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From Roads to Iguanas: Tracing Contemporary Zapotec Literature

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Angelica Belen Waner

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Roads to Iguanas: Tracing Contemporary Zapotec Literature

by

Angelica Belen Waner

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Patricia Arroyo Calderón, Chair

Since the early 1900s, Zapotec intellectuals from Juchitán, Oaxaca began to work towards their goals of preserving and revitalizing Zapotec language and culture through the creation, publication, and dissemination of various bilingual literary magazines. *From Roads to Iguanas: Tracing Contemporary Zapotec Literature* argues that these magazines are sites of resistance and (re)creation where the editors and contributing intellectuals enact *kab'awilian* strategies as they negotiate with the nation state, and create a pathway for their own historical, linguistic, and political autonomy, ensuring Zapotec futurities in the process. The first chapter, "'*Por la cultura Zapoteca*': *Neza* and Zapotec Intellectuals in Postrevolutionary Mexico" delves into the first bilingual newspaper created and published in 1935 Mexico City by a group of UNAM students. The publication is read in the context of the post-revolutionary nation-state, the students were heavily influenced by the nationalization of Indigenous culture and therefore made

a claim to their Isthmus Zapotec identity with a focus on philosophy, history, and politics. The second chapter, "'*Retomando el camino*': *Neza Cubi* and the Start of a Cultural Movement" explores the second literary magazine, *Neza Cubi*, created in Mexico City in 1968 by two Juchitec intellectuals. This magazine makes a connection to the first and establishes a literary genealogy between the first generation of intellectuals and the current one, creates a Zapotec history in opposition to official national history, and begins to think through a Zapotec approach to politics in Juchitán. The third and last chapter, "'*La iguana no muere*': *Guchachi' Reza*, Ethnic Pride, and Political Resistance" centers *Guchachi' Reza*, the longest-running Indigenous independent bilingual literary magazine published in Latin America, from 1975-1998. This chapter explores the way that Zapotec intellectuals began to open their publications to other social movements happening in Mexico and Latin America, think beyond the Zapotec for Indigenous solidarity, explicitly tie their language to politics, and highlights the culmination of a Zapotec history that resulted in a heroic vision of Juchitán and Zapotecs within the nation. Analyzing these magazines gives us insight into Zapotec thought, epistemologies and ontologies, histories, language revitalization movements, and autonomy, all pathways to Zapotec futures.

The dissertation of Angelica Belen Waner is approved.

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Para mi abuelito, que me comparte los cuentos de su pueblo.

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"Nuestra alma, su alma misma, el alma de Juchitán: The Role of Velas for Early 20th Century Zapotec Intellectuals." ACLA Annual Conference 2023. Chicago, Illinois. November 16th-19th, 2023.

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"Oral History in Print: Zapotec Origin Stories." PAMLA 2022. University of California, Los Angeles. Los Angeles, California. November 11th-13th, 2022.

"Tradução de literaturas indígenas." Escrever a América Latina Series. Universidade Federal do Paraná. Online, October 15th, 2022.

"*Neza*: Consolidando literatura zapoteca contemporánea, negociando con el estado." JALLA XV: Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana. Universidad Rafael Landívar. Guatemala City, Guatemala, July 18th-22nd, 2022.

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I. Introduction

¡Ay!, didxazá, didxazá,

didx' a rusibani naa,

naa nanna zanitilu',

dxi initi gubidxacá'.

¡Ay!, zapoteco, zapoteco,

lengua que me das la vida.

Yo sé que morirás

el día que muera el sol.

- Gabriel López Chiñas, "Diidxazá/ El Zapoteco"

In 1935, a group of Isthmus Zapotec students at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) came together and decided to publish a newspaper, *Neza*, meaning path or road. The act of coming together and organizing themselves into an editorial board to create a publication would have ramifications on Zapotec literature and politics for decades to come. That group of intellectuals would inspire another generation, in the late 1960s, to take on the communal role of publishing a magazine once again. In these magazines, they would think through what it meant for them to be Zapotec, often in conversation with the dominant discourses about ethnic and national identity circulated within the Mexican public sphere, negotiating their Indigeneity from various places. This generation of intellectuals would publish another magazine, the longest-running independent Indigenous magazine in Mexico, where,

apart from shaping their history and supporting inter-ethnic solidarity, they would create archives of Juchitán. While the topics addressed in these publications were diverse, there was a focus on subjectivity, language, history, and politics.

I read the corpus of these three magazines – *Neza* (1935-1937), *Neza Cubi* (1968-1970), and *Guchachi' Reza* (1975-1998) – through the lens of *kab'awil,* a "doble mirada" (Chacón 17-18) that allows for a more nuanced reading of the texts and the intentions of the editors. I argue that by utilizing *kab'awilian* strategies (Chacón 18-19), these Zapotec intellectuals are able to create spaces of linguistic, historical, and political autonomy that lead to the imagining of viable Zapotec futurities. In other words, the magazines serve as sites of resistance to erasure and negotiation vis-à-vis the Mexican nation-state, where the intellectuals pour their epistemologies, language, history, and political thought. By publishing these magazines, they invoke Zapotec futurities and push back against Western modernity and its epistemic, symbolic, and material forms of violence against Indigenous peoples. In the context of Mexico, these publications contest the negative stereotypes and nationalizing projects of *Indigenismo* and *mestizaje,* concurrent projects that work towards the assimilation and eventual elimination of Indigenous communities.

In the next few pages, I will provide a brief overview of the field of Indigenous literatures from before contact until the present day, highlighting alphabetic literatures along with other non-alphabetic forms of literature and knowledge, and briefly outlining the way that Indigenous literary production was affected by language policies in various eras of Mexico. Then, I will move to a discussion of *Indigenismo* as a nationalizing project and the peculiar status that the state of Oaxaca has held when thinking Indigeneity within this paradigm to contextualize the creation of the magazines. This discussion on *Indigenismo* will be followed by a brief overview

of "Indigeneity" and the way it has been defined and expressed in Mexico and Oaxaca. I will then return to literary production with a brief overview of Zapotec literature, focusing on the impact that the corpus of literary magazines that are the topic of this dissertation have had. I will then move on to the theoretical framework of this dissertation to explain how I use literature as a space for autonomy, *kab'awilian* strategies, and Indigenous futurities to inform my reading of the texts. The introduction concludes with a chapter breakdown that explains what each chapter explores.

1. The Field of Indigenous Literatures in Mexico

Literatures in Indigenous languages and by Indigenous authors have only grown in importance in Mexico in the last few decades. Indigenous authors from various ethnic backgrounds tend to write bilingually, often translating themselves, and usually take on tasks that go beyond writing, as activists, teachers, and government representatives. Furthermore, these authors produce literature in various mediums ranging from the novel to the essay, to poetry that is often read aloud.

When it comes to Indigenous literary production, one must understand that it is not limited to alphabetic writing. Instead, alphabetic writing and its literary genres, such as novels, poems, songs, etc., are only a part of a diverse form of knowledge transmission. Indigenous scholars and critics alike emphasize that Indigenous knowledge and what we call "literature" is found in other forms such as "signos, símbolos, colores, tejidos y líneas pictóricas" (Arias et al 8). One such study by Worley and Palacios, reveals the way that literary production in Mesoamerica may be better understood under the Maya concept of "ts'íib," that is, "a category that offers a much-expanded repertoire of readable objects that includes everything from Maya

weavings to monuments carved in stone, painted codices, and ceramics" (8). Still, because this dissertation only focuses on Indigenous/Zapotec print culture, I return now to the long history of alphabetic Indigenous literary production in Mexico.

Post-contact, Indigenous literary production varied depending on the authorities' level of tolerance towards language diversity as well as on education laws. For example, during the colonial period, Nahuatl and other Indigenous languages were used often by Indigenous peoples to assert their rights, which resulted in land claims – such as "primordial titles, legal disputes of possession, and transactions of sale and purchase land" – letters, last wills, and testaments (McDonough and Zapoteco Sideño 400). Indigenous people saw the value of the written word and were active agents "at the highest levels of political and cultural power" (Rappaport and Cummins 4). Those documents that still exist today offer proof of a complex literary world during the colonial period. This came to an end during the age of Independence, when Indigenous peoples were "made to disappear" under "citizenship" and turned to orality (McDonough and Zapoteco Sideño 401). Another major shift occurred in post-revolutionary Mexico with the rise of *Indigenismo*, which resulted in non-Indigenous authors, scholars, and researchers, writing about Indigenous peoples. Many of these authors, like José Vasconcelos, Rosario Castellanos, and Octavio Paz, among others, became part of the Mexican literary canon and shaped the way Indigenous peoples were represented for decades.

The next major shift occurred in the 1970s when, according to various scholars, the rise of Indigenous activist organizations resulted in a boom of Indigenous literary production by Indigenous intellectuals/authors. Two decades later, according to Arias et al, the 500-year anniversary of Spanish arrival saw a rise in "un extraordinario dinamismo y una proyección de alcance hemisférico" (8). In Mexico, this rise in production went hand in hand with a rise in

support of Indigenous literary production, via the creation of the Premio Nezahualcóyotl de Literatura en Lenguas Indígenas and the Asociación de Escritores Indígenas in 1993, and the opening of the Casa del Escritor en Lengua Indígena in 1996 (Arias et al 8). More often than not, these "emerging Indigenous textualities" uncover the "myth of homogenous nation-states" (Arias 4) and, in the case of Mexico, they not only push back against *Indigenista* nationalizing projects but are in conversation and resist common stereotypes and tropes imposed on Indigenous peoples. As we will see in this dissertation, the three bilingual magazines published by Zapotec intellectuals analyzed here also share many of the aforementioned traits.

2. *Indigenismo* as a Nationalizing Project

To define *Indigenismo* for my dissertation, I use Analisa Taylor's definition, which is specific to the case of Mexico. Taylor defines *Indigenismo* as "a social scientific paradigm wedded to a set of government institutions and policies as well as an aesthetic sensibility that has shaped a great deal of twentieth-century Mexican art and culture" (1). I pull from this definition because it is succinct yet acknowledges the impact and ties that *Indigenismo* had on both government institutions and policy, as well as art and culture. Still, it is important to highlight that *Indigenista* tendencies do not first appear with the Mexican Revolution. Different versions of *Indigenismo* have existed in the Americas since contact between Indigenous populations and European colonizers, and it has evolved, molded, and adapted to different periods, as well as to the needs and purposes of multiple actors. In *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México* (1950), Luis Villoro argues that up until 1950, there had been three distinct eras of *Indigenismo* in Mexico. Villoro's main argument is that the Indigenous people are held closer or farther away from the rest of society depending on whether they are considered dangerous or not, with each

era shifting between these two poles. Villoro presents a key idea relevant to my project, which is the sometimes ambiguous and contradictory ways in which the nation-state has related to or rejected Indigenous populations. Though Mexico is a prime example, this dynamic is not unique to it, as different forms of appropriation of Indigeneity for nation-building purposes can be found throughout most Latin American countries (Earle). As Indigenous intellectuals publishing their independent magazines within Mexico, the Zapotec editors of the magazines studied in my dissertation were entrenched in an intellectual, political, and cultural environment dominated by *Indigenista* policy and discourses, which changed from post-revolutionary Mexico in the 1930s until the Zapatista uprising in the 1990s.

Indigenismo in post-revolutionary Mexico had roots in governmental policies and spread through anthropology and archeology, museums, education, agriculture, science, literature, film, and the visual arts. Inspired by the 1910 Revolution, early *Indigenistas* shared a humanitarian cause: the well-being and inclusion of Indigenous people in the new Mexican society (Dawson xiv). As a result of the caste system put in place since colonial times, Indigenous people were at the bottom of society, and therefore concerned *Indigenistas* wanted to help elevate their position (Earle). They intended to make changes in the ways that the state handled Indigenous peoples and their traditions so that they were treated with respect and dignity. But alongside this well-intentioned cause, there was also an underlying push for assimilation, that is, Mexico's Indigenous populations had to assimilate – which meant losing their customs, religion, clothing, and language – to be considered part of the new society (Swarthout 56). In attempting to carry out their goals, *Indigenistas* played an integral role in building a Mexican national identity[1] based on the idea of *mestizaje* (understood as a process of biological whitening and cultural

[1] Manuel Gamio in *Forjando Patria* (1916) and José Vasconcelos in *La raza cósmica* (1925) are two main proponents of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*.

Hispanicization), as well as in contributing to the consolidation of a new, modern state that would eventually extend its authority over the whole territory and populations of Mexico (Dawson xiv). Interestingly, Oaxaca has played a key role in the *Indigenista* imaginary for various reasons.

3. Oaxaca in the *Indigenista* Imaginary

While twentieth century historical events shaped and reshaped the social, political, economic, and cultural fabrics of Oaxaca, *Indigenista* government officials and cultural producers were looking to the region from the outside in, imagining a Oaxaca that stood for everything Indigenous in Mexico: a direct connection to the past, a place where customs and traditions were still "pure" and "authentic." Oaxaca proved to be a rich resource for the nation-state to draw from, and this view of Oaxaca remains today.

The reasons for this view of Oaxaca vary, one often cited is the fact that Oaxaca has the highest population of Indigenous people when compared to other states in Mexico; based on the number of speakers of Indigenous languages, "sixteen indigenous groups and more than a hundred mutually unintelligible indigenous dialects"[2] (Faudree 5, Dillingham 3). When discussing Oaxaca well into post-revolutionary Mexico, in the late 1940s, scholars claimed that "its sheer ethnic, political, and geographic diversity had prevented 'traditional ties and common bonds'" (Smith 3). The Zapotec are only one of these peoples, composed of various groups in different geographies, and commonly divided into the Sierra, the Valle, and the Istmo. This geographical division creates three branches of the Zapotec language, but even within each

[2] Dialects here is used to refer to the various variants within each Indigenous language.

branch, different variants can vary from pueblo to pueblo. This is the case also with the Mixtec, Mixe, Huave, and Zoque languages, and with many other pueblos as well.

Oaxaca took a prominent place in the post-revolutionary *Indigenista* imaginary partly thanks to the excavation of Monte Albán, started by Alfonso Caso in 1931 (Dillingham 8). This excavation also led to further folklorization of the state, with an important focus on festivals such as the famous Guelaguetza, which has recently grown even more popular for tourists from outside Mexico with the rise of social media. This festival can be traced back to the "years of Caso's excavation," when "Oaxacan authorities inaugurated an annual folkloric dance festival, then called the Homenaje Racial and later renamed with the Zapotec term *guelaguetza*, to employ Indigenous music and dress as a unifying element in a politically fractious state" (Dillingham 8). Both the excavation at Monte Albán and the Homenaje Racial were used by Mexican authorities to invoke an "Indigenous past" while still emphasizing "Mexico's entry into modernity" (Dillingham 8). This folklorization of Oaxaca did not remain contained within the state's borders.

Oaxaca proved to be a rich resource for nation-state building, as successive Mexican governments drew inspiration from and appropriated many different Indigenous cultural manifestations, such as music, clothing, dance, and art, to name a few. One prevalent example that is especially relevant to Juchitán and the region of Tehuantepec is the *traje de tehuana*,[3] which underwent a series of changes over time and was eventually worn by white actresses posing as Indigenous characters in popular Golden Age films, as well as by artist Frida Kahlo[4] in

[3] For a detailed analysis of the origins and changes of the *traje*, see "The Traje de Tehuana" by Francie Chassen-López. In her article, Chassen-López traces its history and the process of nationalization and decontextualization that occurred.

[4] According to Andrés Henestrosa, one of the main collaborators of the magazine *Neza*, it was he who introduced both Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera to Juchitán, where Kahlo quickly befriended Alfa Ríos Pineda, Henestrosa's wife (Bach 44).

numerous occasions. Eventually, the *traje de tehuana*, together with Isthmian pieces of music and dance like the *Sandunga*, were "made into a national symbol" (Chassen-López 289). The *traje de tehuana* is just one example of Indigenous culture, in this case, a piece of clothing, that is worn by the greater Mexican population and in the process becomes decontextualized from its specific ethnic history and meaning. This *traje* is also an example of how Juchitec culture was nationalized and romanticized. The entire city of Juchitán faced a similar process of exoticization, romanticization, and, ultimately, nationalization.

Juchitán de Zaragoza, or *Xavizende*[5] as it is called in Isthmian Zapotec, is one of the biggest cities in Oaxaca and has also long been romanticized as a place where "authenticity", understood as pre-contact Indigenous culture, can be found. In an article focusing on the roles of public intellectuals in Mexico (specifically Elena Poniatowska and Andrés Henestrosa) Debra Castillo claims that they are only two intellectuals of the myriad who have contributed to the construction of an international imaginary about Juchitán that persists to this day. According to Castillo, Juchitán has served as a "symbol of the timeless, nonthreatening, exotically beautiful deep Mexico" (46). Even though Juchitán is a mid-sized city, it has been able to maintain its image as a small town, one that is "quaint, isolated, relatively untouched by Spain or central Mexican national culture" (Castillo 50). Although Juchitán was never entirely disconnected from central Mexican national culture or politics, this image of Juchitán has percolated to mainstream Mexican culture. According to Castillo, tied to this image is a desire to find in Juchitán a place that is untouched by modernity and therefore exempt from its "stifling rules" (60). Within this framework, Juchitán is imagined as a place where women are matriarchs, where *muxes*[6] live

[5] *Xavizende* stems from "San Vicente," the patron saint of Juchitán.
[6] Indigenous women and *muxes*, or a third gender, have also been a source of interest for outside researchers and artists such as Elena Poniatowska and Graciela Iturbide. There is the common claim that the women who run the mercado independently are proof of the existence of a matriarchy in Juchitán, though that is contested by various

peacefully, and where customs[7] dating back to pre-contact are still practiced and respected. For these reasons and some more, Juchitán has long been an attractive destination[8] for outside researchers. This process of folklorization that Oaxaca underwent was the backdrop for the creation of the magazines. Many times, the Zapotec intellectuals were writing about or against these discourses that decontextualized their culture for the benefit of the Mexican nation.

4. Indigeneity in Mexico

Within the context of *Indigenismo*, which was the result of non-indigenous people thinking, imagining, defining, and writing about Indigenous peoples, is how Indigenous peoples identify themselves. According to Maylei Blackwell, Indigenous peoples:

> As the original inhabitants of the Americas, most[ly] identify first as tribal nations or pueblos (peoples, communities, towns, following Lynn Stephen [2007]), as well as embrac[e] the broader constructions of First Nations, American Indian, Native American, or Indigenous peoples to articulate a diplomatic and legal framework for their survivance, self-determination, and territorial integrity in relation to colonial powers and settler states. (100)

researchers (Stephen 27). And *muxes*, a third gender that lies outside of western understandings of the gender binary are also proof to many that the heteropatriarchy does not exist in Juchitán. However, while muxes are alive and present, that does not mean that they do not experience the oppression and discrimination of the heteropatriarchy.

