the future

> from potential invasions? The answer to the latter question arrived two years later, when [National President] Echeverría created, also by presidential decree (on March 16, 1974) , a new state enterprise for the exploitation of wood in La Lacandona. The directors of the new *Compañía Forestal de La Lacandona, S. A.* (COFOLASA) (the Lacandon Forest Company) did not delay in inducing the Lacandones to sign a contract. On November 27, 1974, the "owners of the rainforest" granted COFOLASA for 10 years the exploitation of 35,000 square meters of precious wood, or 10,000 trees per year. The Lacandones received $250 pesos per cubic meter of mahogany and cedar and $50 pesos per cubic meter for other tropical woods. Seventy percent of these awards would be frozen in a communal fund controlled by *Nacional Financiera* (NAFINSA) (National Finance Company) for the *Fomento Nacional Ejidal* (FONAFE) (the National Promotion of the *Ejido*). The rest of the 30 percent was distributed among the 66 heads of household [*derechosos*] by means of monthly payments. The first remittance was paid in August of 1975 … and each family received an unappreciated amount of 4,862.90 pesos. The three "neighborhoods" of the Lacandon community started to receive visits from various governmental institutions to help them "improve their lives." The programs were funded by the 70 percent reserved funds for this purpose. CONASUPO [the National Company of Popular Subsistence] stores were installed with shelves full of products brought by aircraft: bottled honey, refined sugar, canned juices, tuna fish preserves, corn flower, wheat, etc. … Some [Lacandones] hired a Cho'ol and Tzeltal workforce for the annual harvest that soon lost its traditional diversification due to the growing supply of the CONASUPO stores (p. 90—the author's translation; italics and acronym in capitals added).

Perera and Bruce (1985) reported that the government provoked conflicts among the northern and southern Lacandon communities. The government promoted the leadership of a southern *to'ohil* (leader) from Lacanja—Jose Pepe Chan Bol—who wanted to persuade the northern Lacandon from Naha to move to Lacanja so that the area would be free for lumber extraction. One wise man—the recognized *to'ohil* from Naha, Old Chan'Kin—shared with these authors the fact that a Mexican filmmaker had hired them to act on a film entitled *Cascabel*, which documented the abuses perpetrated by both the Mexican government and the lumber companies. However, Jose Pepe Chan Bol cashed and retained their payment along with corrupted money he received from the government to allow for the greedy extraction of their natural resources. These hardships, along with the very hard living conditions of the new settlers constantly struggling for survival under extreme poverty, led to the emergence of peasant organizations, not only to confront the precarious conditions but to demand and fight for their rights as dignified and legal citizens. Political and religious groups in the region offered them support and advice. For instance, since the 1960s, the Catholic church in San Cristobal de las Casas had a hard-working bishop, Samuel Garcia, who preached liberation theology and was committed to fighting for the rights of peasants and indigenous peoples residing in the region. De Vos (2002) stated

> For the new settlers of the *Lacandona* [the name given to the Lacandon Rainforest] , the religious accompaniment of the Jesuits of the Bachajon Mission and the Dominicans of Ocosingo became an excellent school where they learned not only "to listen to the word of God" but also to "read the signs of the times," that is, to analyze their own reality as marginalized Indigenous peasants at the local, state, and national levels. (p. 31—the author's translation)

A number of Evangelist churches played a similar accompanying role on behalf of the poor peasants in their struggle for social and political justice. However, these

were less numerous than were the Catholic churches. The peasants were exposed to quality education through which they learned to read and write in Spanish while reflecting on their personal and collective struggles, organizing to improve their living conditions, and demanding their rights. They spread the word in their own communities and promoted further community organizing. In this way, religious cohesion served not only to build community solidarity but also to deepen an emerging collective identity among the diverse settlements of the vast rainforest. In this way, the existing relationships between the indigenous groups that resided in the highlands of Chiapas and those inhabiting the Lacandon Rainforest were deepened. This social and religious connection generated popular power to develop sophisticated forms of political organization (Ciofalo 2014). As Leyva and Franco (1996; 2002) stated, liberation theology was aligned with indigenous forms of organizing. The "*nosotros los comunidad*" (we the community) or "*Jcomonaltic*" in Tzeltal evolved as a primary force and social cohesion (p. 156—the author's translation).

In 1974, the first indigenous Congress took place in San Cristobal de las Casas. Indigenous peasants representing various ethnic groups and communities clearly expressed their demands to state and municipal authorities. In addition, other leftist groups, which were of the Maoist tradition, helped the new settlers from Ocosingo articulate their growing discontent in response to the governmental law that awarded 614,321 hectares of land to 66 Lacandon families. Meanwhile, 30 Tzeltal and Cho'ol settlements already established within the granted territory were ignored. In 1975, a new peasant organization called *Quiptic ta Lecubtesel* (*Unidos para Nuestro Progreso/*United for our Progress) was formed. In the next decade, more peasant organizations evolved and merged with others, building, in 1988, the regional organization, *La Asociación de Interés Rural* (ARIC) (The Association of Rural Interest) and *Union de Uniones* (Union of Unions) (De Vos 2002, p. 33).

According to Leyva and Franco (1996; 2002), the peasant movements supported by religious and political organizations promoted a sense of community. They stated,

> Everything pointed at the revaluation of Indigenous culture and giving voice to those who have always been silenced. In this way, a supra-individual spirit was generated: the collective or common in Tzeltal. That is the union of the inhabitants of the colonies who came together to prescribe regulations for the functioning of all spheres of the local social life. For instance, the collective plans to work in the communal milpa, the construction of public buildings (the ejido, the health clinic, the school, etc.), the opening or the cleaning of roads; these plans designated civilian and religious authorities. The common observed that wedding rules were obeyed and punished those who breached them … It was necessary to express one's own thoughts, speak out, voice opinions, read God's word, sing, discuss in community assemblies, consent or contest agreements. In this way the erasure of differences caused by diverse origins or languages was sought. A utopia was shared, the construction of God's kingdom in this earth; this guided everyday work and life. (p. 161—the author' translation)

The authors added that this solidarity and commitment generated strong community cohesion supporting the formation of a collective indigenous identity. The latter was strengthened by several driving forces: (1) liberation theology, (2) the Maoist movement led by university students from the University of Chapingo, Guerrero, (3) membership in the regional organization Union of Unions, (4) a sense of belonging

determined by common indigenous languages, and (5) residence in the regions where the movements were embraced (p. 171—the author's translation).

This collective organizing effectively accomplished the resolution of at least some of their demands to improve land rights and living conditions. It culminated in the emergence of the *Alianza Nacional Campesina Indígena Emiliano Zapata* (ANCIEZ) (National Indigenous Peasant Alliance Emiliano Zapata), and the Zapatista march on October 12, 1992 in San Cristobal de las Casas to commemorate five centuries of colonial oppression.

In 1986, the government gave formal land titles to the Lacandon community that integrated Lacanja Chansayab, Metzabock, Naha, Nueva Palestina, and Frontera Corozal. However, its extension was reduced to 70% given regulations that included more protected areas, such as the historical sites of Bonampak and Yaxchilan and the Chan'Kin national reserve, as well as the granting of other land titles within the region. Despite these conservation policies, the three main factors that destroyed the precious ecology of the Lacandon Rainforest were the lumber companies, the intense cattle raising and agricultural enterprises, and the peasants who migrated from various regions. Vast extensions of the rich forest were transformed into agricultural and cattle raising lands, causing severe erosion and the progressive exhaustion of the delicate soil in only 30 years (De Vos 2002).

The armed social movement known as *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) is a result of a decade-long process of disciplined and clandestine political organizing led by indigenous peasants, who are determined to apply a more radical strategy to their ignored demands so that these are finally addressed. The main location of this important movement is the Lacandon Rainforest, also known as *Lacandonia*. However, as Leyva and Franco (1996; 2002) concluded, it would not be accurate to state that all peasants residing in the Lacandon Rainforest are militants of the EZLN. This is a national problem caused by multiple factors, such as land appropriation, extreme poverty and marginalization, abuses of power, governmental violence, and oppression. These authors added other contributing factors, such as "the role that was assigned to the Indigenous peasant society within the national socio-economic context, the unequal regional development in the country, and the lack of spaces for democratic social participation" (p. 174—the author's translation).

The EZLN published a *Declaración de la Selva Lacandona* (Declaration of the Lacandon Rainforest) (n.d.) that contains six declarations describing, in detail, their cosmogony, ideology, values, and demands, as well as how the Zapatistas see the country to which they belong. They addressed the first declaration to all Mexican peoples, stating

> We are the product of 500 years of struggles: first against slavery, in the Independence war against Spain led by the Insurgents, thereafter [the struggle] to promulgate our Constitution and expulse the French Empire in our grounds followed by the Porfirist dictatorship that denied us the just application of the Reform's laws. The people rebelled, forming our own leaders. Villa and Zapata emerged in this way. They were poor men like us to whom the most basic education had been denied in order to usurp our lands … extracting our country's richness without caring that we were dying of hunger and sickness that could be cured; that

> we do not possess anything … not even a decent roof above our heads, land, work, food, health, education, the freedom and right to elect our own authorities democratically without dependence on foreigners, peace or justice for all of us and our children (p. 1—the author's translation).

The fifth (V) declaration starts with an excerpt from the Popol Vuh: "We are the ones who revenge death; our legacy will never be extinguished; there will be light in the morning light" (p. 11). Referring to the call for solidarity among indigenous peoples, it stated

> The Zapatistas in San Andres and their agreements are not alone … Like now, then [in the past] we were only a small part of a grand history with the face, word, and heart of the Nahuatl, Paipai, Kiliwa, Cucapa, Cochimi, Kumiai, Yuma, Seri, Chontal, Chinanteca, Pame, Chichimeca, Otomi, Mazahua, Matazinca, Ocuilteco, Zapoteco, Solteco, Chatino, Papabuco, Mixteco, Cuicateco, Triqui, Amuzgo, Mazateco, Chocho, Izcateco, Huave, Tlapaneco, Totonaca, Tepehua, Popoluca, Mixe, Zoque, Huasteco, Lacandon, Maya Chol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Mame, Teco, Ixil, Aguateco, Motocintleco, Chicomucelteco, Kanjobal, Jacalteco, Quiche, Cakchiquel, Ketchi, Pima, Tepehuan, Tarahumara, Mayo, Yaqui, Cahita, Opata, Cora, Huichol, Purepecha, and Kikapu. Like then, we continue walking together with all these Indigenous peoples in the struggle for the recognition of our rights. Not as vanguard or direction, just as a part [of all] (p. 12—the author's translation).

However, the struggle continues. The Mexican government responded with violence and seductive strategies, dispatching its army to Zapatista territories and provoking internal conflicts through the use of paramilitary activities (De Vos 2002, p. 33; Muench 2008). To date, the strong organizational capacity of some of the involved communities contrasts with a more submissive and peaceful position in others that choose to not involve themselves in the movement (De Vos 2002, p. 33; Muench 2008). For the Lacandones, the Zapatista movement exists only outside their communities; they do not even want to engage in conversations about it.

Among the strategies that the government has used to pacify the region was the development of ecotourism, which has become the main income-generating activity although it has benefited only a few families. With this intervention, the government has launched a decade-long campaign called *Modernizate* (Modernize), which trains the owners and managers of the eco-camps to construct them according to Western standards, as well as to serve tourists in the manner in which they would be served in urban localities. This neo-colonization, in addition to the abovementioned religious neo-colonization led by Anglo-Saxon Protestants and Evangelists, contributes to the threat of the substitution of Lacandon customs, traditions, language, culture, and ecological habitats with global commodification.

The Cosmogonic and Mythological Context

As stated before, Indigenous Psychologies have evolved from religious and philosophical roots that can inform the development of people's unique cognitive, affective, and spiritual relationships to the world and to each other. In the case of the

Maya, the Sacred Books contained in the codices, the *Popol Vuh*, as well as myths and legends that still exist as historical memory in oral traditions and are passed on to later generations are rich sources for the co-construction of a Mayan psychology. With colonization, this rich legacy was—and continues to be—altered through the imposition of the conquerors' cosmologies or silenced and relegated to primitive superstitions. As Smith (2012) contested, the arrogant colonizers also dared to name their cultural identities. Consequently, the name "Maya" was assigned to a group of people whom the Spanish usurpers of their lands and wisdom had encountered in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize. The name "Lacandon" was also given by the Spanish colonizers; it came from the Mayan word *lacan tun* (the site of stones), which became *lacantun*. Later, the Spanish conquerors used the name "Lacandones" to refer to any kind of rebellious Indians. The Lacandones called themselves *Hash Winik* (the true people) (Boremanse 1982, p. 71; 1986).

In *Maya History and Religion*, Thompson (1970) described myths, traditions, and practices of the Maya as well as other Mesoamerican cultures searching for common principles. The author contributed to the comparison of ancient religions with contemporary ones and confirmed striking analogies. For instance, Thompson reported some Lacandon ceremonial practices from Naha that are very similar to ancient Mayan religious practices. One critique has been that Thompson regarded the Lacandones to be of lesser importance than other Mayan ethnic groups. He also asserted that the direct descendants of the Maya from the classic period were Cho'ol and had been exterminated by the Spaniards. Later, a Yucatec Mayan migration settled in what is now known as the Lacandon Rainforest. However, for Robert Bruce (1974, 1976, 1978a, b), the Northern Lacandon from Naha are direct descendants of the ancient Maya who inhabited the ceremonial sites of Palenque and Yaxchilan.

Another classic work that described in detail the origins and traditions of the Northern Lacandon at the beginning of the twentieth century is Tozzer's *Comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandones* (1907). His book has been considered a classic ethnographic study of the Northern Lacandon culture that covered a long period of almost half a century. Perera and Bruce (1985) asserted that by the time Tozzer conducted this study, "…it was still a time of 'high adventure' for anthropological field work, and anthropologists then still had much in common with the great travelers of the century before" (p. 333). Tozzer based his ethnographic study on only one informant: To'ohil Enrique Bol Garcia of the Ma'ax (Monkey) *omen* (lineage or animal name), who was the father of Old Chan K'in from Naha.

Duby (1944) published a book entitled *Los Lacandones: Su Pasado y su Presente (The Lacanones: Their Past and Present*), which became one of the most accepted ethnographies after Tozzer's work. Duby focused on the threats that were inherent in the rainforest—greedy extraction of its resources by the Mexican government and foreign investors—at the time of her extensive visits to, in particular, the Northern Lacandones. Duby's main claim has been that the Lacandon culture is deeply embedded in the rainforest and that its destruction would entail the destruction of their culture. In their book entitled, *La Selva Lacandona*, Blom and Duby (1955) reported that a significant amount of attention was paid to the Lacandon Rainforest after the discovery of Bonampak. Before that time, the Mayan traditions and

religion systems had remained intact. However, decades later, the invasions of lumber speculators, American and Canadian Evangelists, and other peasant migrations considerably altered the ecology and culture of the region.

The Mayan sacred texts were written utilizing hieroglyphs that depicted symbols describing religious or political events dated according to two calendars: the *haab* and the *tzolkin*. The former was divided into 365 days that were themselves divided in 18 months to which the *uayeb*, a period of 5 days called *xma kaba kin* (nameless days) or *chay kin* (lost days) was added. The Maya would stop activities on those days because they believed something bad would happen if they did not (De Landa 1985, pp. 103–130; cited in Di Girolamo 2017, p. 88—the author's translation). The Spanish missionaries preserved part of the sacred texts in the codices. However, it is striking and quite worrisome that, to date, all the Mayan codices are housed outside of Mexico in Europe and the United States. The Dresden Codices are in Germany, the Madrid Codices are in Spain, the Peresianus Codices are in Paris, France, and the Grolier Codices are housed in New York (Di Girolamo 2017, p. 89—the author's translation).

The deciphering and interpretation of the rich Mayan cosmology, astrology, science, and mythology are still being carried out in the study of archeological sites, as many of the texts were written in stone (Brunhouse 2013; Obregon Rodriguez and Stuardo 2016). There are also the *anals* (science books) described by De Landa (1985) as having been written by nobles of the highest political ranks. The priests only read the books to the people; they did not write them. For the Maya, according to De La Garza (1975), the sacred books or codices were key to comprehending time and space as well as the universe composed by sky, earth, and the underworld ruled by their Gods and Goddesses. The sacred books were used to preserve and transmit their knowledge and religious traditions. During colonial times, the Maya incorporated the Latin alphabet in the preservation of their sacred books. These were considered "community books" that were cautiously kept by the noblest families and passed on to their children. The most important Mayan books are the *Chilam Balam* of the Yucatecan, the *Popul Vuh* of the Quiches, and the *Solala Memorial* of the Cakchiqueles. Popol Vuh means the book of the community, as *popol* means gathering or house and *vuh* or *uuh* means paper or a book made out of tree bark—called *amate.* During colonial times, it was written by an anonymous author who asserted that the original book was occult in nature and that the written version was produced under the influence of Christianity. Cosmogony, myth, and legend are interwoven in these books. In the case of the book called *Rabinal Achi* from Guatemala and the *Dzitbalche Book of Songs,* dance, songs, and ritual are interwoven (Di Girolamo 2017, pp. 90–91— the author's translation).

Mayan cosmogony relates primarily to the relationship that human beings have with nature, symbolized as animals, flowers, plants, rivers, mountains, and stones. The Maya liked to view phenomena from different angles and tended to repeat descriptions frequently. This repetition occurs in other indigenous texts and discourses from diverse ethnic groups such as the Nahuatl, Zapotecs, and others. The main structure of Mayan cosmogony represents a terrestrial level above which is the sky and below which is the underworld, where nine Gods called *Bolon Tiku* lived.

Also in the underworld lived the God of Death *Cizin*—also known as *Kisin*— and his wife, *Ixcab*. The earth had a square form that rested on the back of a crocodile called *Itzam*. The Divine Twins, *Hun-Hunahpu* and *Vucub-Hunahpu,* dedicated themselves to playing ball; they used to make great noise, causing the earth to tremble. The Lords of *Xibalba* sent four messengers, requesting that they be invited to play with them. One of the messengers led the Divine Twins to the stairway leading down to the underworld to meet the Lords of *Xibalba*. Four Gods, who were brothers and called *Bacab,* supported the sky with its 13 layers and formed the four cardinal points that divided the earth. The *Chilam Balam* also refers to these four *Bacabs*, who are seen as destroyers of the earth (Di Girolamo 2017— the author's translation).

Myths and Legends

Several foreign ethnographers studied Lacandon myths and legends and asserted that they worshipped stones and caves found near lakes. The Lacandones believed that their Gods inhabited the pyramids of Palenque, Bonampak, and Yaxchilan and practiced rituals in these sites (Boremanse 1981, 1982, 2006; Bruce 1974, 1975a, b, 1978a, b; Roeling 2007; Tozzer 1907—among others). Due to the invasion of the Evangelic religions, these rituals are no longer carried out. It is estimated that the Northern Lacandon from Naha and Metzabock may have practiced rituals until the mid-1980s but this practice was lost among the Southern Lacandones of Lacanja Chansayab. However, the historical memory of their myths and legends is still preserved. Some of these myths describe creation stories aligned with those published in the *Popol Vuh*. In the *Chilam Balam* from Chumayel, it is written

> The red flint stone is the sacred stone of *Ah Chac Mucen Cab*. Red Mother Ceiba, its Hidden Center, is in the East [….]. The white flint stone is the sacred stone of the North. The white Mother Ceiba is the Invisible Center of *Sac Musen Cab* [….]. The black flint stone is the stone of the West. Black Mother Ceiba is its Hidden Center [….]. The yellow flint stone is the stone of the South. Yellow Mother Ceiba is its Hidden Center. (Mediz Bolio, 1980, p. 220—cited in Di Girolamo 2017, p. 94— the author's translation)

In the Mayan imaginary, the ceiba was the miraculous tree. Its roots were grounded in the underworld, its trunk grew on top of the earth, and its foliage grew into the sky. The sacred legend says that this was the divine tree that created all humans as well as the half-God twins, *Hunahpu* and *Ixbalanque*, who subjugated the Lords of the Underworld and brought light to the earth. The Lords of *Xibalba* won the fight against the Divine Twins, decapitated *Hun-Hunahpu*, and placed his head in the Divine Ceiba tree. A young lady called *Ixquic* heard about its wonders and went to see it. As she stood in front of it, a skeleton spit on her hand and *Hunahpu* and *Ixbalanque* were borne. Another main Mayan myth—as well as that of other indigenous groups on the American continent—describes corn as the origin and sustenance of life. "Only corn entered the body of the ancestors and humans were created by the work of the Progenitors" (Recinos 1995, pp. 35–36—cited in Di Girolamo 2017, p. 95— the author's translation).

Yet another recurrent myth common to many indigenous groups in Mexico is the *nahual*, which is an animal double spirit that accompanies humans who become their animal *nahual* at night and wander the earth. Lastly, it could be concluded that the cosmology and cosmogony as well as philosophy of life of the Maya—and those of many other indigenous cultures of the Americas and elsewhere—consist primarily of the relationship with three main elements of existence (the cosmos, nature, and humans) and the ethical value of harmony among these. It is a philosophy of the collective, of the "we" formed through interdependence and coexistence.

Boremanse (1982) compared a creation myth, "the *Tu'ub* myth," told to him by Northern and Southern Lacandones and supported by other Mayan scholars.

> This story took place after the birth of the gods, after the creation of the forest by Hachàkyum (literally: "Our True Lord"), but before the heavens and the underworld were made. The creation was thus not yet completed. In those days the gods were living on earth. Hachàkyum (also known as Ik Chan Yum, "Our Little Lord." because he is the youngest of three brothers) created the malevolent Kisin, Lord of Death. Then Hachàkyum created man (that is the "True People"). He first made figures of clay. During the night Kisin came and marred Hachàkyum's figures. (This is why the "True People" have black hair and dark skins instead of being like the White People). The next day Hachàkyum waved a guano palm leaf (xa'n, sabal yapa) over the clay figures and they became alive. Kisin wanted to create people too, and he made his own figures. To punish him for what he had done to his creations Hachàkyum turned Kisin's figures into animals (monkeys, deers, wild boars…). This is how animals were created (Cline, 1944; Bruce, 1968, 1971, 1974; Baer 1952; Boremanse, 1974) . Kisin got so angry with Hachàkyum that he decided to kill him. (p. 72).

Tu'ub was Hachàkyum's youngest son. They were running away from Kisin, who wanted to kill Hachàkyum. On the way, they met an ancient man. Hachàkyum asked the man if he could give them maize gruel. Because the man fed him, Hachàkyum told him he would see his cornfield grow in 6 days. He asked the man to not tell Kisin they were there. After they left, Kisin arrived and asked if he had seen Hachàkyum and Tu'ub. The loyal man answered that he had not seen them. Kisin asked the man for maize gruel and he said he had no more left. This proved to Kisin that the God and his son had been there, as he could also smell them. However, the man denied that they were there. Hachàkyum and Tu'ub saw another man on their way, and asked him for a drink. The man replied that he had no food or drink because he could find only stones and ashes in his cornfield. The God asked the man to not tell Kisin that they were there and left. Kisin arrived and asked the man for a drink. The man gave Kisin maize gruel. When Kisin asked him if he had seen Hachàkyum and his son, the man said they had just been there. The men who helped Hachàkyum saw abundance in his milpa. By contrast, the other man who had helped Kisin found only stones and dry ponds in his cornfield. Tu'ub defended his father when Kisin tried to kill him. Hachàkyum made a double of himself with guano leaves, left his double on the earth, and departed to inhabit the sky. Tu'ub's brothers wanted to kill him because he was mourning their father and they were glad he was dead. Hachàkyum helped Tu'ub protect himself from his threatening brothers by transforming him into a bird that ate a cedar tree located in front of their brothers' house in order to punish them. Hachàkyum sent Kisin to the underworld and his older sons to the universe, far away

from the earth, to another planet. Hachàkyum sent his brother, *Sakayum*, to reside in the underworld and watch over Kisin (Boremanse 1982).

Boremanse did not find major differences between the Northern and Southern Lacandon myths. He did find some differences between this myth and the one reported by other ethnographers, but these were not major differences. Analyzing this myth, this author asserted,

> Reference to Lacandon cosmology is made when Kisin is sent to the Underworld and Hachàkyum goes up to the middle of the sky (*u chum ka 'an, chumuk ka 'an*) to create the heavens (Northern version), when T'uub's elder brothers are banished to the extremity of the universe (*u chun ka'an*) (Southern version). To the Lacandon the world consists of seven layers: The underworld, the earth (the forest), and five heavens. They conceive the surface of the earth as a disc supported by four pillars (the cardinal points); below is the Underworld; above are the heavens hanging from the celestial vault. The most striking feature of Lacandon religion is perhaps the belief that the ceremonial centers built by the Ancient Mayas were the dwelling-places of the gods. The ancestors of the modern Lacandon were established in South-western Peten, and they probably migrated west of the Usumacinta river in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to settle in an area where numerous archaeological sites are found (Piedras Negras, Palenque, Bonampak, Yaxchilan…). (Boremanse 1982, p. 84)

Roeling (2007) distinguished four types of rituals that the Northern Lacandones still practice: healing rituals, harvest rituals, personal rituals, and rituals to replace the God-pots used to burn copal incense and make offerings to their Gods. The Lacandones go on pilgrimages to the sites where the God they want to implore resides. As stated above, the Gods reside in the ancient pyramids of Palenque, Bonampack, and Yaxchilan. In these sacred sites, they collect stones that can be placed in the God-pots, identifying the particular Gods according to their house's stones. God-pots are made of clay and have a container for the offering and to burn copal. They have a face with an opened mouth in front of it. The figures are anthropomorphic and painted white with vertical black and red lines when they represent Gods. Those representing Goddesses are painted with vertical and horizontal lines that cross each other. There is also the God-pot of the God K'ayum, the God of Song, which is made in the shape of a drum (pp. 185–190).

Perera and Bruce (1985) reported that when a Lacandon died, the body was buried with several objects such as "a dog made of palm leaf, a lock of hair, a bone, a bowlful of corn, and various tools to aid him in his journey into the underworld" (p. 107). The dead threw the bone to the dogs of *Metlan* (the territory of the God of the Death), the lock of hair to the lice, and the corn to chickens so the dead individual's soul would pass unharmed to Sukunyum's house. If the dead person was good, he/she would go to the five heavens or down to the underworld. Sukunyum would tell the dead person that all he/she saw was illusory (p. 107). Old Chan Kin shared three songs with Perera and Bruce:

> In the first one, Kisin visits one of the ancients, who, in the spirit of hospitality, invites him to dinner. Kisin eats corn broth and tortillas. The next day, all of the ancient's seed corn has turned into little stones. The maize of his companions, who had offered only to the friendly gods, ripens in five days. The moral is, one should protect one's crops from Kisin, even at the cost of appearing inhospitable. In the second song Tu'up, keeper of the son and youngest

> son of Hachakyum, uses clay to make a rooster to keep watch over his father and protect him from Kisin. The third song tells of a god who asks one of the ancients to come with him into the underworld because he has committed incest with a non-permissible relative. The ancient pleads that he cannot leave because he is harvesting his sweet potatoes. The god picks up a sweet-potato vine, draws three circles above the ancient's head and creates an android surrogate to stay behind and fulfill his functions. (pp. 125–126)

Boremanse (2006) and Roeling (2007) gathered contemporary myths and legends that deal with immortality, journeys to the underworld of Xibalba, encounters with Kisin, creation and destruction stories, and relationships with animals such as jaguars, monkeys, birds, roosters, toucans, vultures, armadillos, and peccaries. One peculiar story reported by Roeling is called "The Creation of Money,"

> Akyantho is the god of the whites, creator of the machete, illnesses and medicines, but he is also the creator of money. …The Lacandones learned quickly how to handle the machete and used it to make a road through the rainforest and to clear field to make the milpa. The whites, who lived on villages and cities had soft hands and the machete created painful blisters on the palm of their hands and fingers. Akyantho had pity of them, and therefore he created money for them, so they would not have to work with the machete. …As god of the whites he also gave them livestock and stables. …[They] learned how to keep the livestock and now used it as their primary source. … [The Lancandones'] livestock …ran away. As soon as the livestock reached the forest they turned into game…cows into deer, horses into tapirs and pigs into peccaries. This is why the Lacandones had to become good hunters (Roeling 2007, p. 200).

Perera and Bruce (1985) reported this same story told by Old Chan K'in. Another story that the wise man shared with these authors is "The *Xtabai*" ("The Mermaids"),

> A Lacandon farmer becomes so enraged at the animals that keep raiding his milpa he finally lights incense to Akinchob, the god of maize and protector of farmers, and asks to be changed into a jaguar, so he can chase the animals off. But when Akinchob accedes to his requests, the farmer/jaguar sees the animals as his kin, and instead of eating or chasing them off, he takes pity on them. "You, poor people," he says, "You must all be hungry. Come in, come in, I have plenty to eat in my milpa. I am just lying in wait for some damn animals that have been stealing my corn, so I can eat them." Of course, […] the farmer did not realize that he was now an animal himself, and that other animals looked like his companions, whereas humans would now look like animals and he would have eaten them." (pp. 159–160)

Some stories were also shared by Old Chan K'in to Perera and Bruce in the form of songs centered around the jaguar, who is considered to be a minor God. In one song, a woman chops off a jaguar's head because he wants to eat her small child. However, the jaguar does not die and is able to put his head back on. To hide the child's scent from the jaguar, the woman hides the little boy in a pot of chilies. She then climbs a *zapote* tree, throws unripe fruits at the jaguar, and chops off his front claws. Akinchob, Hachakyum's son-in-law demands that the jaguar not eat people and helps the woman and her baby descend from the tree (pp. 97–98). Old Chan K'in shared another jaguar story,

> In the old days […] the two daughters of an ancient found favor in a jaguar's eyes, and he followed them to the *milpa*. he would sit in hiding and watch them play and sing songs, and help their father gather his corn. They were not aware of their secret admirer.

> One day the sisters wandered close to the edge of the forest, and the jaguar leaped out and snatched them, and carried them back to his cave. […] He carried them like a mother cat carries her kittens […]. The farmer followed them, shouting and crying, until he lost track of the jaguar. When he returned to his home he and his wife mourned their daughters as if they were already dead. Ah—but the jaguar had not yet eaten them. He had made a bed for them of palm leaves—the soft kind—and after crying all day, the sisters fell asleep in each other's arms. The jaguar did not sleep; after night fell he left his cave, and when the sisters woke up, they found a freshly killed fawn by their feet. "Ah, it's horrible." The sisters recoiled from the bloody venison. The jaguar was puzzled, for he knew that people ate meat, but neither he nor the sisters knew how to start a fire and cook it. "We're hungry!" the sisters wailed. "if you are going to keep us here, you will have to feed us *posol* and tortillas, just like we eat at home." Without a word, the jaguar left them, and crept unseen to his father-in-law's house. The jaguar steals a gourd of *posol* and some tortillas from his father-in-law's house, and leaves the fresh deer in its place. He brings the food to the sisters, who eat to their heart's content. That night they slept together, in the manner of husband and wives. (cited in Perera and Bruce 1985, pp. 228–229—italics in original)

These jaguar stories still exist in the memory of storytellers who reside in both communities, Naha and Lacanja, as is evident in the stories told by Chanuk Chan'Kin, co-author of this book.

The *Balche* Ceremony

Several ethnographers reported on the use of ceremonies that included an alcoholic beverage prepared with *balche* tree bark, mixed with sugarcane, soaked in water, and left to be fermented, particularly by the Northern Lacandon group residing in Naha. It appeared that the Southern Lacandon group had stopped practicing ceremonies by the time the American missionaries arrived, by the early 1940s. However, in the next chapter, I will report on an experience of one ceremony in Lacanja. Although balche was not used, this ceremony bore some similarities to those reported by other anthropologists. For instance, Perera and Bruce (1985) described in detail how they experienced balche ceremonies in Naha during their visits from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. The authors narrated that these ceremonies took place in the traditional God-house—a rectangular structure thatched with palmetto leaves and opened so that several ceremonial objects such as drinking bowls, bark-cloth tunics, and God-pots are exposed to air and sunlight. The God-pots are stored and arranged during ceremonial activities according to the Gods to whom prayers, food, and incense will be offered. These authors reported

> The men arrive in the god-house one by one, with fistfuls of homegrown cigars […] K'ayum fills the huge balche pot and sways under its weight as he carries it to the god-house […] pours balche for each of us, placing the bowls on wooden coasters so they will not be polluted by the ground, which is the vault of Kisin's realm. Before sitting down to drink, we each wash our hands outside the god-house, and sprinkle balche over one shoulder as an offering to the gods. We sit down facing east, with our backs to the fifteen god-pots. [….] K'ayum rises from his stool and begins molding nodules of pom [copal] incense for the ceremonial offering to the gods. He fills with balche the two rows of gourds in front of the god-pots. He

> then dips a folded palm leaf into the bowls and dribbles balche on each pot. The formal part of the ceremony has begun, but it does not cramp in the least the drinking and conversation. (pp. 78–84)

During these ceremonies, prayers to the Gods are recited, asking them to do a specific favor, such as healing a family member or solving a problem. In addition, songs are sung and ancient stories, legends, and myths are told and re-told.

Dreams

The Lacandon culture evolves in a continuum of wake and dream life. Many of the ethnographers who have spent time residing with them have reported that the Lacandones greet each other by asking what they have dreamt instead of the usual "how are you? of occidental culture. Bruce (1975a, b) described Lacandon dreams and their system of interpretation in two volumes: *Lacandon Dream Symbolism I and II*. Volume I reported on several dreams, their interpretation, and the philosophical concepts and cultural values transmitted through them. Volume II can be considered a kind of "Dream Book" containing elements described in the Mayan Lacandon language and translated into English. The appendices contain analyses of concepts and mechanisms as well as associations that are, at times, shared with other cultural groups. Some parts are left open for interpretation under other disciplinary frameworks such as psychoanalysis. Bruce reported that Lacandones dream to be with their companions, both dead and alive, as extensions of the self. Bruce stated

> …the Lacandon does not set barriers between his self and others—or between his unconscious life and his conscious one. […] To him one is one continuous stream of experience, just as it is in dreams. He does not distinguish between seeing a companion in a dream and seeing him in the flesh. (cited in Perera and Bruce 1985, p. 88)

Dream interpretation systems that attribute a prophetic function to dreams have been found in many indigenous cultures.

The Pyramids as Residences of the Gods

The Lacandones regarded the ancient pyramids as their Gods' temples. The archeological site of Palenque has been an important pilgrimage center. The city of Palenque was known as *Kabal Xokla*, a name that described its location beneath the Usumacinta River. For the Lacandones, Tu'up resided in the palace's tower, which was directed toward the sun. Hachakyum resided in the palace and used the eastern courtyard, where a sacred ceiba tree was located, to create humans. This ceiba tree was the *sak bel akyum* (the white road to the Gods). It has also been referred to as the Milky Way. *K'ayum*, the God of Song and Dance, resided in the Temple of the Cross. *Bol*, the God

Fig. 2.1 Palenque

of Balche, resided in the Temple of the Foliated Cross (Roeling 2007, pp. 222–223) (Fig. 2.1).

The Lacandones call Yaxchilan, *Chi Xokla,* because it is located at the mouth of the *Xokla* (the Usumacinta) River. An assistant of Hachakyum, the God *Itzanal*, resides in the Labyrinth. Passing the ball court is the northern side of the majestic acropolis and house of the God Sun, *K'in*. To the east lives *Sakapuk* in the lower part and *Ah K'in Chob* in the upper part of the house. The Red Temple is considered to have been the place where Hachakyum gathered people and then cut their throats to use their blood as red paint. South of the Great Plaza is the house of the God of Song and Dance, K'ayum. To the west to his house lives Bol, the God of Balche. Under the top of the pyramid is a stela that the Lacandones call *che tuch lu'um*, the tree-earth navel. This is where Mother Earth was created. The Lacandones wore toucan feathers as headdresses and danced in front of this stela up to the mid-1900s. At the very top of the pyramid is Hachakyum's house. His temple contains staircases with images of people playing ball; however, the Lacandones believe they are watching the moon (Roeling 2007, pp. 225–226) (Fig. 2.2).

The Lacandones believe that Bonampak was discovered by *Chan Bol*, who brought two foreign explorers, Charles Frey and John Bourne, to investigate the site. Later, the discovery was attributed to the former, Charles Frey (Roeling 2007, pp. 228–231). However, the Southern Lacandones had reported that the pyramids were discovered by K'in Obregon or by his grandfather. *Kanan K'ax*, the Lord of the Forest, inhabited Bonampak (Fig. 2.3).

Fig. 2.2 Yaxchilan

> This is also the place where the Lacandones could see the *xtabai* (sirens) who were, …beautiful women with a red skin and red hair who were created by *Hachakyum* to satisfy the sexual needs of the *chembel k'uh* (the lesser gods). …Those who were fortunate did not stay too long with the *xtabai*, and were advised to first visit *Kanan K'ax*. …If they spent the night at [his house] they would receive his blessing…[they] would be able to see the *xtabai* after offering incense to him. Those who stayed with the *xtabai* and did not visit *Kanan K'ax* would wake up on the road to their village and will never see the *xtabai* again. If the man would return to the place where he made love to a *xtabai*, all he would find was a stone. …Next to the *xtaba*i there are also *lo'k'in* (cannibals) in the forest. These are big ugly people with green warts over their entire body who wear the skin of a jaguar. They also have deformed heads (like the Ancient Maya). (pp. 218–219—italics in the original)

The most majestic part of this site is the temple of the mural paintings, which is divided into three rooms. The murals are divided into two horizontal segments depicting musicians playing instruments, celebrations for victories in war, Gods, giant water animals (such as crabs and caimans), and the coronations of their kings (Fig. 2.4).

Fig. 2.3 Bonampak

The Colonial Cosmogony and Ideology of Oppression and Opposition

In contrast to this complex and rich Mayan cosmogony and mythology, the Spanish conquerors imposed their own to oppress and exploit them as well as their material and natural assets. The conquerors' brutal weapon was the destruction of the Maya's religion and places of worship, the denial of their ability to speak their own language, and the requirement (achieved through coercion and violence) that they think, act, and be like the Spanish.

By 1530, the Spanish conquerors had under their tyranny a significant territory of the state of Chiapas. They used the motto of promoting *La Paz de Dios y del Rey* (The Peace of God and the King), which would also be embraced by the Dominican missionaries who arrived 20 years later to complement the violent military oppression with soft and seductive persuasion. They converted the Indians, peacefully and willingly, to their superior and universal religion (De Vos 1982; 2015).

Discussions about the use of violence to conquer the inhabitants' territory, which the conquerors named "The New World" or "The New Spain," had taken place since the earlier years when Colón first informed the Spanish King of their existence and living conditions. Colón received royal instructions to treat the Indians lovingly. However, there were constant and numerous breaches of this order because

Fig. 2.4 The Musicians of Bonampak. Photograph by Ernesto Chancayun Kin

the Spaniards believed that the Indians should be "civilized" by force. Even some of the missionaries, who were commissioned to convert the Indians peacefully and lovingly, resorted to violent punishment if the Indians resisted their impositions and rebelled against them. The mighty Spanish conquerors taught them a lesson. They punished them using weapons to violently kill them. The Spanish colonizers

> were so sure that the Indians were beasts or almost beasts that they did not need to have any considerations and give them shelter. …[A] Dominican priest, Bernardino de Minaya, had to go to Rome to obtain the *Sublimis Deus* [papal] bull that affirmed that the Indians were rational beings, whose lives and property needed to be respected. Oviedo, whom Las Casas considered one of his main enemies, represented well this Spaniards' attitude when he affirmed decisively that "Sathanas [the devil] was eradicated from this island (la Española): everything ceased when the lives of most of the Indians ceased and finished" (Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes, 1851, p. 139). (Hanke 2007, p. 27—the author's translation).

Bartolome de Las Casas arrived in "The New Spain" in 1502 as a result of a massive migration to the new colony. He had Indians under his charge but resigned to this charge in 1514. De las Casas advocated on their behalf given the atrocities committed against them. He fought for their rights until his death in 1566. During the years of 1519–1520, de Las Casas created a colony inhabited by peaceful Spaniards whose charge was to softly persuade the rebellious Indians to accept their customs and beliefs, and to learn their language. However, his intentions failed given the actions of other Spaniards who did not agree that the "savages" could be "civilized" and who

used violence to punish and oblige them to accept their impositions. Devastated by this failure, de Las Casas retired from the mission but joined it again in 1529, when he succeeded in subjugating the rebellious cacique (Indian leader) Enriquillo and gave him to the Spanish authorities applying peaceful and loving strategies (Remesal, 1620; cited in Hanke 2007, p. 24—the author's translation).

Bartolome de Las Casas became Bishop of Chiapas and one of the best-known figures in the conquest of the American continent. In 1536, Las Casas started writing his treaty, entitled, *Del Unico Modo de Atraer a todos los Pueblos a la Verdadera Religion* (*The Only Way to Attract all Peoples to the True Religion*). His opus contained detailed descriptions of strategies to convince not only the Indians but everybody else to willingly and persuasively embrace Christianity and the Spanish empire. He asserted that the war against the Indians was unjust and violent and, therefore, "their gold, silver, pearls, jewelry, and lands had to be given back to them" (Hanke 2007, p. 25). In his struggle to defend the rights of the colonized, he asserted that they were rational beings who possessed all the requirements to conduct "the Aristotelean good life" (Hanke 2007, p. 32). He went on to affirm that the Indians possessed capacities and exquisite talents in the arts as well as exceptional intellectual abilities. However, he also asserted that "those Indians, who still worshipped their idols, were unfaithful, and had difficulties abandoning their depraved religion, would slowly, persuasively, and softly be convinced to embrace the new faith and find benefit in it" (De Las Casas 1942; 2017; cited in Hanke 2007, p. 32—the author's translation).

Hanke asserted that the history of the Spanish conquest has been biased to justify the fact that it was guided by noble and just principles. It started with the first Indians sent to Spain as slaves when, in 1495, a bishop received orders from the crown to sell the Indians. Hanke cited Veblen (1936), who stated that the conquest in the Spanish colonization was a robbery, inflated and amplified by religious fanatics and arrogant warriors. De Vos (1982; 2015) seconded these facts, adding that the Spanish conquest was a "history of ethnocide" (p. 8). The Catholic Church played an important role in this violent endeavor by means of the papal bulls given by Alejandro VI and Julio II, which gave the Spanish crown the power to regulate and control all business related to the church and the state in "The New Spain" (p. 43). To oppose this force, de Las Casas preached his doctrine of the *Vera Paz* (True Peace), including in war zones, where the cruel conquerors were using weapons to subjugate the Indians. In 1547, 3 years after he became Bishop of Chiapas, his Vera Paz territory was invaded by conquerors who terrorized the priests and the Indians. Consequently, de Las Casas flew to Nicaragua after he banned from the church many officials, including judges, who had committed atrocities in his dioceses. The land of the Vera Paz again became a war zone. De Las Casas was slandered and ridiculed. Some officials declared that he was illiterate and turbulent, and that he was not a saint (Hanke 2007).

Of all the indigenous groups residing in the state of Chiapas during colonial times, the Lacandones were the only group that relatively and successfully resisted the colonial invasion. They resided around the *Lacam-Tun* River during the sixteenth century. However, they had to leave their residence, fleeing from the Spaniards and hiding deeper in the forest, enduring their deep resentment of the Christianized Indians and their colonizers who resided in the so-called Vera Paz land. Various

anthropological studies documented an intent of colonization led by missionaries in 1695. De Vos (1988; 2015) asserted that the conquest of the Lacandones occurred from 1695 to 1769, supported by the missionaries from Guatemala. However, there are divergences in historians' and anthropologists' reports. Some report that the Lacandones defended themselves and confronted the colonizers violently. As a result, their territories were declared war zones. Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote that other Indians believed that the Lacandones were violent. Consequently, Hernán Cortés had no interest in confronting [civilizing] them (p. 51).

The most impactful colonization started in the early 1900s, when the Evangelists from the US came to the Lacandon Rainforest to convert and subjugate them. De Vos (2002) reported that the first pioneer work to spread the Evangelic religion in Chiapas was conducted by a woman, Mariana Slocum. She came from Arkansas, sent by the Summer Institute of Linguistics to save the Indians from alcoholism, witchcraft, and poverty and to civilize them so that they would become prosperous preachers of the word of God. During the years 1940–1959, she translated the Bible into Tzeltal and cooperated with the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI) (Indigenous National Institute) to develop materials for teaching the Tzeltales how to read and write. She trained the indigenous people to disseminate the Bible in other communities. In addition, she installed a clinic where people were cured using prayers and medicine. In 1959, Mariana Slocum left for Colombia. By that time, the indigenous preachers' work had spread across the state. Without a doubt, the Protestant religion was a means of finding solace and comfort amidst the precarious and difficult living conditions. However, it also resulted in the destruction of their own religion and traditions (p. 175).

Roeling (2007) reported that during the second half of the twentieth century, Philip Baer, another Protestant missionary from the US, settled in Naha. Baer brought Western medicine and used it to Christianize the Lacandones but would not give it to those Lacandones who would not become Protestants and attend the church he founded. However, Chan K'in *Viejo* (Old Chan K'in), the recognized Lacandon *to'ohil* (leader) who still practiced the religious traditions, moved his residence to the other side of the Naha Lake from where Baer had settled. His intent was not to confront him, but to be far from his influence. Almost all the other villagers followed Old Chan K'in and Baer was left alone. Baer had only one supporter, Chan Bol, whom he had converted to Christianity and who did not accept Old Chan K'in's authority. Baer decided to move to Lacanja and spread his religion there. He met Jose Pepe Chan Bol, the to'ohil of Lacanja, and converted him to Christianity. In 1970, Baer sent Jose Pepe Chan Bol to Naha to try once more to catechize them. Baer arrogantly determined where Jose Pepe Chan Bol could build his house and milpa in Naha. This angered Old Chan K'in, who organized a delegation to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of the state of Chiapas, to report the abuses of this missionary. Before anything was resolved by the state government, Jose Pepe Chan Bol returned to Lacanja. However, over the following years, more Protestant missionaries arrived in the Lacandon Rainforest and wiped their religion and traditions. In 1950, Baer published his article, "Lacandon Ethnographic Materials." In 1971, he co-authored a

book with Merrifield entitled, *Two Studies on the Lacandones of Mexico*, published by the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Perera and Bruce (1985) referred to this book,

> Although there are occasional interesting data in the rest of the book, everything appears overshadowed by the commitment to demonstrate that the Lacandones were murderous and degenerate brutes until Phil Baer arrived with the "Good News that Jesus Saves," from which point they became good, gentle and moral Christians…while the truth is that they were neither so evil before nor so good after. Although the incidence of violence among the Southerners has always been such as to horrify the Northern Lacandones (who considered such incidents among their own people as rare exceptions involving deviants), the study conveniently ignores or minimizes the cases of homicide, wife stealing, rape, and so forth, that occurred after their souls have been saved. Nor is there any mention of the new activities, which included political power plays, embezzlement, mismanagement of community funds, extortion and robbery of tourists, and drunken brawls and knife fights in the whorehouses of Palenque and Tenosique. (p. 321)

The Evangelist churches multiplied in the next decades. Adventists, Protestants, Baptists, and many other preachers invaded both the Northern and Southern Lacandon communities with the goal of "saving" them from evil, ignorance, and primitivism. These authors reported that the missionaries came by airplane from "Yaxoquintela, the missionary forest training center. Groups of four and five evangelists wandered through the settlement, checking pulses, distributing medicines and candy, and snapping cameras" (p. 263).

Describing Lacandon genealogy, Bruce (1985) asserted that all those from Naha are either from the Ma'ax (Monkey) or K'ek'en (Boar) omen (lineage or animal name) while the Southern Lacandones of Lacanja are descendants of the K'ek'en omen, the Yuk (Deer) and the K'ambul (Curassow) omen, which are seen as violent peoples by the northern tribe (p. 16). This author added,

> The American missionaries' efforts to Christianize the Lacandones have been under way for over a quarter of a century, and began sometime after the Catholics' failure. (At least, Catholics failed with the Lacandones who are still Lacandones today. It is possible that they were responsible for the conversion and acculturation of the Jaguar People and the greater part of the Curassow People, who are now assimilated Mexican nationals).
>
> In the first stages of the attempted conversion, which began in Naha, it became apparent to the American missionaries that they were face to face with a profound religious dedication that dwarfed even their own most intense moments of religious devotion. …This was no poor, bewildered, weak-willed savage, to be taken in by little sweet talk, a glass of cold lemonade or Coca-Cola, and the magic of a transistor radio. Before the Christian conversion could progress, the ancient Olmec-Maya tradition had to be discredited. Broken down, and gotten out of the way by any expedient method. (Perera and Bruce 1985, p. 12).

One of the missionaries warned the Lacandones,

> You shall not worship the gods of the bottomless pit which have been created by man in alliance with Satan. You shall have no other god than Jesus. Satan and his effigies of clay [godpots] are the tools of destruction. Jesus will cut your hands and tear your eyes and hack off your feet if you don't believe in him. (Roeling 2007, p. 118)

This violent repression of their religious beliefs has had significant impacts on the continuation of rituals and ceremonies that are practiced only sporadically. In addition, another significant impact on the Lacandon *pixan* (psyche) is the effect of Mexican national culture based on a mestizo ideology, seeking to blend the indigenous race with the White race of the colonizers to create a common national identity.

The Mestizo Ideology

The colonization trauma evidenced in the myth of the mixture of the two races—the Spanish colonizers' White race and the non-White, other race of the many indigenous peoples who have been colonized in Mexican territory—is lumped and mixed into one race, referred to as *mestizaje*, the product of the union of two opposing bodies, souls, spirits, and ideologies. It started when an Aztec woman, *Malintzin*, became Hernan Cortes' lover and servant. They procreated the *Mestizo* generation—in popular terms also called, "*los hijos de la chingada* (the sons of the bitch)," the children of a traitor who sold herself to the European perpetrators. Malintzin is seen as the whore who learned their language and customs and who offered translation services, thereby assisting the brutal Spanish conquerors in their greedy and violent task of invading and appropriating indigenous lands. Others view Malintzin as an ambassador who wanted to promote a peaceful encounter between the two races and create "la raza cósmica (the cosmic race)" (Vaconcelos 1925). This is the new race that symbolizes progress, the seduced consent to embrace the patriarchal empire of the new Spanish Almighty God.

For Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2011), "….*mestizaje* is the ideology that serves to construct a nation and give it a national body in order to define the profile of a national identity" (p. 20—the author's translation; italics in the original). It started with the Spanish invasion of indigenous lands, minds, spirits, souls, and bodies. The European conquerors' invasion of the indigenous body served to preserve their inflated race, which they considered to be superior. It was also driven by their frenzied and uncontrollable erotic desire. The indigenous body was made an object of lust, possession, and self-satisfaction. The fertility of the indigenous body produced the new Mestizo generation, the sons and daughters of the shameful act of copulation with the primitives, the slaves, the Indians; all those subjugated and colonized, depreciated and slaved.

On the other hand, mestizaje is seen as the productive mixture of two cultures, bodies, religions, and races. The formation of a Mestizo national identity became the movement to assert independence from the Spanish colonizer. The Mestizo, "brown" race shall commit to belong to one nation and erase the indigenous legacy. The strengthening of the Mestizo identity allows for the creation of one nation in the search for "progress." The latter means to accomplish the unfinished labor of civilization, to make the project of coloniality sustainable; to warrant that Mestizos look like their Spanish forefathers in spite of their having the inferior dark skin of their maternal forefathers. For Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2011),

progress means to whiten the brown race. This "*blanquismo* (whitening the brown race)" movement seeks to make the Mexican Republic competitive in the global market. Mexicans must speak the colonial language (Spanish), forget their indigenous "dialects," behave like the colonizers, purchase their goods and clothes, and look and live more and more like them. In capitalist times, Mexicans must be competitive in the global market and speak the new colonial language—English. Spanish and English are taught at the national level, supported by the Secretariat of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Publica*) (SEP), which teaches the Indian children that they must forget their indigenous languages, which are considered "dialects."

As Fanon and Memmi have observed, the Mestizos internalize the Spanish forefathers, the rapists, the criminals who killed their indigenous forefathers, and strive to look like them, whitening their brown faces with each bit of progress to accomplish the unfinished project of "colonial civilization." The Mestizo identity maintains and preserves the constitution of unequal races: (1) the colonizers' superior Spanish, European, White race; (2) the new, inferior Mestizo race; and (3) the primitive Indian race that must be eliminated. The *Criollos*, the sons and daughters of the Spanish colonizers who were born in indigenous lands, became the rulers of the liberated, independent nation. They are the colonizers who subjugate the Mestizos and the Indians. The Mestizos, in their striving to be like the colonizers, become the colonized colonizers who, in turn, despise and depreciate the Indians, seeking to convert them to the project of global progress and civilization or to eliminate them (Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera 2011).

Jose Vaconcelos (1925) published his theory of the "cosmic race" as a national project that would generate the pride of belonging to the new race created by the combination of the two races: the indigenous race and the White race. He proposed that this cosmic race had the potential to generate enormous creative capabilities through which a nation could develop the best elements of each race into a more powerful new race. With this universal theory, Vasconcelos intended to unite the heterogeneity housed in a nation representing many ethnicities and languages, at times converging in some fundamental cosmogonies and ways of life but, at other times, completely departing from each other. This was an artificial strategy to create a national identity as a means of developing a superior race and avoiding the devaluation of the indigenous legacy.

Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2011) analyzed the ways in which the White elites of the Mexican nation repudiated the expansion of mestizaje as a national project and proposed to attract more European migration to improve the brown race. This blanquismo (whitening of the brown race) was an obsession to maintain and preserve the White race represented by those in power, by the Spaniards who were born in Spain and by their children, who were born in Mexico but who were expected to marry White Europeans if they desired to remain part of the elite. These authors asserted, "The order to improve the race, a product of the genetics proclaimed by Francis Galton and accomplished procreating and privileging persons of White skin, has been feeding the social improvement tendencies in the imaginaries of the Mexican people" (p. 38—the author's translation). Mexico's racism has, therefore, existed from colonial times to the present. The Mestizo national project has generated

the pervasive devaluation and rejection of everything indigenous. *Los Indios* (the Indians) are undesirable people who must be exterminated or, at the very least, made invisible. Governmental projects targeted toward them must continue the colonial project of "civilization," now in the name of "modernization." As Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2011) asserted

> After all, the racial caste system and the frames in which these are expressed, declare the mestizaje objective of returning to White purity. The conservation of 'racial purity' became a moral mandatory, quasi-religious, that exhorted Whites to inhibit social and sexual contact with the inferior race…This type of ideas were being constituted as an ideological and systematized construction, an ideology of European, esthetic and moral superiority since the XVI century. […] This exclusive practices can be seen as historical antecedents of the scientific racism of the XIX century, for their familiarity with the classificatory mania developed by the European Enlightenment represented by the taxonomic method invented by the Swedish natural scientists, Carl von Linne (1707–1778), as well as by the identification he made of each human type based on physical appearance and skin tone, that in turn should reflect specific temperaments and hereditary constitutions. (pp. 40–41)

A national project of "de-indigenization" followed, with the consequent psychological devaluation of the mestizo national identity. This phenomenon has been analyzed by Bonfield (1996) in his work entitled, *Mexico Profundo: Reclamando una Civilizacion* (*Profound Mexico: Reclaiming a Civilization*). Bonfil found that since colonial times Mexico has been emerging as an imaginary that targets the resemblance with the West, the colonizers' worldview and lifestyle. A deep historical memory of the rich indigenous legacy exists concurrently but is repressed as a shame that causes deep inferiority complexes instilled by colonial brutality. To heal the deep wound, now anchored as a coloniality of being, and recover dignity and pride, Mexico must dig deep in its soul and reclaim the indigenous knowledge, worldview, and way of life that will restore the ancestral harmony with nature, community, and spirituality.

The Decolonial Methodological Approach: Affective Conviviality, Epistemic Resistance, Epistemic Justice, and Decolonial Solidarity

Committing to work with and in indigenous communities driven by leitmotivs anchored in the deepest call of our own selves requires the conscientious and careful selection of methodological approaches. The work becomes a vocation, the ultimate goal that is reached step by step, co-constructing with others, questioning the assumptions one uses to understand phenomena and how we apply them in praxis. Following the analysis of cosmogonies and the ways in which these become epistemologies that are, in turn, applied to create action, the decolonial methodological approach is informed by a commitment to unite with others who have been abused by the denial of their right to express their cosmogonies and ways of life informed by their own axiologies and epistemologies. Consequently, to co-construct a methodology that

commits to resist coloniality, the first ingredient is involvement in community work through the building of affective, reciprocal, and solidary relationships to co-create the desired change. Research is then guided by values that can warrant the weaving of relationships with communities based on their culture. The second ingredient is to learn from their culture. As Pe-Pua (2006) proposed, one method is to live in the community so that the researcher can become "one of us," understanding that the colonial difference (Mignolo 2002; Ruiz Ponce 2017) would be present along the way.

The next key ingredient is reflexivity. We must always be vigilant about the ways in which, consciously or unconsciously, we tend to reproduce this colonial difference. I acknowledge that even if I do not intend to do so, a default systemic feature warrants that this difference will persevere; it will be sustained by maintaining and recreating itself through means of the official hegemonic discourse and the still existing colonial infrastructure. Consequently, I have to be aware of my class and race privilege. As a descendant of Spanish colonizers residing for 17 years in a colonial house in the city of Puebla with Spanish settlers who were served by their Indian servants, I learned to maintain coloniality for the sake of our own race, class, and family. I come from that Criollo racial caste (the sons of Spaniards born in Mexico) that Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2011) described as those who are and will not want to be Mestizos but Europeans, constantly imagining living in Europe while benefiting from the usurpation of the land they had settled in and taken as their own. In his book, *A Hundred Years of Solitude,* Gabriel Garcia Marquez (2006) masterfully described this living in the magic land. However, as Fanon and Memmi have analyzed, criollos are denigrated by their European forefathers, those whom they constantly seek to imitate. Americans and Europeans treat them as bastards, as brown and primitive as the people they govern (Gomez Izquierdo and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera 2011).

Constant consciousness of these pervasive dynamics at play in my commitment to building affective conviviality with the community of Lacanja Chansayab allows me to cautiously and reflexively intervene in the social reality as a means of contributing to the co-construction of decolonial knowledge and *buen vivir* (well-being). The latter implies consciously resisting the continuation of knowledge generation processes that maintain coloniality, are wrongly judged superior, and are violently imposed on other cultures.

I made a commitment to pursue social, cultural, economic, ecological, epistemic, and political justice in my professional vocation as well as personal life. This means changing the terms of the conversation (Mignolo 2002; Ruiz Ponce 2017), learning from other epistemologies, axiologies, and praxes (Wilson 2008; Gone 2016). In the case of my particular dedication to this Maya Lacandon community, I committed to: (1) build affective relationships with the residents of Lacanja Chansayab, (2) learn from their cosmogonies, and (3) co-construct epistemologies that may allow us to better understand how to intervene in the social and ecological realms as a means of preserving and maintaining the well-being of our communities, environments, and cultures. As co-authors of this book, we have committed to work toward ending the hegemonic project of coloniality.

Affective Conviviality

Feminists have valued the affective involvement in research and action, applying knowledge to crystallize the values that guide our actions. As scholars, researchers, and cultural or community workers, we make a commitment to get involved emotionally in the process of co-constructing knowledge. The people with whom we weave the tapestry of affective relationships become co-actors, co-researchers, co-authors, and co-creators of praxes. Being constantly conscious of the colonial difference, I am aware that I am not of this community, that I must be invited and welcomed to build these relationships (Watkins and Shulman 2008; Watkins 2015). Chapter 3 relates this process in detail, following the ethnographic approach of writing reflective field notes shared with the community over the years.

As Almeida and Diaz de Rivera (2017) have taught us, committed community psychologists, cultural workers, artists, and all others truly involved in co-creating a just and peaceful world must commit to community presence (being there) as the fundamental requirement for building affective relationships based on openness, humility, and trust. Spending considerable amounts of time in the community, living in (Pe-Pua 2006), and participating in their daily community activity settings such as schools, community centers, recreational facilities, etc., allowed me to weave these kinds of reciprocal and mutually recognized relationships (Almeida and Diaz de Rivera 2017; Wilson 2008). Political validity should be the long-term outcome of our collaboration (Prilleltensky 2003). This kind of validity of research findings means the pursuit of equitable access to the world's resources in order to better manage our collective environment. Decolonial, indigenous psychologies are guided by values of affective conviviality and reciprocity, political validity, accountability, and social, ecological, and cultural justice. These values are nourished by the utopic dream of crystallizing in praxes collective buen vivir, co-constructed in plurilogue, as polyphonies that co-exist and contribute to the rich biodiversity in our world.

Epistemic Resistance

The Latin American modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (M/C/D) movement has made clear, to committed activists and scholars, the need to constantly question regimes of knowledge that have created, recreated, maintained, and preserved the extension of colonization now manifested as a coloniality of power (Quijano 2000) and coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres 2007), and ways to target the elimination of the colonial difference (Mignolo 2002). In his work, *Resistencia Epistemica*: *Intelligentsia e Identidad Politica en el Proyecto Descolonial Nnu Savi* (*Epistemic Resistance: Intelligentsia and Identity in the Decolonial Project Nnu, Savi*), Ruiz Ponce (2017) proposed new frameworks and methods to comprehend discourses that have been traditionally silenced, devalued, and rejected as politically invalid within hegemonic scholarship. Basing his approach on Mignolo's epistemic disobe-

dience, Ruiz Ponce proposed "epistemic resistance" as a means of understanding the dynamics and mechanisms of the colonial difference and deeply listening to the silenced contestations, the plurilogues contained in the *indigenous intelligentsia* as well as in some historical written and oral archives that can allow for the emergence of new frameworks and methods to create, recreate, maintain, and preserve collective "buen vivir," social and ecological justice, peacebuilding, and spirituality.

Ruiz Ponce defined intelligentsia based on Gramsci's and Fals Borda's definition of the organic intellectual who emerges from the lifeworld of everyday life, a definition formally conceived of as belonging to a particular social class that, because of its privilege of access to hegemonic education, has social, economic, and political power. However, the organic intellectual emerges from the struggle for survival in everyday life and from the opportunities for consciousness raising of the systemic factors causing this struggle, as well as how to address them. The author centered on *indigenous intelligentia* conceived of in diverse categories: indigenous teachers, artists, and leaders of political organizations. Like all other M/C/D scholars, he centered the analysis in the geopolitical context of the American continent because it was an invented phenomenon of the coloniality of power and named "America" by the Spanish conquerors (p. 31). Detailing the main purpose of his study, Ruiz Ponce stated

> We have proposed the need to listen to the voices and thoughts that the colonial history has placed in subaltern positions, at the periphery of modernity, relegating it to conform the exotic and folkloric baggage with tendencies toward extinction instead of considering them alive, dynamic, in equitable dialogue with diverse philosophies of the world. …[There] are only a few researchers in general, but of the social sciences in particular, that have dedicated efforts to the study of the ideas of those Indigenous intellectuals that are still alive. (pp. 31–32—the author's translation)

As Ruiz Ponce pointed out, the indigenous intellectuals create and recreate indigenous knowledge systems within complex conditions given the still existing coloniality of power and being. Some are educated in universities developed as tools of colonization, imperialism, and now globalization. However, indigenous intellectuals integrate and contest the hegemonic discourse given that their own knowledge systems were appropriated by the colonizers. Yet, indigenous intellectuals also continue nourishing their own systems of knowledge (epistemes), philosophies, cosmogonies, and very complex tools to address decolonization. This author added

> In this way, Indigenous theorization turns around relationships between the inner and the outer. Through reflection about what it means to construct the cultural difference within the social system that surrounds them, the Indigenous researchers seek to define by means of research and action how to maintain "an inside" that is culturally different from "an outside" that belongs to the dominant society. (p. 136—the author's translation)

Citing Bartolome (2003), Ruiz Ponce further explained that this is a strategy

Indigenous intellectuals use to produce dialogues that are intelligible to dominant society, to Western hegemony, as if this would be the only way to explain the cultural and colonial difference to assert a fair negotiation as a means of accessing economic, political, and social power.

Wilson (2008) masterfully demonstrated, in his work entitled *Research is Ceremony*, that indigenous researchers are obliged to use tools based on Western rational logic in order to "legitimize" their own cosmogonies, epistemologies, axiologies, and praxeologies, and to obtain doctoral degrees from Western universities. As Bartolome (2003) stated

> That has been always the challenge faced by the indigenous intellectualities, that are now called postcolonial: to generate a discourse that for it to be recognized as legit must transit codes that are not their own. This is one of the most complex challenges that intellectuals from countries that have been colonized, and made subaltern, must face: they must generate a textual production based on their own belonging, but at the same time it [the textual production] must be recognized by their interlocutors who belong to the western tradition. (Bartolome, 2003, p. 27; cited in Ruiz Ponce 2017, p. 139— the author's translation)

In addition, as Mignolo (2000/2012) and others have emphasized, a decolonial approach toward knowledge generation and science in general must not be compartmentalized in disciplinary silos imposed by hegemonic regimes. Separating and setting boundaries in our understanding of phenomena, or what we can also call "reality," allows us to reproduce the same separation and boundaries in a fragmented social and cultural life. The effects of the fragmentation and individualization in society are used to preserve systems of power. Foucault (2002) referred to these processes in their service to the reproduction of capitalist hegemony. Casey and Watkins (2014) expanded this analysis to the phenomena of military borders in the inside (our own psyches) and the outside (the hegemonic world). The effects of such a cruel crystallization of psychic and ecological separations result in violence and extermination. Consequently, we must embrace other epistemes to comprehend a non-fragmented world. We must resist disciplinary boundaries. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) asserted

> The concept of discipline is even more interesting when we think about it not simply as a way of organizing systems of knowledge but also as a way of disciplining bodies. Foucault has argued that discipline in the eighteenth century became 'formulas of domination' which were at work in schools, hospitals, and military organizations. (p. 71)

Similar to the processes of the division and compartmentalization of land and individuals, science is divided into expert areas distinct from each other, building territoriality and elitist codes (jargon) that warrant exclusion and distinction from other disciplinary areas. Anthropology and geography are examples of the "science of imperialism" (p. 70). The former allowed the colonizers to get to know the customs and traditions, religions, and governmental systems of the colonized to better appropriate them and integrate them into a "universal knowledge" that does not belong to anyone but the colonizer claimed as its own intellectual property. Similarly, as Smith well put it, the colonizers "came, saw, and named" the land and its people (p. 83). The myths of discovery, *terra nullius* (empty land), and manifest destiny that justified territorial expansion allowed them to fantasize the new land as an asset they could possess and name, exploit, dominate, control, and appropriate. Anthropology fed the imagination of the colonies and promoted the vast migration of new settlers who felt entitled to possess the new world. Colonial scientists used the native informants to compose their ethnocentric stories of the new world. However,

> their 'informants' were relegated to obscurity, their colonial activities seen as unproblematic, and their chronic ethnocentrism viewed as a sign of the times. …they defined, produced and reproduced 'culture': not just scientific culture, but culture of knowledge, the culture of elitism, the culture of patriarchy. (pp. 85–89)

The appropriation of indigenous knowledge, particularly in the fields of traditional medicine, environmental sciences, and spirituality, continues to occur. As a means of counter-hegemonic action, Smith (2012) proposed the development of an indigenous research agenda that centers on self-determination and works around four directions: (1) political, social, spiritual, and psychological decolonization; (2) psychological, social, political, and economic transformation (collective change); (3) local, national, regional, and global mobilization; and (4) physical, spiritual, psychological, and social healing (collective restoration). Research is conducted at three main levels: (a) survival, (b) recovery, and (c) development (p. 120). The four directions are conceived of as processes that can be incorporated into methodologies and praxes. The main levels (called "tides" by Smith) are fundamental priorities as indigenous cultures preserve their language, traditions, arts, and knowledge systems by means of survival, and must recover them because many were repressed by means of colonial violence. This includes the spiritual, cultural, and physical recovery of land, souls, and bodies. The third tide, development, connotes the dynamic processes of change that occur in indigenous communities and that determine struggles for survival and recovery, which also generate the creation of new cultural expressions. These struggles do not promote a misconceived return to the romantic precolonial past, but the recovery of the cultural losses in a constant and dynamic process of development toward new transformations, conceived of as collective recovery and change. Within these processes and outcomes, decolonial methodologies can emerge that are based on ethical protocols such as those expressed in demands referring to indigenous people's intellectual and cultural property rights, as well as the demand that research be carried out under indigenous leadership following their axiological guidance (p. 123).

Research methodologies that allow for the re-discovery of indigenous knowledge systems promote the development of ethno-sciences and their application "to matters that interest indigenous peoples, such as environmental and resource management or biodiversity … Indigenous knowledge extends beyond the environment … it has values and principles of human behavior and ethics … relationships … [and] wellness … leading a good life" (p. 161). One example of decolonial research is the *Kaupapa Maori* research developed in Aotearoa, New Zealand, by Maori scholars. This indigenous research is guided by prioritized principles that warrant its being conducted in the Maori language and being driven by Maori cultural values and principles that validate the produced knowledge, determined by outcomes of self-determination (p. 187).

Decolonial methodologies are guided by cultural values and praxes that can include such approaches as everyday conviviality, storytelling, ethno-scientific inquiry, myths, legends, poetry, art, and testimonies. As Wilson (2008) has emphasized, in this way, indigenous research becomes a ceremony based on all our relationships and promotes values of ecological and cultural justice.

Epistemic Justice

Indigenous peoples have sought, for generations, the recognition of their struggles and solidary support to have their demands met. The latter has been requested from national and international allied organizations and institutions that can strengthen their political contra-power (Ciofalo 2014). Solidary networks existing across the globe have become key tools for expanding the outcomes of voiced collective demands. Technology and accessible means of communication and the diffusion of information have greatly supported the impacts of social movements. This was the case with the significant gains that the Zapatist movement, the EZLN, experienced as a result of international solidary support, such as improved health and educational systems. Indigenous movements around the globe have been gaining recognized political power to warrant their rights. However, the struggle continues. An indigenous intelligentsia that politicizes knowledge generation and praxes has been emerging within the tensions and contradictions of modernity, moving against it as contra-power, searching for the continuation of ancestral and emerging indigenous knowledge systems, cosmogonies, and praxeologies. Ruiz Ponce (2017) said

> …during the mid 70's, the Mexican anthropologist, Bonfil Batalla identified the gestation of a new and more active generation of indigenous intellectuals in Mexico. During those years this author perceived such intellectuality or new indigenous leadership that in his own words, 'does not emerge from the traditional structures of each group but is acting on their name …[Intelligentsias are] individuals with middle or superior education who have lived outside of the ethnic territory and manage themselves with relative looseness in non-indigenous society; some of them tried, with more or less success, to walk the road of '*ladinization*' [to become ladino or mestizo]; a change of identity and the assimilation of the dominant society. For several reasons, they have un-walked the road, and reassume frequently their original ethnic identity becoming active militants of the indigenous cause' (Bonfiel, 1977, pp. 10–101). (p. 144— the author's translation)

Some indigenous intellectuals, who have left their territories to complete a professional education in modern universities, return to work in their communities and are very conscious of the need for epistemic justice. The multiple demands made by rural teachers' unions across Mexico throughout the decades are evidence of this struggle. Other indigenous leaders of strong and well-organized organizations and movements have clearly expressed demands for their culture, knowledge systems, spirituality, and lifestyles to be respected, for an end to pervasive colonial oppression, and for emphasis to be placed on the importance of respect for nature and of the equal and fair distribution of resources. They have been creating what Santos (2016) called "an epistemology of seeing, one that inquires into the validity of a form of knowledge whose point of ignorance is colonialism and whose point of knowledge is solidarity" (p. 156). This kind of epistemology stands in contrast to one based on

> absent knowledges [that] start from the premise that social practices are knowledge practices. The practices not based on science, rather than being ignorant practices, are practices of alternative, rival knowledges. There is no a priori reason to favor one form of knowledge against another. Moreover, none of them in isolation can guarantee the emergence and flourishing of solidarity. The objective will be rather the formation and constellation of knowledges to create surplus solidarity. This we may call a new common sense (p. 157).

Modern science positions itself as being against common sense because it is merely an opinion, an illusion, or false knowledge. However, this allows science to justify itself as true knowledge. This means that common sense seen as false knowledge gives science power to claim that it is not prejudiced. Consequently, Santos (2015) proposed a first epistemological break that occurs when science distinguishes itself from common sense, and a second epistemological break that transforms scientific knowledge into a new common sense. In this way, "…the new constellation of knowledges must break with the mystified and mystifying conservative common sense, not in order to create a separate, isolated form of superior knowledge but rather to transform itself into a new emancipatory common sense". (p. 158). In this way, knowledge-as-emancipation is generated.

For Santos, a key objective is to create an ecology of knowledge that allows for "the existence of plural systems of knowledge as alternatives to modern science or that engage with it in new knowledge configurations" (p. 199). Non-hegemonic forms of knowledge allow for the generation of a countercurrent against the brutal imposition of power by means of capitalist systems that expand globalization to reach out for more hegemony across the globe. Santos further asserted that the openness to plural ways of knowing and relations among them "has been going on for some time in the global South, where the encounter between hegemonic and non-hegemonic knowledges is more unequal and the limits of each more obvious" (p. 199). This kind of non-hegemonic knowledge and praxes systems are represented particularly by indigenous movements that have preserved biodiversity. Santos further asked

> And should we not be amazed by the wealth of knowledges, ways of life, symbolic universes, and wisdom for survival in hostile conditions that have been preserved based entirely on oral tradition? Does the fact that none of these would have been possible through science not tell us something about science? (p. 201)

To pursue the co-creation of decolonial knowledge systems, a plurality of ecologies of knowledges would include the measure of political validity that reflects on what Santos defined as "knowledge-as-intervention-in-reality" to assess the impact of the application of knowledge in social reality (p. 201). The latter is "…the territory of the artisanship of practices, the territory of the ecology of knowledges" (p. 211). These are local practices driven by rebellious subjectivities that resist being labeled as "subaltern" and distinguish between those practices that are "alternatives to capitalism from those that are alternatives within capitalism" (p. 213), resisting the reproducing of coloniality by means of a "…constant epistemological vigilance into a profound act of autoreflexivity" (p. 210). As stated earlier, the latter means to constantly reflect on the still existing colonial difference in the process of co-creating decolonial knowledge and praxes. It is very important to emphasize that the latter requires that the ecology of knowledges presents itself and is not re-presented by other knowledge systems, as has been the case under imperial regimes of knowledge. As Tucker (1992), in alignment with Said (1978) , stated "schools of thought such as Orientalism and disciplines such as anthropology speak for the 'other' often claiming to know those they study better than they know themselves. […] the other is reduced to a voiceless object" (Said, 1978; Tucker, 1992, p. 20; cited in Santos, 2014,

p. 223). Consequently, we must center—and, if necessary, amplify—their voices, not as other objects but as agentic subjects by means of intercultural translation. Santos deconstructed this process as "contact zones….[conceived as] social fields in which different cultural life worlds meet, mediate, negotiate, and clash" (p. 218). Intercultural translation allows for a deep emotional involvement in the understanding of other knowledges. It allows for the co-creation of plurilogues within diverse ecologies of knowledge. It creates the counter-hegemonic possibility of delinking from colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy.

Decolonial Solidarity

The last approach applied in this work is the building of affective, reciprocal, mutually recognized, and solidary relationships that consciously and carefully depart from the reproduction of the "White savior complex" based on missionary models of redemption, service, or help that are anchored in colonial legacies. Kowal (2015) and Land (2015) advised committed academics and cultural workers, who exist within hegemonic systems, to remain alert to conscious or unconscious manifestations of coloniality that preserve and maintain this complex and its inherited privileges of being part of the hegemonic race. The presence of the still existing racist systems in our daily lifeworlds—those that preserve and maintain the colonial difference—must be made conscious at all times to promote collective, decolonial solidarity. The latter means changing the terms, targeting the equal distribution of opportunities and resources, and learning from other worldviews that have maintained biological and cultural diversity. An example of this applied approach is the Zapatista movement. New educational and health systems were conceived of and implemented within networks of collective solidarity. Good governments for the management of economic, cultural, and political assets were organized in each Zapatista locality. A reclaimed indigenous identity defined by these processes strengthened the cultural sense of belonging of multiple communities, united under the committed cause of "buen vivir."

For decolonial solidarity to evolve in the process of the co-creation of knowledge and transformative action, much work must be done. According to Land (2015), transparent and profound self-inquiry is a condition *sine qua non* these kinds of solidary relationships, "convivencias," could not be generated. Deep analysis of White privilege and the ways in which community activists and scholars benefit from it is necessary, regardless of whether one is from this race or has been assimilated by it, for it has allowed the individual to enjoy privileges, benefits, and profits. This is the case with academics who engage in partnerships with communities to collectively work for social and ecological justice, peacebuilding, and sustainability. However, as academics, we belong to the hegemonic regimes of truth that have preserved and maintained colonization. Therefore, a need exists for a constant and vigilant self-reflexivity about the many unescapable instances which, despite our conscious commitment to decolonial relationships, automatically reproduce the colonial dif-

ference. When we become conscious of this fact, it is important to transparently dialogue about this transgression with those involved in the relationship. As Land (2015) and Casey and Watkins (2014) emphasized, consequent guilt and shame emerge from these kind of confrontations with hegemonic legacies. Numerous traps can emerge if one fears facing these emotions. Questioning ourselves about the reasons, conscious and unconscious motivations, drives, and leitmotivs that caused our commitment to be present in the communities with which we are working is a fundamental process. This can be very painful. Constant feelings of discomfort and even self-hate—because we come from or represent the hegemonic race—must be faced. Transforming these emotions into solidary action is the strategy that has proven to have affected systems and policy change. In this way, academics and community workers who commit to become change agents engage in activities that start tracing the road toward decoloniality (Kowal 2015; Land 2015; Watkins 2015).

Toward Decolonial Action

In this book, several indigenous intellectuals present examples of textual production informed by their own knowledge systems and based on the complex negotiation of codes and intercultural translations that have been imparted in universities. As mentioned earlier, the latter are regimes that emerged during colonial times and that perpetuate coloniality. However, there are new universities emerging in the global South in which the new generations of indigenous intellectuals are being formed. This is the case with the *Universidad Tecnológica de la Selva Lacandona* (Technological University of the Lacandon Rainforest) that has been built in several indigenous communities so that the young generations do not have to leave their places of origin to pursue higher education, which they can then apply to their own habitats and culture.

In the next chapter, I—as the facilitator co-researcher—report in detail on the process of weaving affective conviviality over 6 years spent visiting and residing in the community of Lacanja Chansayab. A Mayan Lacandon artist, teacher, and activist wrote the chapter that follows in collaboration with a community organization called *Colibri* (Hummingbird). The authors describe their dream of creating and recreating cultural festivities and ceremonies in their community as well as creating a school in which generations can learn about their own knowledge and praxis systems in their Mayan Lacandon language. In the development of this project proposal, the authors negotiate the complex dynamics to clearly express their own dream, managing Western codes imposed by governmental and nongovernmental organizations from which funding and solidary support are requested.

The chapter that follows was written by a youth collective, trained in this university and representing the multi-ethnic and multicultural composition of the Lacandon Rainforest region. The authors share their vocational interests and the deep cultural values they learned from their ancestors as well as from this educational institution. They express their dreams for the future and ask for decolonial solidarity to

make them happen. The next chapter compiles knowledge systems that delink from Western hegemonic systems and purely represent indigenous myths and legends, oral histories, and imaginaries manifested in various forms, such as poems and photographs. The co-authors express their deep affective and ethical conviviality with their beloved ecological habitat.

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Chapter 3
Once upon a River and Ghosts: *Jan Kachik Kisin Yoko Ja'*

Nuria Ciofalo

The First Encounter with the Lacandon Community

I arrived in Lacanja for the first time on December 31, 2009, after having visited the *Na Bolom*, which was the anthropologists Franz Bloom and Gertrudis Duby's home where I knew that the Lacandones were staying. The couple had dedicated their lives to San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas to study this magnificent culture. Their constant stay in the two Maya Lacandon communities in the state of Chiapas, Naha and Lacanja Chansayab, managed to create affectionate relationships with the Lacandones. They adopted some young people and sheltered many Lacandones in their house, now turned into a museum and hotel. Na Bolom has a house destined as a home of the Lacandones of both northern and southern communities: Naha, Metzabock, and Lacanja Chansayab, respectively, when they need to be in San Cristóbal for medical or commercial reasons such as selling their crafts.

The first time I visited the Na Bolom was in the mid 70's. At that time, I was living in Germany where I was studying Depth Psychology. Franz Bloom and Gertrudis Duby, "Trudy," as the Lacandones call her, used to receive researchers from all over the world who were interested in learning about local Mayan cultures, including Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Cho'oles, Lacandones, and others. When her husband Franz died, Trudy continued with this tradition. The only thing they requested as a requirement, in case they accepted the researchers' proposal, was to give them a copy of their work. In return, the researchers stayed at the Na Bolom, could consult their extensive library, and learn from living with these various indigenous groups. Another benefit was the possibility of getting to know Lacandones staying in their home and traveling with them to Lacanja or Naha asking them to work as guides. When Trudy died, Na Bolom was granted to the Lacandon Maya. However, a Mexico City foundation has taken its management and turned this cultural heritage into a hotel and museum. By

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_3

obligation, the Na Bolom Foundation must continue to host the Lacandones who need to spend time in San Cristóbal. It has dedicated itself to applying to other foundations and to the same Mexican government to receive funds and be able to finance several health, community development, educational, and cultural projects. However, there is currently the perception that the Na Bolom receives more funds than those that are truly invested in the communities that should be benefited.

By the end of 2009, I decided to meet the community of Lacanja Chansayab after having met Ernesto Chancayum at Na Bolom, a 17-year-old boy who agreed to take me to his community and be my guide and is coauthor of this book. During that stay, I met Gaspar who is blind but sees much more than any human can see, and Ana Kin Kin and her daughter Adelina. Ana Kin Kin asked me if I ever visited her community to bring her an electric piano. I was very interested in this request and when I asked her why an electric piano, Ana Kin Kin answered "because we have to make Lacandon music again."

The First Affective Conviviality: May–July 2012

In May of 2012, I decided to return to Lacanja to spend 3 months of the sabbatical that I receive as a professor at a university in California. When I was arriving there, it was getting dark already, I found myself on my way to Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin, as if they were waiting for me. I asked the taxi to let me out there. Seeing me, Ana Kin Kin said that "they had dreamed that I was going to come and that during the day she heard how I was getting closer." I told her that I had not forgotten what she asked me to bring. Remembering her request from 3 years ago, she asked enthusiastically, "did you bring the piano?" I took it out and she expressed with a warm smile and a big hug, "Welcome to my Lacandon Jungle!"

The next day I went to visit her, her musical production was already exquisite. She had managed to learn the same night how to combine rhythms and sounds to produce her own musical compositions. Some happy and others cosmic. I told them that I had already settled in a small house in front of the Lacanja river, located in the camp of Vicente Paniagua. A few steps from his camp lived his brother Enrique Paniagua also as Vicente head of an extended family or clan and descendant of Master Chan K'in from Naha. Their ecological camp is called *Top Che*. It does not refer to Che Guevara but to a Mayan flower. The dialogs with Vicente and Enrique were always hearty. I learned a lot from them. The Lacandones are very wise and excellent guardians of our Mother Nature.

During the first weeks of my stay, I visited the only elementary school that exists in Lacanja. I spoke with two teachers in charge of the school who told me that about 100 children attend and many need special attention. I offered my services as a psychologist and in just a few minutes I was placed in the library. About 30 children registered to work with me. I will describe my interaction with the children in school later in this chapter.

Additionally, during this phase of the first encounter with the community, I offered my services to the local school and visited several community leaders referred by the school teachers and Gaspar. I proposed to support them by writing a proposal for various international foundations, requesting that the support be housed in a bank account that they themselves manage, distributing the resources as they decide. They showed interest, although they commented that it should be structured following their community organization by family or clan and first discussed in their community assemblies. The leaders expressed themselves in a sovereign way, proud of their culture and outlining possibilities with clear vision.

My constant walks through the community made me aware of the existing food colonization, mainly in the community stores supplied with packaged food, substituting the ancestral customs of family production, collection of plants and wild seeds in the forest, hunting, and fishing. All these activities have been banned by the government and environmental tax bodies that seek to preserve the Lacandon jungle by restricting its local use but still encouraging the extraction of natural products for free trade. It is also notorious the effect of the media, which mainly impacts generations of young people, who—among other customs—alter the traditional dress and choose to appropriate the punk style.

The Lacandones still preserve their cosmology and culture in significant measure and continue to select from the West what seems appropriate. In the 70s, I remember that Trudi and other anthropologists who had lived with the Lacandones reported how Swiss watches were coveted by them. Now they are lovers of the Nissan cars that they acquired with government money, granted to promote eco-tourism. Other global products that now they also appreciate are the Internet and cell phones. There are already places with internet stations, located in eco-tourist camps, but only one phone booth in the entire community.

Yuk, a boy of only 4 years was in a restaurant with a huge television. He was watching a popular Mexican program called, "*El Chavo del 8*" (The Guy of the Eight), showing a group of adults who acted as children of a popular neighborhood in the city and were playing with a big ball. Yuk said, "the earth is a ball and it rotates in space. It can fall and we will all die." Yuk demonstrated a profound cosmic observation that is rarely expected of a city child of the same age. I reflected that this must be the product of his Mayan socialization. Parents pass on this cosmological wisdom to their children.

I visited Gaspar who informed me about the Na Bolom fraud that has used the community's name and needs to propose international scholarships to support various projects. Gaspar assured that Na Bolom has received abundant financial support from various foundations and national and international organizations and the Lacandones have received very few resources and support. The Lacandones are aware of this fraud and are willing to consult with a lawyer. The house, the Na Bolom, belongs to them. I suggested that I would be interested in facilitating an application process for scholarships or financial support from foundations interested in preserving their culture and environment in order for them to receive funds directly. Gaspar added: "Yes, it's fine, we know how to take care of the rainforest; here the air is clean, you

can still hear the *Ba'ats* (howling monkeys). Today I heard them speak loudly. We preserve the world's lungs."

I went to visit Enrique Paniagua. His ecological center has an eco-hotel, an internet station, and lush gardens inserted in the forest with detailed information on the kind of trees and plants located there. The latter, it seems, is part of a project funded by the government to preserve ecosystems. Enrique offered me coffee. Chanuk, his daughter, arrived and asked me, "Did you sleep well? What did you dream?" I told her that lately I had not dreamed anything I could remember and I asked her if she had dreamed something. "Yes," she said, "I dreamed that I was going to the lagoon and the mountain." I replied that perhaps her *pixan* (soul) wanted to travel. She answered, "yes, that's right." Didier Boremanse (1986), a Belgian anthropologist who is now a professor at a university in Guatemala, spoke in his ethnography about this same experience that indicates the importance of dreams in this culture. Bruce (1975a, b), a North American anthropologist who lived with the Lacandones of Lacanja, Naha, and Metzabock for many years, dedicated much of his writing to Lacandon dreams and their interpretation.

Enrique Paniagua told me how important it is to preserve the customs of their culture. Wearing the clothes, the traditional *hach nook*, white tunic, which despite the hard work they do in the milpa crossing the jungle every day, it always looks pristine white. Enrique proceeded to tell me how young people choose to wear Western clothes. "Many of the young people wear punk clothes," he said. He continued emphasizing how important it is to preserve the Mayan language and culture.

At the entrance to his house, there was a wall with impressive drawings about the God Hachakyum and a poem that stated,

> Hachakyum created the sky and the jungle
> the sky sowed it with stars
> and the jungle of big trees
> the roots of all things are connected
> when a tree is knocked down,
> a star falls from the sky.
> Old *Chan K'in*
> *Jnan Tlik Liu'um*
> (translation by the author)

The drawing and the text were signed by Robert Bruce, perhaps more than 40 years ago. I heard from other sources that his son had married a Lacandon woman and they had children. One of them died in an accident in Lacanja. Chanuk, the sister of the woman who married Bruce's relative, informed me that it was not the son but Bruce's nephew who had died in an accident. Cassel (1974) reported that he was Bruce's cousin and that he had killed his wife because he suffered from alcoholism and used to have uncontrollable aggressive reactions. There were reports of previous domestic violence until he ended up killing the wife. Bruce has written several books on his conviviality with the Lacandones in the three Mayan communities, Naha, Metzabock, and Lacanja Chansayab, and his anthropological, social, and cultural

analysis and interpretation. Enrique knew him very well. He recommended a book by Bruce to study Mayan cosmology and mythology. Enrique continued to emphasize the importance of bilingual education in Maya and Spanish. I added that the children constantly asked me how to translate the words they learn to write in Spanish into English. They translate words from Spanish to Mayan and I tell them the word in English. As I also learned German, I shared some words with them in that language. The children were thrilled to know how to say the same word in several languages, but I understood that they must master the Mayan language and give it the greatest importance. Enrique told me that there were few Mayan teachers who taught at the school but that they had left. "There have been very few efforts to include Mayan Lacandon in formal education," he emphasized.

It is worth mentioning that there are different Mayan languages since there are many ethnic groups that also live in the Lacandon Rainforest, such as Tzotziles, Cho'oles, Tzeltales, and Tojolabales—among others. Enrique added that, nevertheless, the parents take care that the children speak Mayan Lacandon in their homes that the Lacandon wisdom has allowed them to know how to preserve the pristine rainforest and its immense biodiversity. "The Lacandones know how to take care of the lungs of the world," he said. "However, the government only gives us 2000 pesos per family to take care of the rainforest and forbids us to live on it as we did before, taking care of it without abuse." I commented that the government stipend was not enough since their families are extensive. He nodded and remained sunk in thoughts with a deep sad look. After a while, he added, "it is important to continue working the traditional milpa that is planted in four sections. We alternate the crops to let the soil rest. If we plant, for example, corn in a section, the next phase, we alternate the crop planting, for example, pumpkin and so on in a continuous cycle. This helps the earth rest and not stress it."

I asked him what the word "*Kisin*" meant since the school children mentioned this frequently when we were creating stories in school. Enrique replied that it means "spirit," something similar to "pixan," soul. Enrique added that it also means "ghost." Bruce translated "*hach u pixan*" as "the real soul." The children reported that it is someone who causes harm, who can kill. I found reference to "Kisin" in Bruce's book (1975a, b) on the interpretation of Lacandon dreams. Kisin is represented as the archetype of the God of Death. Bruce reported,

> …Kisin, the killer, he who causes death, made parts of human beings according to the same plan Hachak Yum brought Kisin's men to life prematurely in the form of animals, corresponding to the Onen of the men created by Hachak Yum." (Lacandon Dream Symbolism, Vol. I, p. 2).

Boremanse (1982, 2006) also reported widely on the God Kisin created by Hachakyum himself.

Es, Enrique's granddaughter, arrived. I asked what her name means and she replied: "To teach." I asked her what she had dreamed of and she replied, "with a *Tapir*," an animal with a long trunk that I asked her to draw in a small notebook. As I left, walking back home I reflected on the wise strategy of ecological management described by Enrique Paniagua that avoids mono-crops and alternates the planting of

different seeds. His deep relationship with dreams and animals appears to be both, unique and similar to many indigenous cosmologies throughout the Americas and elsewhere.

Prisma, a 21-year-old girl, whom I met when I went to the telephone booth of her grandfather K'in Paniagua from Naha, who is also the brother of Enrique and Vicente Paniagua, volunteered to assist me at the school. His grandfather K'in showed me the copal that they collect in the Naha rainforest and that they use to make ceremonies. He gave me a little copal, which I still have. He told me that the government preserves the environment and no longer allows them to get as much copal as they used to. K'in still does the ceremonies and needs the copal so now he buys it elsewhere, although he continues to get copal from the rainforest when possible.

The town is very small and yet residents do not know everyone. Several community members observed that their custom is to know and relate in family or clan and little with others who are not relatives. Although they know the other family clans, they do not interact much with them. At school, the children were generally well behaved and they treated each other with respect. I did not frequently witness that they would push each other or denigrate each other, except on some occasions when perhaps the same activities, such as painting or acting for the theater, aroused cathartic behaviors. However, the children knew well each other's names and places where each one lived. At the end of each session, the children could select books to read as a group. Frequently, their choices were cosmogonic stories such as one that became a favorite, about the Gods of the Sun, Moon, and Earth based on a Mayan Yucatecan legend. Their dreams also had cosmological content such as meteorites, stars, and Gods from the otherworld like Kisin.

I had the opportunity to also talk with some young people on several occasions. One of them, Timo, about 20 years old, told me that he was going to work on a project that had the goal of translating a story from Spanish to Mayan on the radio station of Palenque. He indicated that he had worked in reforestation and other ecological projects. Ernesto Chancayun, the young man who accompanied me to the Selva Lacandona for the first time, also shared that he was almost finishing high school in Palenque and that he was interested in working in ecological sciences. Another girl, only 12 years old, Ruth, granddaughter of Vicente Paniagua, when I asked her what she wanted to study she answered, "I'm interested in what has to do with the noise of the river, I like to listen to it and learn from it, also observe the sun and the moon." Her sister, Nuk, an 18-year-old girl, showed me a digital film that she composed with different photos of the rainforest, archaeological sites, and her family. She gave it the title: "My Lacandon Rainforest." Nuk observed, "We, the Lacandones, have always been concerned about conserving nature and not polluting it, but the tourists who come bring another kind of soap, not the one we use that is natural. They bathe with those soaps and creams to protect themselves from the sun and that messes up my rainforest." Later, in 2017, Nuk presented her beautiful film at an Inter-American Psychological Conference in Merida, Yucatan, which I will refer to later.