[7] Anthropologist Anya Peterson Royce has written extensively on Zapotec/Juchitec culture. By focusing on death, and the rituals that surround it, Peterson Royce delves into customs that Juchitec Zapotecs hold on to and use to express their Indigeneity. She argues that the Juchitec Zapotec have been able to hold on to a Zapotec core, even as pressure from the outside ―political, economic, and cultural― has been exerted on them for centuries. They have been able to "bend and not break" due to their flexibility, absorbing what they want and discarding the rest (Peterson Royce 2).

[8] Even before contemporary researchers chose Juchitán as their site of research, travelers from other regions of Mexico and beyond were fascinated with the city and its people, including Alexander von Humboldt, Charles-Étienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, Miguel Covarrubias, and Sergei Eisenstein.

Commonly, Indigenous peoples identify primarily with the name they give themselves, such as the *binnizá*[9] in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and then, more broadly, as "Indigenous." While the term "Indigenous" can have a homogenizing effect, grouping a diverse group of people with differing clothing, food, languages, etc., various scholars, including Ayuujk (Mixe) linguist and activist Yásnaya Aguilar Gil recognize the importance of the term for political purposes.[10] Still, in Latin America, Indigeneity is often reduced to ethnicity and, therefore, removed from the topics relevant to the political sphere, "potentially stripping away [Indigenous peoples'] specific claims toward self-determination and territory as original inhabitants of the Americas" (Blackwell 100). This is important especially in Mexico because Indigenous peoples organize for autonomy *as* Indigenous peoples. This includes "the right to self-governance and self-determination, independent from their national governments" (Gutiérrez Nájera et al 10). These moves towards autonomy are, however, not always disentangled from the workings of the central government, as we will see is the case with Coalición Obrera, Campesina, Estudiantil del Istmo (COCEI).

While the Zapotec intellectuals who published in the bilingual magazines write about what it means to be Zapotec, Indigeneity in Mexico has been expressed through various avenues. Historically, in Oaxaca, Indigenous peoples expressed their Indigeneity "through a host of practices, including dress, foodways, and the celebration of hometown saints' day festivals" (Dillingham 10). This meant that dress "frequently signal[s] membership in a particular community," and local foods "have their roots in Indigenous gastronomy" (Dillingham 190).

[9] "Binni" means people and "za'" means cloud, meaning the people of the clouds or cloud people. Zapotec is the name given to them by the Aztec. I use the term Zapotec because this is the term that is most used in the magazines I analyze. There is a transition for the Zapotec intellectuals themselves who initially use the term "Zapotec," and eventually use "binnizá."

[10] Aguilar Gil writes in "We Were Not Always Indigenous" about the first time that this term was applied to her when she ventured out from her community, where she conceived of herself only as Ayuujk or Mixe. Later, she would end up claiming the word "Indigenous" as a useful tool to build solidarity with other Indigenous women.

Place was also important, because "In southern Mexico, connection to a community or municipio has often been one of the strongest forms of identity" (Dillingham 190). For the Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals who created these magazines, it will become clear how they play with these notions, at times elevating the importance of clothing and food, and emphasizing that they remain "Zapotec" even as they live away from their hometown of Juchitán. Important to note too, the way that these same signals (dress, place, language) were also used by the Mexican government to define who was Indigenous, and who was not. Still, these "signals" of indigeneity will remain important to the intellectuals as they think through and lay claim to their Zapotec identity.

5. A Brief History of Zapotec Literature

The three literary magazines at the center of this dissertation were produced amid these tensions and overlapping narratives, joining a long history of literary production in Zapotec that existed since before contact. Zapotec is the most widely-spoken Indigenous language in southern Mexico, found in various regions of Oaxaca. Even though Zapotec is considered one language, there are several variants depending on each region, broadly divided into the Isthmus, the Valley, and the Sierra. Some linguists say that the variants can be as different as Romance languages are to each other (Sullivan 42). Despite the variety found in spoken Zapotec, written Zapotec has always been important. In *Escritura zapoteca: 2,500 años de historia* (2003), María de los Ángeles Romero Frizzi takes us through the trajectory of Zapotec writing, one that she claims is the "escritura más antigua que conocemos en América" (7). She shares that one of the most interesting aspects of Zapotec writing is the ever-changing roles that it has had. In the "mundo prehispánico y colonial" writing was tied to power and reserved only for the noble Zapotec class (Romero Frizzi 11). Eventually, in the 18th century, it was used to conserve history, land titles,

and rights. There is one author who stands out, Arcadio G. Molina, who was from San Blas, a town in Tehuantepec, and published *La rosa del amor* in 1876 (Pineda 293). According to Romero Frizzi, Zapotec writing of the twentieth century reflects "problemas y nostalgia por el pasado" (11). It was also in this same period when some Zapotec authors started to achieve national and sometimes international recognition. One of the most well-known was public intellectual turned politician, Andrés Henestrosa, who helped create and publish in *Neza*. Other well-known writers include novelists Javier Castellanos and Mario Molina Cruz, both from the Sierra, who write about their experiences as bilingual teachers. Most recently, the resistance poetry of Isthmus Zapotec writers, like Irma Pineda, Natalia Toledo, and Víctor Cata has garnered international attention (Sullivan 44). This current generation of poets writes bilingually in Zapotec and Spanish and their work has been translated into various languages, including English. They also travel, reading their poetry aloud to allow the non-Isthmus Zapotec-speaking audience to hear their poetry in the way that it was written. Their poetry and other literary work complement the activism they do for Indigenous people and Indigenous languages in Mexico. For example, Natalia Toledo and Víctor Cata launched several language nests ―known as El camino de la iguana― to create communities of Zapotec speakers and learners and Irma Pineda was a representative of Indigenous Peoples for the United Nations. It is no coincidence that the three of them are from the Isthmus of Oaxaca, an area with an especially rich history of literary production, and the same place where the creators of *Neza*, *Neza Cubi,* and *Guchachi' Reza* came from.

Current studies on contemporary Isthmus Zapotec literature are all connected by a common theme: most explain the genealogy of Isthmus Zapotec literature, the interconnected efforts to create an official alphabet, and unfortunately, the endangered status that the Isthmus

Zapotec language still holds despite all its literary production. This genealogy sometimes begins with Arcadio G. Molina, and then moves on to the *Neza* generation, the era of *Guchachi' Reza*, and ends with contemporary poets (Pineda 295, 300 Pérez Báez 138). Sometimes, like is the case with Irma Pineda, the various genres that exist in Isthmus Zapotec writing are mentioned, such as *libana*,[11] *riuunda'*,[12] and mitos y leyendas, but this is not a common approach (294). In addition to establishing a genealogy of Zapotec authors, most researchers also mention the efforts for the creation of an official alphabet, which began with the *Neza* generation, as well as the foundation of the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca (Pérez Báez 139). These efforts continued until the *Mesa redonda de 1956*, attended by Zapotec intellectuals like Enrique Liekens and by American linguists Velma Pickett and Morris Swadesh (De la Cruz 147, Pérez Báez 138). Despite all these initiatives to formalize and revitalize the Zapotec language, linguists who work nowadays on Isthmus Zapotec, like Gabriela Pérez Báez, lament the fact that spoken Zapotec, though backed up by a rich literary tradition, is still struggling in "un terreno que cada día se va hispanizando más" (140).

5.1 The Significance of Neza*,* Neza Cubi*, and* Guchachi' Reza

Very often, *Neza*, *Neza Cubi*, and *Guchachi' Reza* are discussed together, seen as a genealogy of literary magazines that brought together writers, helped create and disseminate an alphabet, and pushed forward a cultural and political movement. In her introduction to *Indigenous Cosmolectics* (2018), Gloria Chacón discusses the role of literacy and Indigenous literature in political movements. About *Neza*, she argues that "This early twentieth-century

[11] Libana is defined by Pineda as "Libana (sermón). Este género, conocido entre los nahuas como huehuetlatolli (discurso de los ancianos). Es un género específico perteneciente a la literatura didáctica o pedagógica. De una redacción literaria muy cuidada que fue cultivado por los mejores sabios o "profesores" con una rebuscada belleza de su lenguaje y un alto contenido de sus preceptos" (294).

[12] Riuunda' is defined as "Riuunda' o liuunda'. Poemas y canciones; poemas llamamos a aquellos objetos verbales en verso que no tienen una melodía con la cual puedan cantarse; canciones son las que tienen su correspondiente música" (Pineda 294).

literature prefigures the number of social movements that led to the establishment of the Coalición Obrera, Campesina, Estudiantil del Istmo [COCEI]" (Chacón 10). Through *Neza*, we can see how Zapotec intellectuals began to organize themselves, we learn about the issues they were concerned with, and how they tackled them. Chacón considers all three magazines important in that they "[illustrate] the growing cultural and political importance of writing in Zapotec, particularly in the isthmus of Oaxaca" (Chacón 10). Both cultural anthropologist Howard Campbell[13] and historian Jeffrey Rubin[14] note the importance of these magazines and their role in the Isthmus political movements. While discussing the rise of the COCEI, Campbell attributes its origins to *Neza*. He claims that "[the COCEI] movement built on an earlier Juchiteco cultural movement which published the journal *Neza* in the 1930s" (Campbell 54). Again, these scholars of Zapotec history and politics recognize these literary magazines as sites of coalition, where authors began to write and disseminate Zapotec culture. One of the creators of *Guchachi' Reza*, Víctor de la Cruz, considers this magazine the venue where the use of the official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet was solidified. He claims that *Guchachi'* played "un papel definitivo," because it was an "espacio donde los escritores aplicaron dicho alfabeto para difundirlo a sus lectores" (493). As we can see, all these magazines are commonly mentioned when discussing Isthmus Zapotec and Zapotec literature more broadly.

And yet, none of the magazines have been the focus of their own study. These magazines are invaluable, as they give us privileged insight into the concerns of a group of Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals during three different moments in history. They are intertextual and polyphonic and

[13] Howard Campbell is the author of *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca* (1993) and *Zapotec Renaissance: Ethnic Politics and Cultural Revivalism in Southern Mexico* (1994). *Zapotec Struggles* does reprint a selection of poems and articles published in *Guchachi' Reza*. He is a cultural anthropologist and professor at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).
[14] Jeffrey Rubin is the author of *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (1997) and is a professor of History at Boston University.

served as a place to collect, curate, and publish what Zapotec intellectuals considered important for themselves and their community of readers. This dissertation is the first study to focus on these magazines and read the Zapotec intellectuals' contributions to the field of Indigenous Literary Studies, as it also explores themes of Indigenous philosophies and cosmologies, subjectivities, histories, language revitalization movements, and the creation of Indigenous archives.

6. Theoretical Framework

I analyze the corpus of literary magazines within three overlapping frameworks. The first acknowledges how Indigenous literary production allows Indigenous peoples to contest nation-states' definitions of Indigeneity. The second pulls from the Maya *Kab'awil*, a concept found in the *Popol Vuh* that allows for a more nuanced reading of the authors and their goals found in the pages of the magazines. The last is inspired by Native American theorists who write about the role that Indigenous modes of production can have in creating Indigenous futurities.

Both Arturo Arias and Emil Keme (formerly known as Emilio del Valle Escalante) write about how Indigenous authors resist the nation state's official narrative of Indigeneity and push back against the illusion of a homogenous nation. In introducing a compilation of Indigenous authors and their works, Keme explains, "Aquí se muestra cómo las literaturas indígenas, tanto en su estética como su contenido, expresan rigurosas críticas a los estado-nación modernos latinoamericanos" (4). By writing about their worldviews, customs, cosmologies, and subjectivities, Indigenous authors contest their erasure, revealing how the nation is not as homogenous as it might first appear, and also redefine "Indigeneity" on their own terms. Keme elaborates on how "estas discusiones desarticulan perspectivas homogeneizadoras indigenistas

que asocian lo indígena con el "pasado," lo "rural," lo "bueno," etc. y más bien lo ubican en una contemporaneidad social mucho más compleja, sea ésta rural, urbana o transnacional" (4). Indigenous authors do the work of revealing that the nation is not homogenous, that nationalizing *Indigenista* and *mestizaje* projects did not succeed entirely, and that they have the right to decide how to define themselves as Indigenous peoples. I argue that by doing that work, literary texts are spaces of autonomy where Indigenous intellectuals decide how to represent themselves and how to work through political, linguistic, and epistemological concepts that are crucial to Indigenous peoples.

One way in which Indigenous authors push back against stereotypes and the nation-state is through *kab'awilian* strategies, which stems from the Maya concept of *Kab'awil*. Chacón cites Adrián Inés Chávez who in 1979 went to the *Popol Vuh* to recover its meaning, explaining *kab'awil* as "two visions at the same time, to see in the darkness and in lightness, to see close and far, a "doble mirada / double gaze" (Chacón 15). Essentially, *kab'awil* is encompassing and holistic, as opposed to binaries, dualisms, or opposites which are common in Western thought. *Kab'awil* is nothing and everything simultaneously. Chacón then applies the notion of *kab'awil* to analyze Indigenous literatures, where she identifies a series of "*kab'awilian* strategies." She defines these strategies as "maneuvers that invert or help indigenous cultural producers imagine possibilities outside the matrix of coloniality and its ordering of things" (18). *Kab'awil* is utilized when Indigenous authors write and represent themselves in a different manner than "how the dominant society sees them" (Chacón 19). Chacón argues that Indigenous authors invoke *kab'awil* for various reasons, she explains: "Patrolled by an unspoken code of conduct, policed by insiders and outsiders, contemporary Mesoamerican indigenous writers cross an uncertain line that spans the past and present, tradition and innovation, oral and written" (20). These

contemporary Indigenous authors do not adhere to dominant notions of Indigenous peoples as unchanging and homogenous but instead show how those representations are limiting, creations of the nation-state to advance the state's goals. The Zapotec authors who created the magazines studied in this dissertation enact *kab'awilian* strategies to navigate thinking, writing, and publishing about Zapotec/Indigenous subjectivities, language, history, and politics. I utilize a *kab'awilian* lens as well for a more nuanced reading of the authors, some of whom were polemical figures. Using a *kab'awilian* lens means reading the texts and authors beyond a binary, with a focus on the nuances and potential apparent contradictions that can exist simultaneously.

Not only do the Indigenous intellectuals create spaces for autonomy in their literary production through their *kab'awilian* strategies, but they also work towards Indigenous futurities, (re)activating their worldviews, language, and history. In doing so, they push back against projects of assimilation and elimination. Indigenous futurity, according to Laura Harjo, goes beyond the idea of a temporal future. Indigenous futurity encompasses "space, place, and temporality produced socially by people, including relatives located in the past, present, and future" (Harjo 30). It is "the act of living out the futures we wish for in a contemporary moment, and the creation of the conditions for these futures" (Harjo 5). This futurity can be invoked in various manners. Still, for this dissertation, I analyze how the intellectuals invoke it through their publications, where they create spaces for autonomy and envision an Isthmus Zapotec future, one where their language is still spoken, they rule themselves how they choose, and they continue being Zapotec. The magazines, and all they contain, are thus a form of "creating futurity in the present moment, dreaming of a (re)imagined future where narratives about Indigenous people are more complex and aligned with lived, felt knowledge" (Harjo 30). In organizing themselves and publishing, these intellectuals react against reductive representations of Indigenous peoples but

also create their venues for expressing and enacting all the complexity of being Zapotec. They are in conversation with the nationalizing projects of *Indigenismo* but depart from them by developing and showing their autonomous worldviews, epistemologies, histories, and politics.

7. Thesis Organization

From Roads to Iguanas: Tracing Contemporary Zapotec Literature is divided into three chapters, one chapter for each magazine. Through a focus on subjectivities, language, history, and politics I argue that the Zapotec intellectuals utilized *kab'awilian* strategies to create spaces of identitarian, linguistic, historical, and political autonomy, all working towards Zapotec futurities.

The first chapter, "'*Por la cultura zapoteca'* (For the Zapotec Culture): *Neza* and Zapotec Intellectuals in Postrevolutionary Mexico," focuses on the first newspaper, *Neza* (path/road). This publication was created by the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos (New Society of Juchitec Students), active in Mexico City at UNAM. To begin, I analyze the editors' goals through two articles that they printed, drawing connections between them and the *Vanguardista* movement – an artistic and literary movement pushing to break free from tradition and aimed towards creating something new – which highlights how the editors of *Neza* inserted themselves into avant-garde intellectual currents while molding them to their own goals of cultural and linguistic preservation. Secondly, I address how they tackled their language goals through the creation of the *Academia de Lengua Zapoteca*. They established the *Academia* to create an official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet, and in doing so began independently combatting the linguistic genocide perpetuated by the Mexican state, which actively promoted Spanish-only education. Then, I analyze the way these intellectuals represented themselves through various retellings of

one origin story, as well as through articles on important customs among the Isthmus Zapotecs, like *velas,* parades, and festivities. Finally, I analyze a pair of articles that explores political thought stemming from the Zapotec concept of *guelaguetza*/*guendalisaa*, and its parallels to Juan Carlos Mariátegui's contemporary political writings on the Andean *ayllu*. This chapter reveals how the editors of *Neza* navigated their claims to their own culture as Zapotec while living and publishing at the heart of Mexico when *Indigenismo* was being consolidated.

The second chapter, "'*Retomando el camino'* (Retaking the Path): *Neza Cubi* and Zapotec Movements," explores the literary magazine titled *Neza Cubi* (new path/road) published in the late 1960s. During this time, its main creators and editors were still based in Mexico City but were writing with a Juchitec audience in mind, including reports on events occurring in Juchitán. I first explore the goals of the editors through their initial "Editoriales" where they state their goals in the form of poetry, and where they write about retaking a Zapotec path and what that means for themselves, their ancestors, and descendants. Next, I explore how the editors are working through their Zapotec identity and leftist politics of the time, inspired by Che Guevara's *Hombre Nuevo*. Furthermore, I focus on how they represent their history, looking to Juchitec intellectuals and authors of the past as inspiration, as well as discussing controversial political figures like Benito Juárez. Finally, I focus on language through their discussion on creating a Zapotec literary history, an idea which they promote by publishing letters sent to the editors reinforcing the importance of literature, and their creation of a literary genealogy. This chapter provides insight into how the editors were navigating their role as Indigenous intellectuals and political activists within Mexico and were creating a foundation for Isthmus Zapotec identity.