Es, who I mentioned before is 15 years old, told me that she wants to study to become a doctor. The children that I have met show great interest in learning. During my first visits to Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin, her 12-year-old daughter Adelina,

her nephews Juanito of 6 years and Armando of 12 years, and the four children of Lucas, the brother of Ana Kin Kin, asked me to teach them how to read and write in English. We met during the afternoons and they learned how to write different words in Spanish, Mayan, and English. When they saw me arrive, they ran to take out their notebooks and pencils with enthusiasm.

Vicente Paniagua, who rented me a cabin, asked me, "how are things going in the school?" After briefly telling him about my work in the school, I asked him about the issue Gaspar had shared with me regarding the relationship of the Lacandones with the Na Bolom. Vicente replied that they owed him a lot of money because he had given them crafts to sell. "They owe me 14,000 pesos. I will travel there in a week because a new administrator has committed to pay what they owe us," he added with resolution. I offered solidarity in what could be needed such as writing a letter and presenting it to Human Rights organizations in San Cristóbal so that they could receive legal attention. Vicente commented that he was going to try to resolve this issue but that "there were still many other issues to resolve with Na Bolom." I continued to reinforce that the community could stand in solidarity to write a letter with testimonies of all the violations that this organization has done after Gertrudis Duby passed away. She had left them her house and belongings, and they had a legal ownership demand. Vicente nodded reflexively and remained silent.

On some nights the howling of the Ba'ats (monkeys) could be heard clearly and powerfully. I learned that when they howl with that tone specifically, there is a foreshadowing that it will rain with thunder and lightning. A rainy night Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin invited me to eat a succulent dish made with "*wo'o*" (frogs) they had caught themselves. "The wo'o is one of the most traditional dishes of the Lacandones," Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin informed me. "The wo'o go out on the road at night. We were from 11 to 1 in the morning catching the frogs," commented Gaspar. They told me it was a very traditional and succulent food from Lacanja, so it was an honor for me to have been invited to try this delicacy. But the frogs looked unpleasant so I preferred the tamale with the wo'o wrapped in banana leaves instead of boiled in broth. I remarked that Ana Kin Kin had been producing magnificent pieces of music with the electric piano I had given her. She has great talent and I proposed that we record her musical creations with cosmic and cheerful tones.

When I needed to use the Internet I went to the only eco-camp store where I lived that has facilities with several computers. This business belongs to the son of Vicente Paniagua, who is also named Vicente. Sometimes I used Enrique Paniagua's wireless internet in the Top Che. He charges according to the time of use that he monitors carefully. When the time ends, he warns us to turn off the computers or he cuts off the connection.

Vicente's shop is frequented by the residents of Lacanja and visiting it frequently allowed me to chat with them while we waited for the few available computers to be vacated. There I met a Lacandón called Elías Chambor Yuk. He was watching a video on YouTube about the rainforest and I asked how it could be accessed. He told me that they made the video and posted it on the Internet. He said there are other videos that have been made and published on YouTube, on a page called: "Lacandon Guides in Bonampak." He added that he had gone to New York, Texas,

and New Mexico in the United States to present on "eco-tourism." The way in which he told me about these commercial, but also educational, activities confirmed that the Lacandones have an impressive ancestral wisdom and select the routes of connection and relationship with the Western world that appear appropriate to them. They express a deep pride for their culture and their ancestral knowledge that is applied to ecological management and that has existed for centuries. Of course, it can be criticized that the very existence of "eco-tourism" in this area is indicative of the global imposition that continues to exploit its resources, now with the mantra of ecological recreation for the new colonizers and promoted by the government. However, it can be argued that eco-tourism was appropriated by the Lacandones and integrates their traditions and values. They are taking control of the income produced by tourism since they are the owners of the camps, where their own family shelters are also located. However, only some families were benefited with the construction of the eco-camps, an investment that was facilitated by the government and that has created conflicts in the community.

I went to visit Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin to tell them that they had to register Adelina at the school so that she could participate in my program. Gaspar got a little upset. He argued that I had promised there would be no problem if Adelina participated in the program and now he said, "It turns out that there is a problem because we have to register her." His brother-in-law, Alberto, added that it was not a problem that he only had to go talk to the teacher to register Adelina in the school program and then with the School Committee, as the school Principal had requested. Adelina was 12 years old and had never been to school. She did not know how to read and write. I had taught her to write the alphabet and she was already beginning to form some words. I asked Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin and Juanito's parents for permission to take the children every day to school.

The next day at school, picking up brushes and paints, I saw that there was Gaspar talking to the teacher. Romeo, the Director, asked that they bring Adelina's birth certificate. Gaspar commented that they had to travel to Palenque to apply for her birth certificate. Gaspar asked Romeo "to let Adelina into the psychologist's program while this was resolved." I told Gaspar and Romeo that I would gladly take Adelina in my program and prepare her before school starts at the end of August. Gaspar asked me if I could go to his home afterward. I went a few hours later. There was his brother-in-law, Alberto, his wife Ana, Ana Kin Kin, and Adelina. Ana Kin Kin played the piano and I recorded a video.

In the center of the village, there was a protestant evangelist church, like all the other four churches that exist in the community. There was a young man playing an electric piano. At that moment I understood where Ana Kin Kin had the idea of wanting to have a piano. However, it is possible that she too felt the need for a musical instrument due to an ancestral impetus to remake their lost their traditional music. Several of the authors who have written about the Lacandones have reported that they used to do their ceremonies playing traditional drums and flutes. However, this custom has been lost in Lacanja, as well as the religious ceremonies for the Mayan Gods and the music they used to accompany them.

I went to Prisma's house, who had asked me to come by to tell me how things were going with her boyfriend. Prisma wanted to find the right partner and establish a long relationship. She was afraid of not achieving it because of her conflictual relationship with her father, who seemed to suffer from deep depression and had difficulty relating to his family. We talked about it. Three years later, Prisma married a resident of Chajul and they had a beautiful son.

One day I had an immense desire to visit the pyramids of Bonampak. However, I could not find transportation. All the men in Lacanja were doing community service, cleaning a section where a lamppost had fallen. Therefore, there was no light in all of Lacanja. Women and children were the only ones who were in their homes or on the roads. I met Leonila, a woman who comes to sell clothes from Tabasco. She lived in a town called Tenosique, on the banks of the Usumacinta River. I praised her skirt that had beautiful colors and added that was the kind of clothes I liked. She had a washcloth tied in her heavy bag laden with Western clothes. I told her if she would sell me one like that. She said it was hers to wipe off the sweat and took out one she had in her bag and gave it to me. I offered to invite her a "boli"—a bag of frozen fruit juice. She said it was not necessary and thanked me. I thanked her for her beautiful gift.

The Usumacinta River separates Mexico from Guatemala, practically constituting the fluvial border, the natural or permeable separation as Ed Casey (2014) would say. Many come and go selling products. They cross by the river or by land. Guatemalans come more frequently to Mexico when products there are cheaper. Guatemala exports vegetables, coffee, sugar, corn, and beans but returns its products to Guatemala when beans and corn are more expensive in Mexico.

I went to see another camp called Rio Lacanja. It included what they call *Sendero Interpretativo* (Interpretative Pathway) which consists of guides made with inscriptions painted in wood on the species of flower and fauna of the region located along paths that go into the jungle. The trails also lead to the traditional milpa, where alternately various products such as pumpkins, palm, and corn are planted for family or commoners' subsistence. In this area, the land is assigned by the clan as opposed to *ejidatario* (small landowner) as in other parts of the country. Guides printed across the road teach about important tree species such as mahogany and rubber, two tree species that have been exploited by Westerners. The Lacandon houses were built of mahogany in the past and now it is used with measure in some eco-camps. All the camps have multiple trash cans separated in organic and inorganic. In this specific camp, Rio Lacanja, the construction and distribution of water, as well as the management of waste, is based on sophisticated ecological processes.

After finishing this visit and walking back to the village, I saw that there were many people gathered at the crossroad or center of the Lacanja community. In this area is the health clinic, the school, and an evangelist temple. There is also the main taxi stop, a community service that transports people to the main road or the San Javier junction. I met several children from the school who greeted me with affection. Cesar, a 7-year-old gifted child assigned to my group by maestro Romeo, came over and I asked if he had done his homework. I let them draw a picture of their dreams and write a short story describing it. He said yes. I asked him what he dreamed.

He answered that about a "*duende* (goblin)." Alexis had told me stories about the goblins when we were in the main temple of Bonampak and that they can be seen inscribed in the stones of the pyramids. Another confirmation of the existence of ancestral memory in children. Cesar wears the tunic, hash nook, and long hair. The teacher told me that he and his brother Manuel needed my services because they come from a very troubled family. The father has two women and there is a lot of rivalry between them. Therefore, children are affected, Romeo said. Polygamy was an ancestral form of organization and some families still practice it. I conveyed to Romeo that I had observed an impressive maturity in Cesar, who could write very well and had made very artistic drawings. Romeo added that Cesar did not know how to read. He is only 7 years old and requires education for talented children. Romeo added that Manuel lost years of school because of the conflict between his father's two wives. The mother of Cesar and Manuel did not want to send Manuel to school.

Cesar told me that they were in the meeting "because a man, a candidate, was going to give toys to the children " he said. I asked some of the mothers who were there what was happening. They watched me with a little distrust, perhaps because they needed to know first who I was and what I was doing with their children. After introducing myself and explaining my role in the school, they told me they did not know what was happening. There was another group of older men, the elderly and perhaps leaders of approximately 50 years and older. In another corner were the young women with their younger children. Some other families preferred to stay in their cars, waiting for what was to come but still did not know. Then I saw Gaspar's brother-in-law, Alberto, who was with several men, all of them in their 30s. I approached him. Alberto told me that a representative of Peña Nieto, the PRI candidate, was coming. To make sure I understood correctly, I asked him again if it was Peña Nieto who was coming. "No, it is another one who comes in his place" replied another young adult who was wearing hash nook (white tunic) and had long hair, unlike Gaspar's brother-in-law who uses Western attire. Another Lacandon also dressed traditionally, said, "We gather here because tomorrow we will see a sun eclipse and we came to observe the sun before that because it starts changing now. This is how we, Lacandones, are." Indeed, the sun looked strange, with a tenuous orange color, clear and sovereign, as it was going down to dusk.

The women were observing me. I understood that it was not appropriate to be in the circle of men and I joined their circle of women. The children came back to hug me. The mothers asked me where I came from. As I answered their questions they talked to each other in Mayan and laughed at times—my presence and way of communicating with them appeared to entertain them. A Lacandon with long hair and Western attire told me that he was the representative of the Education Committee. His name was Alejandro. He stated that it was very important that the children learn to read and write the Mayan language. I told him that I was in absolute agreement and that, for this reason, Prisma had volunteered to help the children write their stories in Mayan and Spanish. Alejandro added that Prisma spoke a different Mayan language because she was from Naha and Mezabock. "All those who live on the other side of the road, after the crossing, are from there and speak differently. They do not understand those of Lacanja," he said. The mothers also nodded and said that there

had been only one teacher who had taught them in Maya Lacandon but had already gone elsewhere. His name was Alfonso Chancayun. Alejandro advised me to include the mothers in my school activities because they were waiting for their children and would be available to assist me. I told him it was a great idea.

Ana Kin Kin confided to me that Adelina's biological father had become addicted to drugs. "He used a white powder and pills," she said. I asked where he got it from. Gaspar said that from "*Malamerito*" and laughed. He had changed the name of the town of Benemérito de las Américas which is located on the border with Guatemala to indicate that it was a bad town, instead of what the name means which stands for a title given to the first indigenous president, Benito Juarez, celebrating him as benefactor of the American continent. "Malamerito" is invaded by the drug trade, alcohol, and prostitution. Indeed, that city is strange and charged with the typical tensions of the border areas, in this case not with the United States (US) but with the other neighboring country of Guatemala. Here, Mexico applies military security and conducts daily deportations of Central Americans crossing the Mexican border with the intent to continue long and dangerous travel toward the US border. It seems Mexico releases in this southern border a cathartic discharge of refractory violence due to the traumas acquired on the northern border with the US empire.

The owner of a restaurant in Benemérito de las Américas told me that this is a relatively new town made up of people from all over Mexico, Indigenous and *Ladinos* (Mestizos). He commented that he was originally from Ixtapa, Zihuatanejo and that he had observed that in this southern border region, "the Indians, in a few years, left their traditional clothing and integrated into modernity." I asked if he was referring to the national culture that pays tribute to globalization as "modernity." He smiled and nodded agreeing with my observation and added, "Now Benemérito is a ladino town, borderless and without values, inhabited by confused residents who discard lots of trash everywhere. It is full of merchants and a feeling of total cultural loss and helplessness. But it is possible to live well here. The border with Guatemala is only a few steps away. Only the river separates both countries. That is why I want to make a customs business" he reflected and smiled.

Working in the School

My work at the only elementary school in Lacanja helped to anchor my relationship with the community. The two teachers, Romeo and Mirsa, were a married couple and in charge of the school. They taught all the Lacanja children who attended the first to the sixth grade of primary school. Romeo is Tzeltal and Mirsa is Cho'ol. They have a 9-month-old boy who stayed in Ocosingo, the capital of the state of Chiapas, with their families. They used to go back to their son and families every weekend.

Our school sessions lasted 2 h in the afternoons from Monday to Friday. The children and I agreed that they would teach me Mayan and I would teach them Spanish. I proposed that we write stories and act them in a play. I invited them to draw and paint images in small books and to build the scenery to decorate the

stage and clothing for the theater play. The children told their own stories in Maya Lacandon. Prisma and Timo translated them into Spanish and helped the children to write them in Mayan. The Secretary of Public Education sends books to all school libraries in the country and when these are sent to indigenous communities, they make sure to include copies in several indigenous languages. However, I could not locate a single book in Maya Lacandon in the school library.

Knowing the importance of dreams in the Lacandon culture, I proposed to the children that they share them as the first activity of our daily sessions. The goal, I told them, is to build a story based on collective dreams. Prisma wrote their stories on the blackboard and the children copied them in their notebooks. We only had a paint box and a pencil sharpener that I had provided. It was necessary to share the materials. I emphasized that the brushes had to be washed when they finished using them and they had to place them back in a box. All children returned each of the pencils and objects that had been provided clean and in perfect condition. They took great care and responsibility saying, "Teacher—or psychologist as they also called me—here is my pencil already washed." They never lost the work materials, however small they were. If someone left some material lying around, the children recognized the owner and did not touch it. This impressed me because it is indicative of a high moral behavior, perhaps, anchored in their ancestral customs and still learned at home, or encouraged by the school. However, after having worked in various indigenous communities in Mexico and in Hawai'i, and other urban schools in other places such as Connecticut in the US and Bavaria in Germany, I had not observed this degree of respect for the rights of others. A similar observation was made by Bruce.

The children were also very careful when sharpening pencils. I assigned a container where they had to put the garbage and carefully put a pencil to the point and placed the garbage in that single space, which suggests the vision rooted in the care of the environment and its resources. I witnessed an almost ceremonial respect for the use of the Lacanja river. When I met the children in the community and they invited me to accompany them to swim in the river, they themselves indicated where they could swim, depending on which part of the river belonged to their families. They took care not to bathe in the part that did not belong to them.

The group of children in my school sessions had increased from a total of 30 to 40 children, although their attendance was irregular. Sessions ranged from an average of 15 to 20 children. Every day, we reviewed the story they had written together based on their collective dreams. Everyone engaged enthusiastically in this activity. The children showed great interest in writing the scenes of their collective story. Some approached the posters that contained the sentences to copy them well. We acted the story and it turned out to be a success (Fig. 3.1).

The teachers informed me that the children's parents already knew me, but they did not know exactly what I was doing in school and they proposed to inform them at least once a month. They brought the parents together several times to report on my work at school and my interest in preserving education in the Mayan language. They also talked about the existing standard tests that, as in the US, are applied in schools to measure the teachers' capacity to raise educational standards. Teachers reported that the Ministry of Public Education awards workplaces to teachers and

Fig. 3.1 Children creating storybooks

sends Cho'ol speakers to regions where Maya Lacandon is spoken and teachers who speak Maya Lacandon to regions where Tzotzil, Cho'ol, or Tzeltal are spoken. They added that it is totally arbitrary because they do not take care to promote the indigenous languages. "On the contrary," said Mirsa, "it is a plan so that no one, neither the teachers nor the Indigenous students, practices our languages; thus they annihilate us and impose their rules as the universal test." This is an imitation of the "no child left behind" of the United States, promoted by the tyrant Bush. They want to implement a standard test for all children in the Mexican Republic in Spanish and following the guidelines of the city, with middle-class standards, to assess the performance of the rural teacher in the indigenous world. This, without a doubt, is epistemicide as Santos (2016) would say.

Mirsa informed me that all teachers in Chiapas were already organized to go on strike and protest against this universal test, under which teachers who do not achieve specific averages in their classes will be dismissed (a replica of Bush's law). So Mirsa advised me not to worry about coming to school until they came back from the strike to protest this annihilating measure in Tuxtla de Gutierrez, the capital of Chiapas.

When the teachers' strike ended, I went to the school to continue our project of creating stories and acting them. We started the class by asking one of the children to select a story. Fabian brought a story entitled: "The Fear Tree." The moral of the story was that the tree did not want to grow because it feared that the birds were going to eat it. Other trees, butterflies, and a pixie helped him to overcome fear. We reflected on experiences in which we have felt fear and how we had overcome them. We continued working on our own story and acted it several times. We recorded the performances with a video camera. I showed these recordings to them and we discussed which parts went well or not so well and how to correct them. This activity aroused much laughter and enthusiasm (Fig. 3.2).

Fig. 3.2 Children painting their storybooks

Bor is a 10-year-old boy, whom the teachers referred to my group because of his behavior and concern that he resided with his grandfather who was an alcoholic. The grandfather used to take Bor with him in the night when he goes out to drink with his friends. Also, apparently, Bor has been severely punished by the grandfather. On one occasion, after the grandfather took him to one of his nocturnal drunkenness, he punished him because one of the men with whom he was drinking took a claim that Bor had stolen his cell phone. The punishment consisted of leaving him alone at night in a milpa. The grandfather left him there until the next day. Bor refused to enter my class. When I asked him why he did not want to enter, he would reply, "Because you scare me with Kisin." However, he later participated in the class. On one occasion he asked to read a book called "The Sun and the Moon." When he read it, he added stories that seemed to reflect his confrontation with a conflicting family relationship.

Teachers held a parents' meeting that was convened the same day. To my surprise, nonetheless, around 30 parents attended. Romeo introduced me to the parents and one of them interrupted saying that he did not know me and that his time was limited and he preferred that the teacher continue with his agenda. However, Romeo asked me to communicate what I was doing. I briefly reported on my activities since the comment of that parent intimidated me and I did not want to take much time. The discussion became energetic when that same parent expressed a conflict with the preschool teachers, who had asked the community to build a house for the teachers. The new preschool was built by the community, not by the Secretary of Public Education as is the case of the primary school. Several parents commented that the community had built that school and the current house, where the teachers were staying. They added that "they had no obligation to continue building houses for

teachers; the teachers should look for a house in the community and pay rent." This was the consensus expressed by most parents present at the meeting. The women did not talk. Romeo, who is Tzeltal, motivated the mothers to express their opinion. Finally, one of them spoke and commented that she agreed with what the men had said about not having any obligation to build houses for teachers. During this meeting, Romeo also reported on the result and reason for the teachers' strike, emphasizing that "the universal test that the Secretary of Public Education intended to impose on Indigenous communities was only going to put them at a disadvantage, once again, because it was done by the rich and for the rich."

Visit to Bonampak

I went looking for Alexis, whom I had known for 2 years since 2010. He worked at the Bonampak pyramids when he had given me an excellent lesson about the mural paintings of the three Bonampak temples. Alexis was not at home, but his wife was there. She told me that Alexis no longer worked at the Bonampak pyramids, that he was now a policeman and that he would return the next day. When I returned the next day, Alexis spoke with a friend to take us to Bonampak. It was Monday and the pyramids were without visitors. Only the Lacandones of Lacanja and San Javier were there. I learned from the people of Lacanja that there are three neighborhoods near Bonampak: Lacanja Chansayab, Bethel, and San Javier. Already in the pyramids, a girl from the school recognized me and greeted me affectionately. She had told me that she liked to sing and I offered to film her singing after returning from visiting the pyramids. However, I ran out of battery because there was no light and I could not charge it. Also, when taking pictures of a figure of an impressive Mayan God, the camera overheated and I had to turn it off. This was strange.

Alexis gave me an excellent lesson. The discoverer of the pyramids is Kin Obregon, who was still alive and perhaps close to 100 years old. Alexis reported that it is said that Kin came to walk through this region of the Bonampak pyramids. Then he saw a hill and a deer. He signaled the deer who took him to caves that contained the majestic murals of Bonampak. Reports published by the media as well as academic sources state that the discoverer of Bonampak was an American named Carlos Frey, a pseudonym that he adopted since his real name apparently was Herman. This history corresponds to the Western legacy of European and US adventurers who appropriate the already existent local wisdom of the native residents and named it "their discovery." A replication of the discovery narrative related to the encounter of the American continent by the Spaniards and the English. The history of the Lacandones is that Bonampak is a sacred place where the Mayan Gods have been venerated during centuries. This historical memory exists in them. The divine animal, the archetypal deer of many indigenous cultures of the American continent, appeared in these temples covered by earth and stones for a long time or covered by the Spanish conquerors themselves so that the Indians would stop worshiping their Gods. Kin Obregon was a wise man and community leader who was highly respected by the Lacandones and

who has been credited with the discovery of this religious and spiritual center on earth, memory, and the Lacandon pixan.

I recorded Alexis' lecture on video. He apologized constantly, saying that he had forgotten a lot since he had not worked there for a long time. I reinforced that this is ancestral wisdom and that he has not forgotten it. Indeed, with some insecurity and unlike the previous time, he remembered a lot, perhaps everything and more. I reinforced that he knows a lot about his oral cultural tradition. Alexis introduced me to Constantino, the repairer of the mural paintings of the three temples and employed by the National Institute of Anthropology and History. I was envious of Constantino because he lived in this majestic center, overfilled with ancestral wisdom and majestic architecture.

After the visit to Bonampak, Alexis told me that he had worked very recently with an anthropologist from Mexico. "I told him traditional stories in Mayan and he recorded them and translated them into Spanish," he said. I commented that the first time I went to Bonampak in January 2010, Ernesto Chancayun, shared several stories about the jaguar, the God *Barum*, and how a person transformed into a jaguar at night. The jaguar walked all night around the community of Lacanja. Robert Bruce reported that same story as a repetitive dream of the Lacandones during his visit to this region in 1972. I also shared with Alexis that Cesar, the 7-year-old boy who attended my class, had told me that he had dreamed and written about the goblins in his school work. Alexis told me a very similar story about goblins in 2009 during my first visit to Bonampak. This was another evidence of their ancestral memory. Alexis said he knew several stories he had learned from his father. Alexis has short hair and dresses in Western style. He wears a ring on his eyebrow. He is 21 years old, has been married for several years, and has a 3-year-old son. He has worked as a policeman "taking care weapons and drugs are not being transported in cars crossing the main roads." Alexis added,

> If we get to see the *zetas* [narcotraffickers] we have to pretend that we did not see them. We already know that they come armed and this is dangerous for us. But we have caught others. Above all, those who traffic the *xate* palm that is now restricted by the government so that it is not exploited, because it is already scarce. We have to go to the rainforest to grab the Cho'oles and the Tzeltales that have been invading the region. Those are the ones who do not respect nature and only think about business and ignore the rules. They also come to hunt species that are no longer allowed to hunt. We are dedicated to taking care of this as the order of the government. We must preserve the environment.

As a policeman, his job is to make sure that alcohol is not consumed in the community, "almost only beer because it's the only thing sold. We have to take care of the community's well-being. If we see a drunk man we take him to jail." I added that another Lacanja policeman had told me that there was a dry law and that the Lacandones could not buy beer in the store or restaurants. Only tourists could buy alcohol. Alexis agreed that this was true but that people bought their beers secretly and drank a lot, men and women. He added that many go to Palestina, Benemérito, or Palenque to drink alcohol and take high amounts to compensate for the restrictions imposed on them. Prisma had shared that she drunk many beers to get rid of headaches. I asked her about how many and she answered, "about 23."

That day the eclipse was foreshadowed. It was cloudy and indeed the sun was not felt so strong. The howler monkeys, Ba'ats, were very active in the afternoon and, above all, when the eclipse was predicted according to the Lacandones at 5:30 p.m.

The Encounter with the Lacandones of San Javier

On Monday, there was no school due to preparations to go to Nueva Palestina to attend an escort contest for girls, a knowledge competition, and school athletic games. After taking the time to talk with the teachers about the children in my group, to study their drawings and work for assessment about their progress, I went to the health clinic. There I met Nuk and her son Kin who were waiting to see the doctor. They told me to stop by to register with the nurse, with Victoriana. I asked Victoriana if she had any advice on how to cure the innumerable mosquito bites I had on my legs. She laughed and said there was no remedy, that I should get used to that. I told her that I was interested in knowing more about her adolescent care clinic, and offered my service as a psychologist. She immediately invited me to attend the talks they have with two groups on Mondays and Thursdays. She added that she was going to tell the doctor and the patients that I was a psychologist. Nuk added that it was good to have a psychologist in the Lacandon Rainforest and that she wanted me to see her son Kin, who immediately asked me if I could cure "drinking a lot of beer and not being able to stop." I said we could try. Kin invited me to go to his house in San Javier. We agreed that I would go but he would have to get a group of men together so that it would be worth my time and investment to go there.

On the agreed day, I looked for someone to drive me to my appointment with Kin in San Javier but no one was available. I waited for a taxi and sat at the intersection under the tree that everyone uses as shadow while waiting for transportation. There was a 21-year-old young man who told me that he was already married and had a 9-month-old baby. I asked him if he worked in Lacanja. He replied that he did not work, that his wife did arts and crafts and sold them to support their family. I saw Victoriana arrive at the clinic with her husband Felipe. I approached her and told her that I had an appointment in San Javier but that there was no transportation. Felipe, her husband, offered to take me. Kin was in service, dressed as a soldier, although he is a policeman. He was carrying a rifle. He was glad to see me and got in Felipe's car to take me to his home. He asked me to start talking with his wife while he finished work. When we arrived at his house, his wife Dora and their two daughters, Teresa and Maria, 2-year-old twins, watched me curiously. We started talking. Dora told me that Kin drank a lot but that was the case with many men from the San Javier neighborhood. "He drinks a lot with his brothers and cousins, every day," she commented sadly. She added that Kin complained often that she is jealous. Kin had told me the same issue when he was in the clinic. Patricia said that she accepted that she had given him a lot of attention at first because she was pregnant and he used to leave her alone and arrived drunk late at night. "He still does it and his cousins and brothers come to the house, each with a six of beers and they drink all the time," she

observed. She said that she had noticed that "when he gets upset about something, he goes to buy his beers." I asked if he got violent. She said no, that he had never hit her or the children. She added that she comes from Paraíso, a town near San Javier and that they are Cho'oles and they think differently. Patricia added that when Kin, his brothers, and cousins are drinking they say they must rescue the Lacandon customs and each of them should be allowed to have up to seven women living with them. Dora said Kin 's father and many others have more than one wife and the Cho'oles do not think that way, "it is just one wife they can have," she added.

After a while of talking, I went out for a walk to get to know the neighborhood. I arrived at a restaurant and saw Nuk, Kin's mother, who owns it. I ordered a fried fish and sat down to wait for the food. Her other daughter arrived and asked if I was the psychologist and she began to tell me that her husband has had many problems and that she wanted me to talk with him. Her husband arrived, he shared that he felt that his heart was beating hard, his hands were sweating, and he felt very weak, and thought that he was going to die. He has visited several doctors who had told him that he had to see a psychologist. He added that he is an auxiliary of the law and also works in the protection of the environment, receiving a minimum salary from the government to take care of the rainforest. He said that some psychologists are sent by the government to ask them questions. They give certificates qualifying them to be policemen. He had met someone who was going to sell him a book so he can do his own therapy and control his anxiety attacks since there is no psychologist in the rainforest.

I returned to meet Kin, as I saw that he was coming home from work. He was already sitting waiting for me with two other men and a six of beer. He said they did not want to be dishonest and that it was better that I saw what they always do. As soon as they leave work they buy beer. A little later another cousin arrived with another six of beer. I told them that I was not there to judge whether what they did was good or bad, but only to understand what was happening. They liked the answer and said that was very good and they started drinking. They talked about young people who cut their hair, dress like tourists, form bands and fight with each other. They added that young people no longer want to be Lacandones. However, Kin and the others present also had short hair and dressed Western attire. I commented that it was very important that they took care of their culture, just as they have managed to take care of their natural environment for so many centuries.

They observed that Lacandon women no longer want to marry Lacandon men. That they look for men from outside the community and that is why they also have to look for women from outside. This has changed their culture. They added, "the tourists come with their tanning creams and repellents on their bodies, they swim in the river wearing swimsuits, and have polluted it. The Lacandon custom is to swim naked or wear clean clothes to enter the river where we bathe." They added that when they were kids and went to school, teachers told them that their long hair and tunic were not tolerated at school, that they had to cut their hair, dress decently, and learn Spanish; that they did not want to hear them speak Maya Lacandon. They reported, pessimistically, "everything is uncontrollable, people drink a lot, men and women, young people use drugs, and nothing can be stopped." Kin and his cousins commented

that they have been prohibited from fishing and hunting because of environmental regulations of the government and in return they give them cans to drink and eat, "and now we cannot stop consuming the cans of beer and food that the government has given us."

They asked me why this was happening to them, that sometimes they only felt it was better to kill themselves and everything would be over. I commented that it seemed as if they were saying that the Westerners invaded their homes and forest, restricted their customs, imposed on them another language, other customs and religion; they sell the Lacandones their products and get rich in exchange for their self-destruction. One of them said, "Yes, that is what they are doing to us! We are supposed to take care of the jungle and we do it very well but we do not take care of ourselves and then, who will take care of the jungle?"

I reinforced that in their community there is a lot of wisdom, that the world needs to learn from them such as how they have preserved their environment, rich in biodiversity, rich in religion and ancestral knowledge, as well as their knowledge of medicinal plants. "Yes," one of them replied, "I can still distinguish those plants, my grandfather taught that to me." Kin added that this wisdom had already been lost, that only a few know it. He remarked, "Now my people buy their medicines in pharmacies and give injections to their sick children. They make their pregnant women see doctors every month. Whereas before people did not get sick so much and pregnant women did not see doctors and everything went well." He added that his father told him that before they ate with their hands sitting on the ground and their dog was always nearby. "Everything that came from the rainforest was eaten by our ancestors and they did not get sick. Now we only eat cans, buy food, and no longer hunt or fish," concluded Kin reflectively.

I asked, "what do the children who see you drinking beer and getting drunk everyday learn from you?" They answered that the children no longer pay attention to them, that the young people are going to buy their drugs and it is worse because they use drugs and get drunk as well. I asked if they saw a connection with the young people's behavior and their daily drinking as adults. Kin shared that he had gone to work in Chihuahua as a young man and had to be admitted to a rehabilitation center there because he had fallen into drug abuse. When he returned, he saw that many young people were doing the same in his own community. Consequently, he thought there was no solution, that it was already too late.

I addressed his two twin girls and Carlos, his 15-year-old brother-in-law who had come to listen to us, and asked him what he thought. The 15-year-old said, "only if they change we will change." I commented that it seemed to me that what they were claiming is that the bad government of Mexico had abandoned them and had rather instituted dependence on Western products without valuing their culture. For example, if the government would value their culture, it would have recognized them as wise teachers to show the world how to conserve nature, something that powerful countries like the United States and others in Europe are desperate to know. The schools would be about preserving their culture and language, and about the wisdom that is still written in the sacred sites of their ancestors such as Bonampak. They commented that the government has indeed tried to destroy them but that now they

are destroying themselves, that they realized that, but they did not know how to stop it. I added that, in a single visit, I did not have a magic wand and we were not going to solve everything at that moment. The important thing was to become aware and to understand the forces that are acting on us and how we react to them. I encouraged them that perhaps one afternoon, instead of drinking beer, they may spend it remembering the knowledge they have learned from their grandparents, feel proud of their culture, and share this with their children. Perhaps, I remarked, they would see their children's faces in the beer cans they consume every day. They looked at me perplexed and asked, "how?" I said, every can they consume is a loss of cultural knowledge for their children. There are several options. One is to drink alcohol to anesthetize the pain of cultural loss and confusion, another is to revive their culture, feel pride in it, and pass it on to the new generations. If they do not, who will teach it to their children?

We agreed to meet at the Lacanja clinic the next time. I had already gone to their house and accepted they had beer, now it was their turn to go to the clinic and decide which option they would like to take. When I was about to leave they said that they would go buy the next 24 beers, that they would not hide it from me, that they would continue to drink until late at night. As I walked through the neighborhood I observed the immense amount of beer cans thrown everywhere. I went to another restaurant to have coffee. There was an 8- or 9-year-old boy crushing the many beer cans that were lying on the floor with a stick. In addition, there were many large garbage bags filled to the overflow of beer cans.

The Encounter with the Tzeltales of Nueva Palestina

I went to Nueva Palestina to the school contest. We left in several cars, parents and children, the two teachers, and me. The commissar, Juanito, drove us there. When I arrived and asked how much transportation would cost and what I owed him, he replied it was paid by the Education Committee. The girls from the Lacanja school's escort competed with other school escorts and did a very good job, but they were only in eighth place out of 10 that competed. The knowledge contest brought together children from preschool through sixth grade that were grouped according to grade level in various classrooms. Four children from Lacanja competed, a sixth-grader, a fifth-grader, a third-grader, and a preschooler. The teachers who applied for the knowledge quiz gave instruction to the children in Spanish and Tzeltal. I asked a mother if they also gave the Lacandon children an explanation about the tests in Maya Lacandon and Spanish. She said no and I added that this could place the Lacandon children at a disadvantage. "That's what I say," replied the mother.

Palestina is a Tzeltal occupation. It is considered a colonial settlement because of the government policy that facilitated the colonization of the Lacandon Rainforest by indigenous groups that came from the highlands of Chiapas and who had conflicts with landowners in that region. The government opened doors to the internal colonization of the State of Chiapas with a vision that would calm the indigenous

insurgency and propel livestock and agriculture in the Lacandon Rainforest. The latter is a wrong policy that has caused immense disasters both ecologically, psychologically, economically, and culturally (Perera and Bruce 1985; Leyva and Franco 1996/2002-among others).

Chanuk, the daughter of Enrique Paniagua, told me that her preschool daughter had been elected to the regional contest. I told her I had learned from another mother, that the children who only speak Maya Lacandon are not given instructions in their language but in Tzeltal. She said that they would go to the classroom and translate instructions for her daughter. We waited for a while for the person in charge of giving the instructions to start the competition. The teacher arrived and Chanuk translated to his daughter what he was saying in Tzeltal. I asked her if she was bilingual and she answered that her husband spoke Tzeltal and she had learned from him. Romero, the teacher, shared that neither his wife nor him can practice their language at school, so they have to teach the children in Spanish. They speak Spanish with each other, but they are teaching their son both languages. We discussed that the Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico plans to assign indigenous teachers in areas where their languages are not spoken in order to exterminate the indigenous languages and make everyone speak only Spanish. This continues the brutal colonization that favors the violent exploitation of the indigenous peoples.

I went to see the town of Palestina. In the center, there was a traditional stone catholic church, unlike the evangelical churches of Lacanja that are made of wood. I was sitting on a bench in the central park located next to the church when an old man approached me and started talking to me in Tzeltal. I commented that I did not speak Tzeltal, unfortunately, only Spanish. He continued telling many stories and I chose to listen carefully. Two girls passed by. I asked them if they could translate what the old man was telling me. They summarized that he said that he would like me to stay and be his wife and to learn Tzeltal. He did not seem drunk, but very thoughtful. When he spoke he raised one hand to the sky and another to the earth, constantly, making long horizontal movements, demarcating ample space. It seemed that he said something had fallen from the sky to the earth, perhaps a lot of rain, and that it had been distributed on the earth. Then I found out that there had been recent floods because of the heavy rain. Maybe this is what he told me. Palestina has long stretches of cattle fields. The Lacandones complain that the Tzeltales invaded the rainforest to raise their cattle and destroyed it, "because they are only interested in money," they told me. There is much resentment in the Lacandon community for feeling invaded by the Tzeltales and the Cho'oles who have not respected the rainforest.

The Pause of Ceremonies and Music in Lacanja

I had heard in San Javier that Western medicine has been another mode of invasion. As well as Gaspar's brother-in-law in Lacanja and K'in from Naha informed me that the invasion of the Protestant and Evangelist religion killed all their religious customs, their ceremonies, and their music. Almost every day the music in the churches that

is played in electric pianos connected to loud horns is heard in the entire town. They no longer listen to traditional music produced by themselves. I found out that K'in is known in the community for still practicing ceremonies, make musical instruments, and for also preparing the *balché*, the traditional alcoholic beverage used in ceremonies. I asked K'in if I could attend a ceremony. He showed me the music instruments he has made in collaboration with his wife Chanuk and said that the ceremonies were not done as much as before because the copal they used to get out of the forest in Naha, "now has many restrictions of the government and is very little and very expensive, " he observed and gave me a little copal. The ceremony costs 300 pesos and K'in offered that if I gathered more people I could pay less since the ceremony is done as a group. However, he accepted that he would do it with me alone if I could not form a group.

Relations with Community Health Organizations and Healers

Lacanja has a clinic for teenagers from 15 to 18 years old. Dr. Andrés was in charge of doing the sessions with the adolescents. Victoriana, the nurse, also participated in these sessions. The doctor informed me that there is a considerable need for mental health in the community. At the clinic they gave talks for adolescents on physical and sexual health issues, such as personal hygiene, venereal diseases, family planning, reproductive health, gender issues, and also topics on family and interpersonal relationships but the latter had not yet been covered. He planned to do those talks in July and proposed that it would be good if I started them now since there is no psychologist in the community. The doctor added that there is a problem of alcoholism, marital infidelity, since men have several women, and in some cases, domestic violence. Moreover, it was difficult to work with families because many have distrust of the clinic. He made a gesture with his hand to express a barrier.

Dr. Andrés shared that he also worked in the neighborhood of Bethel, a community located between San Javier and Lacanja, near Bonampak, and added that he has not had time to serve much in this class for adolescents and the community in general. He asked me if I could go there, too, to Bethel. I told him that I had already been invited to San Javier by his patients who were in the waiting room when I came to speak with him to offer my services. I shared my experience of having talked with three men from San Javier about the subject of alcoholism and they had asked me to give them a talk on how to stop drinking. I also added that during the assembly to receive the candidate who never arrived, a man who was surrounded by other men told me that if I could go talk to him because he needed help to stop thoughts about killing himself. One of the men, laughing and jokingly, added that he had tried to hang himself once. Seeing them laugh, I asked: "Seriously?" Everyone, including him, said decisively: "Yes." The doctor asked me his name, which unfortunately I forgot. He added that there had been only one case of suicide, a woman who had ingested

pesticide. However, he had not heard of any of his patients who had attempted suicide. "As a man it is difficult to talk to women because men get jealous," he observed. I had heard reference to the problem of jealousy in San Javier, but it was the men who complained that women got jealous. "There are problems with jealousy because men have several women, it is very frequent," concluded the doctor. However, men are jealous that the doctor, as a man, takes care of their wives or women so they looked for a woman nurse. Now, she visits the houses and he no longer deals with this problem.

In the past, the Lacandones had several women. Polygamy was practiced. There are Cho'ol women who have married Lacandones and they consider that they have other customs and do not tolerate that their Lacandon husbands tell them that polygamy is part of their culture, even if they are no longer practicing it. Some Lacandon men consider that this is another cultural loss that they should continue practicing. This causes feelings of frequent jealousy in women who are not Lacandon, but also in others who are Lacandon and believers of Protestant religions that have invaded their communities.

I sprained my ankle and they advised me "a man who knows how to rub muscles, a '*sobador*' could help me get well." This is traditional medicine that has existed since pre-Hispanic times and is still popularly preserved. The man who looked after me was a Maya from Palenque, who I learned from others "could kill snakes like no other and also build the palm roofs in an artistic and solid way." The sobador assisted me twice, rubbing my ankle hard. He said he had learned this medicinal art from his father, who in turn had learned from his grandfather. They are healers for generations, for many years. In a few minutes after the *sobada*,(the rubbing of a muscle) I managed to recover my step.

Health Workshops for Teenagers

I accepted to give sessions to teenagers. The first session was attended by three young girls and three young boys, from about 16 to 18 years old. There was also the mother of one of them and Victoriana. I started by asking them if they knew what a psychologist does. Chankin, a strong and vigorous Lacandón boy with traditional long hair but dressed in Western attire answered, "psychologists are those who experiment with the minds of people." I answered that it is true that psychologists have experimented with people and animals to understand their behavior. Another girl, Deisy, said: "they talk with us to tell us what is right or wrong, to give us advice." I added that to know ourselves better, to learn to understand ourselves, who we are, for example. I explained that psychologists help us to be aware of our inner dialog, what we say to ourselves. The mother laughed and commented: "like we tell ourselves that we are ugly." I affirmed with enthusiasm that yes, we can often say to ourselves that we are ugly and then we feel ugly. This perhaps prevents us from talking with boys or girls who we like. If we see them, we hide so they do not see us. Everyone laughed. Deisy shared, "also so that they see us, when we like someone, we do something to

call their attention." "Yes, it is true," I added, "when we feel that a person is going to listen to us, we feel good. We do not think we are ugly and we want people we like to see us, because we hope that, when they see us, they may fall in love with us. When we feel beautiful and good about ourselves, we are happy. "Everyone laughed. Chankun added: "but in that suffering, we can also feel happiness." I answered that it is true, although some psychologists call that "masochism" that we seek pain to feel happiness, it is a different happiness. It is rather the taste of pain, we suffer and may feel victims of pain. Everyone laughed. I added that some psychologists work with dreams because we think that is the language of our *pixan* (soul). Sometimes when, for example, we feel angry with someone but we cannot express it, we repress it. That is, we push it into a well to forget, then it appears in our dreams in a different way. For example, if a teacher scolds us and we feel angry with her and we would like to throw a rock at her, we do not do it because we know that we will be punished badly. Maybe our parents will scold us, the principal would throw us out of school, and we do not want to experience that. Then we repress it, we forget it, and feel in a bad mood. At night we dream that a *ba'at* (howler monkey) crushes a small lizard and screams at it and kills it. As it turns out, the ba'at was ourselves and the lizard the teacher who became small and powerless and we feel powerful. Thus, our rage, our anger comes to the surface to express what we feel in the day, but now in the dream, since our pixan is speaking to us with the truth of what we feel. They nodded silently and thoughtfully. That I had mentioned words in Mayan caused surprise and laughter. I asked if I had said the words well because I was having a hard time learning Mayan, but I asked them to correct me. Fabiola commented, "you will learn it."

Bili was late. I had met him before, in front of the clinic, under a large tree where many like to rest. In fact, he was the one who brought me to the clinic because he told me that he attended talks there every Thursday. Bili had confided to me that he always felt ugly and that the girls do not want him because "he comes from Palestina, although his father is Lacandón." He dressed in Western style, very "punk." Bili added, "They say that between love and hate there is not much distance. Sometimes we start loving someone and we hate her and then we love her again." I affirmed and praised his comment, and shared that opposite feelings live in us at the same time. Although we can exaggerate and live one more intensely than the other. For example, we can tell ourselves internally that we cannot love, only hate because love hurts us, as when we believe that it is love that makes us jealous of someone. I gave them a task, to draw and write who they are, answering the question: "Who am I?" Bili commented that it was a very good question. At first, they resisted a bit, saying they did not know how to draw. I replied that this is an example of what we say to ourselves: "I cannot do this or that and it is like putting big stones on us." I encouraged them to leave their pen free and draw their pixan and write with their heart. They added that pixan and heart meant the same.

At the end of the drawings, I invited them to share them, if they wanted, otherwise they kept their sheet so that at the end of the talks we could see how we changed. I asked them to tell how many positive things and how many negative things they had written. Deisy said that about one positive and all the other negatives. I asked what would be the positive things we could say to ourselves. She added: "that you

feel happy, that you reached your goals for the future." I praised her good response. Fabiola and Claudia said that they had written half of good things and half of bad things. Deisy added: "a balance." Chankin replied that he wrote: "I am a process and I am a product." I praised his response and added that we had excellent philosophers in the group. Fabian, who is reserved and shy said that he did not know what to share. "I draw something, but I did not know what it was or wanted to say," he remarked thoughtfully. His drawing was very impressive and I added that we had artists in the group. Bili asked why we say pure negative things to ourselves. He had written: "I am ugly, I am not good for anything, I do everything wrong." I answered that some psychologists think that we have to review what happened to us when we were children, when we started to feel this way, go deep into our history. Maybe the teachers told us that we were ugly, or every time our parents scolded us they made us feel ugly, or there are others that we admire as handsome, the artists of the TV who are different to oneself and that is why we feel ugly compared to them. But those are beauty norms made by others who want to colonize our pixan and want us to feel ugly so they feel beautiful and powerful. Deisy added that if we had to go to the origin of our history, we would have to remember when we were monkeys or other animals, "so until the beginning of creation because we come from animals." I praised her excellent response and added that we also had excellent scientists in the group, so we can remember all the wisdom that exists in their culture and that is embodied in Bonampak, for example. They remained reflexive and seconds later, they began to get a little restless, playful. I left them with homework that they continued reflecting on that question: "who am I?" And if they did find more answers, they should keep a diary and bring it to the next class. In addition, I said that we would also use our dreams to find an answer to that question and draw what we saw and felt in the dream. They asked again with surprise if they were going to draw their dream and what they saw. "Yes," I replied, remember that our true pixan speaks to us there." Walking back home, I reflected that indigenous young people suffer feelings of devaluation most likely caused by confrontation with the Western culture through the media and the existing national stigma and colonial oppression of indigenous peoples. As Fanon well analyzed this deep colonial wound caused by the identification with the colonial aggressor provokes the immediate devaluation of the self—or persona as defined by Jung—and the Self—defined by Jung as the collective unconscious. It is, however, striking that the older generations still retain cultural pride but in a hermetic, melancholic way. Mourning the loss of their culture reflected in the lifestyles of their youngsters, devoured by globalization. Yet at the same time, the youngsters' pixan houses the Hach Winik in their true Selves and collective unconscious.

The Community Organization

I met with Lucas, a Lacandon who showed interest in presenting at the assembly on June 15th the possibility of the community coming together to propose projects that, perhaps, could be financed by foundations. Lucas proposed that only a few families

should be involved. He added that it would be difficult for the entire community to come together because there are family divisions. Lucas's observation confirmed that the social organization in Lacanja is based on clans. I had heard various stories told by other members of the community about the tensions that exist between different families. Above all, the separation between the Lacandones of Naha and Metzabok and those of Lacanja, who live in two different areas of the community, separated by a road junction in the center of the town as well as a psychological barrier. Those from Lacanja have stated that they speak a different Mayan Lacandon than those of the Naha and Metzabock. In addition, those from the latter settled in the other side of the town have eco-camps, Internet and telephone booth services placing them in better economic conditions.

Vicente visited me to share his disappointment with Na Bolom. He recently had gone to San Cristóbal and had to stay in Na Bolom since he had to see the specialist doctor. At Na Bolom they told him there was no room and he was able to confirm that they had a room available. The managers of Na Bolom told him that the hotel was full of tourists and they denied him the stay. Gertrudis Duby left that property to the Lacandones when she died and those who run the house are now foreigners from the capital of Mexico and abuse the Lacandones, not respecting the agreement and denying them that they can stay at the Na Bolom when they need it. Additionally, Na Bolom receives funds to provide financial assistance for medical expenses. In fact, Gaspar, being blind, showed me documents where Na Bolom reports having received 50 million pesos (about 400, 000 dollars) to grant medical assistance to the Lacandones and to develop various educational and community development projects. None of these resources have reached them. In addition, Vicente reported that he still has not been paid the 14,000 pesos the Na Bolom owes him for arts and crafts he had given them.

Interweaving Daily Relations, Learning, Living, and Shaping Affection

I decided to stay a few days in Lacanja to recover the weakness of my right ankle and order my meals at the camp. Vicente has two large natural fish tanks, which look like small lagoons, where he breeds trout. I asked if I could order fish from the ones he raised. His wife showed me three strong and fresh trout that Vicente had just taken out. Nuk and Ruth had told me that their grandfather does not sell fish, which is only for them, for their family. However, I was lucky that for two days they made me two succulent trout. I asked if I could eat more fish the third day. Vicente's wife replied that there was no more fish, "it is over" she concluded.

I went to visit Es, the young Lacandon woman who had given me a beautiful necklace and when I asked her what I could give her in return, she answered "your shoes." Since I was able to buy another pair of comfortable shoes in Villahermosa, I thought of looking for Es to give her the shoes that she wanted. However, my ankle

was not fully recovered and I feared walking too much. So I walked to the camp restaurant to eat a sandwich. To my surprise, I found Es at the entrance. When I told her I was thinking of her, she answered "yes, I know." I asked her if that was why she was there, as if waiting. She answered simply "yes." We talked a little under the shade of a tree and Prisma arrived. We talked about dreams, something the Lacandones talk about very easily. Prisma made the comment that everything she dreamed she remembered clearly. "Dreams tell you what will happen in real life," she said. This confirms Bruce's report on the function of Lacandon dreams as a harbinger of the future. Margarita, the mother of Nuk and Ruth, came over and invited me to see family photos. She showed me a picture of a frog with black spots on its body and told me that there is a Lacandon legend. "The frog has its spots because they sent it to deliver a sack with flies to the sky and he is asked not to open it. But the frog did not obey and when he opened the sack the mosquitoes splashed it and that's why it has spots," she said.

Later I went to the store to use the Internet, which had not worked for more than 2 weeks due to heavy rains. There was Prisma and two young men, dressed in punk clothes. I sat down to talk with them. Prisma showed me a video of a party in San Javier and said: "Look at this, that is how the Lacandones dance." It looked like a collective indigenous dance following repetitive rhythms and dancing synchronically as a group but adapted with modern music. I asked if there is any day in the year where the entire community celebrates together. The young people laughed and said, "yes, but not anymore because now they [the adults] fight a lot." The youths added that "in the past the Lacandones used to drink the fermented sugar cane, *balche*, but now they only drink beer and they get very drunk." Prisma shared that the rivalry in the community still exists and sadly between families. She said that the brother of her grandfather Kin, Enrique—who has the map drawn by Bruce in his house—fights with him because "when the draw was made by the government to make camps, my uncle Enrique did not want my grandfather to win, only he wanted the camp." She shared that only a few families received the government resources to make camps and that created rivalry in the community. "Those who did not receive the funds feel envious of those who did," concluded wisely Prisma. This community division, or rather, lack of sense of community, has been provoked by the government itself. Prisma added that in Naha and Metzabok true community existed.

Lucas came to ask me for the favor of helping him with a bureaucratic paperwork from a hospital in Mexico where he had an eye operation for having cataracts as he was in danger of losing his sight. This last problem seems to be common in Lacanja since Na Bolom himself has a project where it has been detected that both children and adults, as well as the elderly, suffer from a high rate of cataracts in the eyes, which has been attributed to the use of wood stoves in the kitchen. The hospital needed to correct his name on a certificate to receive assistance from a government agency. His name was misspelled and the government agency was claiming that the funds awarded for the cataracts operation were not awarded to him since the name in the certificate and his official identification card did not match. The government teller had changed his Mayan names into Spanish names as is usually the case to perpetuate colonization. Adelina had told me that Lucas drank a lot of beer and had lost all his

money. In fact, he asked me for money. I find it difficult to help all those who have asked for loans or donations and more difficult if it is not very clear that the funds would be used for other purposes than purchasing alcohol to numb the colonial wound and the harsh poverty and marginalization. In addition, it is worrisome to reinforce an attitude of dependence. What I could do for them in that way, in my brief stay in Lacanja, would not help solve these colonial problems that exist in this and many other indigenous communities in Mexico and elsewhere. When I proposed to Lucas that the community should come together to determine community projects that can be proposed to foundations, he responded that it could only be possible if selected families were included because at the community level it would not be possible. We agreed to talk to the commissioner, Chan Kin, but it has not been possible since he frequently travels to Ocosingo or Palenque to fix community issues. However, Lucas did not seem to be interested in this proposal anymore. Another day he came back to the school to ask me for money. I was busy with the children. He was there for an hour in front of my class and requested my attention, without considering that I needed to offer it to the children. Having commented that I could not give him money because at that moment I was stretching my resources and needed to buy more materials for the children in school, he distanced himself and closed hermetically. However, when I came back years later, he opened up again and was again friendly and talkative. He had accepted the kind relationship that I want to build with them that should not replicate dependency as a strategy of coloniality.

The Community Teacher and Actor

After a week, I decided to go to school to see if it was open. Chanuk's husband had told me that everything had been fixed and the teachers had already returned from the strike. When I left the road I found Ah Kin, one of my students who at that time was 8 years old. He was with his older sister of 12, his younger sister of 4, and another girl. The children told me that they had gone to school in the morning and the teachers had not arrived. Ah Kin then invited me to his house to see a video of a play in which his father acted. I accepted the invitation. In his spacious and creatively constructed house with wooden trunks, they put a video titled "Palenque Rojo (Red Palenque)," a theater performance about the history of the Mayan culture that was being played in San Cristóbal de las Casas. The play is exquisitely artistic. The artists wore pre-Hispanic garments of magnificent shapes and colors and unfolded skillfully and confidently by displaying positions of the Mayan Gods, with great mastery, pride, and absolute confidence. Ah Kin's father, Mario Chambor, a truly professional actor, played the role of "*Kan Jo 'Chitam*," a Mayan Governor of Palenque. Ah Kin recited this name with deep pride and likewise showed me his dad in the video with deep satisfaction. I took out a little book that I had in my bag about the Mayan Gods and shared it with them. I asked Linda, her older sister, to read it. Ah Kin went to get another book and showed me some pictures of a meteorite. He said, "December 21, 2012 is my birthday, but then the world will end and we are all going to die. Look,

one of these is going to fall and the sun is going to get big, big. But only those who give their hearts to God will be saved. Will you give your heart to God? "I answered yes, but to the Mayan Gods, to the God Kin, to the God *Chaac*, to the Goddess *Ixchel*, and *Itzamna*." Ah Kin replied: "There is only one God you should not believe in many Gods, no." He said it changing his voice as if he were representing another person, since he is as good an actor as his father. I asked him where he had heard that. He answered that they are told so in the church. I added that their ancestors are still alive in Palenque, Bonampak, and Yaxchilan and there we can still see and feel the wonderful Mayan Gods, as well as in the play where his father acts. Ah Kin saw me with deep, thoughtful eyes. Then they invited me to swim in the river. From the top of a tree they jumped toward the river with enthusiasm.

His father, Mario Chambor Chanabor, arrived. I asked Ah Kin if I could meet him as I wanted to express my admiration for his excellent artistic work. Ah Kin introduced me to his father as his teacher in school. I talked with Mario about how important it was to spread the wisdom of the Mayan culture. Mario told me that in July and August they were going to Los Angeles and Texas to present their play. He added that he has lived all his life in the Lacandon Rainforest and not a single moment stops admiring its beauty. He said that the Lacandones are true keepers of the forest but that there are more and more human invasions and it is being destroyed. "There is very little territory left. We have preserved the territory that was assigned to us by the government as we have done for centuries. However, the government says it preserves the rainforest, but never invest resources here, they put them in other places, like cities, nothing for us who are truly preserving the environment," said Mario with assertiveness and deep conviction. "Young people in the community are confused, influenced by the mass media such as television and the Internet, and are losing their cultural pride. I agree that everything has to change to improve, but the Mayan culture must be preserved with pride, "he concluded". I enthusiastically reinforced his words and added that the wisdom of his Mayan ancestors and their knowledge about the preservation of the environment should be represented in the books used by schools and universities. However, this knowledge has been silenced and in return a biased and manipulated knowledge is imparted, which is written in the textbooks used as hegemonic weapons in schools and universities to spread epistemic, economic, and cultural colonization. "Yes," Mario added,

> That is why our duty is to spread our culture and our knowledge. Others have now to learn from us. There is much talk of the end of the world in 2012, presaged by the Mayans, in other countries as well. Now the pay attention to us Maya Lacandones for this reason. Thoughts of the end of the world have existed in all cultures, but in the Mayan sense this prophecy refers to a rebirth of our culture. That is why it is our duty to spread it in other parts of the world and that our younger generations learn to be proud of it.

The Excursion to *Sak Nok* Waterfall

I made plans with Ah Kin to go to the Waterfall of the Swallows, *Sak Nok*, that is in his grandfather's care. He and his sisters arrived as well as another 11-year-old girl, Nicolasa, who shared that she is from a nearby Tzeltal region. Nicolasa took care of Ah Kin's little sister, who is only 4 years old and very bright and intelligent. I had my camera and they started singing and dancing asking me to take a movie. They put music with their cell phones. Each of the older girls had their phone and they danced modern music. Linda danced the waltz that she is practicing at school. Nicolasa did not go to school, she worked at Ah Kin's house taking care of the little sister and doing other domestic worker's tasks. Ah Kin's mother, Chanuk, worked in Bonampak selling handicrafts every day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I asked them to sing in their respective indigenous languages, in Mayan and Tzeltal. They did it and I recorded them. When we were heading to the entrance to the waterfall, Mario arrived. He repressed Ah Kin and told him that he could not go because he had not done a job he had asked for. Ah Kin looked down with deep concern. Mario took the little girl away and said that only Linda, the older sister of 12 years old, could accompany me. Nicolasa begged me to ask her father for permission so she could come with us. Seconds later Mario returned and gave Ah Kin permission to come with us. He also gave permission to his little sister and ordered Linda to take good care of her.

Ah Kin was guiding me and giving me relevant information about flora and fauna. He knew plants and trees to the letter and was very proud to recite their names. He also cut various edible plants and fruits and offered them to me to taste. We only had some mangoes to make a small field day. However, the plants and fruits that Ah Kin was sharing with me filled me up satisfactorily. I thought that they still feed themselves like this when, for example, they go to school. It is perhaps for this reason that I see that few eat at school recess, enduring long hours of classes from 8 in the morning to one in the afternoon and eating very little, perhaps a bag of chips or a frozen drink. Linda and Nicolasa got lost in the way. That made me very nervous. Suddenly I saw myself with Ah Kin of only 8 years old and his little sister of 4 years old walking through the jungle and I felt responsible for all the children when they were the ones who knew about that environment and I trusted them to guide me. This last feeling suddenly seemed ridiculous to me and I began to feel strong anxiety to be with them. Then I asked Ah Kin if they frequently went out alone to the waterfall without their parents. Ah Kin replied, "yes, sometimes since grandpa, *Tzukun* Miguel, is waiting on the other side, taking care of the waterfall." Ah Kin and his little sister were watching the road carefully to identify the tracks that could possibly have left Linda and Nicolasa's footprints. We shouted their names in the immense and green Jungle, competing with the loud sounds of the cicadas, *t'ouch*. Ah Kin felt anxious and commented: "How about if they died!" This comment also managed to create a strong anxiety in me, incapacitating me to give him confidence that everything was fine. I asked him if it had happened before that they came with Linda and she was lost. Ah Kin replied that Linda liked to scare them. We hurried toward the waterfall, passing through narrow hanging bridges that crossed the energetic river

with small waterfalls, reinforced by heavy rains. The 4-year-old girl jumped riskily on bridges. When I repressed her, she just laughed and ran out of the bridge, with fine dexterity and security. Obviously, they had already made that journey frequently since they felt confident and knew how to identify wisely the correct path when there were deviations. Although on one occasion Ah Kin doubted the direction we should follow when we were standing at a division with three different paths. He asked, "Which of the three should we choose?" I answered exalted that I had no idea, I was not from there and had only done that route once, 2 years ago and with guides. I added that he was my guide, that he would have to make the effort to remember which was the right direction. This seemed to motivate Ah Kin, he smiled as if reflecting and feeling proud that his teacher was learning from him. In a brief moment after this, Ah Kin answered with assurance, "Yes, I remember, it's here teacher, follow me!" He marked the path with the head up, like a great hero who feels total certainty of his existence and decision.

After about 30 min of walking, Ah Kin, his little sister, and I arrived at the majestic waterfall. There was his legendary Tzukun (grandfather) resting in a hammock that hung from a nice *palapa* (hut). I had met him 2 years ago, when Ernesto Chancayun took me to the waterfall. Obviously he did not remember me anymore because he sees so many tourists from various countries who visit this imposing sanctuary of nature. Days before leaving for this trip, in Los Angeles, investigating about Lacanja on the Internet, I saw a video where he asked tourists, "What does Bush say?" On this occasion Miguel asked me about Obama and the war in the Middle East. We talked about it. His lively intelligence was surprising, the analysis of American politics very accurate, and the comparison with the Lacandon way of life of the, a complete lesson, since Miguel stressed that "The United States is destroying the environment with these wars while we, the Lacandones, take care of it and enjoy it every day."

I joined the children who were already swimming in the waterfall. Again they looked for the tallest trees to throw themselves into the river. Every time they did, my heart jumped with strong anxiety and I shouted: "Be careful, do not do it please!" This only caused loud laughter making me understand that they have gained that skill and it was ridiculous to take it away from them with my overprotective and Western panics. When we got ready to go back home, I asked Tzukun, Grandpa Miguel, to allow me to scold his granddaughter Linda in front of him. Tzukun added that I was his teacher and I certainly had permission to do so. Then I expressed my disappointment to Linda because she abandoned us on the road when her father had delegated the care of her little sister to her and she knew very well that I was totally ignorant in the rainforest. I reinforced that she was our main guide and had to be by our side. Tzukun listened intently and nodded, expressing his support and added, "Tell her dad too." Then I asked Linda if she wanted to use my camera and interview her grandpa. The two accepted the offer, but Linda said she did not know what to ask. I answered, "Ask him what he thinks of the rainforest." Linda asked in Mayan and Tzukun answered first in Mayan and then in Spanish. "What do I think about the rainforest? It cannot be thought, it is lived, its rivers, its trees, the birds, the flowers, the plants," he instructed us with confidence and strong conviction.

The Researchers Who Gathered Stories

Adelino, an anthropologist from San Cristóbal who had worked with the Lacandones for about two years and was writing his doctoral thesis, told me that from 2006 to 2008 there were many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), that had proposed to the Lacandones to apply for funds to finance community projects. These organizations had used them to appropriate resources. He added that the government has severely regulated the use of the rainforest with the argument of environmental preservation, but this has restricted their customs of seeking food in the forest. This has opened the canned food market in the small stores of the community. Some Lacandones continue cultivating the traditional milpa but they are not many anymore. The government has implemented many projects but has never really taken the Lacandones into account as participating agents in their own development. On the contrary, it has acted in the same way as those who founded NGOs, only to take advantage of the Lacandones for their own benefit. Adelino stressed, "There has been a lot of trauma and yet the historical memory continues. This is manifested in myths, legends, and stories; although they are already being lost." I shared my impression that it was also present in the children's unconscious. During my brief work in school and talking with some young people, I have noticed the continuation of archetypes and ancestral symbols they have expressed while sharing their night dreams. For example, they incorporated the archetype of Kisin, a character I found reported in the books of Bruce and Boremanse as the God of Death. In addition, I shared that I had evidenced how children often selected books about indigenous cosmology. For example, books about the creation of the earth, the Sun God, *K'in*, and the Moon Goddess, *Ik'Na*.

Adelino continued,

> There is an agreement of the triple alliance between Brazil, Mexico, and California. Schwarzenegger, former governor of California, signed a compensation agreement for environmental impact since California is one of the places that produces the most carbon footprints and the rainforest traps coal, serving as an environmental cleanup for the entire planet. Therefore, California agreed to compensate the Lacandones for preserving the rainforest, but in the end it has not complied. The government only granted them 200,000 pesos per *comunero*—the community organization is established by land owners called *comunero* (commoner) and *derechosos* (right holders). The latter are family or clan heads who have the right to vote and make decisions in the community assemblies. This led to the purchase of their Nissan vehicles and to be dedicated to the transport of tourists, but it also generated dependence and with it the use of drugs and alcohol.

Adelino added that in 2008 he had worked with the community writing projects they wanted to see happening in their community. Adelino published these proposals in a book called "The Blue Book." They sent their proposals to governmental agencies but they did not take into account what the Lacandones wanted. Adelino observed,

> They played cruelly with them, tricking them into signing another document and accepting the government's proposals. Few can read, much less the language of government, which is already written to deceive them. So the Lacandones withdrew and then it became clear that there were government officials, including the governor of Chiapas, who wanted to sell Lacandon lands to foreign tourism companies. The Lacandones organized and fought so this governor is in jail along with his accomplices.

Adelino added that for years there were several international organizations giving resources to the Mexican government so that it would direct them to preserve the Lancandon Rainforest. But the government did not grant these resources to the Lacandones. Consequently, these organizations like the World Wilderness Foundation (WWF) and other environmental organizations have withdrawn the funding.

I shared that there are only three teachers allocated to the elementary school. The teachers have told me that their salaries have fallen and that this forces them to attend up to 100 children without additional compensation. They have to buy materials with their salaries because resources are not channeled. They also added that they will install a law where they will force teachers to do universal tests and only those teachers who manage to raise school grades will receive merit salary. This is exactly a copy of the US tragic policy called "no child left behind." How can this be possible in this area of the world and so many other places in the Mexican countryside? The government, as always, is only imitating the United States without seeing and appreciating what exists in its own country, that is, the cultural and linguistic richness Imposing standardization of educational interventions across Mexico is plainly the continuation of colonization through genocide, linguicide, and epistemicide.

Alexis, the Lacandon who accompanied me to Bonampak and shared his knowledge about the pyramids, introduced me to an anthropologist from the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INHA) who hired Alexis to collect Maya Lacandon legends and translate them into Spanish. Alexis knows many legends that her grandfather told him. Israel, the anthropologist, said that his main motive was to study the Maya Lacandon grammar but that he had proposed the publication of the Maya Lancandon legends to the Institute of Natural History and Anthropology (INHA). However, the INHA did not seem to be very interested. Israel added that he would continue looking for a publisher. I asked if he could share some legends with the children since I had not been able to find stories in Mayan Lacandon. It was very important to reinforce the oral tradition in the formal school system and increase cultural preservation and pride. Israel was resistant to sharing the stories he had collected. He said that the INHA paid him to do that work and, therefore, they were "property of the INHA." This comment provoked a strong anger in me and I reinforced that the legends were property of the Lacandones. Alexis then added that the Lacandones used to gather together to share stories. Yet now they are resistant to sharing their stories because if they do, others would know them and disseminate them without their consent. The Lacandones did not want others who are not family to know their stories. He said, "I will pass the stories that my dad told men to my son, but I do not care if other children know them." The anthropologist smiled and continued, "See? Those who have told me legends made clear that they do not want anyone else to know them." He concluded by saying," I looked directly for people like Kayom and Enrique Paniagua who know many legends and asked them to come and tell the stories to the children at school. However, there is the problem of the two languages of Naha, Metzabock, and Lacanja." For this last reason, Israel is planning to make a legends' workshop in the future that could include both languages, but he realized how complicated it would be to teach, practically, in a trilingual way—in the two different Mayan Lacandon languages and in Spanish.

I met a 27-year-old girl, Susana, who came from Mexico City to do a master's thesis study on public policies and the eradication of poverty. Susana is a sociologist and shared that she found out that each family received 2,000 pesos a month from the government as payment for their conservation work in the rainforest, which is indispensable for carbon capture worldwide. This income has produced and reinforced dependency with the government, which has also led to a reduction in agricultural occupation, hunting or traditional fishing, causing families to choose to buy products that are sold in the few stores in the community and that generally they are junk food such as canned or packaged products. Susana added that the community is divided, mainly between "those living in the north side who came from Naha and Metzabock and are seen as invaders and those living in the south side of Lacanja. In addition, those from the north side have the power of the media, the Internet, and the telephone, as well as the best camps. They almost never go to the southern side. The community is only divided by a central street where the school, the health clinic, and the church are located. And those who go to the north side are the young people who use the Internet," Susana described in detail. She went on commenting that she had been in Lacanja about 4 months ago and people seemed more open. During that time, researchers from the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), some biologists, had come to follow the jaguars and that a biologist was accused of having injured a jaguar. For this reason, the biologist was forced to leave the community immediately and apparently, that incident aroused much distrust toward other researchers. All research must first be proposed to the commissioner who gives or denies the permit.

Israel, the anthropologist, warned me that I needed to speak with the commissioner and that I should not have started my work without first asking for permission. However, the commissioner's son was in my class and his wife was the one who asked that her son participated in my program. I looked for him only once. I could not talk to him because he had just come from a laborious community work, such as fixing the electricity wires that had been knocked down by a tree. His wife shared with me that Maykin, their son, had already told him about what I did in school. She said her husband wanted Maykin to be included in my group. The teachers had not referred me to Maykin because of his excellent school performance. However, the mother went to talk with the teachers so that Maykin could participate in my program. Maykin's mother often came to observe the class so I assumed that her husband, the commissioner Chan Kin, was aware of what I was doing and in accordance with the school regulations. Consequently, I no longer tried to talk to him directly. Additionally, teachers reported on school activities to the Education Committee regularly thus they were aware of my activities. However, I went to look for the commissioner again, considering the frequent warnings that other researchers made to me. Once again, Chan Kin was not there and I spoke with his wife. I told her that, unfortunately, I had not asked for permission from her husband. She replied again that her husband was well aware of what I was doing since his son attended my class and he always told his father what he did in school. Likewise, she had already told him and there was no problem.

The Dreams

Alberto asked me what was psychology about and if psychologists considered that dreams are important. "Yes," I replied, "we consider them very important, especially the psychologists who try to work with the pixan." He then told me that if he could tell me his dreams and if I could tell him what they meant. I replied that the Lacandones had great wisdom on how to interpret dreams. I talked about Robert Bruce who wrote two books about Lacandon dream interpretation. Alberto and Gaspar added they knew Bruce. Alberto said that their customs have been lost because of the new religion that has invaded their community and that only the elderly still knew them. He said that he had heard from his grandfather, for example, that if you dream of an animal in a specific place in the jungle, the next day you should go to that place because you are sure to find the animal. This is exactly how Bruce reported the same dream interpretation.

Alberto added that Gaspar knew how to interpret dreams. Gaspar assured, "It is well said what you said Alberto about dreaming about an animal and that it means that you will find the animal in that same place. Or if you dream of a hole, you are going to see someone bury an animal or a person." Gaspar's interpretations verified several of the dream interpretations reported in Bruce's book. The Lacandones interpret dreams with a view to the forecast or omen, that is, that dreams tell what will happen in the future. Unlike the Freudian interpretation that is based on the repressed instincts and experiences of the past. I shared about how Carl Jung, a Swiss psychologist, recognized the role that dreams play in presaging the future.

Alberto then shared that he had a dream about falling into a very deep abyss. I asked Gaspar how this dream could be interpreted. He said that he did not know but he wanted to know how I would interpret it under the psychology I study. I commented that to get lost in an abyss is a common dream. However, without knowing anything about the events of his life in those moments, it seemed to me that maybe it had to do with a time in which he was falling in love and maybe, he was afraid of getting lost in that love. He smiled and said it had happened when he was courting Ana, the woman who is now his wife. Then Ana Kin Kin added that she had dreamed very clearly that a bad spirit ripped her father's heart. She related in detail that she saw the living heart in the hand of the spirit and the hollow with blood in his father's chest. He father saw her in the eyes intensely. Then this same spirit ripped her mother's heart. She woke up with a lot of fear and with her hand on her chest, covering her heart. I asked Gaspar if he had something to say about it. Gaspar added that maybe it was because she cared so much about everything as well as the health of her parents. I added that I agreed with Gaspar. Perhaps her father was sick and she expressed her fear of losing him in her dreams. She believed that if her father would die, her mother would suffer and she would also suffer. However, the interpretation reported by Bruce would be the reverse, that is, that parents will enjoy very good health. When I returned in 2017, 5 years later, Ana Kin Kin's father had died of skin cancer.

Ana Kin Kin went on saying that she had dreamed she cut a lot of cane and put one on top of the other. Then her mother came and asked why she had cut so much cane.

She said that she did not know but that she also did not know where to put it. Then she left the cane stacked and went to a stream to sit down. She wondered what this dream meant. I answered that maybe she feels that she has to support her family and that she has to do a lot for that. But she also felt that a lot of what she did may not be necessary but does it anyway since she cannot rest. "You are looking for homework all the time," I concluded. Gaspar smiled and nodded his head. I added that I had observed how she is always doing something. However, the Lacandon interpretation (reported by Bruce) would refer to the opposite or reverse, that is, the dream about abundance corresponds to shortages in the future. The abundant energy of collecting a lot of cane and not finding a place to put it would mean that there will be periods of scarcity and feelings of fatigue.

Then I asked Adelina what she had dreamed of, she answered, "with the weeping woman." In class at school when we talked about Kisin, some children referred to the weeping woman, *la Llorona*, a traditional Mexican legend from the time of the revolution about a woman who loses her children and constantly cried looking for them. I told Gaspar that it was his turn and he said that he was dreaming of a black shadow that wanted to kill him. Ana Kin Kin added that many times he talked in his sleep and said someone would want to kill him. He also said that he usually dreams that, "a child spits my food or urinates next to us." Gaspar did not ask for the meaning and I did not comment. A year later Ana Kin Kin and Gaspar had a beautiful daughter, Amalia.

The Community Theater: The River and the Ghosts of Kisin

As I mentioned before, I was with a group of 15–25 children every day from 11 a.m. to 2 in the afternoon at school. These children were selected by the teachers for presenting learning difficulties. I formed a circle and lead the first part of the class asking them what they had dreamed about. That's how we started to build the story to then put it on stage in a play. The children began to relate that they had dreamed of Kisin. As I had described before, I asked some community leaders what this word meant. Enrique Paniagua commented that it meant a spirit or a ghost. Prisma translated it as the Devil. Later I found a book containing a collection of Lacandon myths and legends written by Didier Bomeranse (2006) entitled, *Cuentos y mitologias de los Lacandones: Contribuciones al estudio de la tradicion oral maya*, where Kisin is referred to as the God of the Underworld or Death and appears in many of the stories that he collected in his trips to the Lacandon Rainforest. Given the perverse evangelization during the last decades, this deity has been condemned to a bad being such as the Devil and forbidden in the Lacandon imaginary. When the children referred to Kisin in class, I noticed them anxious. Some expressed this anxiety with nervous laughter and others with hyperactivity, moving from side to side or playing with their peers. Others were silent and withdrawn. On one occasion, Cesar, just seven years old, shared that "Kisin was scaring him and he did not want

Fig. 3.3 Storybooks

to go to class anymore." However, when I invited them to paint the story we had created and written in class, Cesar was the most engaged and passionate of all.

We were building the story little by little and creating text and drawings. Then we started to rehearse the play and to practice it, following what we had written in the story (Fig. 3.3). I used a camera to record the scenes we performed and then showed them on the computer. We reflected on the behaviors that had helped us achieve our collective goals and those behaviors that did not contribute to it. I invited them to reflect on their actions and to propose a plan of new actions that will help us to perform our play with more success. This technique proved to be very effective.

One afternoon I visited Gaspar, he said that Adelina, his stepdaughter, was all the time talking about Kisin, "everything is that you do not do this or that because Kisin will appear to you" he added. He continued that I must be careful because some families were not going to approve of my talking about Kisin with their children. "It's like the devil, *Puch*, and it is bad." I replied that Kisin's character had come from the children themselves during the first classes at school. This is most likely the manifestation of their fears. I asked several Lacandones what that word meant and some had said it is the name of the God of Death or a spirit. Gaspar insisted that, if my plan was to make a presentation of the story we were creating in the school at the end of school closing party, it was better that "I would not mention the word Kisin because people would not like it," he concluded.

I asked Mirsa what she thought about Gaspar's recommendation. Mirsa proposed that I talk with Mario, who had agreed to help us with the theater project. Mario came to select some children to put on a play and to advise us on our play. He gave

Fig. 3.4 The Kisin mask

an exquisite theater class. At the end of the class, I approached him and shared my concern. Mario replied that if it came from the children themselves I should respect their words. I commented that for me, as a psychologist, it was very important to work with fear and if the children opened to express it as a product of their dreams, I would like to respect what they wrote as a collective story and a theater play created by them. Mario agreed with this decision. Then he asked me to show him the materials we had used to create the costumes and the stage.

I asked the children and the mother of one of them, Maykin who has a store, to collect boxes to make masks and costumes for our characters. Maykin's mother arrived one day with several boxes and we all got very happy. The children were exalted and it was difficult to control them. The boxes were large and they began to get into them which caused some to break. They did not pay attention to me as I was asking them to not play with the boxes. Maykin's mother repressed her son in front of the others asking him to sit in a corner. This miraculously caused absolute obedience and I thanked Maykin's mother for her support. About six mothers were always present at the school while their children were in class. They stopped frequently in the window of our classroom and, if necessary, repressed their children, cooperating with the teachers in managing the children's behaviors in class.

With the boxes, we made masks and the children decorated them with vibrant and cheerful colors. Having used materials that were accessible to them (such as cardboard boxes), basic brushes and paints turned out to be very attractive not only for the students but also for the teachers (Figs. 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6).

Fig. 3.5 The owl mask

Fig. 3.6 Bird mask

Fig. 3.7 The river and the ghosts

Fig. 3.8 Children rehearsing the theater play

At the end of the project, I asked the children what they liked the most and they said, "The cardboard boxes." I reinforced that they could continue collecting boxes and not only make the same masks but other toys. On one occasion I found one of the children on the way to my house who came to show me a very creative bird mask that he had made.

Fig. 3.9 The theater play: Once upon a river and Kisin

Finally, the closing day of classes celebrating the end of the school year arrived. The teachers, Mario, and I coordinated the various presentations. I was hesitant to follow Gaspar's recommendation about not to use Kisin's name because the community could interpret it as "I would be invoking the Devil." Even though it was important for me to keep the words of the children as for them the character of Kisin was central in their story, I decided to use the translation of "ghost" that both Gaspar and Enrique Paniagua had recommended to me. Next, I transcribe and translate the story told by the children in Spanish and Maya Lacandon (Figs. 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9).

The River and the Ghosts.

Aja y Kisin

There was once a river and some ghosts.

Jan Akachik Kisin Yoko Ja'

The children were scared.

A Mejen A Ku Yor.

Kisin appeared in their dreams.

Sa'ati Kisin ichuwaeyak.

They crossed through the river and the rainforest.

Tug' onayokich ja' binich k'aax.

The children made a bridge.

A mejen tu meta uber.

The children blew very strong, like hurricane and Kisin became an owl.

A 'Chichano Tuyusta' Jach mana chich besh a ik a Kisin wai subo irej buj.

A meteorite fell from the sky.

Aj buj pitgo.

The owl went to live to another planet and stopped scaring the children.

Aj buj bini cotaj ich ujer rum y bota u jasik yor a chichan.

The Community Theater: The Monkey Hunter

Ah Kin's father, Mario, came three times a week in the afternoon to give them acting classes. He selected a group of 12 children with whom he put his work representing an ancestral legend of the Lacandon Rainforest. In it appears a hunter always accompanied by a frog. The hunter looks for monkeys and spends long hours in the jungle tracing its smell on the roads. Several days pass without the hunter finding the monkeys. Finally, a group of monkeys appears and then the hunter detects that they are close. He finds them and throws his arrows to several of the monkeys, killing them. He begins to eat the monkeys' meat and goes home carrying the rest of the dead monkeys. When he returns to continue hunting more monkeys, he meets a group of monkeys that surround him. The monkey or leader appears and orders that they take him prisoner. The hunter must now live among them. So he learns that he must respect them and not kill them (Fig. 3.10).

This story reflects the profound values of respect for nature and the animals deeply embedded in the Lacandon culture. It has been reported by Boremanse (2006), in his book, that collects ancestral Lacandon stories and mythologies. A children's book published by Ruy Sanchez (2010) tells the story of the teachings of a wise old man who keeps his secrets. Their main goal is to pass these secrets to the children so that

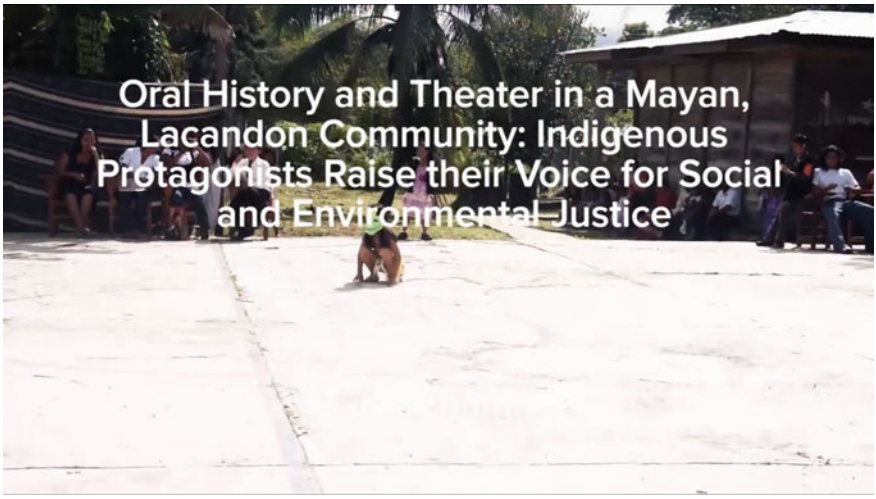

Fig. 3.10 The Lacandon legend played in the community theater

they recognize that they do not only live in the jungle, they are the jungle. The old man tells them that two children, Chen and Zip, began to hunt without measure after the Lord of the Jungle, the powerful Yum K'aax, had put them to the test and dried up all their harvest. They were then engaged in hunting without measure to such a degree that neither the jaguar could find food. Chen disappeared and his brother Zip went to look for him in the jungle. He saw a cave following jaguar spots. Yum K'aax repressed him for abusing the creatures of the jungle and explained that his brother Chen had been punished by the monkeys who forced him to marry a *mona*, a female monkey, with whom he had many children and learned to take care of them.

Boremanse (2006) described this same story shared by Kayum Yuk, one of the elders of Lacanja who still preserves their oral history. This legend tells how a monkey hunter was engaged in hunting for no reason, just for the sheer pleasure of it. The Monkey King finally ordered them to trap the hunter and forced him to live with them and marry a female monkey. In the course of his cohabitation with monkeys, he experienced severe pain due to thorns he had on his feet. His wife bit his feet to remove the thorns, but this caused him severe pain. He decided to ask for forgiveness and compassion from the King of the Monkeys, who told him that this pain did not compare to the pain he had caused them.

In these different versions of the same legend the emphasis of the harmonic and respectful relationship with the jungle and the animals who inhabit it clearly emerges. This was also very clear in each of the scenes in the theatrical performance that Mario directed and the Lacandon children played. The children personified animals with sensitive empathy. They were able to imitate their movements with absolute perfection, achieving the mimesis between man and animal in a balanced, subtle, and divine way. The animals are considered divine companions such as the archetype of the *nagual* (companion or double spirit), the jaguar, *Balum*, the deer, the birds, and many others.

Ghosts Appear in the Community

At the end of the presentation, I went to Prisma's house who had arrived from Tuxtla Gutiérrez with a shaman whom I wanted to meet. They were all in the courtyard of her house. Prisma's grandparents Kin and Chanuk Paniagua, her mother, Koh, her brothers Bor and Kayum, and his friend the shaman, Hugo, gathered together and talked. At nightfall, Hugo asked me if I would help him set up an altar since he was going to have consultations in the community. He placed several idols on a pedestal. One was the *Santa Muerte* (Saint Death) and another a Greek god-like statue, perhaps representing the god Pan or Dionysus. He took a crystal with a thread and said there was an ancestor who wanted to communicate with me. He asked me names of people who had died to identify the spirit. I named several people who were close to me, and finally an aunt turned out to be the one who moved the glass. Some of Prisma's relatives consulted with Hugo but Prisma told me that not all the community would accept him so I should not tell others that he was visiting her family.

The second night Hugo, Prisma, and Bor came to pick me up to go to Prisma's grandparents for dinner. Koh, Prisma's mother, asked me if I knew other ghost stories. In my city, Puebla, we tell many ghost stories such as *La Llorona* (the Whipping Woman) and the *Viceroy of the Corner.* I shared some stories with them. Then Bor said that he was going to tell me a story "of a lot of fright." He shared that where I was living a tourist woman had been killed by the river and then her body had been smashed to pieces and buried around the house. We laughed and continued telling more stories. The next day, Nuk and Ruth asked me where I had gone since they had not seen me the night before. I told them about our evening telling ghost stories and also shared what Bor had told me. Nuk and Ruth expressed horror and ran to tell their parents that Bor was scaring me by telling me that someone had died in the house they were renting me. The next day, Nuk and Ruth's parents went to the home of Prisma's grandfather to shout at them and reproach them that they were scaring me and "taking away their business because now I would be afraid and may not want to stay in their camp anymore." They threatened them that they would take them to the community's judge and press charges against them. A few hours later, Bor, Koh, and her husband came to knock loudly on my door asking to speak. Koh expressed her disappointment because I had shared the story they had told me. Bor added that maybe they could put him in jail for what happened because he was going to be punished for "competing for tourists as authorities would believe that he had told me the story to scare me so that I move to their camp." I went to talk to Vicente who is Kin's half-brother. What I could see is that between them there was already a history of conflict and they had not talked for a long time. The Paniaguas came from Naha a long time ago and are relatives of the well-known Chan Kin the Elder, who was considered the last community and religious leader who retained their traditions. Those families that came from Naha or Metzabock have not been welcomed by the residents of Lacanja and are confronting several conflicts with them. But apparently, these conflicts have also manifested among those of Naha and Metzabok who have settled in Lacanja. I apologized to both families and said that I was the one who created this conflict and the only one to blame. At that time both families told me that there were already conflicts between them and this was just one more.

Reflecting on this experience it seems very clear that when our attempt is to truly participate with the community to generate common knowledge based on intensive and effective interaction, the outsider receives the projection of community conflicts as a necessary catharsis of the community psyche that seeks to resolve deeply repressed community conflicts.

The theater scene composed by the children also reflected the presence of this division and community conflict. For example, Kisin's ghosts that appear in their dreams are on the other side of the river. Psychologically it could be interpreted as a dangerous alien to the community, caused by "invaders" who threaten to enter their territory. The Lacandon community has had stories of invasions from other Mayan groups such as the Tzeltales and Cho'oles that came to occupy lands and turned them into cattle ranching and commercial agriculture, which for the Lacandones is "killing the jungle" (see De Vos 2002; Leyva and Franco 1996/2002; Muench 2008). That is why there are strong conflicts with these new communities, such as Nueva Palestina

and others. Likewise, the arrival of the Northern Lacandones, who speak a similar Maya Lacandon, has created misunderstandings due to the different meaning of some words and concepts that have caused strong conflicts. The children in the play "decide to make a bridge to face the ghosts and blow hard like a hurricane, a meteorite falls on them and the ghosts go to live on another planet." This scene, in addition to reflecting their cosmic ancestral consciousness, is the resolution of the conflict to bring peace in the community, "the children are very happy and they start dancing and singing. Then, the musicians celebrate the exodus of the ghosts." Lacandon music has been severely inhibited by the perverse evangelization that began at the beginning of the twentieth century. There are still some who make drums and I was very lucky to receive one given by Enrique Paniagua. The drum seemed similar to the ancient incense burners used for the house of the Gods, reported by some researchers such as Bruce and Cassel during the years 1950–1980 but now only a few may still practice ceremonies. K'in Paniagua shared that he was still performing ceremonies. Gaspar also reiterated that K'in was the only one who still practiced them.

The Meeting with the Organization for Human Rights, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas in San Cristóbal de Las Casas

The time came to go to San Cristóbal de las Casas. Gaspar, Ana Kin Kin, and Adelina met with me there. Among our goals to meet there was to finish writing the letter to Na Bolom, conceived by representatives of the community, and submit it to the Organization for Human Rights, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Gaspar unfolded with great confidence in himself and very eloquently expressed his requests to the official of that organization. They had to sign the letter and since Gaspar and Ana Kin Kin did not know how to read and write, we had to buy an inked cushion so that they could sign as representatives of their community. The human rights center told us that they were going to do the investigation and they would contact Gaspar in a few months.

Going Back to the United States of America

Upon my return to the United States, I made a commitment to bring Mario and the children to present our work at an international conference. I was not able to find enough funds to pay for the children and their parents but in 2013, Mario and I presented at a community psychology conference at the University of Miami. Mario interacted with the conference participants with great confidence and a lot of social agility. He attended workshops on community development through the arts and met with the Director of Education in Miami who expressed great interest in visiting him and learning more about his project. We talked about the need to develop a

Fig. 3.11 Mario in Miami attending and presenting at the Society for Community Research and Action Conference

community proposal and send it to international foundations. Mario assured me that he "would have it ready in three months." Indeed, three months later he sent me an excellent proposal which is described in this book (Fig. 3.11).

Return to Lacanja During July–August 2015: Reviving Affective Relationships and Returning Products to the Community

I arrived in Lacanja on Sunday, July 20th, when the municipal elections were taking place throughout the nation. When I got off the plane from Mexico City to Palenque, hoping to find ground transportation that would take me directly to Lacanja on a Sunday afternoon, I met a professor of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) who was a liberation psychologist. This was a synchronic meeting due to our common interests and the fact that he was heading to Bonampak, the sacred Mayan place where the pyramids are located on the route to Lacanja. We took transportation to the Guatemalan border and exited at the San Javier crossing. From there we took transportation to Bonampak and Lacanja. Along the way, we

discussed our common interests in liberation psychology and community health. It started to rain heavily. The driver of the van, a Tzeltal from Nueva Palestina who lived in Frontera Corozal—a town bordering Guatemala—told us that countless accidents occurred under those climatic conditions. He shared that he had worked as a driver for several years but that he also worked his milpa. We talked about the strong deforestation that had occurred due to livestock and commercial agriculture. The driver added that agriculture and livestock were necessary to survive, that only a job like the one he had as a driver was not enough.

Finally, we arrived at Lacanja during the heavy rain and in the deep dark night. Mario had offered to lodge me in his new eco-camp but the road was very dark and it would have been necessary to go out and look for him in the heavy rain and with suitcases.

K'in Paniagua's eco-camp is located at the edge of the main road. The restaurant had lights on so I asked the driver to wait a few minutes to ask if they had a room available. K'in and his wife Chanuk went out to meet the van that had arrived in their territory. They recognized me immediately. I had called them on several occasions and also a few weeks before arriving. K'in, Chanuk, and their daughter Koh invited me to have tortilla with salt that Chanuk was preparing. After the long day of travel from Mexico City, the long wait for the plane that took us to Palenque, and the rainy road from Palenque to Lacanja, I had not had a chance to eat anything. The dinner was succulent. The next morning Koh and Chanuk asked me what I had dreamed about, the usual question in Lacandon land. I could not remember anything specific but they told me their dreams in detail. After coffee, Koh shared that her daughter Prisma, who had given me help during my work in school in 2012, had married and moved to live in a border community next to Guatemala. I proposed to visit her. Koh reacted with deep emotion as she had not seen her daughter and new grandson for some time. Prisma was married to a man from Chajul, a town that is a colony of immigrants from the state of Guerrero and borders with Guatemala.

I went to visit Mario's beautiful eco-camp that consists of two structures built with materials from the region. Mario is not only a talented actor and organic intellectual (Fals Borda 1984) but also a self-taught architect. Timo, the young man who had volunteered to be our talented cameraman in 2012, worked for Mario and was the one who received me at the camp. Timo informed me that Mario had gone to Palenque to pick up some tourists who had booked a cabin. He added that Mario had left a message so that in a few days the cabin would be vacated and I could stay there at no cost. However, I decided to stay in K'in's camp since I had already settled there. Interestingly, without consciously choosing to stay with K'in's family this time, after the ghost story conflict between this family and the family I had stayed with in 2012, turned out to be a good choice since the conflict between these families had already been resolved.

I went to visit Ana Kin Kin, who had separated from Gaspar and had a new partner, a Tzeltal from Ocosingo, and her daughter Adelina. On the way home, as agreed by appointment, I found Adelina who was walking in my direction and from several meters away shouted with enthusiasm: "Nuria, you're here!" Adelina was 15 years old and lived with a 39-year-old man, a Tzeltal worker whom she had met

in one of the eco-camps. I met Amalia, the beautiful little daughter of Ana Kin Kin and Gaspar who was only 2 years old. I spent time with them remembering several moments of our conviviality in 2012. Juanito arrived and informed me that he was already in third grade. I gave him a warm applause and enthusiastic congratulations. Then, I told Adelina that she had made the commitment that she would finish school. Juanito added that Adelina had not returned to school since "little after I had left." Adelina smiled and shared that it was because "she had already met Sebastian and she did not have time to go to school anymore." I asked how old Sebastian was, and Juanito gave an unexpected observation: "uh, he is over 100 years old and he will die soon." Then Adelina confessed privately, whispering in my ear, that Sebastian was 39 years old.