The third chapter, "'*La iguana no muere'* (Iguanas Do Not Die): *Guchachi' Reza*, Ethnic Pride, and Political Resistance" focuses on the longest-running publication, *Guchachi' Reza*

(sliced iguana), which was active from 1975 to 1998 and resulted in fifty-eight published issues. The creation of the magazine parallels the rise of the COCEI. This chapter explores how the Zapotec intellectuals take on the symbol of the iguana to help create a Juchitec/Zapotec identity that stems from the land and community resilience. Then I move to an analysis of an article by the main creator, Víctor de la Cruz, to reveal the political connotations that the Isthmus Zapotec language takes on in post-1970s Mexico. After that, through the analysis of a few key articles, I explore how the intellectuals were creating a specific history for Juchitán, which emphasized their resistance against foreign domination dating back to pre-contact times. Finally, I write about Indigenous solidarity by looking at how Zapotec intellectuals wrote about other ethnic groups in Oaxaca and other social and political movements in Mexico and Latin America, including the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. This chapter explores how the Zapotec intellectuals began to expand their scope to be in solidarity with other Indigenous peoples and political movements both in Mexico and abroad.

II. *"Por la cultura Zapoteca": Neza* and Zapotec Intellectuals in Postrevolutionary Mexico

…sintiendo en sus venas fuerza de juventud y en su espíritu la necesidad de encauzar la cultura en nuestros pueblos…

- Gabriel López Chiñas, *Neza* n.5

In 1935, a group of young Zapotec students came together in Mexico City to create the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos. Having just arrived in the capital from their homeland, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, they were nostalgic for their culture and traditions. They found themselves at the center of post-revolutionary Mexico, not far from the end of the Mexican Revolution when *Indigenista* policies were at their peak and reached every level of government and the arts. In the face of this dehumanizing discourse about Indigenous people in Mexico, and the pressures to become "modern citizens" via forced assimilation, these Juchiteco students decided to publish a newspaper, titled *Nesha* and then *Neza*, which ran for two years and twenty numbers. In those newspapers they published their poetry, their short stories, their legends, hoping to preserve their culture and language. They also organized and created the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca to establish an official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet. Through *Neza,* we can see how these student-authors created first a Sociedad, then an Academia, and used the newspaper to disseminate their ideas. All three components served one purpose: preservation of the Zapotec language and culture, and eventually, preservation of themselves, of their spirit. More than that, they were ensuring Zapotec futurities, creating a present for themselves to ensure their future. Through *Neza*, we learn how Zapotec intellectuals were not just resisting or accepting the nation-

state's *Indigenista* policies; instead, they were enacting *kab'awilian* strategies, taking what they needed and discarding the rest, navigating the complexities of their identity, culture, and goals within the emerging Mexican nation. In doing so, *Neza* serves as a space where moves for historical, linguistic, and political autonomy are preserved.

First, we will contextualize the creation of this magazine in post-revolutionary Mexico City. Next, we will read a brief description of the newspaper to get a sense of what was published and by whom. A section is dedicated to the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos as the driving force behind the publication. In a section titled "The Manifestos," we will go over the editors' reasons for creating a publication. The language parallels that of the *vanguardia*, and just as they are inspired by Rodó and Vasconcelos, so are they drawing from Zapotec cosmology. "Efforts for an Alphabet: La Academia de Lengua Zapoteca," goes over the creation of an institution by the *Neza* authors, and the way they manage the creation of an alphabet, not quite enforcing it like the state, but attempting to support writing in Zapotec. In "The Binnigula'sa': Defying National History through Origin Stories," we delve into the origin story of the Isthmus Zapotecs, written across various numbers by four different authors to explore the way that they think of authorship, community, and storytelling, as they provide alternative versions of official history. "Nuestra alma misma: Juchitec velas, Juchitec identity," explores the well-known Juchitec custom of *velas*, through the eyes of the *Neza* authors, who analyze the *velas* as celebrations that capture the spirit of the people. The final section, "*Guelaguetza*/*Guendalisaa*: Thinking Indigenous Politics," reads two articles by two *Neza* authors who are thinking through political organizing from their Zapotec customs of *guelaguetza.*[15] I place these two authors in conversation with José Carlos Mariátegui, who

[15] In this chapter, I discuss *guelaguetza* both as an essential concept for the Zapotec and the festival that was created by the state and appropriated the term. The festival *Guelaguetza* occurs in Oaxaca City every year. Various

parallels their work as he was thinking of "Indigenous socialism" through the concept of *ayllu*.

1. After the Revolution: Mexico City and Juchitán in the 1930s

That *Neza* (1935-1937) was founded by Juchiteco students who came together in 1930s Mexico City was not random or accidental at all. The presence of Juchitecos in the capital city is traced back to then President Porfirio Díaz. Díaz was especially grateful to Juchitán and Juchitecos for their "support during the 5 de septiembre battle and numerous other armed conflicts during the 1850s and 1860s" (Campbell 120). As a token of his gratitude for this support Díaz decided to sponsor a total of six students to study either at the "prestigious Oaxacan Institute of Sciences and Arts or at a military college in Mexico City" (Campbell 120). These six students eventually became trusted associates of Díaz and were the first of many Juchiteco students connecting with their fellow *paisanos* (countrymen) who flocked to Mexico City for "educational, political, and business opportunities that otherwise would have been beyond their reach" (Campbell 120). This process of mobilizing local connections to seek education in Mexico City was built out of necessity as much as tradition. For a long time in Juchitán there were no schools that offered anything beyond an elementary education (Campbell 122), and if students wanted to continue studying, they had to leave their hometown. This eventually created a community of Oaxacan and Zapotec students in Mexico City. Once there, they connected with each other and began to form societies where they could share their nostalgia about their life in Juchitán and began putting together *velas* and other social events that celebrated their culture. The reason for their focus on literature is also related to their roots in Juchitán. Where other Indigenous towns were known for specializing and honing their "popular arts and crafts,"

Indigenous peoples from Oaxaca attend, showcasing their dances, clothing, food, and other art. It has attracted many tourists throughout the years.

Juchitán, like other Isthmus villages, "specialized in the production of songs and romantic poetry" (Campbell 128). This is because in Juchitán and neighboring Tehuantepec, a "rich ceremonial calendar revolving around dozens of annual fiestas, or 'velas' has been maintained," and key to these fiestas are musical and verbal performances (Campbell 128). While the student-authors were living in and publishing in Mexico City, they were still very much connected to Juchitán, which they considered home, a feeling they constantly wrote about and addressed in their magazine.

Back home in Juchitán, from the 1930s-1960s, there appeared to be relative political stability. While president Lázaro Cárdenas was restructuring and institutionalizing the state through extensive land reforms and labor legislation from 1934-1940 at the national level, Juchitán appeared to be relatively autonomous from the dynamics that marked national politics (Rubin 15). For many years, from 1934 until his death in 1964, a "man of the people" was in power, General Heliodoro Charis, the regional political boss (Rubin 45). According to Rubin, Charis's rise to power in 1934 "signified a temporary alliance between regional, state, and federal governments" (48). Rubin argues that while his politics were "in no way radical or oppositional" to the national government, they did allow for "autonomous, locally initiated activity – fostering, from the beginning of the postrevolutionary system, a counterweight to national power" (Rubin 46). Charis was able to negotiate the presence of the PRI in Juchitán, though accounts of his political tactics differ. Feelings towards Charis were ambivalent according to Rubin's interviews. Some believed Charis to be a man of the people, who mixed with the locals and always asked for improvements for Juchitán, while others accused him of being a bandit, of raping young women, of taking money from neighboring communities, and of attacking people and resorting to violence to reach his goals. While people were ambivalent

about Charis's methods, they do remember Charis as someone who wielded his Zapotec identity to connect with the pueblo. For example, he had learned Spanish later in life and therefore did not speak it fluently, so he brought another man, Luis Pineda to read, write, and speak publicly for him (Rubin 50). This contributed to his image of a "poorly educated Indian" who still argued for the "needs of his people in Mexico City," which earned him the loyalty of common Juchitecos (Rubin 50). Charis is also credited with bringing light, water, and schools to Juchitán. Still, his greatest accomplishment is the belief that he kept the PRI out of Juchitán, even though that really meant having some PRI representatives on the municipal government and negotiating with them (Rubin 49; 52). Charis was a key figure in Juchitán because his rule allowed for stability, which would prove important for establishing Zapotec identity.

This relative political stability, spanning the 1930s to the 1960s, allowed for social and economic elites to take a central role in Zapotec culture, and for that culture to grow. Rubin argues that "the general outlines of language, dress, ritual, and historical opposition to the outside were shared among elites and ordinary people, all of whom understood themselves to be members of one pueblo" (58). Rubin's argument perfectly aligns with what we see in *Neza*. Even though the student-authors of this first publication are from the upper class, they write to and with the pueblo; they repeatedly state that they feel connected to it, and do not consider that their class status sets them apart. Important to note as well is that *Neza* was published in the capital city, and while it primarily had a Zapotec audience it was also a statement to Mexican society at large of how "a thriving regional/indigenous culture persisted on the Isthmus within the confines of mestizo Mexico" (Campbell 127). For the first iteration of this magazine, it was the elites who were traveling to Mexico, forming societies, and exalting their Zapotec Juchitec culture as it was simultaneously being appropriated by the state and growing in popularity outside of Juchitán and

the Isthmus.

2. *Neza*: The Newspaper

Neza was originally called *Nesha* for the first two numbers, before it was renamed *Neza,*[16] the name kept for the rest of its publication. *Neza* was for the most part a newspaper, with only the last three numbers published as a magazine. That change occurred after a brief hiatus and a new director, but those three numbers are not widely available. "*Neza*"means "camino" or "lo correcto."

The newspaper consisted of various sections that were included in many if not all numbers. Some of those were the "Guía del lector," "Inquisiciones," "Notas sociales" or "Noticias," "Academia de Lengua Zapoteca," and *refranes* at the foot of some pages. The "Guía del lector" was usually – but not always – written by Marcelo Man, which we learn was a pseudonym used by Andrés Henestrosa in the 1986 edition published by Ediciones Toledo (Henestrosa). The "Guía" varied in topics ranging from descriptions of religions in the Isthmus to book recommendations on Mexican history. A section titled "Inquisiciones," was written by Andrés Henestrosa, Gabriel López Chiñas, and Wilfrido C. Cruz. "Inquisiciones" also focused on culture, covering the importance of speaking the Zapotec language for the understanding of Zapotec culture. After the creation of the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca, there was a section dedicated to updating the audience on progress in the creation of the alphabet. More interestingly, there were various poems and letters published in both Zapotec and Spanish that called to the audience for translations. "Notas sociales" or "Noticias" was a section updating the audience on mostly local news, including events occurring both in Mexico City and Juchitán.

[16] This change in spelling occurs after the creation of the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca.

The inclusion of events happening in Juchitán gives us insight into the fact that the editors were very much connected to their pueblo even as they lived and studied in the capital. Finally, at the foot of every first page there were *refranes* printed in Zapotec, and since this was before the creation of the alphabet, they were written however the writer saw fit. Andrés Henestrosa also takes credit for these *refranes* (Henestrosa).

Throughout the newspaper, images were not commonly found. There is a special issue, number thirteen, which was published at the one-year anniversary of the creation of the newspaper and includes some photographs. On the first page there is an image of an older woman in traditional clothing, which is labeled as such (e.g see fig. 1). On the second and third pages there are small headshots of Aquileo Infanzón Garrido, a contributor, and Andrés Henestrosa. Finally, on the fourth page there are three group photos: the first board of directors, the current board of directors, and a few members who would join the board in the following months. Special issue number thirteen is the only number that contains images apart from the second number that includes one photograph of Juchiteco pilots.

Figure 1. The photograph included on the first page of *Neza*, June 1936, p.1. Screenshot by author.

Throughout the life of the newspaper most articles were stand-alone articles. There were a few that were published throughout many numbers, presumably because of their length, spread across a few issues. Those articles were about geography, diseases in the area, and history of certain sites. There were also some articles with similar titles because they focused on the same themes. For example, four articles published throughout *Neza* are focused on the *binigula'sa'*, or the original/ancient Zapotecs. These articles were written by different authors, but they are interacting with each other, with some authors referencing the articles recently published in previous numbers of *Neza*. There are also many articles that are about the *Zandunga*, a song and dance that is specific to Juchitán. These articles all contain the word *Zandunga* in their title, but they offer either their own interpretation of the lyrics, or their own history of the song and potential authors.

While many of the articles are written by the editors and other contributors in Mexico City, there are a lot that are excerpts from other works or reprinted from other newspapers. For example, Henestrosa republishes some stories that are originally found in his book, *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* (1929), and Rafael Heliodoro Valle contributes from his book, *México Imponderable* (1936). There are also a few excerpts from José Vasconcelos that were originally from *Ulises Criollo* (1935) and an essay titled "El mapa estético de América." Throughout the publication, there are also articles originally from other newspapers like *El Nacional* and *Izquierda*. *Neza* therefore, is a blend of Zapotec authors who are writing for the newspaper, non-Zapotec authors who are writing about themes relevant to the editors, and reprints of excerpts and other articles the editors deem important enough to include.

The leadership on the newspaper was overall stable with only two directors and a few managing editors throughout its publication. Andrés Henestrosa is the director of the newspaper from numbers 1-13 until he leaves to the United States, and then Alfa Ríos Pineda takes over from numbers 14-20. The managing editors range from Hildo Gómez Castillo for numbers 1-3, Gustavo Matus Fuentes for number 4, Tomás López Vera for numbers 5-8, and then Jeremías López Chiñas for numbers 9-20. We can assume that the leadership for the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos was important as well, since they were included in the photographs printed in the special number 13. These photographs showed the first board of directors which included Enrique Cazorla Vera as treasurer, Gabriel López Chiñas as president, Jeremías Estudillo as secretary, Tomás López Vera as first member, and Adolfo C. Gurrión as the former director of *Neza* (even though his name does not appear as director in the printed newspapers). They also show the current board of directors and include Enrique Cazorla Vera as president, Ricardo Pineda as secretary, Tito Ruiz Marín as first member, Heriberto López Castillejos as

second member, and Tomás Nieto Pérez as treasurer. The last photograph includes the current leadership for *Neza* which also highlights Tomás Nieto Pérez as administrator apart from Ríos Pineda and López Chiñas.

3. Who was the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos?

Neza was started in 1935 by the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos (referred to as Sociedad). Many of its members were university students at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). The Sociedad was the force behind the publication of *Neza*, authoring all the works, choosing the excerpts they would reproduce, and distributing the newspaper in both Mexico City and Juchitán. The Sociedad and *Neza,* however, were only two components of a three-branched movement, the third being the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca, which was created only a couple of months later. Together, all three branches tackled issues and goals that the students and their supporters were preoccupied with in post-revolutionary 1930s Mexico. Essentially, these students wanted to help preserve their Zapotec culture and language and felt that they could contribute by creating and publishing the newspaper. *Neza* was published for twenty numbers from June 1935 through January 1937, with a brief pause and then three numbers published in September and November 1937 (De la Cruz 144).

The Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos was created January of 1935. In an introduction to a facsimile of all twenty numbers of *Neza*, from Ediciones Toledo, Andrés Henestrosa shares some background on the Sociedad. The Sociedad was preceded by another organization, an original Sociedad de Estudiantes Zapotecos, which was started in 1923, the year that the highest number of Juchiteco students had arrived in Mexico City, enough to form a Sociedad (Henestrosa). They had come together for various but overlapping reasons: “El amor a

la tierra nativa, a sus tradiciones y a su historia; el orgullo de ser de alguna parte era el vínculo que unía a sus socios" (Henestrosa). In other words, the students had come together because they were all from the same place and could share in their customs and traditions now that they were living in the capital of Mexico City, far from their beloved Juchitán. Their goals were also related to their culture, they aimed to "Proclamar esas tradiciones, esa historia, esa leyenda, darlas a conocer" (Henestrosa). That first Sociedad published two newspapers, *La Raza* in 1924 and then *El Zapoteco* in 1928 (Henestrosa). Those newspapers did not last very long, and eventually la Sociedad dissolved. That was until 1935, when a new wave of Juchiteco students arrived in the city and the Sociedad Nueva was created (Henestrosa). Henestrosa claims that he helped create this new Sociedad and once again, his goals were similar, "Todo por afirmar o por promover el amor, la vocación por las letras" (Henestrosa). It is easy to see these goals reflected in the pieces that the authors chose to publish, which range from songs to legends and origin stories.

The Sociedad had many members who would eventually go on to become well-known authors and public figures, some who first published in *Neza*. A few key contributors include Andrés Henestrosa, brothers Gabriel López Chiñas and Jeremías López Chiñas, Wilfrido C. Cruz, Enrique Liekens, Nazario Chacón Pineda, and Pancho Nácar, who all either started off in *Neza* or were involved in some way.

Andrés Henestrosa claims to have started the Sociedad Nueva. Henestrosa was born in Ixhuatán near Juchitán in 1906 (Bach 40). He left Juchitán in 1922 when he was sixteen years old to go to Mexico City where he was later taken in by Antonieta Rivas Mercado,[17] "a

[17] Antonieta Rivas Mercado would play a key role in the cultural scene in Mexico at that time, acting as patron to many members of *Los Contemporáneos*, helping fund the first avant-garde theater named Ulysses, and funding the publication of other books (Franco 113).

prominent patron of the arts" who also cared for writers and artists like "Xavier Villaurrutia, Mariano Azuela, Rodríguez Lozano, and Julio Castellanos" (Bach 42). There, he read from her library books such as Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and Leo Frobenius' *El decamerón negro* (Bach 42). Henestrosa noted how many of those stories contained animals, just like the tales of Tehuantepec he heard growing up in Juchitán (Bach 42). With the help of Antonieta Rivas Mercado, who edited his stories, he published his first book on his twenty-third birthday, *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* (1929), a collection of folktales. This was only the beginning of Henestrosa's long career as a writer, intellectual, and politician. He was involved with intellectual and artistic circles that ranged from Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, María Izquierdo, Dolores Álvarez Bravo, Antonin Artaud, to Langston Hughes and Henri Cartier Bresson (Bach 43). It was during these years that he helped create the Sociedad Nueva and directed the first few issues of *Neza*. He claims that he was responsible for "todo lo anónimo… las selecciones, la transcripción de textos selectos, y de algunos de los refranes en zapoteco que aparecen al pie de la página" (Henestrosa). Soon after the publication of *Neza*, he applied for and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and he left Mexico City to go study in the United States and create a Zapotec and Spanish dictionary (Bach 43). Even though he was in the United States during the time that *Neza* was being published, he was still able to contribute to the newspaper. Later in his career, Henestrosa would become a PRI politician, and a polemical figure[18] to Juchitec intellectuals as he criticized writing in Zapotec. In this chapter, I argue that we can view Henestrosa's sharing of his culture as a *kab'awilian* strategy. He was taking advantage of the *vanguardia* at the time, when there was a recovery of "autochthonous cultures," a look towards a

[18] In her article, "Engaging Intellectuals: Andrés Henestrosa and Elena Poniatowska" Debra Castillo claims that Henestrosa (along with Poniatowska) "provide local color for tourists, where [they], often unwittingly or unwillingly, collaborate in creating/producing the exportable veneer of an authentic, folkloric deep Mexico for an international consumer market" (45).

unique “New World experience,” to place himself within that sphere (Unruh 127).

A pair of brothers also have a key role in the creation of the Sociedad Nueva and the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca: Jeremías López Chiñas and Gabriel López Chiñas. Jeremías was the oldest of the two, a “capitán” and a “profesor de táctica militar en el Colegio Militar” (Cruz 178). He would go on to become the secretary general for the Federación Indigenista Revolucionaria Oaxaqueña (FIRO), [19] “a popular organization created in the late 1930s to mobilize Indians” (Dawson 136). He would encourage members not to rely on support from the state, as they had differing goals. Under his leadership, he pushed for the FIRO to “carry out any effort that benefits the nation, region, or community” (Dawson 136). His younger brother Gabriel focused more on writing, first publishing his works in *Neza.* Gabriel “gained prominence” in the professional world of Mexico City where he was a professor at the national university, director of the school’s radio station, and in the “literary milieu” (Campbell 127). In 1974 he would publish *Vinnigulasa*, one of his most well-known works that also focused on “myths and folklore” that Campbell calls “similar” to Henestrosa’s *Hombres que dispersó la danza* (127*)*. Some of his works were translated into English, French, and Polish (Campbell 127). Gabriel was a key figure of *Neza* and attempted to continue it after the original twenty numbers, changing it from a newspaper to a magazine.

Wilfrido C. Cruz was, if not a member of the Sociedad still a supporter and key contributor to *Neza* and that generation of intellectuals. Cruz was born in El Espinal, a district of Juchitán, in 1898. He spent his childhood there but moved to Veracruz to attend *preparatoria*. This was most likely because there were no secondary schools in his hometown and in Juchitán

[19] The FIRO was created in 1939 by Víctor González Fernández, who was chosen by President Lázaro Cárdenas to be the governor of Oaxaca, in an attempt to have some control from the center. González Fernández created the FIRO as he gathered popular support and began having conflicts with his opponents, such as Charis (Smith 246).

but also because Veracruz was a prime place for education (Martínez Vásquez XV). It is unclear whether he graduated from his *preparatoria* in Jalapa, but in 1916 he becomes a "maestro de escuelas de campamento" and "dentro del ejercito obtuvo el 'grado asimilado de capitán segundo' en la división 'supremos poderosos'" (Martínez Vásquez XVI). His military career was short-lived, and he soon moved to Mexico City where he enrolled in the national university to study law, graduating in 1921. Once graduated, he became a lawyer for general Manuel García Vigil's government (Martínez Vásquez XVI). Around this time, contests became increasingly popular for song lyrics, music, essays, anything that explored *mexicanidad*. In 1926 Cruz won a contest for an essay that would become his first book, *El Tonalamatl Zapoteco*,[20] published in 1935 (Martínez Vásquez XX). In 1946 he publishes his second book, *Oaxaca recóndita: razas, idiomas, costumbres, leyendas y tradiciones del estado de Oaxaca*, where he expands his study to include other Indigenous peoples from the state of Oaxaca. Wilfrido C. Cruz is considered, along with Henestrosa and López Chiñas, to be one of the most important Zapotec intellectuals of his generation. His two books were at times cited by those authors, and others later on, like Gregorio López y López, but not without controversy.[21] Wilfrido C. Cruz, like Enrique Liekens, though not students anymore at the time of *Neza's* publication, still supported the Sociedad Nueva as more established Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals in the capital city.

Enrique Liekens was born in Juchitán, Oaxaca in 1882 (Pineda 295). He was the son of "a Flemish immigrant to Juchitán and a Zapotec mother" and spoke various languages,[22] including Isthmus Zapotec (Campbell 121). Liekens held various roles ranging from Mexican

[20] *El Tonalamatl Zapoteco* is a study of various Zapotec concepts including time, calendars, gods, language, *guelaguetza* and the binnigula'sa. The word *tonalamatl* is a Nahuatl word composed of "*tonal*," meaning day, and "*amatl*," meaning paper or pages. A *tonalamatl* was like an almanac.
[21] It is said that Cruz would host tertulias in his home and that was where Henestrosa heard many of the stories that he would include in his own book, *Los hombres que dispersó la danza*. This question of plagiarism is explored in the pages of Neza and in this chapter, as it related to community knowledge, authorship, and ownership.
[22] Liekens spoke Zapotec, Spanish, English, French, and German.

consul in San Antonio Texas, to director of the Office of Civil Pensions and Retirement, as well as a diplomat. Liekens, as someone who was installed comfortably in Mexico City, could provide financial support to these university students. He utilized his position, one that came with power and money, to funnel that into the Sociedad and publish *Neza*. He was also directly involved with the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca as the vice-president of the association, and the one who kept the audience of *Neza* updated on the progress they made. Liekens was a key figure in the creation and sustainability of the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos and *Neza*, but he was primarily a military man. Therefore, apart from what he published in *Neza*, and a few poems and one short story, there is not much more literature from him available.

A few of the other notable figures from this Sociedad are well-known in Juchitán and in the world of Zapotec literature. Nazario Chacón Pineda also published in *Neza*,[23] having written his first bilingual poem "Bigu (La Tortuga)" when he was only twelve years old (Pineda 297). He then moved to Mexico City to study at the Escuela Nacional de Maestros during which he published his first book, *Estatua y Danza* in 1939 (Pineda 297). He continued to publish and was often related to *Los Contemporáneos,* who praised his works. There is not much known about another key author, Pancho Nácar, which is a pseudonym for Francisco Javier Sánchez Valdivieso. Nácar only published in *Neza* while he was alive, but most of his works were published posthumously by Zapotec intellectual and author Víctor de la Cruz in 1973, in a book titled *Diidxa*. De la Cruz considers Nácar the first poet to seriously attempt to write solely in Zapotec (Pineda 299). Still, these are only some of the most well-known writers, there were many others involved like Alfonso C. Gurrión, who directed some numbers, as well as Alfa Ríos Pineda. While Alfa Ríos Pineda directed some numbers after Henestrosa left, there is not much

[23] Chacón Pineda will also become an important figure for the following generation of Zapotec intellectuals in the late 1960s.

information available on her life[24] apart from later marrying Henestrosa.

4. The Manifestos

To understand the newspaper, including the motivations and goals for the student-authors to come together and create a publication, one must read two texts published in the first and fifth numbers of the newspaper, which can be read as manifestos. These texts give us insight into the intellectual currents that the authors are surrounded by and how they are influenced by certain ideas which they then mold specifically for their own ethnic identity. In them, we can find the influence of Rodó's *Ariel* (1900), published a few years earlier and Vasconcelos, who was also inspired by Rodó and then developed his own ideas, merging nationalism and the spirit. As a sponsor of Andrés Henestrosa, we also see Vasconcelos' ideas seep into the manifestos. Essentially, we see how the *espíritu* is integral to the student-authors, even as they mold their literary influences for their own ethnic identity. Through their participation in the *vanguardia* and through their use of the language of the time, the student-authors practice *kab'awilian* strategies as they straddle well-known, popular movements and their own Zapotec identity to shape their own trajectory as Zapotec cultural promoters. In doing so, they create Zapotec futurities, thinking through key philosophical concepts and publishing works that will be cited later on by future Zapotec intellectuals.

The first number that the *Neza* student-writers publish is released June 1935 and demonstrates the importance of the *juventud* and the role they have for the future, clearly inspired by Rodó's call to action for the youth of Latin America in *Ariel*. At the center of the first

[24] Alfa Ríos Pineda is one of the women who were clearly key contributors to the creation and consolidation of Isthmus Zapotec literature but are largely left out of its history. Apart from a book of recipes, Ríos Pineda did not publish anything else after *Neza* (Pineda).

page is a piece titled "A los paisanos del Istmo," written by Gabriel López Chiñas. In this piece, the publishers explain the various reasons for the creation of the newspaper, their approach to politics, and the role they believe they have as the *juventud*. First, it is important to note that even though the student-authors find themselves in the capital, Mexico City, they call back to their pueblo, to Juchitán, in that first paragraph. López Chiñas claims that they are doing "la tarea que [por] muchos años pide a gritos la región del Istmo." (1). And as the title suggests, they address themselves to their fellow *Juchitecos*, in Mexico City and in Juchitán. They also believe that they have a role to fill as the younger generation, as the *juventud*. They write that they feel "en sus venas fuerza de juventud" and "en su espíritu la necesidad de encauzar la cultura en nuestros pueblos" (López Chiñas 1). For the student-authors, it is a natural call for them to help preserve their culture. Then, they explain what they see as culture and the relationship to politics that they will assume. There appears to be a divide between culture and politics, with the writers emphasizing their dedication to culture, and avoiding politics unless necessary. López Chiñas implores, "Nuestro corazón sano, libre de epidemias políticas, se abre a vosotros y os ofrece la verdad." To the students, "la verdad" is their culture. They explain further, "La política – necesaria a la vida de los pueblos –, será intocable para nosotros en tanto que os aporte beneficios; más en cuanto enturbie sus entrañas y quiera trabajar en la opacidad, la llevaremos criba para purificar su seno" (López Chiñas 1). In other words, they will only touch on politics when absolutely necessary, and only to clarify, not to become lost in it. To emphasize the point, they continue, "Fuera de ésto, nuestra labor es absolutamente cultural"[25] (López Chiñas 1). And

[25] This proclamation to be strictly cultural and not political is interesting once one reads the contents of the magazines. Even though most of the works published are literary, stories, poems, and songs, there are a few pieces that are more explicitly political. For example, they publish some pieces on diseases and the lack of healthcare, and they also create a scholarship for young girls in Juchitán to be able to attend school. Furthermore, as I will argue later, the literary works that they publish are also political considering the time when they were being published.

once again, to close with the point they opened with, they reiterate their reasons for publishing, "inspirado[s] por un profundo amor a nuestras tierras y a nuestras gentes" (López Chiñas 1). The *Neza* authors are clearly trying to create a publication that will serve as a vehicle to push their culture forward, and they see themselves as responsible for that.

In this first manifesto we can see the influence that Rodó's *Ariel* had for the student-authors, who answer Rodó's call to action and the role of the youth as a regenerative force. Rodó's most well-known essay, *Ariel*, tackles many themes as he utilizes Shakespeare's character, Ariel, to represent all that is good, all that is moral, all that is right "Ariel, genio del aire, representa… la parte noble y alada del espíritu. Ariel es el imperio de la razón y el sentimiento sobre los bajos estímulos de la irracionalidad; es el entusiasmo generoso, el móvil alto y desinteresado en la acción, la espiritualidad de la cultura, la vivacidad y la gracia de la inteligencia" (Rodó 8). And Calibán, the evil spirit, represents the opposite, the negative, the dark, the uncivilized.[26] Through these characters Rodó develops his arguments, including the future of Latin America and the importance of the youth for that future. Rodó argues that the focus for Latin America should be the spiritual, and not the material, as he criticizes the United States for being the epitome of utilitarianism (Rodó 77). Latin America sets itself apart from that with its creativity and focus on beauty, and he believes it is the youth who will bring those changes forward. Rodó emphasizes, "Y sin embargo, yo creo ver expresada en todas partes la necesidad de una activa revelación de fuerzas nuevas; yo creo que América necesita grandemente de su juventud. He ahí por qué os hablo. He ahí por qué me interesa extraordinariamente la orientación moral de vuestro espíritu" (Rodó 23). Rodó calls to the youth of Latin America to help shape the future of the region, and the student-authors from *Neza*

[26] Postcolonial critics (like Aimé Césaire) will reclaim the figure of Caliban in their readings of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

answer, but with a twist. They do feel "en sus venas fuerza de juventud," and they are also guided by "la serenidad y la cordura", but their calling is specific to their ethnic background: it is their Zapotec culture that is the focus (López Chiñas 1). In this way, they find their space within the *vanguardia*. Howard Campbell, who has studied and written about Juchitán extensively, writes that *Neza* was part of a "panLatin American artistic movement which Unruh links to major social and economic changes that occurred after World War I" (272). Campbell cites Unruh who wrote about the Latin American *vanguardia* and argues that during the 1920s and 30s there was a "flurry" of "magazines, manifestoes" and "manifesto-style creative texts" that delved into "language, history, folklore, and politics" (Campbell 272). If we look at the language that the *Neza* student-authors used, influenced by Rodó, we can see how they are looking towards the future and creating a new literary publication, but they are doing so by pulling from their past, from their traditions that they claim have existed since before the Conquest. Unruh goes on to explain, "more specifically, the drive toward engagement – intellectual, social, metaphysical – was a defining feature of the international vanguard movements and that this was particularly true in Latin America" (22). This can be seen in the closing statements of the first manifesto; when the student-authors write, "Os pedimos, paisanos, vuestro acercamiento a nuestra fuente de verdad y de cultura. No permanezcáis inertes ante nuestra acción… Paisanos, vuestros jóvenes estudiantes tienen fija la mirada hacia vosotros. Acoged sus esfuerzos y su saludo" (López Chiñas 1). The student-authors end their introduction of *Neza* with a call for engagement from their readership. They are very much concerned with their publication being read and are not just creating literary texts for themselves.[27] Ultimately, they want to answer the call to action, and they do so through *Neza*.

[27] This openness and calling to the community will prove a recurring theme amongst Isthmus Zapotec authors as the creators of *Neza Cubi* also call to their pueblo.

The second manifesto reiterates the importance of the youth, demonstrating Rodó's influence once again. In "Por la cultura zapoteca," which appears in the fifth number in October 1935, the *Neza* intellectuals[28] focus on three main arguments: 1) the distinction between the youth and the older generation, 2) the difference between the material and the spiritual, which they relate to technology and the spirit, and 3) the Zapotec spirit. Essentially, the publishers explain their motto. They begin, "para la conservación de una cultura zapoteca, se han agrupado los jóvenes de la nueva generación juchiteca" ("Por" 1). There appears to be some tension between the youth and the older generation because they spend some time discussing how the world belongs to the youth, and yet they want to preserve their culture, therefore planting themselves as the bridge between the past and the future, tradition and modernity. They argue, "Nosotros creemos que es la juventud la que puede actualizar todas las potencias. Su entusiasmo y su fe pueden más que la fuerza y el dinero" ("Por" 1). They believe that the youth are led by passion, which will open new doors, but on the contrary, the older generation are led by experience, which "sigue los caminos ya trazados." They then repeat that "la juventud de Juchitán desea una cultura zapoteca" and that they are not tied down to "normas" or "leyes" ("Por" 1). In this way, the Sociedad emphasize how their culture is not static but quite the opposite: it is dynamic, changing, and growing. They explain what they mean when they say "cultura Zapoteca" which is "un desarrollo intelectual y artístico" ("Por" 6). This is reflected in how they focus on publishing poetry, songs, and explaining their traditions. They tie all those factors, a "desarrollo intellectual y artístico," to their culture. The authors also push for a relationship between culture and the spirit versus technology and the material. They begin by

[28] Even though there is no author named for this article, the title is a motto used by Gabriel López Chiñas later throughout his career. It appears at the bottom of the title page of another book of his, *El concepto de la muerte entre los zapotecas* (1969).

accepting that "la civilización [seguirá] su cauce" which will include improving technology, which they are not opposed to. They agree that technology should be used to help men. But they clarify "no queremos confundir las cosas" because "la técnica es cosa manual" and "la cultura es del espíritu" ("Por" 6). In this second manifesto the student-authors are reiterating the argument that they discuss in the first manifesto, the importance of the youth and the role that they play in pushing their culture forward. It is clearly influenced by Rodó's *Ariel* once again and we can even see the critique of the material.[29]

The new argument that arises in this manifesto is the existence and importance of a Zapotec spirit. Later in the manifesto, they write how they place all their hopes in "la cultura zapoteca" and therefore "la conservación de un espíritu zapoteca" ("Por" 6). They explain this *espíritu* in the following manner: "Que la materia ceda a los moldes que le imponen el tiempo, las necesidades y los mandatarios; pero quitemos la máscara mentirosa que esconde la inspiración que mueve la voluntad de los hombres, que los impulsa a querer, que los hace ser *ellos* y siempre *ellos*" ("Por" 6) (italics in original). The authors believe that the Zapotec people have been hiding behind a mask, a "máscara mentirosa", and not showing who they truly are. The Zapotec spirit is what makes them be who they are and who they always have been. The article ends with a call-to-action reiterating what they believe "conservando el espíritu zapoteco" really means: "Se trata de asumir una actitud inteligente: romper con todas las farsas, burlar las sendas estrechas, abrir los dos ojos, buscar la integridad, la plenitud, el sello inconfundible" ("Por" 6). For these authors, retaking and reclaiming their culture is living their truth. Only then

[29] As it is well-known, the *vanguardias* and technology had strong links in the early twentieth century. At the same time, *Indigenista* discourses in Latin America, including the case of Mexico, have often presupposed an inherent opposition between Indigenous peoples and "modern technologies." In the pages of *Neza,* however, I have noticed an interesting discourse that bridges tradition and modernity, as well as avant-garde and technology with the ancestral Zapotec spirit and culture.

can they break from a farce they had been living.