The Visit to Chajul

The next day Koh, her partner Jose, a Tzotzil from the Highlands of Chiapas, Kayom, Koh's grandson, and I went to Chajul to visit Prisma. We took a collective taxi from Lacanja to San Javier and from there a van to Benemerito de las Americas. Fortunately, it turned out that the truck was going to Comitan and would pass through the intersection that would take us directly to Chajul. After 2 h on a very unpleasant journey due to the stifling heat but, particularly, to a foul smell of gasoline inside the truck, we arrived at the junction. Another truck passed that offered to take us to Chajul. This population is in the Marquez de Comillas region and borders Guatemala. Access to telecommunication is made through Guatemalan networks. Prisma and her sister Samantha awaited us anxiously at home, knowing that we would arrive. They were excited to see their mother. Koh approached their house also full of emotion to see them and her grandson. Prisma's husband, Germain, received us with a warm hug and a succulent itinerary to visit the ecological reserve that was on the other side of the river. Prisma commented that a few days ago she had found some earrings that I had given her and she had been remembering me a lot. "So I felt like I was going to see you soon," she said.

After a rich soup of lentils with potatoes that Prisma prepared for all, we headed to the river to take the boat that took us to the ecological reserve located within the Reserve of Montes Azules. In it, we found wild boars, toucans, parrots, and hundreds of butterflies of innumerable colors. Subsequently, Germain took us to see the butterfly sanctuary, where besides having facilities with screens that serve as an observatory of the great diversity of butterflies in the region, they also raise this species to use them dissected in the production of various handicrafts.

When we returned to Prisma and Germain's house, Germain's mother told us how they had formed a cooperative of women artisans from Chajul and now they had a workshop and enough orders from different regions of the country. This project was promoted by an American woman, who knew them and was impressed by their beautiful handicrafts. They received funding to buy sewing machines and materials to continue working their crafts in an effective and productive way. Germain's mother

gave me one of the tablecloths they weave and embroider with designs of animals of the region. It has a beautiful heron embroidered with colorful threads of colors.

The Meeting with the Student, the Reencounter with the Children, the Dreams, and *Kan*, the Serpent God

The next day we went back to Lacanja as I was waiting for the visit of an Italian doctoral student, Valeria. I met her at one of the countless educational events of The Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) (College of the Northern Border) located in Tijuana, Baja California. The COLEF students organized meetings to discuss their research topics and invite professors and researchers from COLEF and other institutions to provide advice on their research. I reported on my participatory action research in the Lacandon Rainforest in one of their meetings. Valeria heard my presentation and was interested mainly because she had studied psychology in Italy and had a great need to discuss her research topic from a psychological point of view, something that she considered is not common in COLEF. Valeria asked if it was possible to accompany me in my fieldwork and I invited her to join me with enthusiasm.

The plans came true and on my return to Lacanja, K'in informed me that Valeria had come asking for me. I decided to go out and look for her. Guided by my intuition, I chose to go to Vicente Paniagua's eco-camp, where I had stayed for two and a half months in 2012. I saw Nuk and Ruth, and the beautiful and intelligent Yuk, who took me to where Vicente was. We briefly talked about his health and his knees. Vicente showed me his knees with several scars and said that "they had extracted some strange formations because the doctor had considered them to be harmful." He added that otherwise, he was in better health. Yuk offered if I wanted to visit the little house in which I had lived before and I agreed enthusiastically. I found it impressive that he remembered all those details, considering that in 2012 he was only 4 years old. Now within 7 years, he looked even smarter, more beautiful, and stronger. Vicente's grandson Kayom arrived. He had played a leading role in the play that Mario put in 2012. Kayom remembered me and gave me a warm hug as a welcome. After the brief visit to my old home, I invited Yuk and Kayom to have a drink. We went to Vicente's son's store, located in the camp, and we bought soft drinks and some junk snacks. We sat on a bench in front of the camp. We saw other children who had participated in the school program in 2012. Yuk shouted, "Where are you going? Oh, I know, you are going to buy a can of tuna and mayonnaise for your mom to make food." Kayom added that this is what most people buy to eat. I had already observed in 2012 that the cans of tuna and mayonnaise have replaced the basic diet of fresh fish from the Lacanja river, due to the environmental regulations imposed by the government. However, some community members observed that it was because "people want everything easy, open the can and smear the mayonnaise and take away the hunger quickly and cheaply without having to go to the milpa to

get fresh corn and vegetables, or to the river to get fresh fish." Little Yuk had pointed at such a worrying situation happening in his community with this ironic observation, which reflects his keen intelligence being just a child.

Valeria had not been in Vicente's camp, nobody gave me reason to have seen or known her. On my way back I heard my name and saw some sweet children running to hug me to greet me. It was very moving that they remembered me and expressed joy of seeing me again. I let them know that we would have a short activity at school on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday and that they should notify other children. When I arrived at the camp, K'in, Chanuk, Koh and Bor, Koh's son, were talking to Valeria and a group of three young men, two Italians and one Mexican, whom she had met in San Cristóbal de las Casas and had decided to accompany her to Lacanja. Valeria shared that looking for me she had met Kayom Ma'ax and Gaspar, the blind man, who guided them to this camp where they knew I was. Kayom Ma'ax is a very well-known and loved elderly man in the community as well as the main connoisseur of the myths and traditional stories of the Lacandon Maya culture. Didier Boremanse (2006) integrated his abundant stories in his book entitled *Cuentos y Mitologia de los Lacandones* (*Stories and Mythology of the Lacandones*).

Gaspar had heard from Ana Kin Kin that I was installed in the camp of K'in's grandson and that is how Valeria found me. What I found synchronous is that in just a few hours Valeria had found two community leaders, who many researchers seek and are slow to find. I, for example, looked for Kayom Ma'ax in my first visit and I was not lucky to have found him after a long hour walk to show him the book written by Boremanse, which contains the legends, myths, and stories he had shared with this author and that he surely had not yet seen. The book contains photos of Kayom Ma'ax and his wife but no recognition as the main author. It is truly outrageous how foreign researchers assume that recording their stories and sacred myths and writing them in the hegemonic languages such as English, French or Spanish, authorizes them to be the unique authors without recognizing, at the very least, coauthorship with those who generously shared their knowledge with them. Omitting their names and authorship is a crime against the intellectual rights of indigenous peoples.

Valeria and I were to see each other the next day at 10 in the morning. She and her companions decided to visit the Sak Nok waterfall and the pyramid located behind the waterfall. I had plans to meet with Mario. Around dawn of that day, I had a clear and vivid dream about Valeria. One of the Italians who accompanied Valeria came to inform me that she had had an accident. We quickly went to the cabin where they were staying. Valeria was lying on a bed in her cabin with her legs spread. The Mexican young man who accompanied her shared with anxiety that "someone had entered the cabin at night and had hurt Valeria." In the upper part of the legs, under the pelvis, Valeria had scratches that formed deep wounds. That morning I shared my dream with Chanuk and Koh without having even seen Valeria. Chanuk said that dream meant that Valeria was sick and would have to take care of herself. They did not arrive and I started to worry. I told Koh and Chanuk that I was going out to look for her. At that precise moment, Valeria appeared with the three companions. We went together to Mario's eco-camp that is just before entering the waterfall. Their visitors must register before entering the path leading to the waterfall. Tourists are

advised to go with a guide so Koh offered to serve as guide for $ 200 pesos. However, Valeria and her companions had already made a deal with a girl of about 12 years old. When Koh saw her and knew that she had taken away her income, she commented that "the girl is not even Lacandon, she is Tzeltal and does not know of the trees and plants they will meet on their way." The small girl was accompanied by her mother and younger sister. I asked the mother if the girl could speak Maya Lacandon. She commented that they are Tzeltzales but they had been living in Lacanja for some time and they knew a bit Maya Lacandon but they mainly spoke Tzeltal.

Valeria, the two Italians, and the Mexican, went to the waterfall and I stayed with Mario. Some children who had been in my program arrived and greeted me cordially, with sincere smiles saying: "Nuria, the psychologist! Why did you take so long to come back?" This was truly moving and I hugged and kissed them with genuine affection. This made them laugh and had fun watching me hug and kiss them. Mario and I sat down to talk and the children walked around, spying on what we were doing, and listening to the conversation. Then one of them came with a gift: a long and perfectly well-preserved skin of a great serpent (the God Kan). I promised that, if they allowed me, I would transport Kan's skin to Ensenada and Los Angeles and show it to other children and my son Tonatiuh as they surely had never seen anything like that before. The snakeskin was right at the entrance to Mario's cabins. This alerted me that I should be on the lookout to find others during my stay. I shared with K'in and his family the gift I had gotten from the children. K'in observed, "You will find a lot of snakes and you should be careful when you walk." I asked him if God Kan would be bothered if I keep its skin. He laughed at ease and said, "no, it is just his skin not his body." Surely, a couple of days later, a snake wondering in Kin's backyard bit their chickens and one of them died. Chanuk cooked the dead chicken quickly making at times jokes that if it would not burn long enough in the fire, it may poison us when we eat it. She left it cooking for a long time over the kitchen fire. We eat it and it was delicious.

Continuation of the Vision to Promote Community Education Generated in 2012

I shared with Mario the fortunate synchronicities of having met Nuria Sanz, the Director of the United Nations (UN) of Mexico, during a conference of the UN Earth Charter at the University of Coahuila and who expressed much interest in knowing more about the Lacandones. I shared with Dr. Nuria Sanz the excellent proposal to implement the *Canto de la Selva* (*The Song of the Forest*) Festival that Mario had sent me years ago. This happened when another pleasant fortune allowed me to see her again at the Forum on Migration and Culture held at the COLEF in Tijuana two months before my visit to Lacanja. Mario and I talked about expanding the proposal to include the creation of a school based on Mayan language, culture, and knowledge.

I also added that during my stay at COLEF I had talked with several researchers about our collaborative work and they had expressed interest in supporting us.

Given my experience in having worked in foundations, as well as having received several scholarships for study and research from prestigious organizations such as the Ford, MacArthur and the Inter-American foundations, I added that we could apply for financial assistance. Of course, Mario was very enthusiastic but the issue was complicated when we talked about the importance of receiving permission from the community to carry out the project. Mario transparently shared that there were "some" members of the community who opposed any project. He added that when he had been promoting the Song of the Rainforest Festival, it had been hampered by mistrust and "envy." He was severely attacked with remarks that he had asked for financial help from civil associations to hold the festival and in the end he had kept the money to build his new eco-camp, benefiting only his family and without any benefit for the community. He assured that this was not true, that "he is an actor and a businessman" and he knew how to raise capital to carry out the construction of his camp.

Now one of his family cabins is already finished and the rent it at $ 800 pesos per section or $1600 pesos for the complete cabin. This is the highest quota, compared to the prices of other eco-camps that range between $100 and $600 pesos. Mario's cabins are built in a very creative and aesthetic way, using materials from the region such as bamboo, palm, and stone. They are decorated with great taste, reflecting that Mario is not only a true artist but also "a barefoot architect" because he has learned to build beautiful spaces for tourists without any formal education. It is obvious that Mario's apparent success causes envy and suspicion in the community. Therefore, I added, "we must be very strategic in how to present the proposal to the community and avoid the emergence of conflicts. When money enters a divided community, the damage is worse than if nothing was done. This I learned in my years working on a mega initiative in California to improve the health of Mexican agricultural workers under which more than 70 million dollars were invested in diverse communities, often causing conflicts between organizations and community groups." Mario proposed that as a strategy he would first include the community leaders, the commissioner, who is his brother Hugo, representatives of his civil organization: "*Colibri* (Hummingbird)" and other leaders of San Javier and Bethel. I added that we should also include the education committee. Mario agreed to arrange a meeting the other day at 7 o'clock at night.

After talking with Mario, I decided to visit Enrique Paniagua. On the way I met his granddaughter Es, who in 2012 had already impressed me by her acute intelligence and early knowledge of her vocation, to be a doctor. She was in her restaurant with her mother. We began to talk about what she was doing and shared that she was already attending Lacanja's High School. I was amazed that there was already a high school and she shared, "Yes, but it is very ugly. It's just an old room without benches and it is sinking. There are mud puddles everywhere and we have to sit on tables near them in which mosquitoes gather and are stinging us all the time; that can also give us malaria." I proposed to go with her to visit the high school and take pictures. I shared that I was working with Mario to write a grant application to improve the

elementary school and that we would include the high school. Es suggested to use a camera to record interviews with her and others who attend high school, who will tell me "how bad things are." We agreed that I would go to the highschool and do the interviews. She commented that there are only eight students because: "the school is so bad that many prefer not to do high school and others, very few, go to another place like Palestina or Palenque. But I do not want to leave. I want to study here and then go to university to study medicine." Es had already shared her interest in medicine with me in 2012 and she continued with this vocational plan, indicating her strength of will and interest in serving as doctor of her community. She added, "When Dr. Andres goes on vacation for more than a month we do not have a doctor." Es also shared that her mother was the president of the High School's Education Committee. So she went to call her mother and I shared in detail the proposal that Mario and I were developing with her. She said that she was going to discuss it with the other committee members but that she supported this project. I told them I was going because I needed to find Hugo, the Commissioner, to ask for support to open the school for the next three days to do a workshop with the children and a field trip to Bonampak. At that moment Es said: "Hugo just arrived home." "How do you know? " I asked. Es replied: "I listened his car just coming into supervise the construction of his house."

We walked for half a mile on the other side of Es' house and indeed, at the end of the road was Hugo getting out of his truck. I approached him and asked if he could open the school in the morning and support with transportation to take the children who attended the program to visit the pyramids of Bonampak as an educational project. Hugo asked: "What time? I answered that the first part of the day would be spent at the school from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and then we would do the field trip to Bonampak. "The school door will be open tomorrow at 10 a.m. and someone will pick you and the children up at 1 p.m. to go to Bonampak," he answered with certainty. I asked him how much it would cost to pay for the truck and he said, "It will be community support. I am glad that you have this kind of programs for our children. It will not cost anything. I will send you a driver. How many vans do you need?" he asked. I answered that I did not think we would have a lot of children because I only had met about 10 children. I had asked them to tell others but in the end maybe not everyone will have permission to go on the trip.

Planning the Community Assembly

At 7 o'clock in the evening, the meeting with the representatives of the community was planned to discuss the proposal. Unfortunately, my cell phone indicated that it was 7 p.m. when I appeared at the meeting but this was Guatemalan time. In Lacanja it was already 8 p.m. and the group had been waiting for my arrival for an hour. I apologized and explained that I had turned on my cell phone in Chajul, which is right on the border with Guatemala and maybe that was the reason time adjusted one hour later than Lacanja time. They were a little annoyed by my delay but already talking

about the reason for the meeting and the details of the proposal. All participants were enthusiastic and decided to support it. The decision was to arrange the community assembly to receive permission from the community and proceed with the plans.

Celebrating the Work Produced

The meeting at the school was supported by Mario's brothers, Chan K'in, a community leader and lawyer—and coauthor of this book—and Hugo, the Commissioner who arrived at my camp at 8 am to let me know that the school was open and that they would pick us up at 1 pm. I decided to buy food for the children because there were going to be many hours of school and they would be hungry and thirsty. I asked Koh what ideas she had to feed the children with $400 pesos. K'in suggested, "the man who sells roasted chickens has just passed on a bicycle but he would soon return. It only costs $ 100 pesos for a whole chicken and if you buy two chickens and a lot of tortillas, the children will be satisfied." Moments later appeared "the *pollero* (the chicken sale man)" in a light motorcycle that carried a basket with roasted chickens, sauce, and cabbage. He gave us two bags and asked for $260 pesos. Koh told him that he sold them at $100 pesos each, so they should be $200 pesos. He replied that "they have already gone up." Maybe the additional $60 is for selling it to the tourist who comes with dollars and must pay more. I gave him a bill of $500 pesos and he returned the same $500 pesos in bills of $100 pesos. Jose corrected him with his mathematical mind and told him that he had given me the chickens for free. The "pollero" thanked Koh and Jose and said goodbye with affection. Koh told me that he had just lost his father and he was very sad "so he is confused and made a mistake in calculating the change," Koh said with compassion and solidarity.

In the evening I went to visit Ana Kin Kin and Adelina to invite them to attend our school workshop and asked Ana Kin Kin to take the piano I had given her in 2012 to listen again to her excellent live musical production and share it in the school. She added that Salomon, her new partner, played the guitar but that he did not have a guitar. I told her that I would ask Jose to take his guitar. "Yes, but we need two and Lucas, my brother has one, ask him," suggested Ana Kin Kin. So I went to visit Lucas and asked him to lend us his guitar. I told him that I was responsible for returning it intact at the end of the workshop. Lucas agreed.

The workshop at the school was succulent. The children arrived, little by little, but in total, they were 25. So we had good attendance. We started the session with my report about having finished our video and having presented it with Mario at an international conference at the University of Miami in 2013. I informed them that we had planned to take a group of children to make the live presentation during this conference but the time had not been enough to ask permission to their parents and if given, to request funding and visas for them and their parents who would have liked to accompany them. So we decided to leave it for a future plan. However, I added, the video was presented at the conference as well as to my students who attend a university located in Santa Barbara, California, and it can be seen on the

Internet (https://vimeo.com/74905129). The children smiled and raised their chests expressing pride.

I described our plan for that day and for the next two days of our short workshop, which was due to my short stay. I stressed that it was very important for me to present them what we did together 3 years ago and to continue producing theater plays collaboratively in order to disseminate their invaluable cultural heritage. Our plan for that day I explained was: (1) reading the story about Kisin and the Owl reported in Boremanse's book, paying attention as the content of our theater play bore many similarities to this legend told by Master Kayom M'ash to this Belgian researcher, who recorded their Mayan legends and myths and translated them in several languages; (2) draw the story and act it by doing previous warm-up exercises directed by teacher Valeria and accompanied by our musicians: Ana Kin Kin, Salomom, and Jose; (3) watch the video; (4) eat, and (5) go visit the sacred place of their ancestors: The pyramids of Bonampak. I added that their parents would have to arrive before our departure to Bonampak, assuring me that they were given permission. There were some like Ofiel and Celestino who had now finished the sixth grade of elementary school and to whom I told I would accept their word that they had their parents' permission. But if I found out that it was not so, they could no longer participate in other events scheduled for the following days. I was delighted to know that Ofiel and Celestino had managed to complete their primary education. Ofiel showed a lot of resistance to attending school during my program in 2012. At the end of it he wrote me a letter in which he said: "Nuri, if you do not come back I'm going to kill myself. I love you very much." This time he was deeply attentive and collaborative in all activities. Likewise, Celestino, who in 2012 could not write and read had already completed the sixth grade. Celestino acted as the Monkey King in Mario's play in 2012 and performed an excellent role. It was surprising that, after having shown resistance to attending school in 2012, he attended my program with punctuality and interest and in the end enrolled in all the closing activities of the school year that included two theater performances directed by Mario and I, and several dances led by the school teachers. The teachers also made the observation that those children who were in my program had participated fully in all the other celebratory end-of-course activities, when in the past they had not wanted to enter the classroom.

We began with the reading of the legends about Kisin and the Owl. The children listened to them with great attention, something I had not experienced in 2012 when we read the stories housed in the library, which were not about Lacandon legends. Their interest was perhaps fostered because I emphasized learning based on their own worldview and knowledge. In this book, Boremanse (2006) reported the following legends: "The Owl; The Birth of the Gods and the Creation of the Jungle; The Creation of Men and Animals; The Creation of Heaven and the Underworld; Origin of Childbirth and End of Immortality; The Luck of the Dead; The Kisin of the Tayra," and many more. Kisin is especially mentioned as the God of Death and appears in many legends. The owl is also referred to as *tecolote,* as a divine animal archetype that also reappears in other indigenous cultures of Mexico and Guatemala. We selected the reading of the legend: *The Kisin of Tayra.*

> The Kisin of Tayra does not die even if it is shot, he is immortal. One of our ancestors shot an arrow over a tayra [sanho-animal of the weasel family] and reached it in the heart. But he did not die. He was death, but he got up shortly after and started to follow the hunter, repeating: "Why did you shoot me? Now, I'm going to kill you … And he followed the hunter who regretted having thrown his arrows over the animal … The demon-tayra had followed him and told him that he would die when he got home. … But his fellows saw nothing … Look, you can see a tayra in the forest and shoot an arrow without knowing that it is not an ordinary tayra, but a Kisin that has taken this aspect. If he is a demon-tayra, he will not die; on the contrary, it will be whoever killed the hunter. There is also a demon-pecari, a demon-tepescuintle, an armadillo demon, etc. (pp. 360–361)

In this legend Kisin is also paired with the devil. This connection existed in the imaginary of the community, made by the children who attended my program such as Cesar and Ofiel as well as the adults, Gaspar and the parents who had expressed concern about waking up or invoking the devil. It has been attributed to the domination of other religions in the region, such as Protestants, Adventists, and other Anglo-Saxon religions. The children drew these archetypes of Mayan gods and divine animals with dexterity and accurate resemblance (Fig. 3.12).

The childrens' participation in the activity of "Embodied Orchestra (Orquesta Corporal)" directed by Valeria, reflected a high degree of interest. Valeria formed 3 groups of children and put an adult to direct the corporal orchestra, performed with rhythmic sounds made with the body. When the hands touched the body performing various rhythms, the sound was truly stimulating and our musicians were attuned to the rhythmic production, creating a succulent musical production. This activity helped us to open ourselves with enthusiasm to act the legend. All the children cooperated and the harmony of our movements and choir was unequaled. We gave ourselves warm applause and proceeded to watch the video.

It was truly impressive to appreciate the dedicated attention and deep interest of the children by watching the video carefully. They were silent and almost immobilized and open-mouthed, perhaps surprised to see themselves on the screen sharing their own knowledge and theatrical performance. Sometimes they laughed out loud at the convincing performances or at the content of the work, which was their own creation. After watching the video, we reflected if we could do better. Several children commented that we should add more legends and stories: "like the ones written in that book you brought," said Ah'Kin, Mario's son. I said that what is written in that book are their own legends and myths, that a man from abroad recorded and wrote them in that book but that wisdom is not from that foreign gentleman but from them, who have to write those books.

The Celebration with the Ancestors of Bonampak

We distributed chicken tacos and soft drinks for all the children and some parents that had accompanied us, as well as our talented musicians and helpers. Then we prepared to go to the sacred place of their ancestors in Bonampak. At 1 p.m. exactly Chan'kin arrived. We did not fit in one van and Chan'kin had to make two trips. We

Fig. 3.12 Archetype of the Mayan God Kisin

waited for the second trip with more children and adults. We gathered at the entrance of the Bonampak pyramids to sing "*Las Mañanitas*" (a traditional birthday song) to the ancestors who have been in that sacred place for centuries and who inspire us with their wisdom and worldview. This song announces that we come to visit them and celebrate life, "the day you were born all the flowers were born … and the nightingales sang." This was a symbol of celebration of their permanence in our lives and the honor of being able to learn from them by visiting their sacred places. The children showed great pride in singing Las Mañanitas to their ancestors. We visited the pyramids and one of the adults who accompanied us read the information described in the posters adjacent to each of the structures. The children listened carefully. After visiting the magnificent murals, we proceeded to draw them. The children took place on the stairs of the pyramids and drew the scenes drawn on the murals with great dedication. A group of older children and several companions climbed the pyramids to the highest point. The little ones stayed down drawing. At

the conclusion of the visit we organized ourselves into two groups to be transported on two trips back to school.

The next day I went to the school where the children and volunteer helpers, Samantha and Jafreth, both 15 years old, and Anita Chankayum were waiting for me. During this session we read another legend, we drew and acted it. At the conclusion of the workshop, the children enthusiastically proposed that we make a trip to the waterfall. I agreed with the condition of being in an hour at the entrance to the waterfall and with their parents' permission. An hour later there was half the group of children who had participated in the workshop and some of the parents. The children who had arrived alone were already the eldest: Ofiel and Celestino, whom I confided had their parents' permission. We crossed the path that took us to the waterfall for about 40 min. The children obeyed my instructions to walk together considering that we also had small children who walked slower than the older ones. They respected the rule but upon seeing the impressive waterfall, the older children ran to it from the highest plain venturing with daring dives. For a foreigner this is very dangerous but not for them, who laughed out loud with my warnings to be very careful. There, I stopped having authority because they are experts in playing skillfully in their own habitat. After returning from the waterfall we agreed to see each other the next day at school to conclude our last workshop.

The next day at school we read the legend of the "Monkey King" described in Boremanse's book and that Mario put on the play in 2012. Mario has the same written legend and much more elaborate than the one that appears in this book. I let the children know that we were going to remember the play we had witnessed in the video during our first day of the workshop, listen to the legend written in the book, and act it. Ah'Kin, Mario's son, suggested that we should improve the play including more animals: "like *balums* (jaguars), vultures, deer, and many more," he proposed. We replied that it was a good idea. After the reenactment of the legend, we started making music with maracas that were made by K'in and Chanuk. Ah'Kin played a beautiful clay flute in the shape of an owl. The children took turns playing the flute and maracas and also made music with their bodies, as Valeria had taught us to do. In the end, I distributed the materials to the children and informed them that Mario would keep the small equipment to play music so that they could borrow it when they practice theater plays. I added that I wished in some future we could achieve the dream of coming to visit me and present our plays live, instead of on video. I said goodbye to them, wishing that they would continue with their studies and expressing my congratulations because everyone had advanced the school year and some were even going to start secondary school.

The Nightlife and the Ceremony

We were sitting on the terrace at the entrance to the eco-camp with K'in, Gaspar, and Miguel, Mario's father and keeper of the Sak Nok waterfall. Valeria and Leo arrived. We talked about the terrible deforestation the Lacandon Rainforest has suf-

fered. Miguel remembered times when they opened a huge road to take out the big mahogany trees. "They removed many trees and the soil dried up," he described. "If the trees are removed, there are no roots to store the water and water the land. That is why the earth is running out of water," he concluded.

Mario arrived with some tourists who had arranged a ceremony with K'in. Mario invited me to join the group and asked K'in permission for me to participate in the ceremony. K'in agreed and we went to the House of the Gods, a large *palapa* (a thatched roof dwelling) located in the back of his house. It was adorned with traditional incense burners, the Godpots, that were lit and K'in sat behind them. He began to dialog with Timo and Mario in Mayan. It seemed to be a conversation in preparation for the ceremony. Moments later Valeria and Leo joined the ceremony. K'in prayed for each of those present and used a plant that he passed through the incense burners praying in Mayan. Then he passed the plant by our backs praying for our health and well-being and for tourists to get well into their homes. He prayed that we would not confront diseases or find snakes on our way. When concluding, Timo translated the prayers into Spanish and recommended that we keep the sacred plant that K'in had given us in a safe place, and that when we felt pain or an illness we put it near us when sleeping and by the body part in where we felt pain.

Since my first trip to Lacanja in 2010, I wanted to participate in a ceremony. In 2012 when Gaspar informed me that K'in was the only one who conducted ceremonies, I went to visit him and asked if he would allow me to participate in a ceremony. At that time K'in suffered from cataracts and could not conduct ceremonies because the copal smoke bothered him. He also said it was difficult to find copal since the government restricted them from obtaining products from the rainforest.

Accompanying Families in Resolving Health Issues

The next day Mario's mother, Carmen, happened to visit Chanuk and K'in. We were having breakfast when she commented that her mother had a strong stomach ache and could not eat because it hurt. She added that Lacanja's doctor had given her a paper to take her to the hospital but she could not read. I offered to accompany her to see her mother and read her the letter. We arrived at her parents' house. Her mother, Yuk, went out to meet us at the entrance of the house and then her father, Jose, came out to sit with us on a bench outside their home. I read the paper that Dr. Andres had given Yuk. It was a referral to urgently visit a surgeon and evaluate her health status in order to perform surgery. It was a medical recommendation to cure the abdominal hernia she had had already for a long time. The hernia had grown considerably. In the official medical referral, it was stated that Yuk was 69 years old, but it seemed she was much older. Her thin complexion made her looked very weak and emaciated. It was stated that the doctor had recommended several visits to the clinic in order to have the surgery as soon as possible. But Yuk and Jose refused treatment. Yuk had suffered from abdominal hernia for more than 20 years.

I explained what the hernia was and how it caused pain when we eat. I added that the hernia would probably have to be operated since the paper was a reference to the surgeon who should assess her health status and decide if it could still be operated. Carmen explained that her mother did not want to be operated on. She was translating since Yuk did not speak Spanish. I asked Yuk if she was willing to have surgery. I emphasized that for the pain to be treated that kind of intervention would be needed. Yuk nodded indicating that she would be willing to have the surgery. She asked some questions and Carmen translated them in Spanish. Her husband, Jose, observed that he had been recommended to have the same operation but since there were no specialists in Palenque he was transferred to San Cristóbal where they did not find specialists either. From there they took him to Tuxtla Gutierrez and they did not find a specialist either, so what he did was to pray to God. He added that God had listened to him because he no longer felt pain in his stomach.

Jose shared that he had been commissioner in the 70s and on several occasions he and other community leaders had been transported by helicopter to Mexico City to meet with the president. This was the time when the government gave the Lacandones over 600,000 hectares of land to control the massive migrations of dispossessed indigenous peasants coming from the highlands of Chiapas and from elsewhere. "Once the plane ran out of gas and just before reaching Lacanja we went straight to the ground and I broke the bones of my arms and legs," Jose said sadly. I wondered if this accident had been provoked by the government amidst the intense conflicts it had generated. Lacandon leaders like Jose were demanding their land rights that the government was not acknowledging due to the land invasions led by the powerful national and foreign investors as well as the poor peasant invasions. I asked him if the government took responsibility for this accident and paid his health care bills. He said the government ignored his requests for health care and he "healed using other remedies and resting at home." He added that he had had several other accidents driving a truck that he used to transport tourists. "I have suffered seven serious accidents and in all of them I broke my bones again. Now I have many pains and I can hardly walk anymore," he shared. I asked him if he went to the clinic in Lacanja to be checked. He answered no. I offered to speak with Victoriana, the nurse. I had been informed that Dr. Andres had not been there for several weeks because he was on vacation. However, there probably should be another doctor in his place. Carmen commented that when Dr. Andres went on vacation for a month, nobody stayed in his place.

I explained that Dr. Andres had given them a referral to bring Yuk to the hospital in Benemerito de las Americas—which is about 45 min from Lacanja. Carmen said the problem was that her brothers could not take her to the hospital because, although they had a car, they were very busy or they said they did not have money. I replied that an ambulance was parked in the clinic. I assumed it would be available for emergencies such as this and offered to talk to the nurse and request the use of the ambulance.

On Monday morning I went to the clinic. Victoriana remembered me since I had done some activities for the teenagers at the clinic in 2012. Since the clinic is in front of the school she had already seen me working with the children. We talked about common memories such as that in 2012 I had brought Ofiel, who when he was playing abruptly with other children hit a pole and opened his forehead. Victoriana healed the wound and between the two we calmed Ofiel who reacted with anxiety to this accident and did not want to be cured. Soon Carmen arrived and we went to the doctor's office to talk about her mother's medical condition. Carmen showed Dr. Andres the paper he had given her. Victoriana commented that a few days ago for the first time Yuk had come "alone to the clinic to ask for medicine because of the pain in her stomach. It is the first time that she comes alone because before she only came with her son." Carmen added that the son who took care of her had died in a car accident. Now she was the only one taking care of her mother because her other children did not care about their grandparents. Victoriana reiterated that Dr. Andres had given her a referral to go to the hospital in Benemerito and to consult with a surgeon who would assess whether the operation could be done or if it was already too late. "She has been suffering from this problem for 20 years and the doctor told her many times that she had to have an operation but her husband did not let her have surgery," Victoriana observed. I added that Yuk had agreed to see the surgeon but now the problem was transportation. However, she could be transported in the ambulance. Victoriana answered that we had to find the key to the ambulance in San Javier that is about 15 min by car from Lacanja. I commented that if there was an emergency, they would have to waste time going to San Javier to get the ambulance key. "Yes that is what would happen and maybe we do not even get the key. Those from San Javier want to have control of who handles the ambulances," shared Victoriana with deep concern. Victoriana advised Carmen to talk to her son Hugo who is the Commissioner, and to request to him direct access to the ambulance. Victoriana added that Hugo should find an ambulance driver." Carmen said she was going to talk to Hugo. Victoriana talked about the problem of alcoholism in the community. Carmen observed: "the Kisin (the devil) pulls their hands and tells them to drink their beer so that they can leave with him sooner." "Yes," Victoriana commented, "This problem that used to be in San Javier is now here. Although not too many some drunks drive down the road to San Javier or Benemerito to get more alcohol. That is why there is so many accidents." asserted Victoriana. Carmen nodded with an expression of deep sadness. Apparently, her own son had passed away in that way.

At night Carmen came to tell me that her son Chan K'in had agreed to take her grandmother to the hospital. Chan K'in speaks very well Spanish and is very intelligent. He graduated as a lawyer from a major university in the capital of Mexico City. He is a respected community leader who had a regional political position and was going to run for Municipal President. I conveyed to Carmen that since Chan K'in was going to be with his grandmother, it was not necessary for me to go with them.

As soon as they returned from visiting the health clinic in Benemerito de las Americas, Chan K'in's oldest son, Kevin, came to my camp to invite me to eat with his parents. I was gifted with a plate of delicious *quesadillas* and a lovely conversation with Chan K'in and his wife, Esperanza, who is from a town near Mexico City. I could sense Chan K'in's appreciation for my brief involvement in her grandmother's well-being. But most importantly, I sensed he had appreciated my respect and trust in his capacity to handle this situation without the need of a white savior.

The Community Assembly

Mario, his wife Chanuk, the Education Committee, Hugo, some other representatives of Bethel and Crucero San Javier, and I met to plan to present the school's proposal in the next community assembly. The initial intention was to receive their support, then that of the community in general to send it to international foundations and receive funds for this important project. In this meeting prior to the assembly, everyone supported the project. Mario felt confident that the project would also be approved in the community assembly. However, Chanuk warned that "I was going to know how her people were."

I dedicated the following days to work with Mario. We restructured the proposal that Mario had sent me in 2013 to include the focus on improving the schools' infrastructure—elementary school and high school—as well as co-constructing a new community school based on their language and culture.

Hugo arranged the town assembly one Friday at 6 o'clock in the afternoon at the school. Mario and I were on the agenda to ask the community for permission for me to look for sources to finance the proposal. When I arrived at the school, several members of the community were waiting. In one group were the older women, in another the older men, another group was formed by the young men and women but all separated by gender and age.

Many residents attended the assembly on time. They were waiting for Hugo to arrive and open the school door for them. Hugo arrived and opened the school. He approached me and said that a civil association called: "Activists for Peace" was going to present before Mario and I. They started the meeting after Hugo presented the agenda and thanked everyone for being present. The people were standing apart by gender and age. The "Activists for Peace" presented a benefactor who wanted all the indigenous groups of Chiapas to come together. There was going to be a reception in a few months where this benefactor would attend. The benefactor expected the indigenous people of each ethnic group to attend with their traditional costumes. The presenters asked to give the benefactor an original costume of each ethnic group. They informed the audience that a truck would arrive to transport them to the reception. Above all, they expected the *Derechosos* (Right Holders) to attend the reception since they are the most important representatives of their community. The Derechosos or the head of the family, the oldest men in a family, received lands belonging to the clan and community (*bienes comunales*/community assets) from the Mexican government

in 1972. Their lands can be several hectares although it is not considered private property. They have the right to vote and make decisions in community assemblies. In contrast, the *Comuneros* (Commoners) are under the authority of the heads of family. Comuneros do not participate in the decision-making process in the community nor directly receive the monthly income granted by the government in compensation for their services to preserve the environment, and commitment to stop living from the resources of the rainforest.

The Comuneros who were present in this assembly complained of "wasting their time, money, and effort in an event such as this one when they were mainly waiting for the presence of the Derechosos and not of them." They made comments regarding the injustice that they perceived the lack of rights granted to the Comuneros and the perception that the power and authority lies in the Derechosos. This organizational system was imposed by the government itself and obviously affects the community cohesion generating permanent conflicts between them, even among the same families.

Hugo announced that Mario had an important proposal to share with them for their approval and support. Mario described the "*Canto de la Selva* (Song of the Rainforest) " proposal in Maya and then introduced me and announced I was going to explain how I would support this project. I introduced myself and greeted everyone. A participant who was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt asked me who had given me permission to dress as Lacandona. Ana Chankayum had given me a beautiful hach nock (traditional tunic) as a gift and I was wearing it. Chanuk and some other women told him if he had asked for permission to dress Western clothes. I answered that it was an honor for me to wear the hach nook that was given to me as a precious gift. I said that I admired their culture and for that reason I came back over the years. I shared that Mario and I had worked in collaboration for a significant time. Hugo shared at the beginning that Mario had been invited by me to present in a conference in Miami. I clarified that I only asked for permission to seek funds so that the proposal could be financed. I emphasized that the school would be built by them with local materials. We would take care that the teachers were from their own community since the main intention is to preserve their culture and language. Some claimed that if the project was carried out, they did not want Mario to be in charge of it, but they would want people they trusted—such as their own friends—to be in charge of it. I added that Mario and I had worked on the project proposal since 2013. After three years, 2015, everything was ready and we could just send the proposal to large foundations in the United States that have supported similar projects. However, if the community did not agree, the funders would not give resources. One of the requirements was that the community signs the application requesting funds as evidence of collective support. Frequently, foundations and donors decide to visit the communities to ensure that their help does not engender conflicts. In case there is no unanimous support in the community, they would not be granted the funds.

A good number of men began to claim that in that case they wanted nothing. Mario then took the word and told them that he would continue persevering on the school project. He reinforced that Mayan education needed to be imparted to their children in order to preserve their traditions, language, knowledge, and culture. He

added that if they did not want to support this project, in the future he would make this a reality and would charge them money if they wanted their children to attend this kind of school.

At the end of the assembly, I was sitting with K'in and Chanuk on the terrace of their house when Mario and his wife Chanuk arrived. Mario said he was not going to give up and that he would talk to representatives of Frontera Corozal to get their support. He asked me to go ahead and send the proposal. I insisted that it would be better to first find a way in which it was possible for the community to resolve the conflicts that exist. If the community was fighting, no project was going to be effective and/or funded.

The Night and the Morning of the Books

During my visit in 2012, Adelina had shown me some cabins that belonged to her grandfather and that were locked with a padlock. She said, "here my grandfather keeps many books that were given to him by some gentlemen from outside." Through the slots in the walls made of palm several wooden boxes placed one on top of the other could be seen. I asked Adelina if it was possible for her grandfather to let us open the boxes and check the books. I added that she could practice what she was learning in school, reading the books, and learning to keep her family's heritage. A few days later Adelina informed me that her grandfather did not want anyone to enter the cabin and did not want to open the boxes. Upon my return in 2017, the cabin had suffered deterioration due to heavy rain and had fallen. Ana Kin Kin informed me that her father had passed away: "and he had taken the books with him."

One night I offered to share the books I had collected, written by Boremanse (2006), Bruce (1975a, b), Cassel (1974) and Perera and Bruce (1985) with K'in's family, where I was staying. This was a night in which most of the family had gathered in around the kitchen stove. There were K'in and his wife Chanuk, their daughter Koh and her partner Jose, Koh's son Bor, Koh's daughter, Samantha, and Koh's grandson Kayom. They reviewed the books with great interest since they all had pictures of themselves and their families, even though only Boremanse's book was written in Spanish and all other books in English. They had never seen these books before and were surprised to know their pictures were published in books. I shared that it seemed a real crime to me that these researchers had written about their life stories, taken their photographs, daring to make theoretical conjectures about their culture, mythology, cosmogony and social organization, even lived with them—some of them for many years—and they had never given them copies of those books. For instance, Bruce lived for several months during more than 40 years among the Lacandones. He came to his community being a young man of only 25 years old and when he died, he asked to be buried in Naha near the remains of Chan Kin, the Old Man, who was Chanuk's father. They all knew Bruce very well. According to Koh and Chanuk, Bruce died shortly after Chan Kin died and "his nails and hair are said to have grown very long," Koh observed. Chanuk shared that her father had become very angry with one of

the authors, Victor Perera, because he had written "that the Lacandones meet their wives in the milpa (cornfield) and that was not true. They asked Roberto (Bruce) to tell Victor he had to erase it. However, in the book written with Bruce and titled, *The Last Lords of Palenque* (*Los Ultimos Gobernantes de Palenque*), it is still written, almost to the luxury of detail, that Chan Kin was with his three wives in the milpa alternately since the Lacandones did not have intimate relationships in the home.

With respect to the titles of the books I shared that both, this book by Perera and Bruce and the book written by Cassel, *Lacandon Adventure: Last of the Mayas* (*Aventura Lacandona: Lo Ultimo de los Mayas*), had titles implying that the Lacandones had already become extinct, that they had all died. However, they were still very alive and present. Everyone laughed out loud knowing the murderous titles of these books and stressing that neither they nor their culture have died.

The tendency of the tone with which these researchers wrote about them is racist because they are referred to pejoratively as "the primitives" or their cultures as if they were from the past and dying. Boremanse was from Belgium. He had been gifted by Kayom Ma'ash with his generous sharing of sacred myths and legends. However, Boremanse made no reference to the Lacandon's authorship, nor does he even cite in the text that Kayom Ma'ash passed on this knowledge to him. Kayom Ma'ash and his wife only appear in a photo in Boremanse's back book cover. This is a crime of plagiarism which is imperative to be punished as one of the Human Rights of indigenous peoples. Smith (2012) analyzed in detail the usurpation and appropriation of indigenous knowledge by the colonizers, who attribute what they learned in indigenous lands to their own authorship and possession. Likewise, with arrogance they venture interpretations of their experiences in other cultures that they consider subaltern, primitive, superstitious, under their imperial paradigms that grant Western culture supremacy and deny other cultures the right to exist and thrive.

The next morning, Mario came to visit and wanted to see the books. He said he wanted to have them all. I replied that it had cost me a lot to get them, not in terms of money but time and effort, but that I was going to look for copies and if it were not possible I would copy them and bring them back. Mario noted that it was shocking that they had not received copies of the authors. "That is why we should write our own books," he concluded. Mario and his wife Chanuk are coauthors of this book.

Mario invited me to accompany them to Palestina to do the shopping for the week. This Tzeltal colony has many shops, compared to those that exist in Lacanja, and the food is cheaper.

I accepted the invitation. Mario asked me to bring Boremanse's book "and to read on the way so he could review the history of the Monkey King." On the way to Palestina his wife Chanuk read the story aloud. Mario noted that much more information was missing. Chanuk then read Mario's story. His version was masterfully written. It showed the excellent representation of the story in his theater play during the school closing activities in 2012.

Return in August of 2017

The Inter-american Psychology Conference in Merida, Yucatan

Chankin, Arcelia Aguila, Kumiai from San Jose de la Zorra, Valle de Guadalupe, State of Northern Baja California, and I met in Merida, Yucatan to present together at a conference of the Inter-American Society of Psychology. Chankin and Arcelia deeply impacted the conference audience. They spoke of the important relationship that their cultures have with nature, how foreigners have invaded their lands, and the need for international solidarity to protect the environment and their cultures. In addition, Nuk Regina Paniagua Kin, at the time 22 years old, shared in this conference the video about her Lacandon Rainforest that she had shown me in 2012. I invited her to show her video in person but at the last minute she could not participate since she had to work in his parents' restaurant. The audience applauded her intelligent and aesthetic work that clearly delineates the main values of her culture: (1) nature, (2) family, and (3) the legacy of Mayan archeology in the region. Nuk also shared a clear message in this video asking tourists not to leave garbage in their Lacandon Rainforest that is their beloved home. I recorded our presentation and shared it with her, my students, and others by posting it in vimeo: https://vimeo.com/262693286

Continuing to Strengthen our Affective Conviviality

After this conference I spent two weeks in Lacanja. This time I stayed with Mario as my main intention was to share the draft of the book, review what we had written until then, and discuss plans for the future. We had discussed the possibility of bringing my university students to do fieldwork in Lacanja. We also dreamt that perhaps there could be support from my university to host a workshop on Mayan mythology imparted by them. Mario proposed that interested people from the United States could attend for a week in the summer, reside in Palenque and Lacanja, and learn Mayan Mythology visiting the archaeological centers of Palenque, Bonampak, and Yaxchilan. Visitors and students, Mario proposed, would walk through the rainforest guided by the Lacandones and learn about medicinal and food plants. They would also experience ancestral rituals and learn about their myths and legends. I committed to propose this plan to the university where I work and plan the workshop for the next year. In 2018, we received approval from my university to conduct this workshop and are planning its implementation.

As a welcome to the rainforest, Mario invited me to participate in a " *limpia* (cleaning ritual)." We went to a *temazcal* he had built near his eco-camp. The *temazcal* is the steam bath created with hot stones and water used by the ancient Mayans and the Aztecs as well as other indigenous cultures in Mexico. It is built according to the four directions and is similar to the sweat lodge of the Native Americans. Mario was

accompanied by one of the 12-year-olds who worked at his eco-camp and his 10-year-old nephew. He used sacred plants to paddle my entire body. He sang and prayed that "the toxins I brought from the city were discarded and that my body and soul, pixan, would open to the benefits granted by the rainforest." The children assisted Mario in performing the ritual respectfully and remained silent for approximately the hour that it lasted. The sacred plants dried by passing through the ankle I had injured. At the conclusion of the ritual, Mario explained that the plant had perceived an illness in that area of my body. I had not shared with Mario before the healing ritual that I had suffered great discomfort in my ankle. Mario prescribed me to introduce the affected foot into a bucket with a medicinal plant called "*hierba santa* (sacred herb)." He asked the young assistant to bring me the bucket with the warm water containing the plant and soak my ankle in it for 15 nights. After this treatment, my ankle healed.

I went to visit Nuk and share photos of her video presentation at the conference. We had the fortune to have been assigned a large cinema belonging to the Convention Center of the City of Merida to share our presentation. I showed Nuk and her family the photos and expressed to her and her parents my deep pride of her work. I added that the audience applauded her contribution during our conference presentation. The audience expressed that her video had transported them vividly to the rainforest, and that they had learned a lot from the Lacandon culture's values she was able to clearly and beautifully convey. Nuk, her sister Ruth, and her parents smiled with deep satisfaction and pride. Her father expressed that Nuk was very busy because that was the tourism high season and she was his only cook. Nuk briefly told me that among the guests there was a team that was going to film in the rainforest, and that she would learn from them if she had a little free time. She shared that the equipment she used to have had broken down and her parents could not afford to buy her a camera and a computer for her to continue making more videos. I told her that I was committed to work for funds to support the talented young people like her that resided in Lacanja. The next year I would return during the tourism low season and we would find time to dedicate to this work.

On one of my visits to Gaspar's family, I had the immense joy of seeing Ernesto, the 17-year-old young men who introduced me to his community for the first time in 2010. He was now 24 years old and already the father of a beautiful 2-year-old daughter. He was residing in Lacanja with his wife and child after having graduated as a Natural Resources Management Engineer from the *Universidad Tecnologica de la Selva* (the Technological University of the Rainforest), located very close to the San Javier crossing on the road to Palenque. During my visit in January 2010, Ernesto took me to visit the Bonampak pyramids and sitting on top of the temple, immersed in the abundant landscape, he shared his dream of studying ecological sciences. He also recounted several traditional legends. One was about a man who at night turns into a jaguar and walks through the community looking for lost souls to feed on them. In 2017 we talked about his thesis work to obtain his degree. He shared it with me and I read it immediately. I was very impressed by its high quality and asked him if he would be interested in publishing it. He accepted with great joy. Ernesto's thesis is included in this book.