The mention of a Zapotec spirit is notable considering the relationship that race and spirit had during that time. José Vasconcelos had published *La raza cósmica* in 1925, only ten years before the student-authors were publishing. And Vasconcelos had a substantial role in the life of Andrés Henestrosa as his sponsor, which gives us insight into why Vasconcelos was republished throughout the newspaper. Vasconcelos based his plans for the future of Mexico on a unique understanding and meshing of "race theory and vitalist spiritualism" where *mestizaje* would be the naturally occurring next step (Swarthout 105). In the following passage we can see how Vasconcelos explains how *mestizaje* will become more common and how the spiritual will overpower the physical:

> El indio es buen puente de mestizaje. Además, el clima cálido es propicio al trato y reunión de todas las gentes. Por otra parte, y esto es fundamental, el cruce de las distintas razas no va a obedecer a razones de simple proximidad, como sucedía al principio, cuando el colono blanco tomaba mujer indígena o negra porque no había otra a mano. En lo sucesivo, a medida que las condiciones sociales mejoren, el cruce de sangre será cada vez más espontáneo, a tal punto que no estará ya sujeto a la necesidad, sino al gusto; en último caso a la curiosidad. El motivo espiritual se irá sobreponiendo de esta suerte a las contingencias de lo físico. (67)

For Vasconcelos, race was spiritual, as he used race to mean cultural heritage, referring to civilizations, customs, and language (Swarthout 105). Vasconcelos was not unique in this definition, as Marisol de la Cadena demonstrates, focusing on the case of Peru. First, De la Cadena emphasizes that race is an ever-evolving subject; citing Goldberg, she describes it as "a historically specific concept that attaches to theoretical and social discourses to establish the

meanings it assumes at any historical moment (Goldberg 1993:74)" (13). In the early twentieth century, race was popularly tied to the soul. In Peru, and more specifically in the capital city of Lima, ideas about race were being influenced by European thinkers (De la Cadena 18). Like the definition that Vasconcelos was using, "racial soul" and the "spirit of the race" were popular, which De la Cadena states could have been borrowed from "Romantic historiography" and were used to refer to a people developing over time and distinct from others by language, religion, or geography (18). In the case of Peru, race could be transcended if an Indigenous person lived in the city, got an education, and dressed differently. Race therefore had less to do with phenotype and more with the spirit. Vasconcelos' ideas about race were in the same vein, where a new *mestizo* race would be created, but he was also assured that a whitening of people would occur naturally. Vasconcelos believed a natural whitening of people would occur because it was "aesthetically pleasing" (72). He explains in more detail:

> La conciencia misma de la especie irá desarrollando un mendelismo astuto así que se vea libre del apremio físico, de la ignorancia y la miseria, y, de esta suerte, en muy pocas generaciones desaparecerán las monstruosidades; lo que hoy es normal llegará a parecer abominable. Los tipos bajos de la especie serán absorbidos por el tipo superior. De esta suerte podría redimirse, por ejemplo, el negro, y poco a poco, por extinción voluntaria, las estirpes más feas irán cediendo el paso a las más hermosas. (Vasconcelos 72)

Two components of Vasconcelos' ideology must be noted here: first, that he equates "ignorancia" and "miseria" as well as "monstruosidades" to Blackness, and second, that he believes this whitening will happen because of aesthetics, because "las estirpes más feas irán cediendo el paso a las más hermosas" – in other words, white. Therefore, even though race and the spirit were tied, Vasconcelos still had ideas about race on a spectrum and was aiming for a

whitening of the nation.

In this second manifesto, the student-authors also refer to a spirit, but they specifically name a "Zapotec spirit." They, unlike Vasconcelos, did not name a "Mexican spirit" or a "mestizo spirit," nor an "indio spirit." Instead, they take ownership of their culture and background and remind the readers that it is Zapotec specific, and in this way they push back against generalizing and homogenizing discourses that do not distinguish between Indigenous peoples. After claiming that they want to develop their culture intellectually and artistically, they elaborate, "Pero decirla y rimarlo de acuerdo con su propia alma. Quiere tener la visión de las cosas a través de su propio paisaje. Pretende construir la síntesis de todas las cosas bajo su propio cielo" ("Por" 6). Taking into consideration the nationalization of Indigenous cultures in Mexico at the time, I read this very culturally and regionally specific focus as a claim to authority. The student-authors remind the audience that the customs, the songs, the clothing that they are writing about in *Neza* (such as *La Zandunga* and the *tehuana* outfit) are Zapotec specific, Juchitán specific, too. It is quite the opposite to Vasconcelos and the case in Peru where race could be transcended; they are reminding the reader that their Zapotec heritage is what makes them "*ellos* y siempre *ellos*" ("Por" 6). In a way, they are appropriating the language of the time, the usage of the word "espíritu" and its connection to race, but molding it for their own goals, which in this case is preserving their Zapotec culture.

The connection between the spirit and culture becomes clearer if we look into Zapotec cosmology and the concepts of *guenda*, *petào*, and *làchi*, all interconnected in a constellation of concepts that reveal the understanding of the world according to Zapotec tradition. *Guenda*, one of the most, if not the most important concept in Zapotec philosophy is an all-encompassing darkness that is the beginning of everything, gives birth to everything. Linguistically, "*guenda*"

also makes verbs into nouns.[30] *Petào* and *làchi* are almost synonymous, and mean spirit, or breath of life. I argue that just as the student-authors draw from both Rodó and Vasconcelos, they also draw from Zapotec cosmology much older than both of the authors and the *vanguardia* cultural movement. They are alluding to a growing field of Zapotec philosophy that will develop partly due to their independent publications[31] only a few years after the publication of *Neza*. Delving into these concepts allows us to see the way in which the Zapotec intellectuals were in conversation, not just with widespread intellectual currents of the time, but also with Zapotec philosophy and cosmology that was emerging contemporaneously. Now, with some distance we can see the clear connection between their words, and the reason why preserving their culture, their Zapotec spirit, was so pressing for them in a post-revolutionary Mexico that was attempting to unite the nation under a new Mexican nationhood.

Before we delve into the specific language that the intellectuals use in both their pieces, "A los paisanos del Istmo" and "Por la cultura Zapoteca," we must briefly examine where these concepts originate from: *guenda*. According to Sánchez-Antonio, *guenda* is one of the most important and encompassing concepts in Zapotec thought. He explains this concept in the following manner:

> Uno de ellos, es la noción de *quèla*, *guèla* o *guenda* como se le dice en el Istmo de Tehuantepec, la cual significa básicamente obscuridad, noche, pero también connota profundidad y desconocimiento. En el diccionario de Juan de Córdova[32] encontramos el

[30] For example, in Isthmus Zapotec the verb for eating is *ro*, and *guendaro* is the word for food.
[31] Gregorio López y López will begin writing about Zapotec philosophy in the 1940s based on books published by Wilfrido C. Cruz, Andres Henestrosa, and Jeremías López Chiñas, all contributors to the *Neza* newspaper and potential authors of the manifestos. More currently, Juan Carlos Sánchez-Antonio draws from López y López to offer a more comprehensive analysis of Zapotec philosophy in his forthcoming book, *La filosofía de los zapotecos: hacia un dialógo mundial inter-filosófico transmoderno* (2024).
[32] Juan de Córdova was a Dominican friar who compiled the *Vocabulario de Lengua Zapoteca* (1578) that various Zapotec intellectuals would later use as a resource to reconstruct Zapotec philosophy.

> vocablo *quèla* como "ser el ser de cualquier cosa" (folio 377, columna 3). El cual representa para nosotros, una de las categorías filosóficas más importantes dentro de la filosofía de los zapotecos. (Sánchez-Antonio 14)

Guenda is repeatedly defined as the "ser el ser de todas las cosas," the essence of everything, an all-encompassing darkness. This darkness that is the beginning of everything is referenced by various Zapotec intellectuals, notably in Macario Matus' book, *Los zapotecas/ Binni záa* (1998), in a series of poems titled "Orígenes" Matus begins, "Toda oscuridad era/ cuando nacieron los zapotecas" (15). This darkness bears everything, "De la obscuridad surge la pareja primordial para crear la luz, y con ello el tiempo-espacio, los días y las noches, el calendario y el lenguaje" (Sánchez-Antonio 5). *Guenda* is at the center of the constellation of concepts that we find woven throughout the Sociedad's manifestos. *Guenda*, the beginning of everything, from which everything is born, is connected to the concept of the spirit, intelligence, and culture. Here, we will focus on each concept independently while acknowledging their connections.

Important in this constellation is the connection between truth, their Zapotec culture, and a Zapotec path. While the concept of "*neza*" or "path" will be explored more in the second chapter, it is important to note here because the intellectuals are already thinking about the Zapotec path and what that path entails, hence the name of their newspaper. López Chiñas writes, "Nuestro corazón, libre de epidemias políticas, se abre a vosotros y os ofrece la verdad" (1), and then he ends his call, "Os pedimos, paisanos, vuestro acercamiento a nuestra fuente de verdad y de cultura" (1). López Chiñas appears to make a parallel between "verdad" and "cultura." The connection to culture I will explain later. First, we focus on "truth." According to Sánchez-Antonio, Juan de Córdova utilized the word "*xinezaya*" to refer to life, with the root word *neza*. Sánchez-Antonio breaks down the word, "En este caso, la partícula *xi*, como hemos

dicho, es principio, la claridad que abre y despeja por momentos la obscuridad, *nèza* es "senda o sendero" (folio 475, columna 3), camino, y puede entenderse también como lo correcto, la verdad, es decir, lo que está en su camino, en su justo lugar o medida (*péa*), y el sufijo ya, indica lo limpio, lo claro, asociado nuevamente con la luz" (18). The word *neza* means not only path or road, but also "lo correcto" and "la verdad". Therefore, when the Sociedad expresses their pursuit of the truth, their offering of the truth, there is an inherent connection between that truth and the path they are on, the Zapotec path. The concept of path will become even more clearer in *Neza Cubi*, the following magazine, but here those connections already exist.

The Sociedad utilizes the word *espíritu* throughout their manifestos, and while they are clearly influenced by Rodó and Vasconcelos, the concept of *espíritu* is also one of the key concepts of Zapotec cosmology. *Guenda*, the all-encompassing darkness that births everything, is related to the spirit, which, according to Zapotecs, everyone and everything has precisely because they are born of *guenda*. Sánchez-Antonio explains, "Así, el vocablo xiquèla [peniàti], en su construcción lingüística refiere a la relación luz (xi-cilla) obscuridad (quèla), es decir en los elementos primordiales que constituyen la esencia de las almas." He is referring to a specific concept for this breath of life that is equated to spirit, or soul, the concept of "*petáo*" or "*pitáo*." Based on Francisco Burgoa,[33] Sánchez-Antonio defines "*pitào*" as "ese impulso, aliento vital o «Alma del mundo» (Burgoa 1989 II [1674]) que anima a toda la vida de los seres de la tierra y los mares" (9). Since everything is born of *guenda*, everything has *pitào*, an "aliento vital." This concept is equivalent to "*láchi*," as Sánchez-Antonio finds, "Por ejemplo, una de las nociones más importantes en la religión zapoteca es el alma, encontramos que la entrada *làchi* es 'alma o

[33] Burgoa wrote *Geográfica descripción de la Parte Septentrional del Polo Ártico de la América y, Nueva Iglesia de las Indias Occidentales, y Sitio Astronómico de esta Provincia de Predicadores de Antequera, Valle de Oaxaca* (1672).

anima' (folio 022, columna 4), *pèe* tiene la misma equivalencia: 'alma o anima' (folio 022, columna 4), o *peenepaa* indica lo mismo 'alma o anima' (folio 022, columna 4)." The Sociedad refers to the spirit various times throughout their manifestos, directing themselves to their fellow Zapotecs and mentioning culture as well. First, they write, "La nueva generación de estudiantes juchitecos, sintiendo en sus venas fuerza de juventud y en su *espíritu* la necesidad de encauzar la *cultura* en *nuestro pueblo*" (López Chiñas 1; emphasis added). Then they claim, "Nuestra labor es absolutamente *cultural*" (López Chiñas 1; emphasis added). And finally, they write, "La técnica es cosa manual. La *cultura* es del *espíritu*. Y si hemos optado por reclamar antes que todo la *cultura*, es porque nosotros aun ponemos el *espíritu* por encima de la materia. La conservación de un *espíritu zapoteca*: he ahí toda nuestra esperanza" ("Por" 6; emphasis added). This connection between the spirit and culture becomes clear in Zapotec cosmology. The spirit is also related to "la conciencia," and therefore actions: "Al alma, alude no sólo a la conciencia, sino también a nuestras intenciones, que podría estar relacionada con nuestra voluntad, nuestro deseo, por ejemplo, *làchi* se traduce como 'intención o fin' (folio 236, columna 1) o 'pecho por la intención' (folio 306, columna 4)" (Sánchez-Antonio). In other words, the soul is related to consciousness and to intentions. This leads to another concept in the constellation that connects the Sociedad's use of spirit and culture ever more clearly. Sánchez-Antonio explains,

> Así, por ejemplo, *làchi* se traduce también como "costumbre" (folio 096, columna 2), es decir, los hábitos sociales o comunitarios que hemos heredado y construido en la vida. Tener conciencia de nuestras costumbres parece ser importante, e implica, según nuestra hipótesis de interpretación, examinar o preguntarse lo que ha hecho el alma.

The reason that the Zapotec intellectuals speak of their spirit, and specifically of their Zapotec spirit, when their goal is cultural preservation and revitalization is because there is a direct

connection between the spirit, customs, and culture. In other words, when the student-authors write about spirit, they are basing their ideas on a spirit that has a direct connection to customs and culture, which is the truth, or "lo correcto." In this rare instance, there appears to be a convergence between their cosmology and widespread intellectual currents that were also speaking of an "espíritu." The connections that they are drawing from the spirit to culture and customs are inherently intertwined in Zapotec philosophy. As university students in the intellectual circles they were a part of, well-versed in both Vasconcelos, Rodó, and Zapotec cosmology, they were making connections clear to themselves.

These manifestos already start hinting at *kab'awilian* strategies that the authors were thinking of since the inception of the newspaper. They used the language of the *vanguardia*, as wealthy intellectuals, surrounded by key literary and intellectual currents, taking part in popular movements while holding on to their Indigenous Zapotec identity. They agree with the role of the youth in Rodó's *Ariel* and lean on it. They also speak of a spirit, but unlike Vasconcelos' spirit, they refer to a Zapotec spirit. This Zapotec spirit is inherently intertwined with culture, with their people, their pueblo. Campbell has noted:

> Although from a national perspective, *Neza*, Henestrosa's writings, and the other works of the Juchiteco intellectuals may be considered part of a larger process of postrevolutionary indigenismo in which the Mexican state attempted to assimilate Indian traditions and communities into "the nation" for Juchitecos, they were emblematic of Juchitán's independent cultural vitality. (124)

If we use a *kab'awilian* lens, we can see how both can be true. These authors utilized this opportunity that opened up to them in post-revolutionary Mexico to begin crafting a Zapotec literary history. Their newspaper will have an impact for generations to come, considered by

many as the start of contemporary Isthmus Zapotec literature. And as Campbell writes, while the newspapers were "primarily for consumption of Zapotec people, they also were directed to the society at large, as a statement that a thriving regional/indigenous culture persisted on the Isthmus within the confines of mestizo Mexico" (127). Since the student-authors were living in Mexico City, they highlight how their culture persisted in the capital, in the heart of the nation-state that was pushing for assimilation through various avenues. They not only drew attention to their culture but began making concrete plans for its continuance to ensure Zapotec futurities, apart from their publication, another was the creation of an Academia to safeguard their language.

5. Efforts for an Alphabet: La Academia de Lengua Zapoteca

The Academia de Lengua Zapoteca was the third and last arm in the movement for cultural preservation and revitalization. The Academia was created soon after the creation of *Neza* and becomes a consistent theme for the publication. The Academia is notable because of the time in which it was created, the fact that the student-authors were attempting to institutionalize their goal of cultural preservation, and the opposing ways in which standardized languages can and have been used by the state versus native communities. In this section, I will briefly highlight the history of the relationship of the nation-state to Indigenous languages, including the state of linguistics when the student-authors decided to create their own Academia, and what we learn about the Academia through *Neza*, including the unique approach and the tension between the Sociedad members.

5.1 *The State of Indigenous Languages in Post-Revolutionary Mexico*

There has been a paradoxical and tense relationship between the authorities in power in

Mexico and Indigenous languages since the Conquest; Indigenous languages have been studied mostly for the purpose of assimilation while speakers of Indigenous languages and the languages themselves have been scorned. Since the Conquest, Indigenous languages were seen as a barrier for conversion and not just because of lack of comprehensibility but because they were considered "simples estructuras" and not adequate for the "sagradas escrituras" (Castillo Hernández 297). If the Spanish learned any Indigenous languages it was for conversion, such as translating the Bible. It was not until Mexico's Independence that the government began to take a more methodic interest in Indigenous languages, when "se planteó la necesidad de documentar el origen de los distintos pueblos indígenas de México y fue pertinente realizar su reconstrucción, histórica, social y cultural para lograr la unidad del país" (Castillo Hernández 298). Still, this interest was only to ensure national unity since Indigenous languages were seen as a threat, as separating the speakers from "Mexican culture." After the Mexican Revolution, the state's relationship to Indigenous languages became more solidified in its rejection. There were still those who believed that Indigenous languages were a threat to national unity, such as Vasconcelos who created a literacy campaign, or a "Campaña de desanalfabetización," which was described as "el instrumento que permitiría la realización del proceso de unificación lingüística a través de la castellanización" (González Luna 99). And in early post-revolutionary Mexico, other important figures like Gamio initially agreed, even as they studied Indigenous languages and published studies under the Department of Anthropology (De Angulo 102). It was not until the 1940's that "anthropologists such as Gamio (1916), Sáenz (1970) and Ramírez (1928)… reversed their position to press for the preservation and teaching of indigenous languages as a means to build and preserve 'national' culture" (Sitton 130). This was of course, after the "consolidation of the revolutionary nation-state and the reduced threat of U.S.

intervention" (Sitton 130). Still, even with the support of the government once Lázaro Cárdenas became president, the stigma around Indigenous languages continued. One example that highlights stigma towards Indigenous people and languages is the fact that mestizos were called "gente de razón" and Indigenous people who spoke Spanish were called "arrazonados" (Lomnitz 171, Vigil and Lopez 59). By this standard it would mean that Indigenous people who did not speak Spanish were "gente sin razón," in other words, not rational beings.[34] The student-authors were coming together and creating the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca only a few years after the literacy campaign and the anthropological interest in Indigenous languages.

The Zapotec authors were likely aware of the linguistic studies occurring in southern Mexico, which were years in the making. In 1917 Gamio was named the director of the Dirección de Antropología, and the anthropological study of various Indigenous peoples in Mexico only increased. After Gamio finished excavating Teotihuacan he sent anthropologists south to Oaxaca. Jaime de Angulo is one linguist who was in Oaxaca as early as 1922. In an article published in 1925 he reveals that he was there at the bequest of Gamio, "to collaborate as linguist in the Anthropological Survey of the Mexican Republic which he has planned" (96). And this is only after "the monumental work on Teotihuacan, as typical of the Aztec culture, had just been completed and the field of investigation was now shifted to the Zapotecan region" (De Angulo 96). A few years later, in 1930, Paul Radin publishes his own article on the Zapotec language. In it he shares that there is a long history of documentation of the Zapotec language, such as "representative series of grammars, dictionaries, and confesionarios" that began in 1578 and continued into his own time and would give "fairly good insight into both the phonetics and

[34] Even today, Indigenous communities in Mexico face racism and discrimination when speaking their language, which influences where they will speak it and whether they will teach it to their children. Speakers are intertwined in discourses of modernity, which include denigration towards the "main symbol of Indigenous identity in Mexico: language" (Messing 116).

the structure of the language throughout the vicissitudes of the last 350 years" (Radin 64). But when he names contemporary studies, he simply lists, "the data obtained by me (1912-1929) and de Angulo (1922)" (Radin 65). Therefore, it appears that there are not a lot of post-revolutionary linguistics studies on Zapotec. The research that was happening more profusely was for Nahuatl, and much of that was by U.S. anthropologists. The lack of research on Zapotec, as well as the backgrounds of the linguists could be the reasons why the student-authors felt a need to create their own Academia and research their language.

5.2 *La Academia*

The creation of the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca goes in hand with that of the Sociedad and *Neza* and serves as an official vehicle for institutional change and recognition of Indigenous languages as living languages. We learn about the trajectory of the Academia, why it was started, who was a part of it, and their process, through their publications in *Neza*. In the end, it appears that there might have been some tension behind the scenes, with the Academia and Andrés Henestrosa both working towards similar goals but with differing methods. Still, the creation of the Academia highlights how this Zapotec intellectual network decided to navigate its place in the capital.

The first article explains their reasons for the creation of the Academia and demonstrates the relationship between language and culture and why the student-authors were so preoccupied with establishing an official language. It is clear from the beginning of the newspaper that the student-authors are concerned with creating and establishing an official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet. They first publish "Apuntes sobre el alfabeto Zapoteco" in the third number. Then in the fourth number they announce the creation of the Academia de la Lengua Zapoteca. In this first article we learn that the Academia was established on the eighteenth of the previous month,

August 1935. The president is the licenciado Vicente E. Matus and the vice-president is Enrique Liekens ("Miembros" 6). The authors also explain the reason for creating the Academia, they are tired of there being no uniformity when writing Zapotec, and they exclaim, "nuestra lengua no solo tiene un preciado valor histórico, sino que está pleno de vida" ("Academia 1"). In this way they remind the readers that Indigenous languages are not dead or dying and that they are in fact living languages. They continue more explicitly, "No se trata de una lengua muerta que tiene su lápida en la memoria de los justos. Se trata de un idioma que vive mientras late el corazón de toda una raza" ("Academia 1"). They connect the language to the people, inextricably, it beats in their hearts. This is especially notable because the project of *Indigenismo* relegated Indigenous people to the past. In other words, state *Indigenismo* celebrated the civilizations of the past and the current Mexico as *herederos* of those great civilizations, but Indigenous people were only allowed to live in that past. Contemporary Indigenous people had to shed their Indigenous identity (clothing, customs, language, religion) for them to survive into modernity. This was a key component of state *Indigenismo*.[35] The student-authors emphasize that Zapotec is still alive because the people who speak it are still alive. They reiterate this connection when they argue that "un idioma sintetiza la cultura de un pueblo" ("Academia 1"). For the publishers, it is not a question to continue speaking and writing in their language, it is essential for their goal to push culture forward, to preserve their culture they must preserve their language, and that begins with creating an alphabet and eventually a dictionary. This goal contributes to their efforts for Zapotec futurities, ensuring that there is continuation of their language and therefore themselves. The members of the Sociedad also take full responsibility for this effort, it is "un triunfo plenamente suyo," taking complete ownership of the independent creation of the Academia and its future

[35] Johannes Fabian, in his book *Time and the Other,* explains this "denial of coevalness" that the West projects onto non-western people, so it is not unique to Indigenous people but also to other non-western populations.

achievements (“Academia 1”). With this article the publishers announce to their readers their journey of creating an Isthmus Zapotec alphabet, inviting them along as well. The creation of an Academia of Lengua Zapoteca in 1935 indicates how these student-authors might be responding to the paradoxical *Indigenista* policies of the time. On the one hand, Spanish is being pushed in educational settings. On the other, there are linguists studying Indigenous languages, but it is through the state, such as the *Dirección de Antropología*. The student-authors have a direct personal connection to the language, and practical reasons for wanting to standardize the language. They are writers and want to disseminate their literature. This personal connection can be seen with the repeated use of possessive pronouns, “nuestra lengua,” “triunfo suyo” (“Academia” 1). These intellectuals are approaching language from a different lens than the state, not as an object of study, but as a means of cultural preservation, and their methods are influenced by their approach.

Throughout the twenty numbers published by *Neza*, the readers are kept informed about the progress on the alphabet, highlighting a communal approach to knowledge. The readers are taken along with the Academia de la Lengua Zapoteca because they are fundamental to the process. In the next number published in October of 1935, the Sociedad publishes a call by Vicente. E Matus. Matus asks the readers for their thoughts and opinions on an issue he and the rest of the Academia have encountered, how to write a pronunciation that is not found in Spanish. Matus described it as the “j” in “John” in English, the “j” in “jouer” in French and the “g” in “gentile” in Italian (“Academia” 2). Matus asks the readers to send in their suggestions, the Academia is thinking of using “Xh, Hx, Dx, or Dch” but they want the input of “todo istmeño, sin excepción” (“Academia” 2). This article shows how the creation of a Zapotec alphabet is a communal act, the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca did not want to keep this project

to themselves, but instead opened it up to the community, to speakers of the language who utilized it every day. They continue this public-facing research throughout their process. In the next number, Enrique Liekens publishes a response to the question Matus sent out the previous month. In the January 1936 number, Matus publishes a letter he received from Juchitán, offering it as a translation exercise for the readers, to check if they understood it like he did ("Ejercicios" 2). A couple of months pass without updates, and then the Academia appears again in the thirteenth number published. In a footnote we learn that Matus had distributed an alphabet to the community for their approval, and that they are now publishing a response to it. This article demonstrates that they attempted to have a consensus before publishing their "final alphabet." It is difficult to know how many readers actually responded, but they claim that the readership did have a say. Matus decided that the Isthmus Zapotec alphabet should be based on the Castilian one, "suprimiendo y aumentando letras, según las exigencias del zapoteco" ("Academia" 3). He goes on to explain each letter included in detail and ends by proclaiming that this will be "el oficial" but that "los compañeros podrán seguir usando el que gusten" ("Academia" 8). While language standardization can be, and has historically been a tool for hegemony, the student-authors take an alternative approach. They have created an alphabet not to control but to aid in communication and connection. Because after months of work, back and forth, and the various issues they encountered, they do not attempt to enforce their alphabet. In fact, they encourage the complete opposite. They welcome their community to continue writing as they feel comfortable, and simply provide their alphabet as a resource. The Academia takes a communal approach when creating an alphabet, different than the methods of the state, but this approach is not without pushback.

A couple of months later Andrés Henestrosa publishes a piece updating the readers on the

Zapotec alphabet, demonstrating tension between the members of the Academia, and a journey that has not ended. Four months and numbers later, Henestrosa publishes a piece under the "Guía de lector" section, in the seventeenth number in October 1936. Henestrosa reappears in the newspaper after months and after settling in Michigan during his Guggenheim Fellowship, with the aim of creating a Zapotec dictionary. From there he claims that the Academia de la Lengua Zapoteca was not as successful as it might have appeared. While he does support the ambitious goal of creating a Zapotec alphabet, he claims that "los trabajos no prosperaron en la medida de nuestro deseo" (Henestrosa 3). While Henestrosa believes that there were many problems, one of them was turning to the people, who he refers to as "plebiscito," for grammatical input. While he believes the community can and should contribute by speaking the Zapotec language, he does not think they were fit to contribute to grammar (Henestrosa 3). Another problem he sees is naming people part of the Academy if they spoke Zapotec, and not considering whether they spoke Spanish (Henestrosa 3). And to make matters worse, some of them were not truly passionate about the project and abandoned the Academia soon after. Still, Henestrosa writes that their effort was not in vain because "siempre será importante publicar y haber publicado todas estas tentativas: nada mejor que ellas podrán señalar las diversas estaciones que ha recorrido la vieja preocupación de crear una Gramática y Vocabulario Zapoteco" (Henestrosa 3). For Henestrosa, the Academia did not have the proper approach, nor did it accomplish its goals. Henestrosa's critique, coupled with the fact that he was in the United States on a Guggenheim Fellowship attempting to create a Zapotec dictionary, highlights the diversity of these Zapotec intellectuals. Even though they had the same goals, they had different ways of reaching those goals. For the leaders of the Academia, Liekens and Matus, including the community was important, while Henestrosa seemed to be conducting more independent research, in a

completely different country. Henestrosa studied and did research at Stanford University with philology professor Antonio Solalinde at the University of California, Berkeley, at the University of Chicago where he took courses on comparative linguistics with anthropologist Sol Tax,[36] and at Tulane University (Bach 43). He was able to extend his Guggenheim Fellowship, so he spent a total of two years researching in the United States. Henestrosa clearly approached the creation of a Zapotec dictionary differently than Liekens and Matus did for an alphabet at the Academia, but they had the same goals, to help standardize their language. The goal for an alphabet would be accomplished only a few years later at the Mesa Redonda de 1956.

The Academia de Lengua Zapoteca had different repercussions according to various people. According to Henestrosa, the Academia was not successful except in recording the long trajectory of the creation of an official alphabet. And Campbell also calls the Academia "essentially symbolic" except for showcasing the passion that Juchitecos felt towards their culture (123). Linguist Gabriela Pérez Báez, however, does consider the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca important, because it was where Juchiteco intellectuals first came together and attempted to consolidate an alphabet (139). The Academia is also noteworthy because they came together in 1935, before the creation of various institutes by President Cárdenas that would be dedicated to the study of Indigenous languages. By coming together and focusing on an alphabet, the student-authors also disprove the widespread belief that Indigenous peoples do not have literary traditions, only oral traditions. These authors write down their oral traditions and in doing so invoke *kab'awilian* strategies, merging the oral and the written instead of choosing one. They appropriate the notion of an Academia, knowing that it will mean institutionalization, but for their own needs, preservation of their language. These student-authors demonstrate that

[36] Sol Tax worked extensively in Guatemala afterwards and is well known for "action anthropology" which sought to be different than "applied anthropology" (Smith).

Indigenous intellectuals have long had to navigate living within their culture and western culture, but do not necessarily forget one for the other. Arturo Arias argues that Indigenous intellectuals "envision alternative understandings of Indigenous knowledges and cultural sophistication" (614). He claims that they "rescue and vindicate maternal languages in written form" and "standardize systems of writing" (Arias 614). While the *Neza* authors did rescue the written form, they did not enforce their alphabet, allowing the community to write as they felt comfortable, aiming only for their culture to continue and be recorded.

The Academia de Lengua Zapoteca was the last arm in the organized network the Zapotec intellectuals were creating. They might have been reacting to what they felt was insufficient study of their language. And yet they took a non-normative approach. They opened up the pages of *Neza* to discussions with the community. And while not all members agreed with the strategy, they ultimately did create an alphabet. Even after months of laboring on the alphabet, they still did not enforce it. They offered it up as a suggestion to use, but ultimately stated that they would rather people write how they wanted to write, as long as they were writing in Zapotec. In their creation of the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca*,* the *Neza* intellectuals enacted *kab'awilian* strategies, to ensure Zapotec futurities, highlighting the way that the survival of their language was intertwined with their own continued existence. They created a present that would ensure a future.

So far, I have focused on the ways that the *Neza* authors organized themselves, first creating the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos, then creating *Neza*, and finally forming the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca. Their goal was to help preserve their culture for future generations. In doing so, they started utilizing *kab'awilian* strategies to navigate their Indigenous ethnic identity, in the heart of Mexico, while taking part in the government and the literary

vanguardia movement of the time. They will continue to highlight their culture in the articles they choose to publish in *Neza*. Through those articles, they let the readers into their worldviews and provide alternative histories.

6. The *Binnigula'sa'*:[37] Defying National History Through Origin Stories

A curious exchange occurs in the pages of *Neza*, where one origin story, that of the original Zapotecs, is printed four times. This origin story, with significant variations, is retold by four men, prompted by Andrés Henestrosa's titular story published in *Los hombres que dispersó la danza*, his first book published in 1929. In the seventh number of *Neza,* Eumartino Smith, which we learn in a footnote is an anagram for Herminio T. Matus, gives his retelling of the story, followed by a response from Manuel Montero in the ninth number, a reprint of Henestrosa's first version in the tenth number, and a version by Wilfrido C. Cruz in the eleventh number. These four men each give their own interpretation or rendition of the story of the "*binnigula'sa'*," that is the ancient Zapotecs. It appears that this conversation takes place in the pages of *Neza* as a result of a plagiarism accusation against Henestrosa. Essentially, Henestrosa is accused of plagiarizing stories shared by Wilfrido C. Cruz. These stories appear in Henestrosa's *Los hombres que dispersó la danza*. Even though this plagiarism scandal can lead to discussions about authorship or intellectual property, I believe we can also see how the writers place great importance in origin stories. Through their inclusion and framing of this origin story, the authors enact *kab'awilian* strategies by writing a history that does not match state-sponsored narratives about the origins of the Mexican nation, thereby providing alternatives to *Indigenista*

[37] I use the spelling utilized by Víctor de la Cruz who is guided by the *Alfabeto de la mesa redonda de 1956*. When citing the *Neza* authors' articles I keep to their spelling of the term, which at the time was not standardized and therefore differs greatly. De la Cruz also distinguishes between the *binnigula'sa'* as the ancient Zapotecs and the *binnizá*, the contemporary Zapotecs.

anthropological efforts of the time, and placing themselves and their elders as knowledge creators, simultaneously highlighting the importance of foundational stories and their poets/authors.

Before we can delve into the ways that these authors frame the origin stories of the ancient Zapotecs, their evidence to support one version or another, and the conversation that seems to be happening in the pages of *Neza*, an explanation of these origin stories is necessary. One of the stories explains how the term, *binnigula'sa'* is used for the original Zapotecs, the ones who traveled from the Valley of Oaxaca into an area close to Juchitán. They were *alfareros* or pottery makers. They found a spot by a river that was nice and humid, allowing them to make their unique pottery, made from *barro blanco* not the red or black *barro* that is more common. Soon, there was torrential rain which flooded their village, and forced them to move once again, and they finally settled in Juchitán. The other story is also about the original Zapotecs, but this one state that they were originally birds, large birds with beautiful, colorful, feathers, and they descended from the clouds. And yet another story claims that they sprang from trees, from the roots of trees, which explains their flexibility as a people.

That the *Neza* editors publish these four pieces, all alluding to the same origin story, is significant when considering the role of the state and the emerging field of anthropology. Scholars generally agree that the dissemination and development of the discipline of anthropology in Mexico, as well as of anthropological institutions, was a project guided by the state during the Mexican Revolution and the period immediately following it (Dawson, Sitton, Beezley), an endeavor mainly led by Manuel Gamio.[38] This anthropological complex "would not only work closely with the state, but also share the goal of assimilating Indians and mestizos into

[38] Gamio would change his mind on assimilationism but that would not happen for a few more years.

Mexico's modern, Spanish speaking nation" (Sitton 129). And not only would the goal be assimilation, but Indigenous people would be denied their existence in the present, since the focus was a celebrated "Indian past as the source of the Mexican nation," therefore connecting "living Indians to that past" (Dawson 279). Thus, when anthropological studies were conducted, and stories were collected, the goal was understanding the Indigenous populations, to help push assimilation forward. The Indigenous populations were often the objects of study and did not have a role in the knowledge produced.[39] This is one of the characteristics of *Indigenismo*, where "'the Indian' was constituted as a voiceless, passive subject for intellectual contemplation and administrative reform" (Sitton 131). Similarly to other intellectuals and state officials of his time, Vasconcelos also participated in collecting knowledge about Indigenous populations. Vasconcelos was responsible for "programs involving teachers, artists, writers, and intellectuals who visited remote regions of the country to record the diverse cultural traditions of village ethnic groups through descriptions of markets, archeological ruins, fiestas, houses, corn patches, and daily life" (Beezley 427). Still, he believed that the Indigenous populations would eventually disappear, so maybe his motive was to record different aspects of Indigenous cultures to preserve them as archives (Beezley 427). Either way, the aforementioned stories and traditions, along with the people, were recorded and cataloged only for the purpose of the state.

The origin stories of the ancient Zapotecs published in *Neza* served a different purpose, however, in that they are for the Zapotec-speaking audience and others interested, and are told from an Indigenous point of view. The authors explicitly state that they are publishing *Neza* to push forward their culture. Even though Matus, whose version of the story was the first to be

[39] An interesting read that highlights some autonomy and participation by Indigenous peoples in the state of Oaxaca is **"**Comunidades, patrimonio y arqueólogos: relaciones entre municipios e instituciones culturales de Oaxaca en el periodo indigenista" by Manuel Burón Díaz, although the focus is not the years immediately following the Revolution but after 1940.

printed in the magazine, critiques Henestrosa's retelling of the story in his book *Los hombres que dispersó la danza*, he cannot help but emphasize that he is not critiquing the creation, publication and dissemination of this origin story. Matus writes that he appreciates Henestrosa's version of the story, as a supporter of the Zapotec language, and makes sure to state, "como tema lírico la obra ha gustado, y los que sentimos simpatía e interés para todo aquello en que palpita nuestro idioma, con mayor razón había de merecer nuestra estimación" (Matus 6). What these four authors have in common is that they are sharing their origin story in order to keep it alive, versus the state-sponsored efforts of anthropologists, whose goals of assimilating, recording, and archiving Indigenous cultures were predicated upon the assumption of their imminent death. This is only one way in which the authors published in *Neza* are negotiating their identity with the nation-state, by refuting the narrative that Indigenous people will not survive, and instead providing their own versions of their stories. This is directly tied to the importance of storytelling and stories in Native communities, which allows for Indigenous people to claim their status as knowledge producers and push the rigid binaries of western modernity.

By focusing on the story of the *binnigula'sa'*, the *Neza* intellectuals highlight the importance of stories – especially origin stories –, the life and flexibility of native stories, and the multiple functions they can serve. First, origin stories are important for Indigenous peoples in that they show how they place their origin outside of national histories. Origin stories defy the totalizing power of the nation, by highlighting a history before contact and therefore disrupting the official narrative of the state. Origin stories are important for Indigenous communities because they hold the history of the people, the landmarks, and traditions. In this case, the Zapotec origin story exists outside of the stories of contact, outside of Independence, and outside of the Revolution. Interestingly, in two of the published versions we can find stories of the

Conquest, but from an Indigenous point of view. As such, both Cruz and Henestrosa tell that the *binnigula'sa'* could be referring to those Zapotecs who heard of the arrival of the Spanish, and left to go into hiding, "otros caminaron en distintas direcciones, llevándose la tradición – la material y la fluida" (Henestrosa 5). Simply by including a version that could refer to the Conquest, reminds the reader that the Zapotec were in their land before the arrival of the Spanish and that the Mexican nation is a more recent creation.