The Work with the Young Mayan Lacandon and Tzeltales

Mario worked with three young people he had hired for being knowledgeable about their culture. One of them was called "Jorge Bush" and he was 12 years old. Jorge shared that his father had wanted him to be named as the American president. This surprised me and even more so when I found out from the other young people that his father had given him that name "not because he admired that president of the United States of America but because Jorge was born when Bush had been elected as president. His father made fun of it and gave his son that name. The youths expressed that they did not support any president, neither from the United States nor from Mexico because they all liked to steal. Jorge shared his wisdom in the use of medicinal plants that he had learned from his father. He took me for a walk through the rainforest and taught me the different plants and their healing uses. He told me that his father had healed many people but that he had died of cancer. His family had even turned to a Protestant church to help his father when he was already dying. The people of the church could not do anything but managed to convince their mother to convert to their religion, and now they frequent that church. Jorge added that he would continue to learn about medicinal plants and help his community.

The other 16-year-old young man was Tzeltal and commented that it was also necessary that they not forget their own religion and their Gods, "like Lord Father Hachakyum and Mother Ixchel, Goddess of Medicine," he observed. These young people maintain and sustain their ancestral knowledge and achieve an effective negotiation with Western culture. Although they have accepted the influence of globalization in the form of punk-like clothing or agreeing to attend the Protestant church, in the case of Jorge's family, they are aware of the importance of their knowledge and customs and they interweave "global designs," as Mignolo (2000/2012) would say, without getting lost in them.

In Merida, I had talked with Chan Kin about a call for proposals to impact international public policies offered by a US association to which I belong. He told me that there were some young people from Palestina who were doing that kind of work and that it would be an excellent opportunity for them. I met with this group of young people who belong to the Youth Network of Chiapas and have done community education and awareness work regarding the preservation of the environment and culture. I invited Ernesto to join this group and form a team representing the Maya Lacandon and the Maya Tzeltal youths. Ernesto, a Maya Lacandon from the community of Lacanja Chansayab, Maria Esther and Marwilio, Maya Tzeltal from the community of Palestina, met several times to work hard to write the proposal. I submitted their proposal to a community psychology organization, which despite having evaluated it quite positively, did not fund it with the argument that only two proposals had received the highest score evidencing a clearer potential to impact US public policy. Evaluators commented that the proposal written by the indigenous youths from Chiapas could not possibly have such an expected impact. It was quite striking to evidence that their proposal received considerable positive rankings con-

sidering that they were competing with graduate students, who in the end, won the funding. We decided to disseminate their impressive work that is included in this book.

The Celebration of Community Cohesion

At the end of my stay, I was invited to participate in a community celebration that included other communities of the Lacandon Rainforest, particularly, Bethel, San Javier, Palestina, Benemeretito de las Americas, and Frontera Corozal. The community of Lacanja Chansayab celebrated having managed to resolve conflicts and the election of the new commissioner. The celebration started on a Sunday morning with community food and ended with a joyful dance animated by a musical band. Almost the entire community attended as well as residents of the other communities. This was undoubtedly an enormous achievement, considering what it had cost them to overcome conflicts for a considerably long time. The dance was very cheerful and convivial. The next day, the community felt harmonious and full of hope for a promising change. I departed nourishing the same hope for a more enabling time to receive the community's unanimous support for our collaborative proposals and request for international and solidary funding.

Coming Back to the United States of America

I remained in frequent contact with the group of young people and with other families. I sent the proposal written by the youth to an American organization of community psychology. We were in constant contact to inform them about the result. Mario sent me messages online informing me that he would carry out several ceremonies in the community and that he was also acting in a movie that was being filmed in Lacanja. Ernesto informed me that the community had celebrated the First Festival of Lacandon Culture in honor of Mother Earth on April 22–24, 2018. This is the first implementation of the proposal that Mario dreamed in 2013 and that is included in this book. Ernesto sent me numerous photos and videos of the ceremony. It began with the traditional conch shell (*caracol*) as musical instrument. Its sound is used to invoke the Mayan Gods, Chaac, God of Water, Ixchel, Goddess of Medicine, Hachakyum, the Creator, and all the Gods and Goddesses of Nature. The Masters of Ceremonies offered their prayers to the four directions. The members of the participating communities followed the guide and direction of the Master of Ceremonies in harmony and solidarity. Some of Ernesto's recordings of the ceremony are included in the aforementioned video: https://vimeo.com/262693286. This event confirmed that the community had solved conflicts, and as a result, this celebration was made possible by the revived community cohesion that in turn was fueled by their cultural-religious empowerment (Ciofalo 2014).

Coming Back to Lacanja in 2018

During my sabbatical, I returned to Lacanja in 2018 to cowrite this book with the youth collaborative and other community members. This time, I decided to stay in an eco-camp where I had not stayed previously. My purpose was to relate with other families. I stayed in the eco-camp called Rio Lacanja, a beautiful and well-maintained lodging with several cabins and a restaurant in the midst of the lush rainforest. This camp is owned by Ricardo Chambor, son of the well-known Kin Obregon, who is credited with having discovered Bonampak and is recognized as a prestigious community leader and religious guide. Ricardo earned a *Certificado de Modernización* (Modernization Certificate) from the Mexican government, for which he was very proud. He told me he had passed the government test because he had furnished the cabins in "Western style." He was proud of having installed electricity and private bathrooms in each cabin, and of keeping them very clean using natural products to avoid environmental impacts. Ricardo had constructed his camp according to strict ecological standards. Through the forest, he built "educational pathways" marked with clear and didactic billboards to explain the region's existing flora and fauna. However, the government uses this "modernization" strategy to replace the indigenous cultural ways with Western ways in providing tourist services. Ricardo was against the preservation of the Lacandon culture and language, which he viewed as obsolete and "not modern." He said that this was what the government told the Lacandones when they were being trained to earn the certificate. Consequently, some of those who have done the training and received the certificate, and who play important community roles as leaders and entrepreneurs, developed a derogatory attitude toward Lacandones who still practice their customs and traditions. Like Ricardo, some believe that the Lacandones "want to stay behind and do not want to modernize." This has been another governmental strategy to continue the pervasive epistemicide in every indigenous culture across the nation in order to modernize Mexico and "make it competitive in the international market."

Among Ricardo's vast family lived the only Mayan teacher, Alfredo Chancayun, who is Ricardo's nephew and who had been sent for years to teach in an indigenous community other than his own—a community where Tzeltal was spoken. This is one more strategy that the Mexican government uses to support the pervasive epistemicide supported by the Secretariat of Education. However, Alfredo persevered, asking that he be allowed to teach in his own community, as there were no other teachers who spoke Maya Lacandon. After over eight years had passed, Alfredo finally received permission from the Secretariat of Education to go back to teach and reside in his own community. He is now residing in Lacanja and applying an innovative early education program with infants and their mothers in their own Mayan language. He has also taken key positions in the community's Educational Committee and has been advocating for educational justice, such as the proper staffing of teachers who can commit to teaching in the community's preschool and elementary school. He shared with me, in detail, his experience organizing a group of parents who went to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of the state of Chiapas, and demanded that their rights

Fig. 3.13 Alfredo Chancayun's Early Childhood Education Program

to receive education be respected. Alfonso successfully lobbied for new teachers to came to Lacanja Chansayab, with permanent positions that will ensure educational continuity for the children (Fig. 3.13).

Some youths shared with me the fact that an international company called "Natura Mexicana" had been extracting medicinal plants from the rainforest and restricting access to it so that the company could freely extract vast resources. The young people said that this company hires young community members who are strictly trained to act as environmental police, restricting access to the same rainforest that enables their families' subsistence through milpas, hunting, or fishing. The company states that it does this to protect the rainforest's natural resources. However, Natura Mexicana has been extracting large amounts of medicinal plants as well as other plants that it uses to create beauty products for international export. The young people would like to unite and organize to find ways of making Natura Mexicana's actions known worldwide and gaining solidarity to stop the company.

During this time, I worked with the youth collaborative and other community members to write this book. We spent long hours clarifying our ideas and contributions. Ernesto Chancayun invited me to meet with the administrators and professors of his alma mater, the Technological University of the Rainforest, to present our collaborative project. The professors felt very proud that one of their alumni had the opportunity to publish what he had learned in their institution. They invited me to attend their commencement and see the many young people who graduate every year and return to work in their communities.

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Chapter 4
Uk'Ay K'ax (El Canto de La Selva—Song of the Rainforest)

Mario Chambor Chanabor, Chan'Kin Chambor Chanabor, Jose Manuel Morales Vazquez and Elias Diaz Diaz

Only those who are their own selves in this world can complete their own nature.
Only those who can complete their own nature can complete the nature of others.
Only those who can complete the nature of others can complete the nature of things.
Only those who complete the nature of things are dignified enough to help nature in its task of life growth and sustainability.
Only those who are dignified enough to help nature in its task of life growth and sustainability are equal to Sky and Earth.
(Popol Vuh 400 A.C.).

For humanity to enjoy nature's temple, its harmony, and its strength, Mother Earth:
A message to the Universe.
Hachak'yum, I believe in the Sky and the Rainforest.
The Sky was planted with stars, and the Rainforest with huge trees.
The roots of all things are connected.
When a tree is destroyed, a star falls from the Sky.
Chan'Kin the Elder.

We, the authors of this chapter, have come together to create an organization that we have named "*Tzu Nu'* (*Colibrí*/Hummingbird) *Jnantik Lu'umNantik* (Federation

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_4

Fig. 4.1 The Earth and the Skye. Photograph by Ernesto Chancayun Kin

of Social, Cultural, and Artistic Development for Environmental Sustainability)." Our community organization represents the main ethnic groups residing in the Mayan Zone: Cho'oles, Tzeltales, and Lacandones. This organization was born from a collective dream that became our vision for the well-being of our community and future generations. We believe that community well-being means that our culture drives our education, our ecological habitat sustains its rich biodiversity, and our spirituality and art guide our celebrations, rituals, ceremonies, and daily living. We have integrated our diverse professional roles as artists, teachers, lawyers, ecologists, and economists to develop a long-term, collaborative action plan that we will describe in the following pages. We hope that international solidarity will support our dream and vision and result in a collaboration that focuses on the preservation and sustainability of our Lacandon Rainforest. Our dream is that many people from throughout the world will join us in singing our *Uk'Ay K'ax* (Canto De La Selva—Song of the Rainforest) (Figs. 4.1 and 4.2).

Fig. 4.2 Listening to the Song of the Rainforest (*Uk'Ay K'ax*). Photograph by Enrique Olvera

Community Profile

The Lacandon community is in the municipality of Ocosing in the state of Chiapas, México. Within this territory are located the state's most exuberant natural and eco-touristic sites and historical monuments, such as the archeological zones of Tonina, Yaxchilan, and Bonampak, and the beautiful lagoons of Metzabok, Naha, El Ocotal, Sibal, Guineo, and Miramar. In addition, this territory is home to all the rivers, lakes, and lagoons of the Natural Protected Area (NPA) called "The Blue Mountains," and much more has yet to be discovered. The Lacandon Rainforest is considered the most important ecosystem in Mexico, given its size and degree of environmental preservation. The rainforest is home to over 20% of the nation's biodiversity. It has been, and continues to be, stewarded by the Mayan Lacandon inhabitants of this majestic region (Fig. 4.3).

In its vicinity are other natural touristic assets, such as the Guacamayas in the Zamora Pico de Oro, Marqués de Comillas Municipality, the locality called "Las Nubes (The Clouds)" of the Maravilla Tenejapa Municipality, with access to the breathtaking lagoons of Monte Bello in La Trinitaria Municipality. All these magic

Fig. 4.3 Sak Nok, the Waterfall of the Swallows. Photograph by Mario Chambor Chanabor

localities, in all senses, are located in the to the so-called "Mayan Route." The Lacandon Zone is composed of six Lacandon sub-communities representing the three ethnic groups of the Mayan Lacandon, the Tzeltal, and the Cho'ol: (1) Mayan Lacandon: Lacanja, Chamzayab, (2) Metzabok, (3) Naha, (4) Ojo De Agua Chan' Kin, (5) Tzeltal: Palestina, and (6) Cho'ol: Frontera Corozal.

The administration and surveillance of community assets and needs is the responsibility of the "*Comisariado*" (Commissioner), who works with the President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer. The President must be a Mayan Lacandon, whereas the Treasurer and the Secretary may be Mayan Tzeltal or Cho'ol. Similarly, Mayan Lacandones compose the Safety Council. There is also a General Community Assembly that represents the highest authority of the Mayan Lacandon community. These six communities have, in turn, administrative, legal, and organizational authority by means of representatives of the aforementioned Comisariado and Safety Council and

Fig. 4.4 Lacandon assembly. Enrique Olvera

their respective members. Each sub-community has its own General Assembly that involves all community members. As stated previously, this assembly represents the highest authority in its respective sub-communities. It forms on the last Friday of each month, but extraordinary assemblies may also be held. Each sub-community has independent authority to handle internal issues as well as elect the representatives of the Comisiariado and Safety Council (Fig. 4.4).

As stated, Tzu Nu' (Colibrí/Hummingbird) is a community organization including the aforementioned three main ethnic groups residing in the Mayan Zone: Cho'oles, Tzeltales, and Lacandons. Our multiethnic community organization directs its efforts toward preserving and conserving the Lacandon Rainforest in particular, and all the other natural spaces of rural and urban communities that compose the national Mayan territory in general. Its activities are tightly linked to economic, artistic, cultural, and ecological objectives and goals that promote connections among the many efforts and capacities of the region's diverse communities.

Community Project Background

One can assume that the most drastic manifestation of the contradictions of social life and a lack of identity experienced by our indigenous communities (Mayan Lacandon, Mayan Cho'ol, and Mayan Tzeltal) is not only the extreme poverty and violence that these conditions generate but also the absence of authentic and transparent leadership promoting sustainable development and mobilizing strategic productive actions to alleviate the immense weight that the inhabitants of the Mayan zone carry due to deplorable conditions. This leadership must be clear about the solutions presented to solve the region's issues and have the capacity to respond to this situation in agentic ways. It must be clear that the solution to these regional issues is not an exclusive task of the various levels of government; rather, these levels must be capable of generating positive, proactive solutions owned by our communities.

The severe environmental degradation that the Lacandon community confronts is another important issue due to the constant loss of biodiversity, a loss that makes the physical space, in which the inhabitants' lifeworld has been preserved for centuries, highly vulnerable. At the same time, an alteration of their wisdom and knowledge, of their relationship with the natural environment, their interpretation of natural processes, and their ecological preservation and conservation techniques generates a clear and rapid loss of natural resources. This occurs along with a progressive loss of cultural identity and, by extension, an alarming deterioration of the social fabric existing in this zone.

In terms of the ecological and cultural devastation that the Lacandon Rainforest suffers, the real problem stems from extensive and itinerant agriculture—i.e., the so-called "roza-tumba-quema/irrigate-bury-and burn" technique used in various periods of cultivation—as well as extensive husbandry, commercial pressures to extract precious natural resources, forest fires, agrarian conflicts, and land invasions. These factors promote the use of land for the settlement of other commercial agricultural communities, such as those created by the governmental agency, "*La Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*" (SEMARNAT—The Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources). Although these problems affect the forest soil, they are not the only factors officially recognized as grave causes of the rainforest's devastation.

Within the agrarian context, the key strategic action that made a major impact on the region's future was the national, presidential decrete of recognition and entitlement of the Lacandon zone's community assets, issued in 1972. This decrete ceded 614,321 hectares of land to 66 Mayan Lacandon heads of household, recognized as the traditional inhabitants of the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest. The action was taken as a means of restoring community assets. It was justified by the need to warrant the rights and survival of this ethnic group and, by extension, of the rainforest's ecosystem.

In the region, this decrete created enormous agrarian and social conflicts that promoted community organizing and the mobilization of diverse groups residing in the zones of "Cañadas de Ocosingo" and "Las Margaritas" as well as the zone

known as "Desempeño." In 1976, based on these social movements, two residential centers were built. Fourteen groups—mostly Tzeltales—reside in one of the towns, originally called "Velasco Suarez" but known today as "Nueva Palestina." The other was called "Frontera Echeverría" (today called "Frontera Corozal") in which eight groups of Cho'ols reside. Due to exercised pressure, these new settlers were officially recognized as members of the Mayan Lacandon community (De Vos 2002).

Project Goal

To achieve harmony in the Lacandon region's community life and to ignite its economy, this territory must be reorganized for its Regional Community Assets (art, agriculture, apiculture, fishing, husbandry, tourism, and silviculture) and their classification according to the activities that take place.

Regional Community Assets—Activity Settings

- Art—cultural, historic, archeological, ethnic, traditions, festivities, and ceremonies.
- Agriculture—systematic implementation of the agricultural sector with the diversification of crops; rustic and backyard agriculture.
- Apiculture—systematic implementation of the production of honey.
- Fishing—conventional, commercial, and recreational.
- Husbandry—systematic implementation of a productive chain of meat and milk products.
- Tourism—cultural, educational, recreational, athletic, traditional, adventurous, and scientific.
- Silviculture—wildlife management and the utilization of recyclable wood produced in the forest.

Within the artistic sector, specific aspects are highlighted, such as the monumental (arqueological) and ethnic aspects. The implementation of this project, *Uk'Ay K'ax* (Canto De La Selva—Song of the Rainforest) is located within the latter. For its development, three ethnic groups—Mayan Cho'oles, Tzeltales, and Lacandons of the Lacandon community—have organized to form our Tzu Nu' (Colibrí/Hummingbird) collaborative to implement this artistic and cultural project, born with the intention of celebrating the International Day of the Earth every year. We are committed to the preservation and conservation of this region's rich biodiversity and to rescuing our cultural customs, traditions, and languages through diverse community arts. Furthermore, we seek to systematically promote ecotourism in our region's natural places and promote and maintain ecological and community well-being.

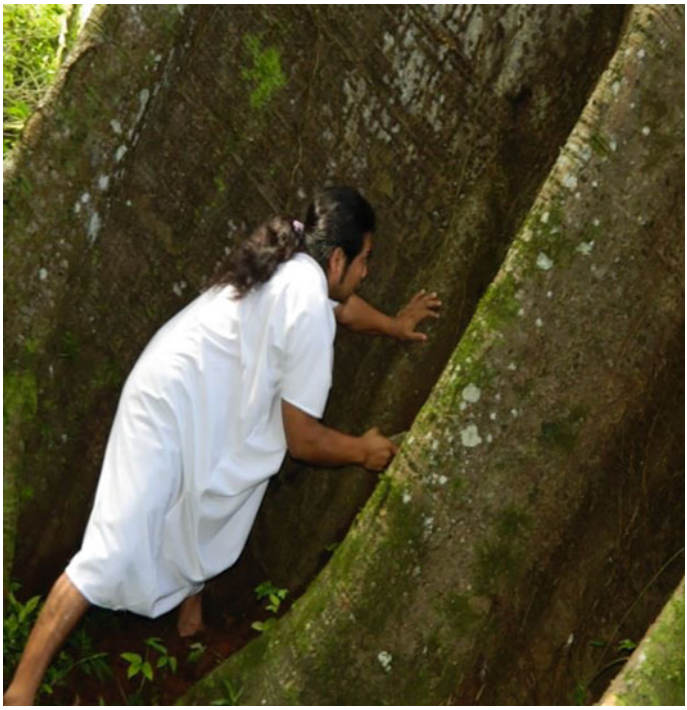

Fig. 4.5 Chan'Kin Healing the Rainforest. Jose Manuel Morales

Project Mission

The voice of the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest shall be heard! All our creative, artistic, and cultural manifestations shall tell the world that, through the application of our own capacities, we can build bridges that unite our ideas and dreams for the benefit of our community well-being. We will organize all towns in efforts to implement activities that keep our original traditions alive. Through our efforts and capacities, we will promote a culture, based on our traditions of love, that focuses on the nature and stewardship of our region's rich biodiversity. With our collaborative efforts and capacities, we will attain community well-being and ecological sustainability (Fig. 4.5).

Project Vision

The implementation of sustainable, productive, artistic, cultural, and ecotouristic activities of the Tzu Nu' collaborative shall achieve the well-being of all communities constituting not only the Lacandon Rainforest but also the entire nation and world. It will create a culture based on love of nature and biodiversity. We will transform these

activities into bridges that reconstruct the social fabric in our society, highlighting ethical and moral values that make us better human beings who take care of our Mother Earth.

Project Rationale

This project was initiated in 2008 by Rodolfo Chambor Yuk, who established the Mayan Lacandon festival with exhibitions of arts and crafts, regional gastronomy, photography, and documentaries representing everyday life in the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest. It was held in collaboration with the entire community. Through this festival, we celebrated our profound respect for the preservation of our natural environment and our love of Mother Earth, which is fundamental to our Lacandon cosmology. Unfortunately, Rodolfo lost his life in an accident and these festivities ceased. However, we uphold his dream of celebrating this festival every year. For this reason, we have decided to come together and bring it to life again. To that end, we organized the *Uk'Ay K'ax* (Song of the Rainforest) project. Another important motivation was the celebration of the International Day of the Earth, as well as the memorializing of Rodolfo's death. This festival also has the goal of strengthening fraternal links with all communities in the region to promote the region's sustainable, economic, ecological, political, cultural, social, and religious well-being. This community collaboration will promote the existence of diverse sources of community income that is currently generated solely by ecotouristic activities.

For these reasons, we present this project, which will unite the efforts of Mayan Lacandones, Cho'oles, Tzeltales, and other ethnic groups to promote the sustainable development of our region, the ecological preservation of its resources, and the maintenance of its community assets and well-being. We would like to hold an artistic and cultural event entitled "Uk'Ay K'Ax," whose main objective would be to collect money and resources to promote the holistic preservation of the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest. With these funds, we intend to implement diverse planning and development projects, such as the initiation of an ecological and cultural school that would train children and youth in the use of the performing arts as a means of raising community consciousness to accomplish our mission and vision. We seek to implement conferences, courses, workshops, and group dynamics in diverse schools, barrios, and assemblies in our communities, involving their leaders and authorities in the development and implementation of these activities (Fig. 4.6).

We hope that the importance of our everyday life, the sustainable use of natural resources, and the need to live in harmony with Mother Earth can be addressed in community dialogues. We seek to promote the biodiversity of our region and to show that within our communities we can generate organized actions to accomplish our goals. This can be achieved only through active community participation and a profound respect for our customs and traditions. We seek to demonstrate that, through this participation and respect, we can achieve sustainable development.

Fig. 4.6 Mario Chambor teaching theater in the community school. Photograh by Enrique Olvera

Project Objectives

General Objectives

The Uk'Ay K'ax (Canto de la Selva/Song of the Rainforest) festival will be implemented with the participation of the Lacanja Chansayab community and the collaboration of diverse groups, such as theater groups and traditional music groups such as, *Batz'i* rock (rock Tsotzil) and Trova that will perform in natural spaces in the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest. We hope to count on the support of four levels of government (international, national, state, and local), private initiatives, and non-governmental organizations. We seek to build a community school that promotes cultural and ecological teachings for children and youth and that utilizes theater as a means of accomplishing such goals. We believe that through the arts and cultural teachings, we can promote the development of new leaders who are transparent and capable of strengthening our essential cultural values, such as the love and respect of our ecology. Our Mayan Lacandon culture must be preserved, nurtured, and maintained. Some experts state that the world's cultural diversity is disappearing at a faster rate than biodiversity (Fig. 4.7).

Fig. 4.7 Mario teaching theater. Photograph by Enrique Olvera

Specific Objectives

- Implement the artistic-cultural project Uk'Ay K'ax (Canto de la Selva/Song of the Rainforest).
- Invite national and international artists.
- Offer community-based theater, traditional music, and the works of national and international artists.
- Exhibit photography, paintings, films, documentaries, and arts and crafts from throughout the region.
- Develop a model for the construction of the school.
- Build a cultural, artistic, and ecological school that promotes community theater as a means of awareness-raising.
- Engage ecotouristic-oriented activities and management structures to help promote this event.
- Exhibit traditional clothing and textiles of the Mayan region.
- Exhibit and promote natural products made in the region.

Specific Goals

We seek to engage an average of 2,000 visitors—that is, a total of 6,000 visitors throughout the festival's 3 days. We project that potential revenue will fund the development of our community school.

Proposal Infrastructure

It is important to describe the general characteristics of the ecological context in which implementation will occur, the place in which this festival is planned to be implemented, and the tools and necessary conditions for the planned development. Through this effort, we seek to provide evidence of the necessity and sustainability of this yearly festivity.

Macro-location

Chiapas is located in the southeast of Mexico. It is adjacent to the state of Tabasco to the north, the state of Veracruz to the northeast, the state of Oaxaca to the northwest, the Pacific Ocean to the south, and the Guatemala border to the southeast.

Micro-location

The Ocosingo municipality is located in the eastern mountainous region. It is adjacent to the Palenque municipality to the north, Guatemala to the east and south, the Las Margaritas municipality to the east, and the municipalities of Chilonn, Sitala, San Juan Cancuc, and Oxchuc and Altamirano to the west. Ocosingo is the main headquarters of the municipality and is located approximately 80 km from Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the state capital.

This event will take place in the community of Lacanja Chansayab, which is in the Ocosingo municipality, Chiapas, and is located along the border highway. The Lacanja Chansayab community can be accessed by bus or airplane from Palenque and Tuxtla Gutierrez or by bus from San Cristobal de las Cases. In the city of Palenque, where the majestic, ancestral pyramidal complex lies, other collective transportation exists to the border with Guatemala: Frontera Corozal. Midway, at the San Javier junction, collective vans can be taken to travel to Lacanja, Chansayab. The distance between Palenque and Lacanja is 148 km.

The Montes Azules: National Protected Areas in the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest

In this scenario, the state and federal governments have decided to establish seven National Protected areas (NPAs) in the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest. These are: (1) the National Reserves of Montes Azules; (2) Lacantun; the archeological sites of (3) Bonampak and (4) Yaxchilan; (5) Naha; (6) Metzabok; and (7) Chan Kin Reserve. They constitute the most important zones of the high perennifolia rainforest in México (INE SEMARNAP 2000).

Geographical Characteristics of the Mayan Lacandon Zone

Type of Soil

The soil along the mountainous regions is thin with rich organic components but unstable with erosion vulnerability. The soil is deeper in the lower regions, with humidity and sediment accumulation. Fertile soil can be found only in the areas adjacent to the rivers.

Geology

The Lacandon Rainforest occupies the external marginal zone of the mountainous region of Chiapas, located northwest. It is composed primarily of cal formations from the Cretacic Era. This system consists of ample rock sediments that contain layers from the Pensilvanic and the Neogene Eras, including Cretacic formations. The mountainous layers are more developed in the southern regions, in contact with the higher mountains of Chiapas, which have the highest altitudes. The mountainous formations gradually disappear to the southeast, becoming flat in the coastal regions of Tabasco as well as in areas adjacent to the Usumacinta River (Garcia-Gil and Lugo-Hupb 1992).

Hydrography

The hydrographic network is dense and includes, among others, the following rivers: Usumacinta, Lacantun, *Chixoy*, Grijalva, *La Concordia*, *Rio Negro*, *Tzendales*, Chajul, *Perlas*, and Lacanja. The zone is also rich in lagoons and lakes such as, among others, Miramar, Ocotal, *Tres Lagunas*, *Pop Chan*, Lacanja, *Anaite*, *Orizaba*, *Maroma*,

Suspiro, *Ojos Azules*, *Pochitoque*, *Laguna Las Piedras*, *Laguna Colorada*, Metzabok, Naha, Sibal, and *Laguna Guineo*.

Climate

Precipitation varies between 1,200 and 3,000 mm annually, with thermic oscillation between 14 degrees and 38 degrees celsius and a standard measure of 25 degrees annually. The rainy season occurs during two periods of less precipitation; the lowest takes place in February and May (the dry season) and the second between July and August, at which time (for 15 or 20 days) a climatological state called the "canicular or intraestival" dry season takes place (Vásquez-Sánchez, and Ramos-Olmos 1992).

Main Ecosystems

The main types of vegetation in the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest are the high and medium perennifolia forest and the medium, sub-perennifolia, and sub-caducifolia forests or the tropical, humid forest. In the latter, the trees of superior size measure up to 30 meters in height and frequently reach up to 50 m. Many of them are important for economic activity; these include the *Ceiba Pentandra* (Ceiba), *Calophyllum Brasiliense* (Bari), *Brosimum Alicastrum* (Ramon), *Swietenia Macrophylla* (Mahogany) and *Teminalia Amazonia* (Canshan). The existing vegetation includes additional wood-producing trees such as mahogany, cedar, breadnut, *guapaque* (velvet tamarind), *chico zapote*, palm, *yucca*, ceiba, *caucho* (rubber), and *xate* palm, among others. The vegetation used for international commerce is vainila, cedar, mahogany, and rubber (de Vos 2002).

Animal Life

The main species living in the region include jaguar, rabbits of the forest, *cola blanca* (white tail) and *de llano* (from the plain) deer, mountain cats, *tapir*, crocodiles, *tepezcuintle*, armadillos, wild pigs, howler monkeys, otters, hummingbirds, eagles, macaws, *nauyaca* and *coralillo* snakes, and iguana (among many others).

Socioeconomic Aspects

Main Sectors, Products, and Services

In the Lacandon community, several economic activities are carried out, such as husbandry, agriculture, silviculture, apiculture, ecotourism, and general commercial activities (e.g., carpentry, construction, iron-work, hotel services, terrestrial and fluvial transportation, and professional services in the areas of health, education, and counseling).

Transportation

There is a fully paved highway that is best known as the border highway with Guatemala. In addition, there are adjacent paved roads to several communities such as Palestina, Frontera Corozal, and Lacanja Chansayab (INEGI 2000).

Poverty and Marginalization

The Lacandon community currently contains approximately 54,200 residents distributed among six sub-communities: Lacanja Chansayab, Naha, Metzabok, Frontera Corozal, and Palestina. The communities of Lacanja Chansayab, Naha, Metzabok, and Ojo de Agua Chan' Kin have 1,800 inhabitants representing the Lacandon ethnic group. Palestina has 29,290 inhabitants representing the Tzeltal ethnic group, while Frontera Corozal has 23,110 inhabitants representing the Cho'ol ethnic group (INEGI 2000) (Table 4.1).

Migration Patterns

The main destinations in terms of forced migration are Mexico City (49.0%) and the United States (34.2%); 81.2% of national and international migration is caused mainly by labor needs. However, it is important to note that 14.2% of migrants (male and female) have educational motives and seek to continue higher education in diverse regional centers. Likely, a high percentage of these youths may not return to their communities of origin due to the areas' lack of employment opportunities. In the case of women, one-fifth of the migrant population (24.8%) has educational motives: 41.9% seek work in diverse service sectors, and 12.8% become domestic workers. Male migrants work mainly in agriculture (29.9%), as employees in diverse service sectors (27.3%), and (18.8%) in several other technical jobs (*oficios*) (INEGI 2000).

Table 4.1 Population by Sector and Income (INEGI, 2000)

Population with less than $1,000.00 (Mexican Pesos/less than approximately $100.00) per month	82.59%
Economically inactive population	29.13%
Rural population	99.09%
Economically active population in primary sector	79.75%
Illiterate population—6 years of age or older	43.09%
Population who completed elementary school—15 years of age or older	4.22%
Households without water services	68.01%
Households without sewage	84.69%
Households without electricity	84.21%
Lack of communication services	85.35%
Number of residents per medical doctor	1,754.76

Infrastructure of the Mayan Lacandon Zone Community

The Mayan Lacandon zone contains educational facilities from pre-schools to universities such as the Technological University of the Rainforest. There are five Health Centers; among the safety-related agencies are the Secretary of the Marines, the Public Safety Secretariat, the Mexican Army, the Mexican Institutes of Migration, and the Ecological and Municipal Police.

In addition, there are the Comision Nacional de Areas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP) (National Commission of Natural Protected Areas) offices, two Municipal Auditories in Palestina and Frontera Corozal, basketball and soccer play areas in each community, two offices of the Sub Commissary in Palestina and Frontera Corozal, 50 grocery stores, recreational parks, multipurpose building areas, the Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares(CONASUPO) (National Company of Popular Subsistence) stores, community museums, touristic centers, and offices of terrestrial and fluvial transportation.

Uk'Ay K'ax:El Canto de La Selva (the Song of the Rainforest) Project

Our goal is to implement a traditional ceremony to commemorate Mother Earth each year on International Earth Day. This ceremony will allow us to come together as one community, representing diverse ethnic groups residing in the Lacandon Rainforest, that takes care of Mother Earth. In addition, we hope that through the support of national and international organizations, as well as governmental and non-governmental agencies, we will be able to collect funds generated during the cultural festival to develop and implement a community school.

For this purpose, our collaborative has developed a ceremonial plan to implement its first cultural festival. There will be 25 *caracoles* (musicians who play the traditional snail) and ceremonial masters of the Mayan Lacandon tradition, asking Mother Earth's permission to initiate the workings of the art festival. The implementation plan is outlined below.

First Day

Mayan Lacandon Ceremonial Masters will open the cultural festival with a ritual—Mayan caracoles (snails) will be played to announce and close the opening ritual.

Ut'ia K'ax (The Children of the Rainforest) theater performance

Takane Cochihira music performance

Second Day

Mayan Lacandon Ceremonial Masters will open the cultural festival with a ritual—Mayan caracoles (snails) will be played to announce and close the opening ritual.

Palenque Rojo (Red Palenque) theater performance—nationally and internationally acclaimed Mexican theater group from San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas

Nietos de Chiltepec (Grandkids of Chiltepec) music performance

Son de la Montaña (Song of the Mountain) music performance

Cumbiamba music performance

Yibel Jmetik Banamil music performance

Third Day

Mayan Lacandon Ceremonial Masters will open the cultural festival with a ritual—Mayan caracoles (snails) will be played to announce and close the opening ritual.

Hamac Caxim music performance

Sak Tzebul music performance

Batz'ik Rock: "La Selva soñadora" ("The Dreaming Rainforest") performance—Mexican musicians from Tzinacantan, Chiapas

Every Day

Various artists will exhibit their work, including collaborations among local, national, and international artists. The communities of the Lacandon Rainforest will exhibit their arts and crafts. There will also be presentations of various documentaries and films created in the Lacandon Rainforest, as well as walks through the rainforest, visits to the archeological zone of Bonampak, and fishing and rafting activities.

Administrative Guidelines

The resources' administration will be in charge of a committee of the Community CollaborativeTzu Nu' (Colibrí/Hummingbird) Jnantik Lu'um Nantik (Federation of Social, Cultural, and Artistic Development for Environmental Sustainability). Resource management will be carried out through a communal bank account. Reports on financial matters will be created by the members of this cooperative organization,

the involved communities, and funders. Trustworthiness, honesty, transparency, economic and environmental sustainability, experience, and respectful human relations are the values that will guide our charge to carry out this event. The resources obtained through the implementation of this event, as well as other private, governmental, or non-governmental resources, will be administered through a communal bank account under the responsibility and management of the Community Administrative Council of the Tzu Nu' (Colibrí/Hummingbird) Jnantik Lu'um Nantik (Federation of Social, Cultural, and Artistic Development for Environmental Sustainability).

Resources gained through the implementation of the yearly festivals will be used to develop and implement our community school. Community residents will be employed to build the school as well as serve as teachers and service providers. The investment of our ceremonial and cultural resources in the construction and implementation of our community school will promote the ecological and cultural sustainability of our region for the next generations.

Environmental Impacts

We will assess all activities that may directly or indirectly generate emissions (through terrestrial transportation, air transportation, electric consumption, and generation of solid waste). Based on these measures and on the methodologies developed by the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts about Climate Change (2006) and the International Certificate (ISO: 14064-1; in Eggelston et al. 2006), we will calculate the equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (carbon footprint) produced as a consequence of this event.

Carbon Capture

Knowing the volume of carbon emissions produced as a result of this event, Tzu Nu' (Colibrí/Hummingbird) Jnantik Lu'um Nantik (Federation of Social, Cultural, and Artistic Development for Environmental Sustainability) and the organization *Cecropia: Soluciones Locales a Retos Globales A.C* (Local Solutions to Global Challenges) will neutralize those emissions. We will do so by means of the reforestation and maintenance of impacted areas that were originally perennifolia forests and that are currently used as husbandry areas of low efficiency.

We will promote the growth of forest species to neutralize the emissions produced as a result of these events. In the near future, these areas will have a new forest covering that will generate additional productive chains of forestal covering to supply other productive, community chains that are sustainable and abide by national and international standards regarding environmental management of the rainforest's resources.

Positive Impacts

The positive impacts will be the productive, virtual cycle of forestal area growth, the construction and implementation of a community school that promotes our culture and language, the generation of local employment, the diversification of productive chains, and, in summary, the generation of a local economy with local and sustainable environmental resource management.

The link between our community school and the reforestation activities is a direct one. Community work, as well as the involvement of children and youth, will not only benefit from increased education but also raise awareness of the importance of our Lacandon Rainforest, its rich biodiversity, and the need to sustain its cultural and economic well-being. In this way, Uk'Ay K'ax intends to contribute to international, national, and local efforts to reduce the pervasive impact of climate change. We want to demonstrate that it is possible to work in solidarity to make this world a better place for all.

Currently, the collective organization has identified 400 hectares requiring reforestation. Cecropia will contribute their technical capacity building skills to measure potential emissions. However, we will need additional funds and donations to implement this reforestation project as well as to evaluate and monitor the potential impacts to promote sustainability. For this reason, we have requested an initial investment of 310,000 pesos (about 25,000 USD) and are currently seeking resources to fund the project's future phases. The funds will be administered in an efficient and transparent way; we will continuously report to our potential funders and to the main supporters of this project.

We hope that international solidarity will support this proposal. We encourage international audiences to visit our Lacandon Rainforest, appreciate and learn from our traditions and customs, celebrate our culture and language, and sing with us our Uk'Ay K'ax for the sake of our beloved Mother Earth.

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Chapter 5
Environmental Impact Assessment of Deforestation in Three Communities of the Lacandon Rainforest

Ernesto Chancayun Kin

This chapter is based on my thesis to obtain the Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Resource Management at the Technological University of the Rainforest. I conducted research in three communities of the Lacandon Rainforest with the purpose of understanding vegetation cover changes due to anthropic activities. Data was collected on several field trips. A tree cover analysis using satellite images was conducted to obtain data of the changes in the area reserved for forest use. Findings suggested that Lacanja Chansayab has a greater deforestation area equivalent to 42%, followed by Betel at 41%, and Crucero San Javier (San Javier Junction) at 17% of deforested hectares. The most influential factor appeared to be population size in each zone.

Mexico is a very important country because of its still existing natural reserves, taking the 12th place at a global level in forest surface, as well as the 3rd place in Latin America (Del Angel and Mobarak 2001). The study entitled *Capital Natural de México*, coordinated by Sarukhán (2009) explained that Mexico has a high number and richness of species as well as genetic variability that is distributed through its territory.

Mexico also has a forest surface covering an estimated 146,118,323 ha, composed of many types of vegetation. The biggest part is represented by xerophile bushes (with a 41.2%), temperate forests (24.2%), rainforests (22.8%), and other forest vegetation types (11.8%). All these vegetation types are very relevant to Mexico's environmental, economic, and social context (FAO 2005, 2010).

The State of Chiapas is one of the most biologically diverse and owner of a great biological richness. A rich diversity of landscapes have emerged in this state due to its geographical position, altitudinal amplitude, a complex topography, different climates, its physiographic complexity, and its geological and human history (González-Espinosa 2005). The Lacandon Rainforest, located in the State of Chia-

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_5

pas, is one of the last redoubts of the humid tropical ecosystems of the country. This is found in the Montes Azules Biosphere that counts with a great genetic, endemic, and rare diversity, like no other seen in the state (Muench 2008).

The current project took place in three communities of the Lacandon Rainforest. Analysis and comparison of the vegetation cover loss in the sites of Crucero San Javier, Bethel, and Lacanja Chansayab were conducted to determine the influential factors of ecological change.

Theoretical Framework

The vegetation cover is understood as the vegetation that covers an area in an ecosystem, fulfilling important functions such as the catchment and storage of energy and refuge for the wild fauna. It serves to stop the erosion of the soil, regulate the local climate, and keep at bay the atmospheric and noise contamination. It is the primary source of human well-being (Rzedowski 2006). This is also the case if it is being degraded due to different anthropic factors.

Among the main causes of forest mass clearance are, for instance, the migratory agriculture known as "*roza-tumba y quema*," (slash-and-burn agriculture). This is a traditional technique by which forested land is cut and the remaining vegetation is burned using the ashes for soil nutrients that only serve a couple of years. As a result, farmers need to abandon these lands and search for others that are more fertile. It has been found that this technique causes deforestation and is used by more than 300 million people per year affecting more than 15,000 million hectares of the fertile soil in the planet (Brady 1996). From 2005 to 2010, the Mexican Institute of Ecology and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Ecologia y Geografia, INEGI) registered a loss of more than 155,000 ha per year. The National Forest Inventory (NFI), declared in the same time span that the loss of the forest cover in Mexico was close to 326,000 ha per year (INEGI 2013; CONAFOR 2014).

According to the State Program of Territory Ordering (PEOT 2005), in 1957 Chiapas had 1,405,578 ha of humid rainforest from which only 54% remained by 2000 (761,265 ha); 18% (253,986 ha) have been converted to cultivated soils, and 21% (300,317 ha) to secondary vegetation. In addition, the soils in Chiapas are used for pastureland (22.30% of the state surface) and for cattle raising and agricultural purposes (17.13%).

Lacandon Rainforest

The Lacandon Rainforest covers a 1,818,052 ha surface in southern Chiapas. Most of it corresponds to the physiographic sub-province of the Marginales del Oriente Mountains of Chiapas (Müllerried 1982; Calleros and Brauer 1983). In 1982, at least 584,178 ha were transformed from which 45% is surfaced by trees. The Lacandon

Rainforest is still harboring the habitat for Chiapas' flora and fauna. According to the floristic division of the State of Chiapas done by (Miranda 1952), the climate and edaphic conditions help in the formation of the following vegetation communities.

Primary Vegetation or *Tém Ché* in Mayan. The upper stratum measures around 30 m and in some cases there are some species reaching up to 45 m. But on average, the diameter of the tree of this forest is around 30–60 cm. There are some tree diameters measuring up to 2–3 m chest high, like the mahogany and the ceiba. The mid stratum is characterized by trees that are around 15–25 m tall. The lower stratum is characterized by abundant trees and bushes measuring 5–12 m tall.

Secondary Vegetation or *Acahual/Jurup Che or Pa'c Ché Cör* in Mayan. This type of vegetation is used for agriculture, with a mosaic variety of ecological succession phases known as *acahual* (Jurup che or Pa'c Ché Cör in Mayan) that are abandoned areas with secondary vegetation or uncultivated for successional use. Their age varies, from 1 to 8 years with a great variety of pioneer bushes species.

What needs to be conserved? With exactitude, one cannot know what to conserve in the zone and at the same time, focus on it, to clearly define what needs to be done. Based on the "ABCD" model for the management of the forest ecosystems, the four sets key factors that require more attention and special care to achieve the objectives of conservation, sustainability, and restoration of the deforested sites are: (A) Water and Soil, (B) Biodiversity, (C) Forest Cover, and (D) Dynamic and Variety of the forest ecosystems at a landscape scale (Jardel 2010; Jardel-Peláez 2014).

(A) **Water and Soil**. The forest ecosystems play an important role in regulating hydrologic cycles and protecting watersheds. Furthermore, forests, provide "environmental hydrologic services" that are most valued by society. The conservation of water and soil requires that the whole society understands eco-systemic processes (Cotler 2015). Water and soil conservation is vital for humanity. The conservation of sufficient water reserves and nutrient contributes to the production of many resources (Perry 1998). The aquatic habitats (rivers and streams, lagoons, ponds, wetlands, etc.) of the forest landscapes harbor important biodiversity (Lindemayer 2002).

(B) **Biodiversity**. Preservation of the species diversity is fundamental to the forest ecosystem integrity and its capacity to provide services. A high degree of species diversity stabilizes the properties of ecosystems such as environmental production, disturbances emerge as resistance against invasive species, and reduction of plagues and diseases (Folke 2004). Soil productivity is enhanced by the diversity of existing organisms that intervene in the decomposition and mineralization of organic matter, contributing plant nutrition (i.e., mycorrhiza, microorganisms, and nitrogen fixers), and the transformation processes of the soils (Perry 1998, 2008).

(C) **Forest Cover**. The conservation and restoration of the forest cover is indispensable to help maintain the ecosystem functions such as climate and hydrological cycles regulation. This is also a condition sine qua non for the protection of the soils and to keep the availability of habitats for biodiversity (Chapin 2002).

(D) **Dynamic and Variety**. The fourth basic component of the "ABCD" is to understand the dynamic process and the natural or historical variety of the forest landscapes. This is quite likely the most difficult component to understand, due to a predominant static view of the ecosystems and constant concept changes such as "Ecosystem Equilibrium" or "Natural Balance" that are questioned by the current theory of ecological succession, (Botkin 1990; Christensen 1997; Puettman et al. 2009).

Background

In spite of the worst registered deforestation in Mexican territory since 1960, it still has more than half a million hectares of high and mid tropical forests (De Vos 2002; Muench 2008). In the Lacandon region, an annual deforestation of 475 ha has been reported. This is equivalent to at least 3.6% of the remaining forest, for the periods 2000–2005 (Carabias et al. 2006). During the period of 2001–2012, the reserve with the highest deforestation was Montes Azules in the northeast part (3.51%) and Cañon del Usumacinta (8.72%). The areas of Metzabok, Chan-kin, Nahá, Yaxchilán and Lacantún have had a total deforestation of 1.88%, 0.41%, 1.55%, 0.9% and 1.05%, respectively (INEGI 2007; CONAFOR 2010). The Bonampak area presented 0.01% deforestation in 2012.

From 2005 to 2014, forest fires were registered in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab. The fires were reported in Crucero San Javier, close to the Cojolita Hill area, and the second fires close to the Carranza Lagoon were at least 65 ha of forest cover were lost. There are not many studies or research conducted in the region about the analysis of the loss of vegetation cover. The only studies were done in the Biosphere Reserve of Montes Azules with the purpose of assessing the approximate value of annual losses. The transformed areas were classified as fragmented or disturbed (Meave 1990).

The grand majority of the studies were done utilizing aerial photography that allowed to obtain the deforestation rate happening in the vegetation cover at a state, regional, and local level. The most relevant images are the ones provided by the LANDSAT satellite. However, aerial photography is rarely used in field work that is more complex, unlike satellite image manipulation.