And yet this is only one version of the story because, as I mentioned previously, the authors also state that the original Zapotecs sprang from the roots of trees, and/or dropped from the clouds. One characteristic of the story of the ancient Zapotecs is this fluidity or flexibility in its ability to be considered one origin story with various iterations. The authors acknowledge these variations, many times connecting them to an etymological analysis of the words, but do not appear to take issue with the differences inherent to the multiple iterations. In fact, three of the four authors published in *Neza* refer explicitly to the life of this narrative, highlighting how it does not detract from the story but instead feeds it, enriching it to help it continue to future generations. An example of this approach can be found in Matus' version, whose story is the first that appears in *Neza*. He spends a considerable amount of time explaining how stories are changed throughout time, and he writes:

> Es posible que el mito del *binni gulagsag*, conforme a la transcripción antigua que las generaciones sucesivas hemos recogido, adolezca, en algunos de sus aspectos, de inconformidades narrativas, propias a toda conseja y a hechos ciertos que a través de los tiempos han tocado multitud de los labios, de donde salen para proseguir su infinita misión llevando nuevo colorido, nuevas impresiones del temperamento literario, la inventiva popular los adapta, pero

> que a pesar de cualquier modalidad de estilo o referencia, su fondo original continúa siendo invulnerable. (Matus 1)

Matus acknowledges that this story has been passed down for some time, that it is changed according to who is telling the story, and therefore might "suffer" some inconsistencies, but ultimately reaches its goal of being circulated, all while maintaining the essence of the story. Montero, who follows Matus in the *Neza* publications, also alludes to this flexibility of the story as enriching, not detracting. Montero is clearly writing back to Matus, who had previously accused Henestrosa of misinterpreting the etymology of the word *binnigula'sa'*. Montero makes his stance clear early in his article, he enjoys the fact that the *binnigula'sa'* has resulted in various interpretations and believes that the authors have produced "relatos legendarios… llenos de encanto, de poesía y de interés grandísimo, porque han sabido interpretar con ingenio y gracia los elementos filológicos de la palabra zapoteca de referencia" (1). Montero pushes the story further by first seemingly categorizing it as historical, and then not retracting that claim, but rather suggesting that some parts of the story can be imaginary: "en estos mal pergeñados renglones no he procurado más que relatar hechos reales, y partiendo de ellos, deducir algunos probables, que ayuden a aclarar la historia de nuestra ascendencia" (Montero 4). He bases himself on historical events, but admits to deducing others, which will only help clarify the origin story. He justifies himself, "y por eso no fue exageración mía imaginar la existencia de la gran población de *Lahui-yu-gucha*" which is the name of the place where the *binnigula'sa* allegedly originally settled (Montero 4).

It might appear that there is a direct contradiction between Montero's claims of historical veracity and his simultaneous pull towards literary imagination, but the author himself does not seem to think so. I believe this is because "Indigenous oral histories do not share conventional

categorical boundaries: the package is holistic – they include religious teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history, linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form, and 'Indigenous truths' (Stevenson 200:79)" (Kovach 101). This is not to say that Isthmus Zapotec literary tradition does not have different genres,[40] just that this story, as an oral story, an origin story, serves various purposes. It can contain historical facts just as it can contain the storyteller/author's interpretation that is considered a product of his imagination. This characteristic is directly related to the fact that oral stories are told by various people and therefore do change depending on the speaker. Henestrosa also focuses on the fact that his story is not only highly crafted but has gone through many changes before it has reached him. Henestrosa begins his retelling with an extended poetic explanation of how he has arrived to it. He explains,

> Unida a la historia de nuestro origen, ha llegado hasta aquí, después de muchas vueltas, incompleta, borrosa; y de trecho en trecho, brinca sobre vacíos. Y entonces es cuando se pierde su rastro y hay que revolver la tradición, fracturar la palabra, subir y bajar el acento, para hallarlo. Y se encuentra con una huella nueva y a veces, en cada rumbo de la misma época, diferente. (Henestrosa 1)

Henestrosa makes it clear that the story he is telling has passed the lips of many and has changed and been molded by others. He is also explicit about his method, he is creative with the ways in which he divides the word, "*binni gulagsag*," and the placement of accents, which changes his interpretation and allows for new ones to arise. Later in his career, Henestrosa will continue saying that the works he publishes are not truly his stories, and are not truths, instead they are highly crafted, "la mitad del material con que están compuestas estas leyendas fue inventada por

[40] Both Víctor de la Cruz and Irma Pineda have written on Isthmus Zapotec literary genres which they trace back to Juan de Córdova's Zapotec dictionary.

los primeros zapotecos. La otra mitad la inventé yo… Cuando alguien ha vuelto a contar alguna de estas leyendas, aunque la transcriba, no me llamo a plagiado, ni me duelo" (Castillo 62). Both Montero and Henestrosa allude to the way in which these stories are formed collectively. There is not one story, there is not a "correct" version or a "true" version of the origin of the Zapotec people because it has been passed down and altered throughout time.

Along with this communal approach to this origin story, it must be noted that the authors make a claim to the elders and themselves as knowledge producers. When Cruz begins his retelling, he writes, "De niños, los que nacimos en esa comarca oaxaqueña, escuchamos de los labios de nuestros abuelos, y hoy recordamos como un viejo sueño, como una visión lejana y misteriosa" (1). Since Cruz begins his retelling with these words, he makes the connection clear between these stories he will tell and the Isthmus. He also hints at the fact that these stories surround the entire community, since they all hear them as children. He also emphasizes the elders' role in the passing down of these stories, it was the "abuelos" who shared them (Cruz 1). And he further includes the elders as knowledge holders, when he writes, "hemos tenido que recurrir al auxilio de los vocabularios antiguos o al consejo de los más ancianos Zapotecas" (Cruz 1). With this simple sentence, he acknowledges the elders as knowledge creators. Montero takes it a step further as he makes a call to his fellow writers. He explains,

> Como podrá verse, no destruyo con mi relato el poético misterio de los *Binigulaza*. Tenéis todavía oportunidad de inspiraros en él, vosotros los Cruz, los Henestrosa, los Matus; seguid inspirandoos sobre el mismo tema para deleite nuestro, hasta descifrar el arcano que encierra los BINIGULAZA. El misterio queda intacto; el globo de cristal está henchido de poesía. Yo sólo he intentado levantar una punta del velo de brocado y oro que lo cubre, para poder ver algo de

su secreto. (Montero 4)

Here, Montero does not consider sharing this story for an anthropological purpose, but for a literary purpose. He is interested in the "poético misterio," which he considers just as important as any other. Furthermore, he believes the poet can help explore those mysteries, meaning that the poet holds a similar role to the anthropologist or archeologist. In doing so, he marks himself a knowledge creator as well.

In the repeated republishing of this origin story, the *Neza* writers are navigating the *Indigenista* anthropological discourse of the time along with the input by their community. When Indigenous stories, customs, artifacts, and many other sources were collected by anthropologists, it was for the archiving of knowledge to help assimilation efforts, all while relegating Indigenous peoples to the past. In retelling these stories, the authors look for a different outcome, sharing their culture, highlighting the importance of storytelling, situating their place outside of an official national history, and emphasizing the continued renovation of their culture, not its extinction. In doing so, they also cast themselves, and their community, especially the Zapotec elders, as creators of knowledge, a communal knowledge that is fed and kept alive by storytellers, and now, also writers.

7. Nuestra alma misma: Juchitec velas, Juchitec identity

As the authors in *Neza* write and publish various articles with differing themes, many focus on their Zapotec customs, with a particular interest in *fiestas*. Multiple articles appear that either describe *velas* or that comment on them. Some of these articles include, "La fiesta popular" by Andrés Henestrosa in the second number of July 1935, where he opines on the changing of the names of the *velas*. An anonymous author writes, "Ecos del Istmo" in the

sixteenth number on September 1936, where they briefly relate the importance of music for fiestas in the Isthmus, whether it be at a wedding or funeral, and then includes song lyrics in Zapotec. This section focuses on two articles also about the *velas*, "Las velas: carnaval aborigen" by Alfa Ríos Pineda in the second number and "Atarrayeros" by Adolfo Gurrión in the fourteenth number. Through an analysis of these articles, I argue that the authors make two main claims through their discussion of *velas*. First, they explain the deeper meanings behind the *velas*, pushing back against popular nationalistic appropriation and representations of the *velas*, and reclaiming them as important expressions of their culture. Included in that significance is the reflection of their souls, complementing the manifestos published earlier. Secondly, they connect the *velas* to literary production, blurring the lines between distinct forms of cultural production.

The *velas* are unmistakably Juchitecas, even today, Juchitán is well known for its *velas*, long and lively celebrations that occur throughout the year. The *velas* are more than a simple party, spanning multiple days and revolving around a "rich ceremonial calendar" (Campbell 128). According to Michel, "Las velas son de tamaño variable, pueden involucrar al conjunto de la comunidad, a una zona de la ciudad o a un grupo socioprofesional. Todas las velas son organizadas a lo largo del año por la sociedad de vela que le corresponde" (65). The most important *velas* are the ones for the patron saint of Juchitán, San Vicente (Michel 65). Then, there are *velas* to celebrate a specific profession, *velas* for specific neighborhoods, and *velas* for specific families (based on last names). The *velas* are planned with much anticipation, which requires extensive organizing by those in charge, include a mass, a dance that goes through the night, and what is typically called a "lavada de olla," which is the day following the dance where some guests are invited to the hosts' home for leftovers and a smaller-scale celebration. While "it would be difficult to document the beginning of *velas* in Juchitán," both Peterson Royce and

Campbell write that they have been around, as they exist today, since the last half of the nineteenth century" (57).

These *velas*, and other components associated with them, such as music, dance, and clothing (particularly the *traje de tehuana*) became an important marker of Indigeneity, appropriated by the State in post-revolutionary Mexico. When *Indigenista* depictions of Juchitán focused on women and their clothing,[41] the *velas*, along with music and dance, were also included in that representation of Juchitán as an authentic, Indigenous utopia. One such example is the film, *La Zandunga* (1938), named after a popular song and dance from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which is also a recurring topic[42] found in *Neza*. There are various scenes in the film that focus on wedding ceremonies, the preparation and the "various folkloric customs." These scenes are intentional, as García Blizzard explains, "The length of the dance scenes as well as the multiple camera angles used to capture them amount to the exhibition of the dances as folkloric spectacle" (85). These scenes serve the purpose of highlighting the otherness of Juchitán as an exotic place, even as there is a simultaneous reminder for the viewer that they are a part of Mexico (García Blizzard 85). It is no surprise then, that the *Neza* intellectuals choose these themes as the focus of many of their articles, providing intimate knowledge that does not allow for decontextualization by the state. In these *Indigenista* depictions, there are no explanations behind the dance, the music, or the mode of celebration. Still, these *velas*, "elaborate complex festivities, parades, religious observances, and social obligations," "constitute one of the major

[41] In her chapter, "Taming the Tehuana," in *The White Indians of Mexican Cinema: Racial Masquerade throughout the Golden Age*, Monica García Blizzard explains in more detail how the *tehuana* became a "national symbol" as women in Mexico City began to take photographs in the outfit and were "deployed in prestigious visual art forms, notably in the paintings of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, the photography of Tina Modotti, and the "Sandunga" segment of Sergei Eisenstein's now famous film shot in the country beginning in 1930, "¡Qué viva México!" (82).
[42] Four articles focused on this song and dance appear in *Neza*, first "Ca Zandunga," by Esteban Maqueos Castellanos in the eigth number, "La Zandunga," by Guillermo A. Esteva in the ninth number, an excerpt by José Vasconcelos, "La Zandunga," in the twelfth number and El orígen de la Zandunga," by Aquileo Infanzon Garrido in the thirteenth number.

definers of Zapotec style" (Peterson Royce 57), the *Neza* authors offer then, their knowledge as Juchitec Zapotecs, revealing the meaning behind their *fiestas*, and the way that they are a reflection of their worldviews.

The first intervention that the authors make is through their careful and detailed explanation of the *velas*, revealing the significance behind these fiestas. I describe the following article in detail, because it is essential to note the level of detail and the didactic tone in which it is written. In "Las velas: carnaval aborígen," Alfa Ríos Pineda explains what exactly happens during the *velas*. She explains that the *velas* are religious celebrations "de origen muy antiguo" that happen when people want to celebrate "sus actividades, sus productos, sus santos, sus nombres" (Ríos Pineda 1). Ríos Pineda takes the reader through a step-by-step explanation of the different components of a *vela* starting with why they are celebrated. She lists various reasons, such as careers, "pesca, ladrillería, [and] herrería," fruits like "ciruelas - viáxhi, higo silvestre - dúgha," last names like "Pineda" and "López," and saints like "San Vicente, patrón de Juchitán, San Jacinto, San Juan, [and] San Isidro Labrador" (Ríos Pineda 1). She then moves on to explain how a *vela* is organized. She writes that those in charge of organizing the *vela* are a *mayordomo*, a *gushana*, which are "socios mujeres," and *diputados* (Ríos Pineda 1). She progresses to explain how there are processions with painted carts adorned with flowers. The *gushanás* also go around the town passing out hot chocolate and bread. Ríos Pineda paints a detailed picture of this custom, from how it is organized, to the events that occur, the decorations, the food, and the clothing worn, every detail one could need to picture these celebrations. Her level of detail points to the fact that there might be readers who are unfamiliar with *velas*. It is so detailed; it reads as instructions to someone who might be in charge of planning a *vela*. The detail and tone are important because they highlight the complexity of the *velas.* They are not just parties, but

celebrations that span days and have specific roles for those in charge of organizing, relying on community to make them happen. These details are important for the argument that Ríos Pineda makes about the significance of *velas*.

Throughout her piece, Ríos Pineda stresses how *velas* are one way that Juchitec Zapotecs have kept their traditions alive in the face of assimilationist *Indigenista* policies, as she reclaims the *velas* as significant component of Zapotec culture. Ríos Pineda begins her article by claiming, "se da el nombre de *vela* a una festividad religiosa de origen muy antiguo" (1). She does not give us an estimate of when exactly this festivity began, but "muy antiguo" signals pre-contact or pre-Christianity. The *velas* continue to be practiced religiously in Juchitán and the *Neza* authors have no plans to stop. As such, Ríos Pineda ends her article with no ambiguity when she writes that Juchitán, "en todo el Istmo de Tehuantepec es el que mejor conserva sus costumbres y viendo la fuerza con que defiende su pasado nos da lugar a pensar que algunas generaciones gozarán todavía de estas fiestas que son como carnavales aborígenes" (5). Ríos Pineda places Juchitán as exemplary for conserving its traditions in all of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. She also points to the goals of the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos, to preserve their culture to be able to pass it down to future generations. This custom of the *vela* is another component that the *Neza* intellectuals are fighting to continue, since they aim for the future "generaciones" to "gozar todavía de estas fiestas" (Ríos Pineda 5). In this manner, the authors are not only highlighting a custom unique to Juchitán, and therefore resisting the tendencies to generalize Indigenous cultures in Mexico, in Oaxaca, and in the Isthmus, but also resisting assimilationist efforts that attempted to suppress Indigenous traditions throughout the country. The *Neza* authors are writing down their traditions not just to preserve them in the face of extinction but to teach the younger generations to continue this tradition for years to come,

enacting Zapotec futurities. In doing so they resist the nation-state's assimilationist and generalizing discourses on Indigenous people. Beyond reclaiming their tradition of velas, the authors explore the depth of these fiestas.

For Adolfo C. Gurrión, the *velas* allow for reflection on the souls of his community as well as modes of self-representation. His piece is focused on a *pesca vela*, which allows for an in-depth description of the symbolism behind the nets. Instead of focusing on the planning of the *vela*, Gurrión paints a vivid picture of the *desfile* as if the reader were in attendance. He describes the *carretas* that "van pintadas briosa y simbólicamente" and "cargan flores y ramas verdes que son la expresión magnífica de la vida" (Gurrión 3). After all, the *carretas* "hacen la síntesis del Trópico" (Gurrión 3). He quickly turns to the main act that is unique to this parade. On the carts, are the fishermen, who pick up their nets and throw them over the people watching the procession. According to Gurrión, the spectators and the fisherman engage in a reciprocal act of viewing their *almas*. He elaborates that as people walk, "ya estamos mirando el alma misma del cortejo" (Gurrión 3). Then, the fishermen throw their nets, which for a moment fall upon the spectators and "al recoger su asparavel, el atarrayero recoge nuestras almas para incorporarlas en el cortejo. De este modo, el atarrayero se vuelve un *pescador de almas*" (Gurrión 3) (italics in original). In other words, as the fishermen symbolically throw their nets over the spectators who are the people of Juchitán, he is collecting their souls. Gurrión continues elaborating on the reason why these *velas* are so well-attended and important for the people, "por eso la gente adelante, como nosotros, salen a ver el desfile, es decir, nuestra alma, su alma misma: el alma de Juchitán" (Gurrión 3). For Gurrión, these *velas* are an expression of the soul of the people. Gurrión concludes, "De este modo, la tradición nunca perece porque el alma es eterna. Tal es el simbolismo de los atarrayeros (3). In this last sentence, Gurrión explicitly links tradition with the

soul, and for him, to eternity. Considering what the *Neza* authors had written in their manifesto-like articles, the *velas* are an example of what makes them "ellos y siempre ellos" ("Por" 6). During the *velas* the people of Juchitán see each other, parading down the streets, wearing their celebratory traditional clothing, passing out food, dancing and singing, and that is how they represent themselves and the liveliness of Juchiteco Zapotec culture. Gurrión, unlike the authors of the manifestos, is not concerned with his Zapotec culture disappearing, he believes that it cannot, because it is tied to the Zapotec *alma*, which is eternal. Furthermore, for Gurrión, the velas, once explained are what can represent the Juchitec Zapotec. In explaining the symbolism behind this *vela*, and the importance of it, Gurrión pushes back against the appropriation of Zapotec fiestas and its decontextualization, all while making a claim to this mode of celebration.

Just as Gurrión focuses on *velas* to represent *almas*, various scholars have claimed that the *velas* are just one way in which *guenda lisaa/guelaguetza* is enacted. Peterson Royce argues that *velas* represent one of the most important concepts of Zapotec society, *guendalisaa*,[43] strengthening Gurrión's claim. For Peterson Royce, *velas* are "inextricable conceptually from the much broader notion of a community of kinship (*guenda lisaa*). They help to define it and are, in turn, defined by it" (Peterson Royce 51). Peterson Royce includes a specific definition of *guendalisaa* that is inspired by the author Gabriel López Chiñas. She writes that "*Guenda*, following the suggestion of Gabriel López Chiñas, a prolific and highly regarded Zapotec writer, might be translated as 'making' or 'causing' (Lopez Chinas 1974:19). With *lisaa*, the Zapotec word meaning 'kinship' or 'relatedness,' there is left no doubt about a commitment to an active rather than passive definition of community" (Peterson Royce 51). López Chiñas further claims that "all fiestas are an expression of work" and that "No one who knows Zapotec customs, even

[43] I will explore this concept further, from the point of view of *Neza* authors, in the following section of this chapter.

those of today, may ignore the fact that the transcendental work is done communally" (my translation, 1974:19-20) (Peterson Royce 51). In his master's thesis, Zapotec intellectual Gregorio López y López also makes this claim when discussing *guelaguetza.* He writes:

> Esta idea es tan cara al pueblo zapoteca que los actuales oaxaqueños, con su ya reconocido instinto estético, la han cristalizado en su significativos y edificantes actos: en fiestas de ofrenda y regalos… fiestas que constituyen páginas admirables de nuestro folklore autóctono como son: las famosas "Velas" del Istmo de Tehuantepec con sus desfiles de carretas adornadas de flores y doncellas, y las tiradas de frutas y las alegorías de máscaras y atarrayas; o "el lunes del cerro" que se celebra con toda pompa en la Antequera. (32)

According to López y López, the *velas*[44] are representations of *guelaguetza*. For these *velas* to occur, the people rely on *guenda lisaa*. Already in *Neza*, it is clear that the authors are preoccupied with the Zapotec spirit and what it entails. In this article on *velas*, Gurrión puts forth his reflections on *velas* and the spirit.