Problematic

Anthropic disturbance is a very discreet event that alters the structure of the land vegetation, in a specific ecosystem (Bolin 1983; Ramírez-Marcial and Williams-Linera 2001), community or population. Changes to the availability of resources, viability of the substrate, and/or the physical environment are generated due to this kind of disturbance (Pickett and White 1985). The world's ecosystems have been trans-

formed and show signs of deterioration due to human activities. The changes have had negative repercussions that have significantly altered the existing biodiversity in the last 40–50 years. The destruction and fragmentation processes are still rising and are leaving the ecosystem in a critical state (PEOT 2005).

The Lacandon Rainforest is characterized in the same way as the tropical forests of the world. To date, even with all the technological and cultural advancements of society, a solution for the accelerated process of modification and destruction in the forest mass has not been found. An adequate management of its peculiarities and consequent socioeconomic impacts has not been done either (Mauricio n.d.). The great threats befalling the biodiversity and vegetation covers are the great extensions of agricultural areas, forest fires, overexploitation of natural resources, demographic growth, and the great invasions happening every day.

Justification

Ecosystems provide continuous biochemistry cycles, natural processes of great importance, land retention, and control of erosion. The Lacandon Rainforest is a wild flora and fauna reserve. However, its species could be categorized as "in danger," according to the nomenclature: threatened, in extinction, special protection, rare, or endemic.

The most worrisome impact is the loss of its biodiversity and very useful species for nature and humans. In this region, half of all the species of the planet are represented. Studies about the structure of ecosystems and the existing degree of deforestation are urgently needed. We are losing biodiversity annually and need to generate strategies for the conservation and protection of our ecosystems (Santillán 1986; Hunter 2009).

Objectives

General Objective

- Analyze and compare the loss of vegetation cover in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab.

Specific Objective

- Identify the type of vegetation most affected by the deforestation of the researched area.

- Identify the affected surface of the vegetation cover in the researched area.

Description of the Researched Area

Geographical Location

The current study was conducted in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab located in the Lacandon Rainforest, Municipality of Ocosingo of the state of Chiapas, Mexico. The subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab is close to the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, the archaeological site of Bonampak, and La Cojolita Hill. It is located in the following coordinates: 16ª 45′ 46.7″ North Latitude and 91° 07′ 46.4″ West Longitude. The surface of the territory that the subcommunity occupies is at least 10,430 ha. (INEGI 2003).

Physiographic Characteristics

Geology
Regarding the subcommunity's geology, it corresponds to the mesozoic area of the mid and superior cretacic eras, more than 60–70 million years ago. Consequently, the geological events of the region are relatively new, what explains the high biological diversity of the state. Geological events caused the appearance of limestone and shale pertaining to the cenozoic and mesozoic eras, predominating in the Bonampak territory and in some parts of the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab (INEGI 2003).

Physiography
The Lacandon Rainforest is characterized by the presence of calcareous hills with relief variety in all of its territory, causing uneven mountain zones (Cuanalo 1989).

Hydrography
The National Commission of Water grouped Chiapas in the XI region, Southern Frontier, one of its subregions formed by the watershed of the Lacan-Tun river, a left stream of the Usumacinta river that utterly develops in nine municipalities of the state of Chiapas. This subregion has the most water availability of Chiapas where the archaeological monument, Bonampak is located (CONAGUA 2007).

The most important hydrological feature in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab is the Lacanja river that flows in the northeast–southeast direction through the Bonampak valley. It falls into the Lacan-Tun river that flows from east to north, joining the Salinas River and the formation of the Usumacinta river. This zone has many small streams that appear during raining seasons (Meave 1990).

Table 5.1 Population of the rainforest communities

Subcommunity	Men	Women	Population
Lacanja Chansayab	265	276	541
Bethel	123	111	234
Crucero San Javier	64	62	126
Total	452	449	901

Weather

The most prevalent weather is the warm-humid type, with an annual average of 24.6º C and a low thermal annual oscillation. The warmest period is in May with an annual average of 27.2º C maximum and the coldest period 21.8º C in January with an average of 21.8º C. The rains surpass annual rates of 1,500 mm (Vásquez Sánchez 1992).

Biological Characteristics

Vegetation

Studies done on the existing vegetation have registered a total of 245 species. The most represented families were the Legumes, Rubiaceae, and Lauraceae (Castillo 2007). There is a registry of the vegetation of the subcommunity of Lacanja and the one close to the Cojolita Hill conducted during the period of 2004–2007 by the National Forest Commission. In addition, there is a first and second inventory conducted from 2009 to 2013. The data showed more than 105 species of trees in the 2004–2007 period. The species that were highlighted were the Brosimum alicastrum, Guarea glabra, Heliocarpus appendiculatus, Sebastiania longicuspis, Alseis yucatanensis, Schizolobium parahyba, Trichospermum grewiifolium, Manilkara zapota, Spondias mombins, and Quercus crassifolia. For the period 2009–2013, 105 tree species were registered. The most abundant species were the Brosimum Alicastrum, Heliocarpus donnell-smithii, Croton glabellus, Dialium guianense, and Saurauia kegeliana (CONAFOR 2014).

Fauna

The most representative of the existing fauna were the monkeys, the tapir, the jaguar, macaws, the pheasant, and the cojolita (Medellín 1994). These species were considered threatened or in danger of extinction (Table 5.1).

The total population of the community is 901, including adults and children. Taking into account the population in each subcommunity, Lacanja Chansayab has a total of 541 people, 265 men and 276 women; Bethel 234 people, 123 men and 111 women, and Crucero San Javier 126 people, 64 men, and 62 women.

Methods

The sampling site was done in the subcommunities of Lacanja Chansayab, Bethel, and San Javier.

Sampling Method

The applied methods consisted of field trips and visualization, going through the paths that could lead to a possible recollection of vegetation cover and cover deforestation samples.

Field Trips and Visualization

The study took place during January and March 2017, taking at least three field trips using the same method of visualization and sample recollection in the three sites. The recollection took two days in addition to an 8 h trip to the field. A measuring tape was used to determine the perimeter of the sites that were georeferenced with the assistance of a Global Position System (GPS). Detailed descriptions of the deforested primary and secondary vegetation, jurup che in Mayan, were written in a field notebook in the type and degree of deforestation. In addition, a camera was used for evidence.

Results

During this study, at least 48 samplings were collected. A total of 69.25 ha of deforestation areas in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab were found. The graphic clearly shows that the Lacanja Chansayab zone had a greater rate of deforestation at 42%, representing a loss of 29.25 ha, followed by Bethel at a loss of 41% representing 28.5 ha, and Crucero San Javier 17%, representing a loss of 11.5 ha (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2).

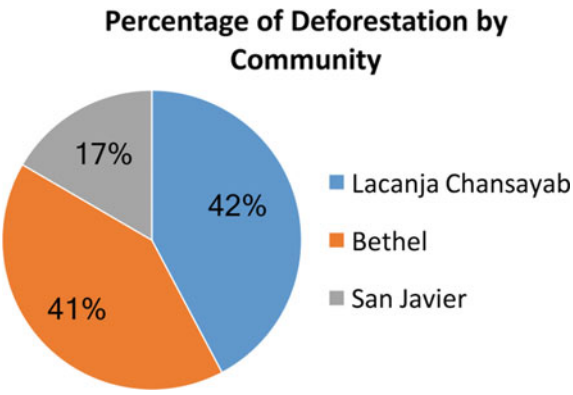

Fig. 5.1 Percentage of deforestation areas by community

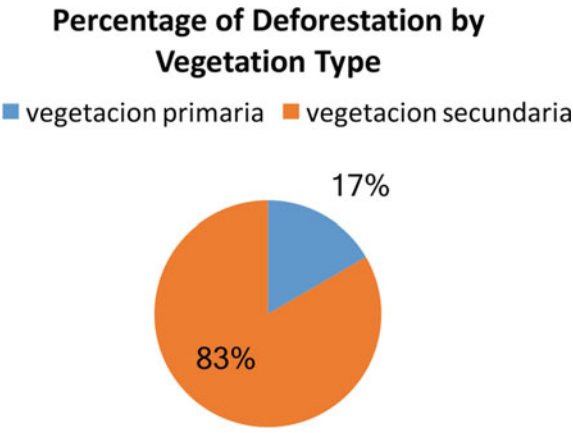

Fig. 5.2 Percentage of deforestation areas by vegetation type

The secondary vegetation showed the worst deforestation at 83%, representing a loss of 57.75 ha and the primary vegetation showed a moderate deforestation at 17%, representing a loss of 11.5 ha.

Subcommunity Deforestation

Findings suggested different percentages of deforestation in each of the three subcommunities.

The first graphic shows a worse primary vegetation deforestation than the secondary one with a 0.5 ha difference in San Javier (Fig. 5.3).

The second graphic shows a worse secondary vegetation deforestation than the primary one with a 23.5 difference in Bethel (Fig. 5.4).

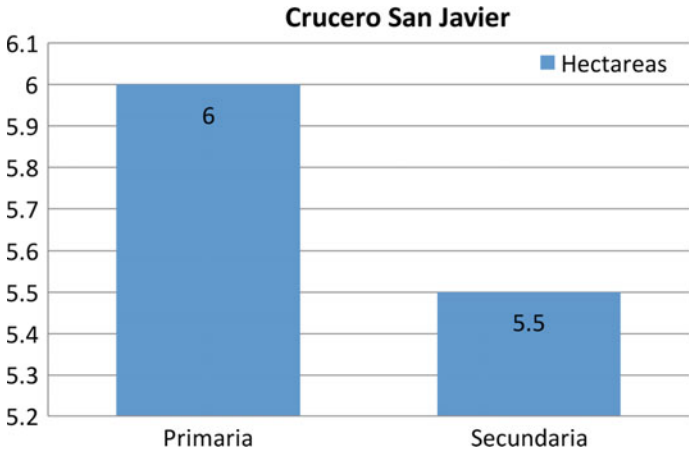

Fig. 5.3 Percentage of deforestation area by vegetation type in San Javier

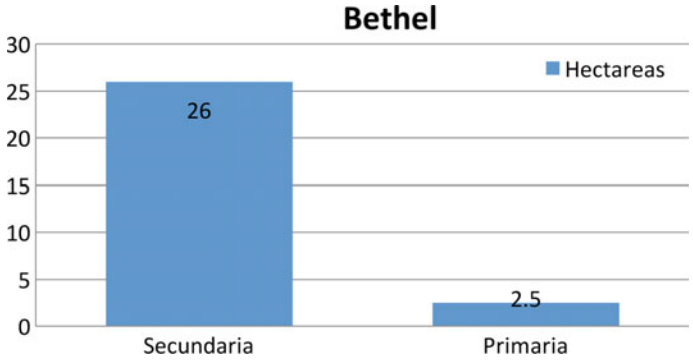

Fig. 5.4 Percentage of deforestation area by vegetation type in Bethel

The last graphic shows very similar findings in Lacanja Chansayab with a worse secondary vegetation deforestation than the primary one and the same 23.5 difference found in Bethel (Fig. 5.5).

Subcommunity Population Size

It was hypothesized that population size in each community would predict the difference in the degree and type of deforestation (Fig. 5.6).

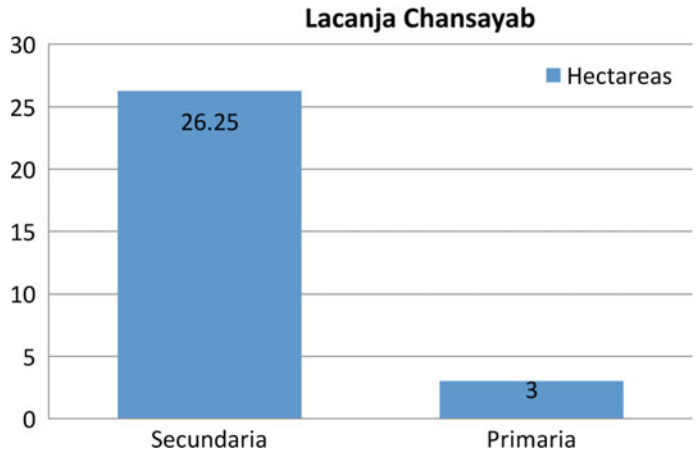

Fig. 5.5 Percentage of deforestation area by vegetation type in Lacanja Chansayab

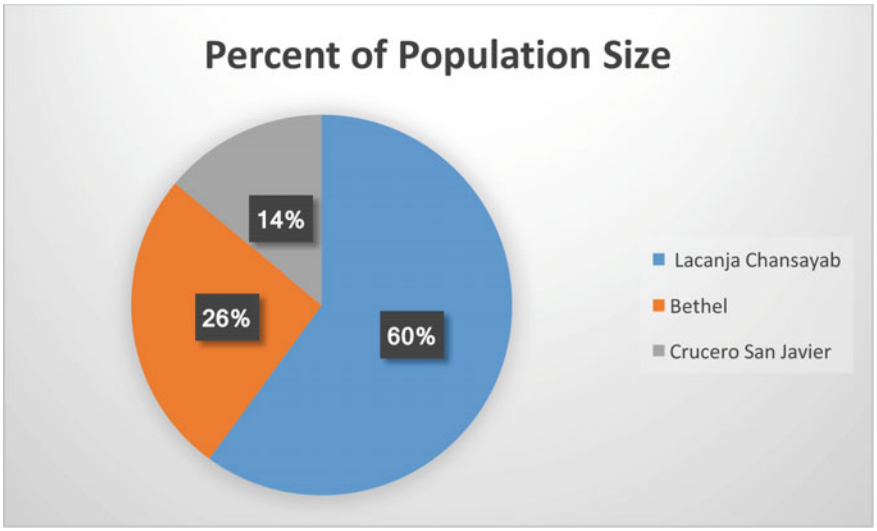

Fig. 5.6 Total population percentages by community

The subcommunity with the highest number of population was Lacanja Chansayab representing 60% of the total population, equivalent to a total of 541 people, followed by Bethel with 26%, equivalent to a total of 234 people. Crucero San Javier had the lowest population at 14%, equivalent to a total of 126 people.

Conclusion

Findings suggested that deforestation of vegetation cover is higher in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab due to soil change, use of land for agriculture, and application of the roza-tumba-quema practice that increases the probability of non-controlled forest fires, one of the most severe issues causing the loss of ecosystems. The analysis and comparison of the difference in vegetation deforestation showed that the secondary vegetation was the most affected at 83% and equivalent to 57.75 ha.

The highest deforested areas were found in the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab at 42% of the hectares, equivalent to 29.25 ha of deforested land. Lacanja Chansayab is the most populated subcommunity resulting in a bigger deforestation area. San Javier, the subcommunity with the lowest population size, has the lowest number of deforested areas. Population size appeared to be the most influential cause of deforestation. The problem that the subcommunity of Lacanja Chansayab is facing is an issue that must be solved in a multi-institutional and interdisciplinary way, in order to understand the fragility of the Lacandon Rainforest's mass and soil. There is an urgent need to increase the awareness of these issues because we depend on its natural resources.

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Chapter 6
Jootik Ta Lum Kinal (Mayan Tzeltal)—*To'on Yejer Ru'um* (Mayan Lacandon) *Nosotros y la Tierra* (Spanish)—We and the Earth

Maria Esther Velasco Garcia, Ernesto Chancayun Kin, Carlos Chambor Sanchez and Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

This chapter integrates the work of a youth collaborative representing the three main ethnic groups that reside in the Lacandon Rainforest: Lacandon, Tzeltal, and Cho'ol. We have formed a collaborative to propose, design, implement, and evaluate various ecological and community projects to preserve and sustain our Lacandon Rainforest. First, we will describe a proposal we wrote together to influence international and local policy for ecological sustainability. A brief section written by Carlos Chambor Sanchez will address the need to monitor our rich fauna. Last, Ernesto Chancayun Kin will share various projects in which he is involved to prevent forest fires, raise our communities' awareness to preserve our rich biodiversity, and promote community cooperation for sustainable ecotourism.

Public Policy Development for Community and Ecological Well-Being

This proposal has been written by the youth collective: "*Jootik Ta Lum Kinal/To'on Yejer Ru'um* (JTLK/TYR—*Nosotros y la Tierra*/We and the Earth)" represent-

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_6

ing the communities of Nueva Palestina—a Tzeltal community—and Lacanja Chansayab—a Mayan Lacandon community located in the municipalities of Ocosingo Chiapas, México and also known as the Lacandon Rainforest. We are also part of the "*Red de Colectivos Jóvenes Lideres de Chiapas* (JOCLCH—Network of Youth Collectives of Chiapas)" created by youths of the State of Chiapas who reside in diverse municipalities and seek to impact public policy and participate in decision-making. These youths work on diverse topics such as reproductive health, family planning, youth education, work and youth entrepreneurship, food sovereignty, peace culture promotion, and preservation of cultural and biological diversity as strategies for social change. We are young social agents who are working in the zones that are most vulnerable to these issues such as the municipalities of San Cristobal de las Casas, Comitan de Dominguez, Palenque, Ocosingo, Oxchuc, Tuxtla Gutierrez, and Chiapa de Corzo—among others.

This proposal has been conceived and written by four youth representatives who have experience in educating our communities on various ecological and social themes. We are graduates (Ernesto and Carlos) and students (Maria Esther and Marwilio) of the Technological University of the Rainforest, who are committed to the protection, preservation, and sustainability of our ecological habitat and desire that our voices be heard in public policies that promote ecological sustainability nationally and internationally. We have worked for more than 3 years in this Lacandon community of the State of Chiapas. Our mission is to promote conscientization of the rational use of natural resources in collaboration with the cultures that represent this population. We seek for innovative ways in which our communities can be more involved to promote the health and well-being of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas.

Relevance of This Project

It is imperative to address international policy work given that all countries' policy actions have significant impacts in other regions of the world. Ecological issues need to be viewed within a global context as we all share one Earth. This proposal addresses the need to forge bridges to expand the impact that Indigenous Psychologies can make when many of its foundations and principles are applied to address the pervasive ecological issues we are facing worldwide. In this proposal, we are applying important values, strategies, and actions that are supported by the inclusion of other ways of knowing and acting that have been silenced by colonial power and that have effectively managed their habitat. Furthermore, youth involvement in decision-making will improve community and environmental health and well-being. We are looking for inclusion of our cultural and biological diversity, building intergenerational and intercultural networks to strengthen international solidarity for ecological sustainability. We seek to strengthen community capacity led by multicultural, young generations from indigenous communities, and the development of international public policy to improve our *buen vivir* (well-being).

Description of the Community Context

México has become an important, international geopolitical locality given its rich cultural, biological, and ecological diversity. Many authors assigned the Lacandon Rainforest as one of the zones among the first eight in the world that still house rich diversity. Chiapas, with a territorial expansion of 7,355,416 hectares, takes nationally the second rank in most important ecological and cultural assets after the State of Oaxaca. Without a doubt, these are the regions with the highest incidence of ethnic and biological diversity. For this reason, these two states also house important biological, ecological, and social research institutions and organizations. All these riches and biological diversity have made Chiapas one of the localities in which natural protected areas have been formally established (Reyes et al. 2010).

At the same time, Chiapas is considered as a central asset of biological and cultural diversity; it is also internationally perceived as a center of community empowerment demanding, for centuries, social change based on essential human and Earth rights. In this state have existed powerful social movements lead by youths like us, creating social networks that allow for our voices to be heard and to be respected as key agents of just, social change.

We are a nonpartisan, independent, and not-for-profit organization. Our main goal is the social, cultural, ecological, and political inclusiveness that promotes the diversity of the various communities, organizations, and life-forms inhabiting our Earth.

Issues

Greedy extraction of the natural resources of the Lacandon Rainforest by global, international capital has caused the severe ecological degradation that our communities are facing. Examples are the extraction of mahogany in the 1920–50 s and the actual, illegal, and severe extraction of the *Xate* palm, native to this region that, consequently, has caused its extinction and the negligent, imposed replacement by the imported African palm that in turn caused the degradation of its soil (De Vos 1988; Instituto Nacional de Ecología 2000; Leyva et al. 2002; Muench 2008).

Another issue is the loss of its fauna caused by this same exploitation guided by the rules of global, international capital that impacts the health and well-being of our communities as well as their natural habitat. Based on our ancestral wisdom, subsistence hunting has been regulated by the natural, reproductive cycles of the animal species. However, due to conditions of extreme poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and the exploitation of our indigenous communities since colonial times until now manifested in current coloniality, the inhabitants of this land are pressed to hunt in order to feed their families, including during restricted, reproductive cycles (De Vos 1988).

The imposition of the Western culture on our people and cultures since colonial times has caused the loss of our languages, traditions, and cultures. Consequently, one of the main objectives of our collective is to raise consciousness of the importance of cultural and linguistic preservation and sustainability. Our ancestral wisdom and knowledge have allowed for the preservation of our natural resources and due to colonization and the continued imposition of the Western culture, our communities are losing them. We seek to promote the revitalization of our wisdom and knowledge through these activities of conscientization and ecological education.

Intervention

As part of an important intervention strategy, it is imperative to inform national and international public policy in order to create guidelines that center the importance of the ecological and cultural preservation of the Lacandon Rainforest as a worldwide asset. This zone is internationally considered "*el pulmón del mundo* (the lung of the world)" given that the *Reserva de La Biosfera de Montes Azules* (REBIMA— Reserve of the Blue Mountains) is one of the major ecological zones with high biodiversity (De Vos 1988; Leyva et al. 2002; Muench 2008). This zone is also seen by global capital and international, ecological organizations as responsible for the capture of carbon dioxide produced in the high technological and industrial countries. This causes the perception to consider the Lacandon Rainforest as an important resource to clean international pollution, causing again the overexploitation of its capacity. For this reason, committed youths want to promote an international public policy that allows raising consciousness of the main sources that cause the overexploitation of this zone, considered internationally an essential natural resource that needs to be protected, sustained, and preserved.

Another strategy of this intervention is the development of a policy brief that allows to compile the testimonies of the involved communities about the importance of public policies that advocate in benefit of the REBIMA's natural resources. The implementation of this proposal in the Lacandon communities including: Nueva Palestina, Lacanja Chansayab, and Frontera Corozal as pilot communities will allow its future replication in other communities such as: Zamora Pico de Oro, Plan de Ayutla, Nuevo Chamizal, Playon de la Gloria, Benemérito de las Américas, Maravilla Tenejapa, and Comitán de Domínguez that confirm the Tzeltal, Cho'ol, Maya Lacandón, and Zoque ethnicities. These are the indigenous ethnicities most involved in this proposal through the lead of youths who represent them and are part of our collective and youth networks. The four authors who wrote this proposal, two Tzeltal youths from Nueva Palestina and two recently graduated youth who received a B.S degree in environmental sciences from the Universidad Tecnologica de la Selva, Chiapas, will be the Principal Investigators and implementers of its activities. We will contact one youth representative from the community of Frontera Colosal who will join this pilot proposal with the vision of implementing in the future the replication of our strategies, involving other youths, who as members of this collective will engage

their own communities. Because we belong to a wide youth network, we already count with youth volunteers from each community who could serve as representatives and who know their own languages and cultures. We have the shared vision that in the future we will be able to replicate these strategies in other communities, once we have learned what worked and what did not work in order to improve them for stronger impact and effectiveness.

Activities

Phase I: Proposal implementation

Activity 1. We will ask administrative authorities in each community to communicate in community assemblies the purpose and objectives of this project and will seek their collective commitment and approval.

Activity 2. We will develop a work plan integrating the proposed and approved activities. As overall vision of this project, we will propose a series of meetings in order to develop the dissemination of our main objectives and plan to inform national and international policies that promote the well-being of our communities as well as the sustainability of our cultures and ecology, our 'buen vivir.'

Activity 3. Anothet important factor is to promote national and international solidarity and committment as well as to gain clarity of the "*nosotros* (we)." The discoveries, knowledge, creations, and examples of the teachings of the ancestors are seeds for progress in human minds, and in the human will and experience that will continue to improve the health and well-being of our communities for future generations. Consequently, our parents', grandparents', great-grandparents', and ancestors' teachings are present in our feeling and thinking, shaped by our own experience and inherited onto future generations.

We want to emphasize that each person has the capacity to implement activities and to dedicate with joy to their implementation. These individual capacities build the community capacity whenever an issue needs to be addressed. Community cooperation allocates work-load according to the capacities and abilities of each community member yielding satisfactory outcomes. In this way, community capacity can have effective impacts.

We will work together to accomplish cultural, community, and ecological health and well-being doing what each of us can do best, favoring our personal and community growth. With the strength of the "nosotros" that includes the will of children, youths, their parents, and neighbors, our collective Jo´otik Sok Lum K'inal/ To'on Yejer Ru'um/ Nosotros y la Tierra promotes coordinated and committed actions to improve the health and well-being of our indigenous communities, their cultures, and ecology.

Another important objective is to integrate this project into our continuous work on raising consciousness of the importance of being together, including diverse generations and cultures, and collaborating with institutions of public education that include elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and universities in the involved communities with the purpose of increasing intercultural and intergenerational collaboration.

We will also integrate into this project other activities that we have been conducting during the past 3 years such as workshops to collect intergenerational and intercultural perceptions of ecological sustainability in the region, perceptions about

current conditions, and future visions as well as the needed conditions to achieve them. These workshops have been implemented in elementary schools as well as junior and senior high schools in the communities that form the infrastructure of this project. In addition, as mentioned above, other important infrastructure will be the general assemblies that will involve the adult residents of these communities as well as their decision-makers. Based on these structures we will implement workshops and meetings that allow developing local decisions to improve the health and well-being of the involved communities as well as their natural environments.

Activity 4. We will promote the community capacity to influence national and international public policy based on ancestral wisdom and knowledge that have evidenced to effectively have preserved and sustained the rich cultural and biological diversity of our region. This project will promote the intergenerational and cultural community capacity to effectively contribute to the development of public policy that directly impacts their well-being.

It is essential to increase the work on awareness raising in order to strengthen the effectiveness of national and international public policy that directly benefits the health and sustainability of our Earth. This needs to be a transparent, horizontal, and inclusive process that involves all sectors of society.

We will implement actions that are supported by international, ecological policy that seeks to preserve, maintain, and sustain worldwide natural reserves. In order to conduct these actions, we will further look for the necessary resources to also address current issues of climate change. We understand that humanity shares the same planet, inhabited as well by a variety of species. In this shared living, dialogue and shared actions are necessary and conflict needs to be resolved peacefully (Arroyo-Quiroz et al. 2005). For this reason, we will promote the development of treaties and action plans that integrate collective consensus on important resolutions to improve community, cultural, and ecological health and well-being.

Phase 2. Dissemination of Findings

Activity 5. We will promote the dissemination of findings in order to reach a wide, national and international audience. We will submit Community Reports based on popular education approaches such as videos, photo-testimonies, and booklets that disseminate the clear articulation of national and international policies that promote the health and well-being of our communities and our environment.

Community Monitoring of Wildlife

Carlos Chambor Sanchez

Due to the financing of Payments for Environmental Services (PSA in Spanish) that the community receives from the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR in Spanish), among other institutions, community monitoring of wildlife in the area has been carried out. This activity is important for the community and society in general to know and make known the biological diversity that exists within the Lacandon area as part of our natural and cultural wealth that has been alive for many years. Through these works, which have been carried out by the group of

Fig. 6.1 Amphibian. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

Young Surveillance Brigades during a 3-year period (2015–2017), a large number of records of the fauna inhabiting the Lacandon Rainforest within the Reserve of the Montes Azules Biosphere (REBIMA) has been carried out by the people of the area, particularly in the buffer zone that includes sites where agricultural activities take place (Figs. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4).

It is important and necessary to continue executing these types of commitments and to follow up on obtaining new data in the different areas within the reserve. Our group of young people interested in the preservation of our rainforest's biodiversity seeks support for monitoring these wildlife activities. Likewise, we want to know and make known to the world the current state of these species in order to develop proposals for their conservation and protection.

Community Work for the Care and Sustainability of the Lacandon Rainforest

Ernesto Chancayun Kin

Forest Fires Prevention

This community work to prevent fires has been carried out during 2015–2018 thanks to the dedication of young Lacandones interested in preserving the Lacandon Rainforest. These young people belong to a community of fire brigades for the protection and care of the rainforest. There have been some incidents of forest fires in the community due to the clearing and burning practices. Some government institutions have supported this work such as the Ministry of the Environment and Natural History (SEMAHN in Spanish), the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR in Spanish)

Fig. 6.2 Bird. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

and Payment for Environmental Service (PSA in Spanish). By the end of 2018, the support that has been received from these institutions will be terminated until new agreements are formalized. However, the young people who integrate this work team will be working for the community to continue maintaining the forest, carrying out the same activities of forest fire prevention without any economic support.

The task of continuing to maintain the Lacandon Rainforest will be difficult without receiving support from different institutions. It is necessary to carry out a constant monitoring within the community to train more people since currently there are only 15 brigade members in Lacanja Chansayab. Recently 12 brigade members joined the same tasks in another community. The surveillance tours of the 15 brigade members take place in the neighborhoods of Bethel and Crucero Bonampak, located east of the entrance to the buffer zone—a short fire gap that marks the limit where it is no longer possible to practice slash-and-burn agriculture. Another entrance to this buffer zone is to the south in the adjoining area where Bonampak and Laguna Lacanja are located, and that is divided by the water basin of the Rio Lacanja.

The community surveillance tours start as early as 6:00 a.m. accessing the small villages until reaching the limit marked as a fire breach. Before carrying out the tours, the 15 community fire brigade members prepare a list of the people who have their work area near the firebreak, and a list of the people who practice the slash-and-burn agriculture to know the calendar when they implement this practice. Monitoring tours are conducted to fight fires in all plots of the rainforest. These tours are made with three groups of five people to cover more areas with scheduled dates. We only work for three months: March, April, and May. We receive a compensation of $2,500

Fig. 6.3 Insect. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

Fig. 6.4 Reptile. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

Fig. 6.5 Youth fire brigade. Photograph by Enrique Villar Contreras

(around $130) per month without life insurance or antivenin kits for any incident that may occur. We do not have good equipment but only basic materials. We would like to have much more economic support, material equipment, and more people who are involved in the care of our rainforest, protecting other areas of our communities. In this way, we would have a greater capacity to avoid forest fires within the Lacandon Rainforest area.

The results obtained during 2015–2018 indicate that there have not been fires registered that could have damaged a significant land extension of hectares. This is due to the fact that we have managed to control fires immediately because those who practice slash-and-burn agriculture have informed the corresponding authorities that they will carry out this practice on specific dates and times. In addition, people have been trained by the staff of the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR in Spanish) and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP in Spanish). Moreover, the dedication of fire brigade members, the civil protection belonging to the same communities, has increased community awareness of the problem caused by uncontrolled burning and they have been assisted by trained personnel (Fig. 6.5).

Tourist Project Lacanja Chansayab Municipality of Ocosingo, Chiapas

In 2000, the government financed the construction of 11 tourist centers in the community of Lacanja Chansayab. This project entitled "Lacandona Zone Development – Lacanja Chansayab Tourism Project" was funded by the Tourism Secretariat (SECTUR in Spanish). In 2001 the construction of the infrastructure to host and service visitors was completed. In 2002, *Ingeniería Ambiental del Sureste, S. A de C. V* (Southern Environmental Engineering Company) conducted the environmental impact assessment and approved the project given it followed sustainable ecotourism guidelines.

Table 6.1 describes the names of the heads of families who benefited from these ecological camps to promote tourism, the name of the eco-camp, its location, and current status—that is, if they are still in service.

Of the 11 modules of existing tourist centers, 10 are in service to host visitors. The areas of the tourist centers have the Sierra La Cojolita Reserve to the north, the Bonampak Protected Natural Area and the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve to the south, the Sierra la Cojolita Reserve extension to the east, and the Sierra la Cojolita and the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve to the west. The area has several rivers such as, the Rio Lacanja and Rio Cedros that have a series of waterfalls with small falls of 2 to 4 m, and lakes such as, the Laguna Carranza, *Laguna Amarilla* (the Yellow Lake), and Laguna Lacanja. These are areas of attractive natural beauty.

The 11 modules have sections of 250 m^2 for the construction of simple (4.20 m × 11 m) and double (8 m × 11 m) cabins with installation of water tanks and a biodigester system. The beneficiaries used their lands as human settlements, back-

Table 6.1 Names of owners and ecocamps in the community of Lacanja Chansayab

Location modules				
N°	Owner	Name of the current tourist center	Location	Existing
1	Moisés Tarano Gonzales	N/A	Bethel	No
2	Margarito Chan Kayun	Chanaj	Crucero Bonampak	Yes
3	Manuel Chambor Yuc	Yax Can	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
4	Carmelo Chambor Yuc	Lacandones Camp	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
5	Enrique Chankin Paniagua	Top che	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
6	Kimbor Paniagua	Kimbor	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
7	Vicente Kin Paniagua	Yatoch Barum	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
8	Juan Chan Kayom Yuc	Yax pepen	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
9	Ricardo Chambor Kin	Rio Lacanja	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
10	Carlos Chambor Kin	Yax can	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
11	Martin Chan Kin Yuc	Yax Che	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes

Table 6.2 Names of new owners and ecocamps in the Lacanja Chansayab subcommunity

Location modules				
N°	Owner	Name of the current tourist center	Location	Existing
1	Pablo Chankin	Tres Lagunas: Santuario de cocodrilos	San Javier	Yes
2	Rodolfo Chankin	Cueva de Tejon	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
3	Enrique Chankin	Coc Chan	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
4	Manuel Castellano Chankin	Jaguares	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
5	Ismael Chansab Yuc	Yax Bache	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
6	Ulises Chambor Chanes	Tulipanes	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
7	Felipe Chambor Kin	Túur	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
8	Mario Chambor Chanabor	Sak Nok	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
9	Gabriel Garcia Paniagua	Kayon	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
10	Gilberto Miranda Caballero	Yatoch Buj	Lacanja Chansayab	Yes
11	Yolanda Chambor	Maya Luna Roja	Crucero San Javier	Yes

yards, *acahuales* (secondary vegetation), agriculture, annual crops, traditional milpa, and other purposes. Thus, they had to make land use changes. These sites are well connected by a state road that is paved and goes from the city of Palenque to the community of San Javier Junction, and a dirt road that goes from the latter community to the archaeological site of Bonampak and Lacanja Chansayab. All other sites in the community have dirt roads and paths or trails that lead to sites of natural attraction.

In the last 8 years (2010–2018), 10 new tourist centers have been built within the subcommunity of Lacanjá Chansayab consisting of different types of constructions—according to the design chosen by the owners—ranging from rustic or private cabins to eco-hotels and tents in the form of camping (Table 6.2).

All the centers are intended to host visitors and offer various activities such as hiking to the *Cueva de Murcielago* (Cave of the Bat) and the spring, visits to the archaeological site of Bonampak, the *Sak Nok*, *Laguna de las Golondrinas* (Waterfall of the Swallows), the Lost City, rafting sport, and night tours through the jungle. Yet, the tourist centers compete among themselves offering the same services and activities to the visitors, although some look for another kind of activity such as arts and crafts workshops that they could attend. It is recommended that the tourist centers organize to coordinate the activities and services offered to visitors and avoid the deterioration of our Lacandon Rainforest. For this to happen, it is necessary to monitor the degree of sustainable ecotourism that can both conserve the protected natural areas and provide economic support to the community (Fig. 6.6).

Fig. 6.6 Youth-led ceremonies to preserve our culture and rainforest. Enrique Villar Contreras

Sensitization of the Population and Strategic Development of Sustainable Tourism as a Tool for Ecological Conservation

Community Sensitization to Reduce Vegetation Overuse

Since January 2018, I have worked as a community promoter employed by the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO in Spanish) in collaboration with other comrades from the Frontera Corozal and Nueva Palestina subcommunities. We sensitize the population about the overuse of vegetation for the extensive consumption of livestock. The extensive cultivation of the African oil palm, livestock, and extensive agriculture are the main predatory factors that cause the deforestation of the Lacandon Rainforest. Additionally, agrochemicals are used to facilitate clearing work as well as inadequate management of grazing intensity and range, pasture, and animal capacity which reduce the productivity of ecosystems. This causes the expansion of the livestock frontier that in turn causes deforestation and decrease of the ecosystems' environmental services, which contribute to the global warming that the planet is currently suffering.

We carried out an evaluation for the members of the Livestock Union, and others who do not belong to this society, as well as for the Silvopastoral Network in Chiapas in Frontera Corozal and Nueva Palestina. The evaluation studied the dimension of the deforested areas that are destined to livestock areas, which become abandoned for not having good results. Some have up to 15 to 40 hectares of pastures with few divisions. These livestock areas do not have a variety of pastures where the intention of the producers is to rotate them for 30–80 cattle. The objectives are not achieved due to lack of adequate management of pasture rotation as well as of cattle vaccination and other activities carried out by livestock. If the producers were seriously committed to the adoption of improved techniques in sustainable livestock management using the Silvopastoral Systems (SSP), a project that is being implemented in Chiapas, these techniques would be replicated in other places and good results would be achieved. The application of sustainable systems implies the incorporation of trees, especially, native fodder that have higher percentage of proteins than the best grass. In this way, the interaction of perennial woody plants (trees or shrubs) that can be sources of food in fiber, fodder, protein, insecticide, and deworming for livestock can take place–since they are legume herbaceous plants and pastures.

Exchange of Experiences in Ecotourism Among Indigenous Communities

During May 24–29, 2018, an exchange of experiences in ecotourism was carried out, supported by the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO in Spanish), the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP in Spanish), *Natura and Ecosistemas Mexicanos AC* (Natura and Mexican Ecosystems Company), and *La Mano del Mono* (The Monkey's Hand), a community organization in Oaxaca, to organize ecotourism service providers in the Lacandon Rainforest region. A total of 24 colleagues attended this exchange with a collaborative ecotourism service organization from Oaxaca located in an agrarian region comprised of eight communities. The Oaxacan organization shared its experience of the project, the opportunities to replicate the process that included implementing various tours, using facilities such as zip-line and suspension bridge, extreme cycling, handicraft workshops, gastronomy workshops, making serrano bread, and jam production. They have a very good organization and have provided ecotourism services for over 25 years, managing their own travel agency and several tour packages. The personnel assigned by the community carry out the tours for visitors to appreciate the wonders of nature.

In the routes to the trails, the explanations of the guides were based on their own ancestral knowledge. I believe that this collaborative model of shared ecotourism services such as that carried out by the communities of the Sierra Norte de Oaxaca is an excellent work model that can be replicated in other regions, emphasizing connections and collaboration and not competition. One of the dreams I have had is

to see my community as well organized as I saw it reflected in Oaxaca. As mentioned, the work in collaboration with several communities is complicated but possible, and finally it is very productive and satisfying.

A Vision for Collaborative Ecotourism in Lacanjá Chansayáb

The opportunity to develop collaborative tourism in the Lacandon Rainforest is very extensive. This would require to work with providers of ecotourism services first individually, and then as a union. This is a huge challenge that must be faced with authorities who have very different ideals than those of us, young entrepreneurs. Lacanja Chansayab has various ecological and archaeological sites as well as possible collaborators to perform activities such as: (1) visits to the ecological sites of *Tres Lagunas* (the Three Lakes), the Crocodile Sanctuary, the spring, the Lost City, the Bat Cave, Laguna Amarilla, Laguna Lacanjá, Laguna Jalisco, the viewpoint, *Cenote Negro* (Black Cenote); (2) visits to archaeological centers such as Bonampak and *Ruina las Abejas* (the Bees' Pyramids); (3) hiking trails for the sighting of fauna and flora; (4) sports activities such as rafting, and (5) participation in cultural activities such as, arts and crafts, gastronomy workshops, workshops on oral histories, mythology and legends, natural medicine workshops, festivals, rituals, and ceremonies.

Vision. I see my community in 10–15 years replicating the working model of the Oaxacan collaborative. For this, it is necessary to organize both ecotourism centers and the community. If the objective of developing a good community organization is achieved, coordinated services can be implemented attracting visitors, which will generate more income for the improvement of community well-being. The profits will support the cultural revitalization, the preservation of our ancestral knowledge, the ecological preservation, the conservation of biodiversity, and the generation of cultural workshops. In this way, the visitors would have a magical experience relating with the Lacandones and other ethnic groups. Each tourist center will have different activities to offer such as hiking, rafting, story workshops, legends, mythology, ancestral knowledge, and traditional medicine—among others. Within the community, there will be a cultural center and a Mayan Lacandon school for children and youth, and seniors collaborating for the community's well-being. There will also be workshops on typical gastronomic exhibitions, samples of handicrafts, clothing, dances, ceremonies, and rituals.

With a good community organization based on collaboration and not competition, we will create catalogs of coordinated service packages. We will attract visitors who appreciate the Lacandon Rainforest, not only because travel agencies sell them tour packages but also because they have an authentic interest in our culture and in conserving our Mother Earth's biodiversity (Figs. 6.7 and 6.8).

Fig. 6.7 Youth at the Technological University of the Rainforest (TUR) with Chan'Kin Chambor (co-author). Photograph by Enrique Villar Contreras

Fig. 6.8 Graduation ceremony. Photograph by Enrique Villar Contreras

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Chapter 7
Oral History, Legends, Myths, Poetry, and Images

Ernesto Chancayun Kin, Maria Esther Velasco Garcia, Martha Chanuk Chankin and Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

This chapter collects a tapestry of oral history, legends, and myths learned from our ancestors as well as our deep emotions and connection with our Mother Earth by means of poems and images.

Lacanja Chansayab: Culture and Knowledge of the Lacandones from Chiapas

Ernesto Chancayun Kin

Lacanja Chansaya means: "The water snake or snake water of the little star." My grandfather and my father told me what our great-grandparents' experience was like before the explorers made our civilization known to the world. Families do not talk about their Maya Lacandon offspring, only they know who their great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents were.

Before there were only four clans (family groups), represented by their heads of family: Jose Pepe Chambor, Kayom Carranza, Pancho Villa Bor, and Obregón Kin with their respective women and children. They were the ones who made themselves known to the world through the explorers and the *chicleros* (collectors of gum) who came to the Lacandon Jungle. The explorers and the chicleros gave them names in Spanish so they would not get confused. These four heads of family were those who made known to the explorers the Ciudad Perdida (Lost City) that is currently called Bonampak. But it was not the explorers Carlos Frey and Silvanus Morley

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_7

who discovered the Lost City. They made known to the world what the jungle was protecting since they had Western preparation and the opportunity to spread the information provided by my great-grandparents through the press and journalism. If my great-grandparents at that time had had the same tools and knowledge of how to disseminate information, I assure you that the expeditionists or explorers would not have this credit of discoverers of the Lost City. My grandparents and great-grandparents frequented this sacred place where they performed their rituals, ceremonies, offerings, and pilgrimage to thank the God of the Gods, creator of the whole: *Hach´ak´yum*. This means that my great-grandparents should be recognized as the true discoverers of the Lost City.

In the past, the Lacandones lived in small houses called "*caríbales*" that measured in height from 1.40 to 2 m and 3 × 5 m in width and length. They had the roofs covered with *Mexican Sabal* (guano palm), and the walls were made of wooden round sticks, cork, reed, and other materials. Their beds, called in Maya Lacandon "*chä ak,*'" were also made of wooden round sticks assembled to rest at night. They also used fiber hammocks to sleep and rest during the day. The blankets were made of animal skins, wood fibers, or cotton materials. These were made by women. Inside of the *caríbal* (house), there were cooking and eating instruments such as a clay *comal* (a smooth, flat griddle), dishes of the same material, glasses, and fire pits for cooking food as well as for lighting inside the house.

With the passage of time, families or clans grew. These had to have names of animals with great emblem such as jaguar, tapir, puma, boar, monkey—among others—which represented each clan with the respective characteristics of each animal name. For example, the monkey that is very agile to climb trees, astute, and strong would represent these same characteristics of the clan with that name. The sons and daughters of the Monkey clan were not allowed to mate with another clan with animal names that were not respected or had skills. For example, the Jaguar clan could not associate with the Turtle clan. They could only associate with strong and audacious family groups. For example, the Wild Boar clan could relate to the Tapir clan, the Jaguar clan, and the Crocodile clan.

One of the Several Ways to Have a Lacandon Woman

The way to know if a woman was single or had a partner was that the engaged women carried feathers of some colorful bird like, macaw, pheasant, eagle, and toucan. It was common to see women wearing a pin with feathers of a toucan in their hair, which they would give to their partner when they committed. In the case of those who were not engaged, they wore only necklaces made of materials collected inside the forest by themselves or by their mother, such as resistant seeds and a part of an animal such as claws, beaks, nails, and fangs.

In the old days, it was not very easy to be given a wife or to ask for a wife. The man had to go before the woman's parents and ask if they had a daughter who could become his wife. Although it was known that the family had daughters, the first thing

that the father did was show his sons and say that he had no daughters. He would ask you which of the sons you liked. If you continued to persist in going to visit them frequently, bringing gifts to him and his wife, you could earn the trust of the family. Maybe the parents would show you their daughters at the end. Everything depended on how skillful you were hunting, fishing, collecting fruits, and working your cornfield. That was what was most valued at that time so that the daughter and mother-in-law did not have to go hungry in case the father was missing.

Another requirement was that you had to work for the father-in-law for as long as the age of the woman you wanted corresponded. This was because the family had dedicated all that time to the care of the girl who is now a woman. According to the work that the father did, the future husband's job would be to hunt with his father-in-law and carry all his hunting, work the traditional *milpa* (cornfield), or make a new house and load all the necessary materials. If you endured the work time in the end you were given his daughter as your wife. If you could not bear to work the time corresponding to the woman's age, you would not get anything. The father would not lose anything and would continue waiting for the man worthy of his daughter.

Knowing that a woman in the family was pregnant, an old man could go to the woman and ask her if the pregnancy is a girl, she should become his wife. The mother would raise the girl receiving the support of the man who asked for her. He would send food until she was the right age to be his wife. He could take her home no matter how old the man was, even if he was much older.

What Was Valued in the Lacandon Culture

In the past, it was not easy to visit a Lacandon family. Before doing so, you had to announce that you were going to visit by hitting a tree. If the family you wanted to visit responded in the same way, you had permission to visit them. But if you did not announce and arrived unexpectedly, you would have caused your certain death as it was interpreted as aggression.

If you were a good hunter, the woman seeing you returning from afar would prepare your *pozol* (beverage prepared with corn and cacao) and reheat your food quickly. She would run to greet you and offer you a pozol cup. When looking tired and thirsty due to the hunt you have brought, you would be treated well. The opposite would be the case if you would not bring hunt. The woman would then prepare chili powder in a *molcajete* (mortar) to eat only with tortilla. And if you would not bring anything with each hunting trip, the woman would leave you and go live with someone else who is a better hunter. Even if that man had a woman, the other woman would accept her to share the work of the household that is done together living without any conflict.

As my grandfather told me, everything is learned in the rainforest. There you learn the mystery of the ancestors that is hidden under its shadow and that only great-grandparents know. Mother Nature gives us knowledge. In addition, nature contains many mysterious or mystical things, which with the passage of time are

Fig. 7.1 Our Lacandon Rainforest. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

revealed only to worthy people who are pure of heart, do not intend to harm the relationship of man with animals and nature, and harmoniously live together.

That is the knowledge that continues to exist in us the Lacandones, the *Hach Winik* (the true people), who wear the white tunic that represents peace, wisdom, and long hair that symbolizes the connection with nature. Without the long hair, we would not have the knowledge that the jungle reveals to us every time that one goes into the deepest part of it, where the animals do not know the human being since they see us as part of the jungle. There are magnificent creatures, large animals that are leaders of each species. They show you the way to communicate with them. The human being uses the song to communicate with the largest and smallest of the animal kingdom. The animals interpret our song in their own language (Fig. 7.1).

Sigh of Life: Lessons from My Grandfather and My Lacandon Rainforest

Maria Esther Velasco Garcia

It has been several nights of long conversations between my grandfather and me, as well as the journey of several ways to understand what he shared. “Life in my time was not living, however, we learned to live,” he told me. He was only 3 years old when his mother died. He had a little brother of almost a year of age and they

both moved to his aunt's house. At 6 years old, he was already going out to look for firewood because they had to support the family to earn their food.

He told me that all the children that were born had to be baptized as soon as possible. The sponsors of the baptism, the godparents, had to be strong to take care of their godchild. They had to be godparents that are respected in the town. They said that witchcraft did not let children grow up. If the children were not baptized, there would be no one to protect them and they were free to receive witchcraft and die. When the babies got sick, the godparents had the responsibility to dialogue with the sorcerer and if he did the spell convince him to heal the child. Only a few children survived.

"The most important thing is respect," said my grandfather. "If you come across older persons you have to take the step to greet them and kiss their hands with your head down until you pass and continue your walk." From him, I learned that at celebrations and large ceremonies, godparents and the elderly are served first food. That also means respect towards them.

About the Work in the Field and the Foundation of Nueva Palestina

At an early age, my grandfather started working at the ranch. They planted tobacco, corn, beans, and coffee in the vast landlord's land. They got up when the roosters began to sing, drank their coffee, and ate tortillas while the women made the pozol. My grandparent worked for the landlord only from Monday to Wednesday. The other days he worked for himself. Everything that was harvested in the milpa was sold only to the owner of the ranch where they lived. They got paid less than when they sold their products in town. But in those times, there were many problems. People heard that there were wars in other places, that they were killing themselves, and that the military had already entered the *rancherias* (small settlements) to look for young people, who had not married, to go to war since they had no family. One day the military arrived at the ranch where my grandfather worked. But the landlord did not want to lose his people and warned them before the military arrived so they could hide and escape. They fled the ranch and hid so the military could not find them and they could be safe. When my grandfather returned home, his aunt told him to look for a woman and have a family. That way he would avoid being taken by the military to go to war. Then his boss offered him one of his cooks and that is how he made his family.

Tobacco crops were grown per hectare. The best leaves were sold to the boss but they used the battered little ones to smoke. They dried the tobacco leaves for several days. Later they were saved or exchanged for other crops. There were times when my grandfather started to harvest more tobacco. He hid a little of it so he could go out at midnight and sell it in town because they paid well there. He would bring home a basket of bread and sweets, among other things he liked. Then they started

fighting between bosses and peons because of work and family abuse. One night, the workers threatened the landlord and the next day they found him dead. Then they kept the land. Many of the peons went to other ranches to look for lands to work and others went to look for land in other settlements, passing through many villages. Sometimes they took one or two crops and continued looking for other settlements. They traveled throughout the state of Chiapas from the center to the south. The road was long but lastly my grandfather arrived at the last stop, at an *ejido* (a piece of land farmed and owned collectively) where they accepted new families. My grandfather and his family settled there, they made their cornfields, harvested several hectares of corn, and sold parchments of coffee and chili.

After 3 years of acquiring ownership of the land, a group of people who founded the ejido got upset and burned the milpas. Very few parchments of coffee sacks could be removed on horseback, and the others were burned or stolen. My grandfather and his family had to leave again looking for new lands and thus became part of the community of San Alfredo. They started making land divisions and created a new town that at that time was called "Velasco Suarez." They built streets and a community center to which all the small groups that inhabited the jungle joined. Over time this settlement changed its name and is now known as "Nueva Palestina." This is a communal settlement. The settlers come from different municipalities to this settlement in search of land. The community is composed of three predominant ethnic groups of our state of Chiapas: Tzeltal, Tzotzil, and Cho'ol. These ethnic groups strengthen our culture because each of them has its own traditions and some have traditions in common. Since the community organization is communal, the different ethnic groups learn to live together and make decisions together, which has been a bit difficult because they are also governed by uses and customs imposed by the Mexican society. The decision makers are the *comuneros* (commoners). They are the ones who have the land certification since the community was founded.

Traditions and Customs

As for the traditions, the three subcommunities, Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Cho'ol of the Lacandon area, are totally different. Tzeltal women wear embroidered blouses that are called "*luch kúil*" combined with skirts, called "*nahua o tsekel*," joined at the waist and rolled to be tight with a belt embroidered with designs of flowers and colors. Previously, these women braided their hair and expressed their marital status according to the number of braids. The single women only had a braid in their hair and the married women had two braids that meant they were engaged. As time passes, these details with the hair are disappearing. There are few women left who dress and comb following these traditions. Young Tzeltal women have adopted the style of cities and the media, among other sources that have drastically changed the multicultural nature of this region.

In the days of menstruation, women used to go to the river to wash clothes and shell and grind corn, among other things. They used old fabrics to cover the runoff of

the blood. If they slept and stained the bed, the next day they washed all the fabrics they had stained, dried them and used them again. Perhaps that is why women at that time married at a young age and had children until menstruation disappeared. Many women had up to 14 children.

In the case of men, clothing has also changed, as has their way of working the land. For some years, they have been using agrochemicals in the cornfields. This has generated a negative impact within society and in the field. These substances have caused the death of many young people, men and women, who have applied them in agricultural work. The relatives seek to deal with the harmful effects of agrochemicals by applying traditional remedies such as lemon juice, lard or milk but it has not worked and many have died. The use of these substances in agriculture has caused a high level of toxicity. No farmer has enough prevention equipment and knowledge to be able to avoid intoxication.

There are only a few older peasants who practice traditional agriculture consisting of planting maize in one or two hectares of milpa, depending on the family size, intercropped with beans that serve to fix nitrogen to the soil. In that same area, they plant chives, cilantro, chili, sweet potato, tomatillos, other types of beans, plantain, *chaya* (a leafy perennial plant), and some vegetables that grow on their own when the soil is fertile. They also plant the mushrooms that nature itself provides. These agricultural products are based on the cultural life of indigenous people.

Marriages, Midwives, and Craftswomen

Marriages are common because getting married means that you respect your parents. The groom's father has to ask for the bride at her parents' home. The groom and his parents have to visit the bride and ask her parents for her three times. The parents and the daughter make the decision the third time. However, the daughter decides whether to marry or not. If the parents do not want their daughter to marry, they close the house in the afternoon and the night when the parents of the groom usually visit and ask for the bride. Then, as the door is not opened, they understand that the request is not accepted. If the decision to marry is made, they arrange an exact wedding date. If they decide not to make a wedding, they determine how much money the groom will give for the daughter. If the decision is a wedding, they discuss what they will eat. Usually, a party is done and barbecue beef is cooked. After the wedding, sometimes the boyfriend stays in the house of the in-laws that same night or he takes the woman and her things to his parents' house for them to live there. The husband has to start making his milpa and look for work to support the woman. The new member of the family has to adapt. There are mothers-in-law who teach their daughters-in-law how to cook, how to prepare different types of handmade tortillas, and how to cook all the different types of dishes that the family likes to enjoy.

Women play an important role in the family because they have become the best midwives. They can predict if the baby will be a boy or girl. They also know how to accommodate a baby in the right posture when it is time to be born. Usually, the

pregnant woman goes with her husband to visit the midwife and provide support. They bring her bread, a chicken, and sugar as a sign of the trust they will have in her until the baby is born. The midwife massages the woman's belly from the first time she sees her. Depending on the movements, they assure you if it is really a pregnancy, the possible months it takes, the sex of the baby, and the day of birth. The husband would look for the midwife even at midnight, early morning or afternoon. The midwife has to fulfill her responsibility to take care of the birth at any needed time.

Many midwives are also experts in the use of medicinal plants. They prepare remedies that stimulate childbirth and combine plants to accelerate it. When the child is born, they cut the umbilical cord in two pieces. A piece is rolled and burned with cotton. They say this is done for it to dry fast. The father buries the other piece of cord next to the house so that the child does not forget where he/she was born when he/she grows up. The woman who gave birth must have her stomach warmed up every night so she does not get air. The mother should always cover the baby. Eight days after birth, the mother gives the child a bath. Then, the mother makes a meal as a sign that everything went well and she shares it with the midwife.

These midwives know plants for abortion, fertility, delay of menstruation, prevention of pregnancy, and can put the matrix back in its place when it falls. The midwives have all this knowledge, some from birth as a gift and others because they asked God to give them their knowledge about medicinal plants through dreams. When there is a plant they know that heals, it is because someone told them in their dreams or they know this intuitively.

There are other women who make mud crafts from sticky yellow earth that they combine with a crystallized stone. They crush the earth until it is like dust and throw a little water on it. They mix it well until it is like a paste. Then they begin to shape it up to make clay pits, *comales* (griddles to make tortillas), cups, plates, and candlesticks that are used for home use or to sell them.

Death and the Day of the Dead

In indigenous communities when someone dies, the deceased's family member notifies the neighborhood representative. The representative organizes a meeting and advises that the neighbors bring some financial support. Then the neighbors take the responsibility of doing the funeral and watching the deceased at night. The women organize to cook dinner, make tortillas, and bring coffee, sugar, salt, corn, beans, cookies, bread, and rice, among other consumable products. They spend whole days accompanying the relatives of the deceased. During the day, they drink pozol of cocoa or white corn. After accompanying the family member to the funeral, everyone says goodbye and they go home.

They say that the day of the dead, the first of November, must be kept sacred because it is when the spirits of children and babies, adults, and the elderly begin to walk the earth. Each family makes their altars adorning them with *cempasúchil*

(marigold) flowers and white flowers, making an arch that is covered with the leaves of *cambray*, a palm used for ornaments in celebrations. In the middle of the altar, families place the photos of relatives who are already dead. This is a very important tradition. Families start buying what they will use a week before the celebration. Two days before this celebration, they start preparing the stews and tamales, yucca candy, sweet potato, pumpkin, orange, and other sweets to put on the altars. They also put the most common fruits of each locality, the *atoles* (beverage prepared with cornmeal), cocoa chocolates, tobacco, tanned nance fruit, and the favorite dishes of the person who has left. At night, 13 candles are placed under the altars, which the spirits use as light when they arrive and when they leave. When the family receives them with great joy and meals, the deceased leave happy. The dead even invite their friends to go visit their families with them.

My grandfather told me that there was a couple and the man did not respect the Day of the Dead. When the woman got up in the morning she told her husband, "Man do not go to work, rest today, all the people are celebrating the Day of the Dead and we did not even make an altar." The man replied "I have to work, those things do not exist." Then the man went to work. Entering the milpa he found a row of elders walking each with a candle. The man stood up and his father, who had died a few months earlier, came up to him and said, "Son I went to your house with my *compadres* (best friends). I thought you missed me, I thought you remembered me. We arrived at your house and returned empty-handed. It hurts me in the soul that you left me in shame with my compadres. I am back and you will go with us too." The man turned around and ran back to his house. When he got home he called his wife and said, "Woman, you were right, I met my father on the way to work and he asked me why I had forgotten him. He told me that I would go with them." Scared the woman said, "See, I told you!" The man died after a few days. This is why we children should not forget the stories that tell the truth of our traditions.

Children and Indigenous Youth

At present, there are many indigenous communities that live far from the cities. This has also led to the vulnerability of lacking decent schools that provide a good education for children, or decent health centers, and centers for the empowerment of indigenous peoples. To settle matters with the government you have to travel many hours to the cities.

The children of these communities go to the rivers to fish and learn to swim in their spare time. They also play marbles, making two small groups and competing. But boys and girls help their parents collect firewood in the fields. Sometimes they have to go into the jungle, since in the areas near the communities, there are no trees for firewood anymore. Children like to play a lot, draw, and listen to stories. There are other children who sell bread, chili, tamales, vegetables, and fruits. They usually have the support of their parents but there are cases in which children seek ways to survive on their own. When they have no other choice, they have had to leave their

homes and wander the streets. They sleep in parks until someone decides to adopt them and take them home. There are people who do it with the intention of supporting them and others with the intention of abusing them. Children require a lot of support at different stages of their growth. If they do not receive it, we create young people with addictions and foment violence—among other problems that affect society.

Young indigenous people have also organized in groups to generate work. We fight to protect the vulnerable population of the state of Chiapas by generating new tools that allow us to support women, the countryside, the rights of indigenous populations, and create projects that promote the protection of the environment. These groups of young people feel the responsibility to invest their potential in generating a just society, where the main goal is the conservation of our cultural heritage taking care of Mother Nature. We use strategies such as theater plays, poems in our own languages, paintings where we express our feelings, and crafts. Indigenous young people want to be heard and taken into account within society. We want to participate in local decision-making, especially when it affects the integrity of the young population. That is why many young indigenous people have risen to exercise our rights as important members of society. However, we have not yet been integrated into decision-making and as important community leaders.

The Preservation of the Lacandon Rainforest and the Laguna Del Suspiro (The Lake of the Sigh)

In the high evergreen forest, which snuggled me into her arms at birth, there are also big problems. The remaining natural resources have been exploited for a long time and even more every day. With population growth, local and global demand has generated the extraction of many endemic species from the Lacandon Rainforest. Such is the case of the *xate*, the endemic palm of the high forest that requires a lot of shade for its growth. The cutters of this palm walk up to eight hours in the jungle and carry them on horseback. These palms are not given enough time for their seeds to grow since when cutting their leaves, they do not sprout. This palm, wildlife, rivers, lagoons, and the population of trees, in general, are diminishing every day. There are hunters who do not respect the closed season and hunt or kill animals in danger of extinction. Additionally, intensive livestock and commercial agriculture are invading our Lacandon Rainforest.

In the case of the Laguna del Suspiro (The Lake of the Sigh) that feeds the bodies of rivers dispersed in the surrounding communities, it is necessary to start raising the awareness of all human beings of this planet. Every day that passes is already too late. The Laguna del Suspiro is the habitat of larger mammals such as the tapir, jaguar, and collar pecari. These wild faunas require large extensions of conserved habitats. They also control the population dynamics of rodents that are wild faunas of small and medium size such as *guaqueque* and *tepezcuintle*—among others.

Fig. 7.2 Laguna del Suspiro. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

In these protected natural areas, not only faunas are found but also floras that are still unknown species rich in lichens. In the same way, the different species of *ichthyofauna* (fish of the region) that inhabit the waters are part of the whole ecosystem. However, the Lacandon Rainforest is suffering great pressure and is no longer capable of regenerating itself. We all want to continue breathing the pure air provided by natural resources. Consequently, we must be aware and responsible for our planet. We must take into account our indigenous roots that have generated cultures that adore Mother Earth. However, we are forgetting our cultural values and abusing our living resources that are not renewable.

Within these paradises, there is life that we have not all had the opportunity to see since it only inhabits the thickest part of the rainforest. These are living beings that at some point in my life desire to be shown to me when I am in the jungle. They say that those living beings of the jungle play like children. They are always naked, sit on the trees, and play on the banks of the rivers. They talk to you making signals. My dear friend *Pakínté*, I long to see you! (Fig. 7.2).

It hurts my heart to see how people are destroying life in my Lacandon Rainforest. Do they not realize that we live thanks to her? If she dies we die too. She has already put up with us a lot. I understand that agriculture is fundamental in life to produce food but it can be done sustainably as our ancestors did. I do not forgive the abuse of our resources and of the soil, water, trees, plants, and animals that we humans are exploiting every day. The advance of agriculture and livestock in the protected

natural areas, carried out by the government itself and by some people who consider themselves environmentalists, results in the destruction of natural resources, invasions, land dispossession, wars between settlers, and the disappearance of endemic species and aquifer resources that give life to more lives on the planet.

It is urgent to create new public policies, new ways of demanding all the residents of these reserves as well as those who live in other parts of the world that we must care for and preserve our environment. All of us who inhabit the planet need to take care of it. Everything that coexists in our world is of us and we are of the world. Everything that surrounds us and exists in our Mother Earth deserves respect for the simple fact that it provides us with life and receives us lovingly in her arms when we have died.

Lacandon Myths

Martha Chanuk Chanuk

Kotika'an

There was once a large village where few people but many animals lived. People believed that having a child meant caring for them for life. Thus, people made baskets as big as a hat to protect their children from ferocious animals like *Kotika'an*, which is a mascot of a man named *Baxip* that wanted to devour them. Baxip believed that Kotik'an was a God.

All the towns were afraid because there was no baby growing there. Women who became pregnant and had their babies experienced that after a year, when the babies started walking, the Kotika'an took them. The people were afraid, very afraid. There was a couple, the man named Baxip told his wife: "I have to go see my God." The man left for several months. Every time the woman heard from the village that a woman was pregnant, Baxip went to heaven to see his God. Baxip warned his God that in 1 year, a child would be born and the Kotika'an waited to make the 1-year-old child his prey. On the way back he told his wife, "I am back from my trip. I saw and talked with my God." The wife asked, "What did he say? Where is your God and why don't you take me to see him?" Then Baxip answered, "Don't you see? You will be afraid of him." The wife asked, "Why every time you go see your God the children get lost?"

The wife got pregnant once more and the man said again that he had to go see his God. He left his pregnant wife alone. When Baxip returned he told his wife, "When will our child be born?" But the woman did not want to tell him. Months passed until the baby was born. A year passed and the baby grew up. The woman was shelling her corn outside the house. She had forgotten that the Kotika'an always comes for the children after completing the year. She heard a sound from the sky warning that he

was coming. All the trees moved their leaves. The woman started screaming, "The child, where is the child!" She ran to the house to look for the baby but the Kotika'an had already taken the child. Then the woman screamed, "Where is my husband?" She was screaming desperately. A few months passed until the husband returned. Baxip asked her, "Why are you crying woman?" "Kotika'an took the child," she replied crying inconsolably. He asked her calmly, "Could it be that the Gods are gathering the children?"

The woman was very sad and months and months went by. The husband went again to see his God. The Kotika'an, who was the husband's pet, had already gained weight because he had eaten many children. The people were so afraid that they dedicated themselves to knitting a very big basket in the shape of a hat to protect their children. And the Kotika'an came down to earth and could not see them because the baskets made of liana protected them. So some children grew up. Baxip returned to his house and told his wife that her God was very sad. And the woman asked him, "Why?" Her husband responded, "Sit down because I'm going to tell you that my God is like my friend, he is like my son, he is everything to me. He takes me to heaven and lowers me to the earth to gather his food. I go to heaven and I talk to him." That afternoon there was a very strong wind. And the man continued saying that he was going to visit his God because he heard the roar of the sky. The wife ignored him and did not ask him to stay because she did not want him to know that she was pregnant.

She went to visit her parents and told them that she thought her husband was selling the children of the town to the Gods. The woman's father started working as a shaman making a house of pure stone in the middle of the sea. His daughter told him, "Father, if my husband seeks me, tell him I'm not here, that I went far away. Tell him I have not cooked for him. He should eat all kinds of fruits he can find." The father finished the new house and took his daughter to live for 9 months in the middle of the sea. When Baxip returned from seeing his God he shouted loudly where his wife was. The father came out to find him and said, "My daughter has left you. She said that the fruits you can find will be your food, they will taste as good as she cooks. If you see that the fruits ripen, eat them. If they sting like chili, it is because you are a liar. If they taste sweet, that means that she will come back soon." The husband kept looking for her and shouted for her because he loved his wife but could not stop feeding his God, his pet.

Several years passed and when Baxip ate fruits, they started to sting like chili. But the man was not resigned to losing his wife. He always went to look for his father-in-law and asked him to show him the road where his wife was. The fruits tasted each time fiery so the man began to get thinner. This was his punishment for selling many children to his pet. His wife's father told him, "My daughter told me to tell you that if you want to see her just walk beside the river and you will see her." Baxip did this several times but could not see her.

Six months of rainy season passed when the woman saw him standing at sea. The husband said, “You are back woman!” But he could not hug her because she was in the middle of the sea. The woman said, “I know that your God is your pet. All the fruits that you have eaten have been fiery because you told me lies. You have sold the children to your God. If you want me back, you must bring me to your God and both of you must promise the people that you will not take the children away from them. Then I will come back to you when I hear you have finished with that pet you have.” Baxip replied, “But he is my God! I cannot do that to my God.” “Then I am leaving again and I am not coming back,” his wife replied and went into the sea.

The man was already very thin and had no strength. He sighed several times and said, “Okay, I will! I will bring you to my God.” And the woman replied, “Bring him to me, until I hear the pen fall from the sky, until the earth squeaks, and I see the God fallen down and dead I will come back to you.” And the man left sadly eating the spicy fruits. But he had promised the woman he loved to go for his God. The last words he told his wife were that if she did not listen to his voice in three days, she would never hear from him again. The woman went back to the sea.

The man and the woman could listen to each other’s voices from earth to heaven. Months and months passed and the Kotika’an was very weak because he had not consumed his food. Baxip had not taken any more children to his God. The Kotika’an was bigger than an eagle and when he saw the children he took them away. But now he was feeling so weak that he could not do it anymore. A while passed and the woman asked Baxip, “What have you done with your God? You promised to bring him down to earth and you did not do it.” The man replied, “I will get him down soon, woman, wait.”

Suddenly the woman heard a rock fall from the sky. The townspeople came out of their houses to see what happened and saw a very big pet. Baxip said, “My God is already here. Now I want to be with you again.” The father-in-law showed him the way to the sea and the woman received him saying, “You have returned and have done what you have promised.” Then the man heard a mysterious voice singing in the middle of the sea. The woman said, “Look, this is your son and he has your voice.” The man saw a boy about 12 or 13 years old who looked a lot like him. The boy sang until the father began to fall of weakness, seeing the son that the woman has showed him. “You have sold the other children we have had to your God. I could only save this one here in the middle of the sea, in the rock house that my father built for me. And he sings just like his father,” added his wife.

His father-in-law, the shaman, opened paths of pure stone over the sea and the man returned to live with his wife and son, who could not be eaten by Kotika’an anymore since he was older and Kotika’an had already died. But the Kotika’an breeding remained in heaven. When there was a flood, the children of Kotika’an became small eagles.

Barum, the Jaguar God of the Jungle

This story tells us that no one should say: "See you tomorrow." It is a story about a tiger. In a place in the jungle inhabited women and men, who performed celebrations and a Mayan ritual in which they asked the Gods for permission to harvest beans, corn, or weed the mountain. During the village celebration, a woman asked her sister-in-law, "Do you have time tomorrow to go and look for *zapote* (sapodilla plum)?" The woman's brother asked, "Are you inviting your sister-in-law?" "Yes, I am going to pick up zapote tomorrow. I will come very early at sunrise and knock on her door," replied the woman. Time passed and when it still was dark there was a knock on the door. "Sister-in-law, we are leaving. Where is my brother?" asked the woman. "He already went to find resin for his God," the other woman replied. "What time did he leave?" The sister-in-law asked again. "Very early. Let's go," the other woman replied. "Yes, just let me carry my nephew," said the sister-in-law.

They left and went deeper and deeper into the jungle. It was very early and there was a lot of fog. The sister-in-law said, "We no longer have time to go for zapote, we better go look for snail." The other woman agreed. They went deeper into the jungle and found a very small stream where there were many snails. The sister-in-law said, "I will carry my nephew while you gather snails. Give him to me." The woman gave her baby to her sister-in-law and began to gather snails, to the left and to the right until her basket was full. She heard her baby crying and asked her sister-in-law, "Why is your nephew crying?" "Nothing is happening. He is going to stop crying right now. I am taking care of him," she replied. "And why can I not see him?" asked the baby's mother. It was dark and she could not see the snails anymore. The sun had not risen yet.

The sister-in-law was *Barum*, the Jaguar God. He said to the baby's mother, "I do not know why he cries but do not worry, keep collecting the snails. It is already late and my brother will be looking for you." But the woman kept hearing that her baby was crying. The sister-in-law did not look at her straight in the eyes but deviously from her side and said, "Do not worry, keep collecting snails."

In a bend of the river full of trees, the woman stopped to see why her baby was crying. Suddenly she saw a tail that was moving. She could see that the tail belonged to the sister-in-law. Then she asked again, "Why is your nephew crying?" The sister-in-law replied, "It is okay now, he is asleep." But the mother of the baby realized that the tail was moving and that the other woman was not looking at her straight in the eyes. Then she could see that Barum was already eating her baby. The sister-in-law had already become a very large tiger that wagged its tail. She saw that he had already eaten the little legs and arms of the baby, who had stopped crying. The Barum said to her, "In-law, my nephew has already slept. Grab the snails while I am taking care of the baby." She was not taking care of but eating the baby! She turned in a curve and ran fast to escape from the jaguar. She realized that it was not dawn yet and that it was not her sister-in-law who had come to knock on the door. She ran and ran trying to escape the Barum.

Her husband came to town looking for resin for his God and asked, "Where is my wife? I went to look for her and did not find her." People replied that she had left with his sister. He assured them that his sister had not left with her wife. The townspeople asked him, "Then, who is with your wife? Who knocked on her door?" The townspeople were very afraid and worried for his wife. At dawn, the real sister-in-law appeared and told her brother, "But I told my sister-in-law that I was coming to knock on her door at dawn. It is just now dawning and I came for her." The brother replied, "Someone different from you took your form and came for her. Bring me my arrows. The *Kisin* has taken your sister-in-law!"

He desperately went out into the jungle to look for his wife and son where they had said they were going to go pick up zapote. But the man saw that no one had arrived there. He ran and used a detour to go to the river. There he saw the baby's rag filled with blood. There were jaguar tracks. With much fear, he ran looking for them. He felt that he had lost his family. He searched for them in many places until he heard a roaring jaguar chasing him. His wife was running behind him and said to all the trees she saw, "Help us because the jaguar is going to eat us. Help me, *coroso* (a palm tree), if you listen to me, open up, open up because Barum is coming after me." And the jaguar ran behind them.

Fortunately, the coroso listened to her. It was the oldest tree that had been there in the jungle. It opened like a door and the wife got into the palm tree. Suddenly, slowly, little by little, centimeter by centimeter the palm tree closed and told the woman, "Hurry, there they come!" The jaguar reached to put his paw but it was trapped. He kept scratching with his strong claws. The woman had very long hair. She hid a *pedernal* (the tip of an arrow) in her hair. She inserted it into the claw of the jaguar. The Barum screamed and roared loudly. According to the story, it says that the woman inserted the arrow into the jaguar's penis. Barum ate people with his penis because it was *Kisin* (the Lord of Dead). He injected people with his penis as if it were a syringe but it was his arrow that is called "*uhara kisin*." The husband also inserted his arrow into the jaguar's penis. The man shouted, "Woman, are you there in the palm tree? What are you doing inside?" "Barum wants to eat me. He already ate our baby," answered the wife. The husband asked her, "Why did you come with the jaguar?" The woman answered, "I thought she was your sister. She knocked on the door and I thought that the sun had risen. But it was not dawn yet but still night." The man threw more arrows to save his wife and with one he gave the Barum in the heart. Kisin fell to the ground with a loud roar and the woman shouted again, "Coroso open up, it is all over now." He told it three times and it opened. The woman slowly pulled out the arrow that she had inserted in the jaguar.

The couple returned to the village and told the people what had happened. The lesson is that you never should say: "See you tomorrow" because someone will come for you, someone you do not expect. You should never wait for someone watching the road because the Barum, Kisin, will come instead and use his arrow (uhara kisin) to make people sick and have chest pain (Fig. 7.3).

Fig. 7.3 Barums and arrows made by Chanuk Chankin in her artisan booth located in the archeological site of Bonampak

Tzeltal Poems: *Xch'ulei Yaxal K'inal* (The Essence of the Rainforest)

Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

The Lacandon Rainforest

As a glass of water in the Sahara.
As an entity conformed by the unification of many.
Like a single tree so leafy and imposing.
She is wounded by the action of the arm.
By the action of the mind.
By the action of actions.
She sees herself diminishing with the ride of time.
A part has gone to not return.
Yet, that green spot on the globe still has its heart beating.
With more intensity than the hummingbird's heart.

Fig. 7.4 Dawn somewhere in Montes Azules

You see indifference in her contemplation.
Green gold sifted for all the inhabitants of the world.
You are worthy of praise for your beauty and greatness is as unique as the cosmos itself! (Fig. 7.4).

The Leaves of My Life

Dear leaves, I need you.
From the widest ones like the roof of a peasant house.
Even the smallest ones, like the width of an ant's head.
Forms as unique as the faces of each country in the world.
I need you constantly!
The past does not matter.
It only matters the present in which I see you and imagine you at any time.
I do not imagine a world without the leaves of my life!

Fig. 7.5 A drop in the rainforest

Nature

I open my eyes and a lush vegetation surrounds me.
Millenary and pure air bathed in chlorophyll interlaced in the roots.
They are like brothers who are nourished by the same mother.
I immerse myself in you with every step I take and you always take me to a different place.
Curiosity forces me to look for you and feel you.
My beloved nature, you have existed before I imagined you!
Each span contains an enigma of life.
Exotic aromas emanate from your skin.
You glide smoothly on the surface of a great unprecedented paradise.
You become the confusion of your filtered beauty through my senses (Fig. 7.5).

Night

Between brilliant algae and the symphony of the nocturnes I immersed myself in you.
I feel being part of your greatness.
I'm just an intruder at your feet.

Fig. 7.6 The dew posing on me

The rhythm of the heart accelerates.
The anguish disappears slowly in the darkness' flash.
When I close my eyes softly the whisper of the trees perfumes me with peace.
Fantastic flying beings sing a symphony that delights my senses.
The wind caresses my face and molds it by drawing a smile.

The Soft Breeze

The gentle breeze caresses me in the morning.
It accompanies me and urges me to continue in the art of war in everyday life.
The gentle breeze gives me a sigh in its presence.
I feel it, even though it belongs to everyone.
The gentle breeze pacifies me with its freshness.
It makes me happy with its eternal presence.
The gentle breeze is in everyone's thoughts.
It appears before our presence (Fig. 7.6).

Fig. 7.7 Petrified looking at the water

The Tree

It is so strong that it can withstand the cold in the night and the heat in the day.
It is immobile and so taciturn that it does not reveal anyone's secrets.
It is so magical that it makes me live in every breath.
It is so noble that it does not defend itself when being destroyed and mistreated.
It is so beautiful that it does not need symmetry.
It is so millennial that it saw me being born and will see me die.
You are greatly needed in this desert! (Fig. 7.7).

The Rain

The rain detaches somewhere from space.
From the same place where life is born.
Food of the movement, essence of life, friend of the rivers.
Unification of heaven and earth.
Each drop in perfect synchrony delights us with its stunning harmony.
It soothes me just by seeing it and I realize its greatness when discovering its beauty.

Dancing flow turned into rivers that are born in movement.
So much happiness in my eyes and on my skin!
The disease of everyday life prevented me from appreciating so much beauty.
It emanates from my feet.
It rises beyond the horizons permeating every surface that touches with life.

The Bulk

A bulk that matches or exceeds my weight accompanies me.
There is an essential content within it.
Uneven shapes that stick out like mountains on earth.
From the perspective of an ant that enjoys exploring that lump.
If I were an entity with locomotion I would laugh until I reach my destination.
But that inert companion gives me more than just laughter.
A large involuntary sigh is necessary.
My body be strong!
These are the words of the sigh in low voice.
As I prepare to load that bundle, each step is a great achievement.
Running like this is impossible!
As impossible as leaving the cross that I carry on my back in the form of a bulk.
I feel that my heart is held to the point of bursting.
Only when the last muscle is about to be applied, it is released to be reborn.
My mouth becomes bitter like gall.
I need a few drops of life.
I look up and a raptor lowers his sight.
With a pair of wings my bulky friend could carry me.
He would be the happiest of the errant without feathers and flying pleasure.
I return to see a smoky house in the distance.
Among the humid vegetation, typical of the tropics.
So much warmth is inside because it is my house that I see.

Woman's Face

Iris impregnated with all colors.
Unreachable pupil solemnly emanating everything that has happened.
Your gaze of cyclonic love nothing escapes.
Unattainable hilarity is the process that leads us to it.
As a wasp to the nectar.
As inexorable as the air itself (Fig. 7.8).

Fig. 7.8 Natural harmony

Hunger at Night

Like a monster inside me, it unleashes without warning and then attacks incessantly.
A voracious hunger different to all existing hunger.
You interrupt the rest of my soul, my body, and mind.
I succumb my bowels before you.
My face is deformed.
It resembles the worm that writhes freely, leading the metamorphosis of the new day.
At last I taste the best salsa of the stain in the world!

Your Petals

I want to be the petals that shelter your body and soul.
And that make you fly as if they were a pair of wings.
Being your petals I protect you without caring if I am cold or warm.
Like wrapping a fragile fruit worthy of delight in a place very close to sunset.
I will be as solemn and happiest as the one who has lived a day on earth.

Fig. 7.9 Sunbath

The Morning

Only the beam of light through my window invites me to live my life in the morning.
It rejoices with folkloric music of birds and wonders telling us peace and harmony.
The soft bread in the morning and the eternal coffee companion take me where I want to be.
This day will be the only one of my existence, it will be the happiest of the mornings.
I will live it with all my senses fully added (Fig. 7.9).

The Wind

Your giant span protects the immeasurable earth.
You walk in it while extending your arms.
You fill each void leaving parts of you day or night with or without rain.
You are present at every moment.
You embrace an invisible flash that blooms life everywhere.

Even when we are dusty you will make us travel with a breath.
I will follow you like the densest smoke.
Only leaving the silhouette of my body engraved on the headstone of the thoughts of others.
You nail your eyes in mine.
You embrace me with your cottony touch.
You make chills flow in my soul while you whisper in my ear.
I constantly evoke you in a breath.
The only thing I hear is, "peace."

The Utopia of Your Love

Your smile is the reason for mine.
It is your eyes that make me contemplate you.
It is because of you that I am dreaming in a wonderful place.
Under the light of the moon and the brightness of the stars.
The eternal cold asked me to give you a hug.
Each part of you is a world to explore.
Only I live in you.
I would like to lose myself in the beautiful form of your attributes.
I would like to rediscover the emotions that flow from them.
My lips dry and need to be very close to yours to give them the freshness they need.
I just hope the sun helps me and the rain wakes me up next to you (Fig. 7.10).

True Illusion

In an instant of emotion that will last forever, total doubt takes over.
You want to know what your neighbor has in mind to carry out that action you so desire.
No doubt you do not know anything.
It is for that same reason that your imagination is sustained in a great emotion.
The essential madness of your mind could reach such a prestigious conclusion.
How to feel the heart of a person?
Open your mind to the possibility that this time will not be the last.
Feel the total texture, the aesthetic present in each dimension of your body.
The enigmatic feeling in each dreamed kiss.

Fig. 7.10 Love utopia. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

Your Eyes

From the first dawn, each step guides me to you.
Each stone can be the key to your presence.
Each beat arises because of you.
Mounted in time I will come to you.
Every smile and every tear was given by you.
The earth's plates joined.
The dinosaurs became extinct.
The heavens and the seas were made for you.
The volcanoes roared.
The livings were born.
The stars were located.
The planets settled.
All for one day to see your fleeting eyes.
And we could stay forever petrified in the dimension of love.

Fig. 7.11 The poet's journey. Photograph by Marwilio Sanchez Gomez

The Fire

The sun's rays are lost in the horizon of a large tree.
A look of curiosity has only left a beam of light in my pupils.
Slowly it goes out.
It is necessary to create my own star.
Yet, just its presence gives me the heat my skin needs.
It is born from a spark.
It needs the elements of its passionate existence.
The bright colors of a couple.
The wind directs the rhythm.
Microscopic embers.
Your spiral dance is so abstract.
It grabs everything tangible to devour it to fire bites.
Sometimes slowly, sometimes with choking hurricanes (Fig. 7.11).

Chapter 8
Conclusions: Making the Road by Walking "de Otra Manera" (in a Different Way)

Nuria Ciofalo

This book has been a collaborative project nourished through affective conviviality over the course of 8 years. As a Mexican academic woman who has devoted over 40 years to community work in Mexico and elsewhere, I acted as friend, facilitator of this collaboration, and editor. The process of relationship building has entailed deep and painful confrontations with my own positionality as well as conscious and unconscious tendencies to create and recreate the colonial difference. Having been born and raised in Mexico, and having experienced the pervasive racism endured by indigenous peoples in our country and worldwide for over 500 years, as well as their rich legacies and contributions, I feel deeply embedded in their struggle for economic, political, cultural, ecological, and epistemic justice. The latter may be achieved if their legacies and contributions are brought to the center of academic discourse and used to teach new student generations that may acquire the necessary capacities to cocreate a different world in which many worlds can exist.

Chapter 3 detailed the joyous road of building deep and affective intercultural and intergenerational relationships with the coauthors of this book as well as with other community members. These field notes are aligned with Almeida and de Rivera (2017) definition of their lifelong work in a *Nahuat* community as "…a solidarity pilgrimage of countercurrent tendency consisting of interacting in the *thickness of life*, recognizing conflicting vulnerabilities, and struggling to build horizontal relationships of reciprocal recognition among human beings" (p. 63—italics added for emphasis). The constant reflection on these interactions formed the basis of a confrontation of colonial difference, contrasting our different ways of life due to unequal access to resources and opportunities but transparently expressing my solidary commitment to—and deep thirst for—being gifted by their teachings, their history, their culture, their knowledge systems, and their dreams for the future. I also committed to mobilize resources to make these dreams come true.

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N. Ciofalo (ed.), *Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization*, International and Cultural Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04822-8_8

In this book, the coauthors shared the subjects of inquiry and praxes that are part of their own psychologies within an open ecology of knowledges. I do not intend to address conclusions here decoding their contributions according to hegemonic academic discourse. Hence, I will address this section shortly, following an intercultural translation that, as de Sousa Santos (2016) emphasized, allows for deep emotional involvement in the co-creation of plurilogues and creates a counterhegemonic possibility to delink from colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. In this way, intercultural translation allowed me to learn from the co-authors' epistemologies and praxes, without the traditional interpretations that lead back to the theoretical and methodological frameworks outlined in Chaps. 1 and 2. I found these useful in my struggle to delink from hegemonic epistemologies and strategies that only feed back to the same colonial systems we are trying so hard to eliminate. The applied decolonial frameworks and methods described in Chap. 2 allowed me to: build trusting and transparent relationships; learn from their cosmogony, axiology, and praxes; generate community projects; and produce this collaborative text that presents their work without representation.

Here, I briefly refer to some concepts based on the described theoretical frameworks whenever these are useful as a means of highlighting their voices. I use repetition based on circular—instead of lineal—thinking as a key strategy of indigenous epistemologies that look at the same phenomenon from different perspectives. These are ways of knowing and strategies that hegemonic academy has authoritatively erased. Against erasure, let us now attentively learn from them.

Chambor et al. taught us about their sacred relationship with Mother Earth and the importance of the preservation of their Mayan language and culture through community-driven celebrations and education. They proposed that their community economy should be driven by their cultural traditions, addressing the promotion of ecotourism within careful economic and environmental impact considerations. We learned that nature is their sacred place and, therefore, a psychological and ontological priority. Lastly, these coauthors called for international solidarity to sing the song of the Lacandon Rainforest, as well as to participate in their community celebrations and in the shared stewardship of their region's still-existing biodiversity.

Chancayun, a young professional trained in the Technological University of the Rainforest, maintains the vocation of preserving his natural habitat, investigating the factors that may contribute to deforestation and proposing strategies to raise community awareness of ecological sustainability. He shared his dreams for the future: implementing collaborative projects that promote community well-being and sustain the rainforest's rich biodiversity. In this work, Chancayun applied the knowledge and skills earned in an academic institution designed to respond to his community's needs as well as his own cultural heritage. This is an innovative academic institution of the Global South that forms the indigenous intelligentsia that is shaping a promising, different future. Scientific knowledge and research are not the private property of Western epistemologies and methodologies. These are also anchored in ancestral indigenous traditions and reclaimed by the new generations of indigenous scientists, who are applying informed knowledge to the preservation of their cultures and habitats.

The youth collaborative proposed the unity of various ethnic groups to, together, conduct community education for the preservation of their natural habitat, including its flora and fauna, and to call for international solidarity to impact public policy. They manifest the integration of diverse ecologies of knowledge to impact Western discourse for the development of decolonial solidarity that influences ecological policy-making. These youths and the adult co-author, Chanuk Chankin, also shared oral histories learned from their ancestors; legends and myths; poems, and artistic images represented in photographs that clearly delink from Western worldviews and evidence their deep relationship with nature, animals, and the spiritual world. Their knowledge and praxes, as well as their cultural assets, have been appropriated by many Western scholars who have written about them without acknowledging indigenous authorship. Referring to this usurpation, Chancayun observed

> But it was not the explorers Carlos Frey and Silvanus Morley who discovered the Lost City [Bonampak]. They made known to the world what the jungle was protecting since they had Western preparation and the opportunity to spread the information provided by my great-grandparents through the press and journalism. If my great-grandparents at that time had had the same tools and knowledge of how to disseminate information, I assure you that the expeditionists or explorers would not have this credit of discoverers of the Lost City. (Chap. 7)

If this book's coauthors, who represent the indigenous intelligentsia, had had opportunities to disseminate their knowledge systems and effective ecological praxes, we would have made a new road to walk together "de otra manera." This book has sketched such a new road so that it heads toward epistemic justice. It has given them the means to disseminate their expertise in a manner that serves as a sharp contrast to the many books published about them—books that misrepresent them and usurp their knowledge, placing it under foreign authors' names.

The manifestations of their knowledge and praxes constitute their psychology—that is, they reflect their thinking, feeling, and acting, as well as the manner in which these are applied to the preservation of their cultural heritage of taking care of Mother Earth as their ultimate spirituality and life telos. It is a psychology from which we must learn to address the pressing ecocide we are facing and end the pervasive epistemicide practiced on a daily basis in formal and informal educational settings worldwide, assisted by hegemonic regimes of knowledge such as academia, globalization, technology, and the mass media.

It is also striking to note that in spite of the insidious colonization and modern coloniality to which indigenous communities have been exposed for centuries, as detailed in the first two chapters, their knowledge systems still exist, as do their wise praxes to preserve the few places with rich biodiversity still existing in the world. Their capacity to resist epistemic imposition is extraordinary and exemplary. It informs our quest to make the road toward decolonial ways of being by walking together "de otra manera" (in a different way) than the one to which we have been indoctrinated.

Hegemonic systems of knowledge production continue to embrace a doctrine that promotes the exploitation of others for the benefit of a few, the abuse of natural resources and animal life, the usurpation of other knowledges, and the imposition

of beliefs and practices in the name of progress and civilization. Industrialization, urbanization, and the expansion of technology have been supporting the expanding tentacles of imperial globalization reaching out to even more remote regions in our planet where rich biodiversity exists. Maria Esther Velasco expressed her opened wound and raised her voice to call for international awareness,

> It hurts my heart to see how people are destroying life in my Lacandon Rainforest. Do they not realize that we live thanks to her? If she dies we die too. She has already put up with us a lot. I understand that agriculture is fundamental in life to produce food but it can be done sustainably as our ancestors did. I do not forgive the abuse of our resources, of the soil, water, trees, plants, and animals that we humans are exploiting every day. The advance of agriculture and livestock in the protected natural areas, carried out by the government itself and by some people who consider themselves environmentalists, results in the destruction of natural resources, invasions, land dispossession, wars between settlers, and the disappearance of endemic species and aquifer resources that give life to more lives on the planet. It is urgent to create new public policies, new ways of demanding all the residents of these reserves as well as those who live in other parts of the world that we must care for and preserve our environment. All of us who inhabit the planet need to take care of it. Everything that coexists in our world is of us and we are of the world. (Chap. 7)

The Lacandon Rainforest is still alive and thriving despite predatory actions promoted not only by erred government policies but also by those who claim to preserve the environment. Those policies benefit the international elite that exploits the rainforest's resources to generate extreme capital gains. In the name of progress and civilization, such barbaric actions are carried out to satisfy the elite's greediness and power cravings. However, for centuries, indigenous communities around the globe have resisted the violent attacks that these predators' ideologies support. It is now imperative, as we begin the new era of decoloniality, to stop the erasure of their contributions in order to co-construct a different world and seek ways in which enduring transformations can take place. As Almeida and de Rivera (2017) proposed,

> To carry out social transformations in this damaged world community integration and democratic commitment have now to be looked for at the levels, styles, and quality of life that have survived in the life of solidarity, resilience, and audacity of the Indigenous populations. (p. 61)

The cosmogony, axiology, and praxes shared by the coauthors form the basis for the co-construction of Mayan psychologies that are not anthropocentric and whose common theme is the sacredness of nature, its preservation, the cultivation of spirituality, and accountability as a means of maintaining harmonious relationships with the human and other-than-human worlds. In alignment with many Indigenous Psychologies around the globe, these psychologies embrace the rich legacy of ancestral Mayan cosmogony and knowledge systems, such as astrology, mythology, architecture, ecological resource management, religious rituals, ceremony, and community celebrations. Indigenous Psychologies must be part of any transdisciplinary academic curriculum, and not just in psychology, as this would imply the reproduction of knowledge fragmentations that has supported coloniality. As Almeida and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera further added

> The task is to create community conscience; of shaping an intersubjectivity able to understand and share texts and contexts; of establishing a structural basis where one may question the beliefs and practices in which domination is supported. The matter is to learn to read and write collectively, to strengthen critical and lucid thinking, and to destroy the phantom of the predators. This structural basis is the task of creating community team groups; about never being alone again. Having company is important to learning to live. … The practice of narrating our own experiences lead to acquire a solid thought, full of affectivity, of social support to deal with oppression in an ambiance emotionally rich in the joyous struggle. To have company, make alliances, and support one another, reinforces the intentionality of creating community conscience. …and the promotion of the utopia of horizontal relations of reciprocal recognition. (p. 68)

In accomplishing this solidary accompaniment, Watkins (2015) proposed psychological and ecological accompaniment as an approach toward nourishing horizontal and reciprocal solidarity with others, including animals and the ecological habitat. This author viewed this type of accompaniment as a means of co-constructing liberating knowledge that can promote the decolonization of interpersonal and international relations. She invited us

> … to walk in the company of others [and] to listen to their emergent strategies … involving prophetic imagination, … [a] vision—latent or manifest—of how the situation could be otherwise … [that] can guide and inspire, serving wider circles of solidarity … [as] a demand not for development, but for liberation. (p. 327)

The co-authors of this book invite us to accompany them in singing the Song of the Rainforest, cultivating a prophetic imagination, and walking together to adore Mother Nature—to take care of her flora and fauna as well as to be grateful for the sacred spirituality and physical nourishment she provides, including taking us in her generous arms when we pass away. Let the Song of the Lacandon Rainforest be heard!

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