In describing the *vela*, Gurrión draws links between the *vela* and poetry, emphasizing the connections between different forms of cultural production and expression. Gurrión sets the tone for his poetic piece as he starts, "Todavía con el dejo-mezcla de nostalgia y de placer – de la danza de la noche anterior, cae en nuestras almas la tarde. Fecunda en ellas y procrea la poesía" (3). In this opening sentence, Gurrión attributes the poetry he is to create to the fall of the afternoon and his inspiration to the *vela*, including the dancing of the previous night. He

[44] When explaining the origin of *guelaguetza*, Xochitl Flores-Marcial states: "A most important cargo position for any male or female who was not born into the native nobility was that of the cofradía mayordomo, who was in charge of organizing the feast of the patron saint and who arranged smaller religious celebrations on other notable feast days of the church calendar (109). Even today, the terms remain the same when planning *velas*, that of the *mayodormo*.

continues with his claim, tying the *vela* to poetry, “Siempre ha sido la tarde hora de los poetas. Con ellos, nuestras almas recogen versos de la acción, de la vida que corre” (Gurrión 3). Here, Gurrión compares everyday actions to verse, and once again returning to the soul, argues that it is the soul that recollects these verses from everyday actions. He resumes, “Cierto: las tradiciones son las estrofas de la poesía interminable de la vida” (Gurrión 3). Once again linking poetry and life, he compares “tradiciones” to “estrofas.” For him, everyday life, but specifically traditions, provided content to create poetry, as well as they were, so to speak, living poetry in motion. This comparison that he draws continues throughout the rest of his article, as he describes the *carretas* and the women passing by the viewers, he says, “Belleza tras belleza; poesía tras poesía (Gurrión 3). Once again, the people, the *carretas* are the poetry. This article is important because it hints at what the future generation of Juchitec Zapotec intellectuals will argue for, the central role of literature for their culture. This piece provides insight into how intellectuals in the 1930s were thinking of their culture and the connections between velas and literary production. They blur the lines between two distinct forms, music, dance, and the written word.

The authors from Juchitán take the time to write and publish various articles about their customs which highlight their Zapotec worldviews and how they continue to enact a Zapotec way of being. While various themes emerge, I identify celebration, in the form of *velas,* as a key recurring theme. Repeatedly, the authors emphasize how their customs are very much Zapotec customs, how Juchitán and Juchitecos still ardently practice those customs, and how important those customs are to the people. The *velas* allow for self-representation and further exploration of the relationship between traditions, the soul, and literature. Through the articles on their customs, the *Neza* authors share with the readers how their worldviews are continuously enacted.

Through *Neza*, they create an opportunity to shape the narrative on Indigenous people; instead of allowing popular *Indigenista* literature and film to shape the way that others understood Indigenous populations, they put their perspective forward specifically for the Isthmus Zapotec of Juchitán.

8. *Guelaguetza*/*Guendalisaa*:[45] Thinking Indigenous Politics in the 1920s and 1930s

The *Neza* authors, apart from focusing on dances and songs, also begin to theorize an Indigenous politics that stems from the concept of *guelaguetza* or *guendalisaa*. Two authors write explicitly about this way of living, Wilfrido C. Cruz in "Guelaguetza-Guendalezaa," and Samuel Reyes Vera in "El mutualismo zapoteco." These authors, apart from providing descriptions of the way that this concept is enacted in their communities, also make implicit and explicit calls to organizing politically around *guelaguetza,* even if, like Reyes Vera, they do not explicitly name the concept. The importance of this concept for the Zapotec, of communality, is highlighted by Peterson Royce, as she lists community along with transformation and balance as three core values for the Isthmus Zapotec (2). I place these authors in parallel to Mariátegui, who only a decade before, was thinking of an Indigenous socialism stemming from the concept of *ayllu*. These articles reveal the way that the *Neza* authors are delving into politics and thinking through ways of political organizing from their culture and again enacting *kab'awilian* strategies.

Before delving into the article, it is essential to understand the original concept of *guelaguetza*/*guendalisaa*, not the celebration appropriated by the state, but the way of communal living that was common across Zapotec pueblos. The words "*guelaguetza*" and "*guendalisaa"* are variations of the same word; "*guelaguetza"* is used in the Valles Centrales while

[45] For *guelaguetza/guendalisaa* I use the two most popular spellings here, but when citing the articles and secondary sources, I keep to the spelling the authors use.

"*guendalisaa"* is used in the Isthmus. The word stems from "*guenda*," which means "making" or "causing," and "*lisaa*," which means "kinship" or "relatedness," in other words, making kinship (Peterson Royce 51). According to Xochitl Flores-Marcial, who traces the history of *guelaguetza* until its present-day manifestations in the United States, it is difficult to know its exact point of origin though "there is little doubt that the guelaguetza system existed in the preconquest period (91). Flores-Marcial elaborates that one potential point of origin is marriage gifting, "marriage lápidas portray the origins of guelaguetza systems in the late Classic period (600-900 C.E.), systems that were deeply rooted in Zapotecs communities by the time the Spaniards arrived in Oaxaca in 1521" (98). This is supported by Gregorio López y López who writes about royal weddings, stating, "… pero cuando los mismos enviaban presentes a su rey, no lo hacían obedeciendo un mandato u orden legal, sino sencillamente llevados del impulso amoroso que se manifiesta a la luz de la guelagueza" (29). This concept eventually evolved from gifting to the royals to include the entire community, a system of reciprocal gift-giving that was upheld for the better of the community (Flores-Marcial 104). López y López defines it as "Dignidad o propia estima, honor, gracia o don gratuito, liberalidad, amor, caridad; ofrenda, regalo, fiesta: todo esto encierra la palabra 'guelagueza'; pero sobre todo y prístinamente VIRTUD" (27). This system allowed for the survival of the Zapotec even during the conquest, changing and adapting depending on the circumstances (Flores-Marcial 103). And even today, this is one of the most important tenets of Isthmus Zapotec society, the famous *velas* for example, rely on this concept of *guendalisaa*. This term is appropriated by the state in the 1930s for a celebration, originally called Lunes de Cerro, where various Indigenous communities from Oaxaca gather to dance in the capital city of Oaxaca.

The authors begin their articles by explaining the concept and the way that it is

entrenched within the community. Cruz gives a broader history of this idea, beginning with an ethnographic-like description[46] and ends with a call to action. Reyes Vera focuses on a quintessential example in which we can see this community support, building a house for a newlywed couple. Even though Reyes Vera does not use the term "*guelaguetza*,[47]" it becomes clear from his example that it is what he is referring to, since both Flores-Marcial[48] and López y López point to the importance of marriages and weddings when explaining the concept. Cruz begins by explaining this communality of "'*guelaguetza'*, o '*guendalezáa"*" as an "organismo típico de fraternidad y cooperación dentro de los hábitos colectivos de la raza zapoteca" (5). Reyes Vera claims that this concept of "mutualismo" can be found in the "raza zapoteca" as a whole. Cruz describes it as a mixture of hospitality and solidarity (5). He continues that it does not have a "mesa directiva, [y] no distingue jerarquías" to underscore how it is a non-hierarchical community practice (Cruz 5). He emphasizes that "nadie está obligado a tomar participación en la 'guelaguetzáa', pero las propias exigencias sociales, los sentimientos de confianza, de unión, de anhelos comunes hacen que los habitantes de un pueblo participen" (Cruz 5). For Reyes Vera, this concept arises "naturally" from the people who "tienen ellos cierto espíritu de hermandad que demuestran siempre que les brinda la ocasión" (1). Overall, the argument is that the people

[46] While Cruz ends his article with a political call to action, the first two paragraphs do read more like ethnography, discussing "the indio" from a third-person point of view, for example: "Mucho se ha ponderado de la proverbial hospitalidad de nuestros indios para con las gentes que por tener que vivir entre ellos o que transitar por sus pueblos, se ven en la necesidad de solicitar un abrigo, un auxilio cualquiera de los individuaos de esa raza tan temible en la guerra como mansa y generosa en la paz" (5). The paragraph continues in this manner, which I just note to highlight the differing tones that Cruz takes on throughout the article.

[47] Reyes Vera uses the term "mutualismo," instead of *guelaguetza* which I will explain later in this section.

[48]Flores-Marcial writes: "If royal palaces are the primordial, founding households of Zapotec communities, as has been argued for the Nahuas and Mixtecs, then royal marriage ceremonies would have involved the participation of all community members. The reciprocal exchange of gifts and services in royal marriage ceremonies was replicated in marriages among all households. The royal marriage ceremony, as a major feast celebrated by the community, initiated or renewed a network of exchange that governed all relations within Zapotec society. This network is the guelaguetza system. Whether the system originated with royal marriages or not, we can see the system at work in the celebration of marriages and all feasts, in general" (91).

who practice *guelaguetza* do so not because they are forced to, but because it is simply a part of their way of living. *Guelaguetza* does not only occur when someone gets married, as Reyes Vera explains, it can also happen when someone loses a loved one and in everyday matters such as borrowing a sweater, "el matrimonio, la muerte, la necesidad de llevar a cabo una obra cualquiera en que el esfuerzo común puede realizar el Milagro de consumarla rápidamente, son los principales aplicaciones de la 'guendalezáa'" (Cruz 5). Both authors insist that it is a communal way of living, and that it is a long-standing tradition.

Both authors deem it important, as many of the *Neza* authors have previously done, to emphasize how long this Zapotec way of life has been practiced, pointing to pre-contact modes of living. Both Reyes Vera and Cruz underscore the fact that this tradition has been passed down from their ancestors. Reyes Vera mentions in the beginning of his article "Ayer como hoy, el mutualismo se llevaba a la práctica por mis hermanos de raza" (1). And then again towards the end, "Da gusto ver cómo aquellos hombres, después de cumplir con una costumbre heredada de generación en generación, se retiran a sus casas con la sonrisa en los labios" (Reyes Vera 6). Even though he uses a different word, "mutualismo," he is referring and explaining the same concept that Cruz is. Cruz also mentions the longevity of this tradition when he writes, "La 'guelaguetza' o 'guendalezáa' de otras épocas, subsiste aún hoy en los poblados de indios es una forma de cooperativas casi familiar para ayudar a aquel que lo necesita por un motivo generalmente trascendental de su existencia" (5). The authors take the time to explain this way of life they say is common in Juchitán and reiterate throughout their articles that it was passed down from their ancestors. In doing so, they underscore how this way of living has its origins in Zapotec society and has continued despite colonization, even if it has changed over time.

The last element of interest in the authors' discussion of *guelaguetza* is the political take

that they both include, moving from describing this common practice to calling for political organizing based on *guelaguetza*. Reyes Vera uses the word "mutualismo" to label the communal way of living that he is explaining. This term, "mutualismo," was used before the creation of unions in Mexico and throughout Latin America (Leal 14). Essentially, in the mid-1800s, "sociedades mutualistas" emerged where funds were collected from all members to be redistributed to them[49] in times of need. These *sociedades mutualistas* have been critiqued as ineffective since they were not dangerous to capital or the state but were still key in helping bring about the consciousness of the working class[50] (Rivas Hernández 97). These *sociedades mutualistas* are considered the precursors to labor unions, and just as importantly, are considered the sites where a socialist/anarchist ideology began to develop. Reyes Vera, in taking up this term to describe *guelaguetza*, is clearly thinking of a way to organize politically from his Zapotec culture. He is well-versed in the history of labor movements in Mexico, potentially involved in organizing, and in the pages of *Neza* merges that history with his Zapotec understandings of communal ways of life. He equates *guelaguetza* and "mutualismo" to highlight the similarities in both and push for political organizing that stems from their culture. Cruz also has a political spin when he ends his article with a call to action. He writes, "Necesitamos, pues, ahora que se trata de hacer labor social, ahora que se trata de incorporar a

[49] According to Leal, "Los artesanos que se integraban a la Junta debían pagar, por única vez, cierta cantidad por derecho de matrícula. Además debían cotizar semanal, quincenal o mensualmente, de conformidad con su jerarquía y sus ingresos. Estos recursos, aunados a los aportados por las rifas de productos elaborados por los propios trabajadores, sirvieron para establecer una caja de ahorros, cuyas utilidades se aplicaban en a) premiar a los artesanos que llegaran a distinguirse; b) realizar actos de beneficencia entre los socios (auxilio de enfermos, ayuda a los familiares de los socios que fallecían, beneficio a los socios que contraían matrimonio o que bautizaban a sus hijos) y c) cubrir los fastos del establecimiento. Fue así como a mediados de 1844 surgió la primera asociación mutualista" (14). I cite this here to highlight the similarities between the *sociedades mutualistas* and *guelaguetza*, the community coming together to help the individual in times of celebration and/or hardship.

[50] Citing Jorge Basurto, Rivas Hernández writes: "En todo caso, el mutualismo y el cooperativismo fueron ineficaces y utópicos pues no representaron un peligro para el capital y Estado. Sin embargo, la influencia ideológica socialista y anarquista y el rol de los lideres como Zalacosta, Villanueva o los Flores Magón, fueron forjando una toma de conciencia 'en sí y para sí', necesaria para la formación de la clase obrera" (97).

nuestras razas aborígenes a la corriente de agitación y despertamiento colectivos, aprovechar este raro y hermoso fruto de nuestras costumbres nativas y transformarlo en producto eficiente para mejorar la condición de nuestros pueblos" (Cruz 8). In his concluding paragraphs, Cruz makes a call to institutionalize this "costumbre nativa" in order for the Zapotec population of Juchitán to live within their worldviews. Cruz sees parallels between the concept of *guelaguetza* and "agitación y despertamiento colectivos," and encourages the readers to begin thinking about it in a political way, to work for the people. This is in direct contrast to what the national government will do with the *guelaguetza*, first creating it to help unify the state, and then appropriating it for tourism purposes around this same time (Dillingham 8). Once it has been appropriated, it is decontextualized and depoliticized. Even though the student-authors write that they will not delve into the political unless absolutely necessary, in these articles they are clearly thinking politically. Furthermore, they are combining their understandings of *guelaguetza* with the current political situations, including labor movements, merging their Zapotec culture and current political movements of the time, enacting *kab'awilian* strategies.

This fact that the *Neza* intellectuals are thinking politically from the concept of *guelaguetza* is particularly interesting considering that only a few years earlier, José Carlos Mariátegui was parallelly thinking about an Indigenous socialism from the concept of *ayllu*. Mariátegui's *Siete Ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana* was published in 1928 and was "an immediate publishing success" (Gonzalez 61). In thinking about Latin America, and Peru specifically through a materialist lens, Mariátegui tackles both the "problema del indio" and the "problema de la tierra," linking them to claim that the "Indian problem" is not an ethnic problem, not a moral problem, but an economic problem, specifically related to land (34). In "El problema de la tierra," Mariátegui explores how Peru was organized as a society before the

conquest, and claims that there exists a "socialismo práctico" in the "agricultura y vida [de los] indígenas" (41). He is inspired by the *ayllu*, "the basic unit of organization in the Inca Empire… both social and physical, both the community and the land it occupied. The collective included the elderly and those unable to work" (Gonzalez 140). Mariátegui refers to the *ayllu* as a "comunismo agrario" that survived the destruction of the Inca empire with the arrival of the Spanish (50, Gonzalez 66). While Mariátegui has been criticized for romanticizing the *ayllu*, his focus on it still demonstrates the importance he places on Indigenous cultures and peoples in Peru in order to improve economic and social conditions. Mariátegui was pulling from the Inca in an attempt to theorize a Marxism rooted in Latin America, and not in Europe, similar to the *Neza* intellectuals building off the concept of *guelaguetza* for a form of political egalitarian organization. They too are thinking about how their customs can be used to "mejorar la condición de nuestros pueblos" (Cruz 8). In this case, the ones theorizing are Indigenous Zapotec intellectuals themselves. The political take that both Cruz and Reyes Vera adopt might appear to contradict what the *Neza* authors wrote in their manifesto, that they would steer clear from politics. Instead, they merge their culture and politics, which highlights a theorization of a deep-rooted custom adjusted to serve them in the present and into the future.

The significance of the *Neza* intellectuals thinking politically from the concept of *guelaguetza* cannot be understated considering their context in postrevolutionary Mexico. *Guelaguetza* is one of the most important concepts in Isthmus Zapotec society that is still enacted today. They look to this concept that means "making kinship," to organize themselves politically, emphasizing their community focused efforts. Their efforts widely contrast with the way that *guelaguetza* is appropriated by the state. At the moment of their writing, various *Indigenista* intellectuals and scholars were working towards the unity and creation of the new

Mexican nation. According to Rick López, while images that were meant to represent Mexico were popular since the early nineteenth century, "It was only after the revolution that Mexican artists and cultural leaders began calling for an aesthetic reorientation. This, in turn, was inseparable from the larger project of forging a distinctive and inclusive nationality" (15). The *Guelaguetza* was part of this visual aesthetic that was meant to represent authenticity, an Indigenous practice meant to unify the state after an earthquake. Created in tandem with Alfonso Caso's excavation of Monte Albán, it was part of "Mexico's entry into modernity [which] was premised on its ability to invoke its Indigenous past in international arts and statecraft" (Dillingham 8). The *Guelaguetza* created by the state was a festival where various Indigenous groups from all over Oaxaca went to the state's capital city to showcase their dances and has changed over the years to include the selling of food and *artesanía* from the various pueblos. Initially named the Homenaje Racial it was later renamed Guelaguetza, appropriating the concept that the *Neza* intellectuals write about around the same time. In writing about the true meaning behind *guelaguetza*, the Neza intellectuals reclaim, in their newspaper, and to their audience, the real meaning behind *guelaguetza*. It is not a festival used to "enter modernity," but a way of life that prioritizes relationality, a way of living that predates the Conquest. Unlike the State, the *Neza* authors are following a different route, in doing so reclaiming the concept of *guelaguetza*, not just as a celebration to outsiders that exoticized and folklorized, but as a complex way of living that can develop into a mode of political organizing.

In writing about the *guelaguetza* in *Neza*, the intellectuals accomplish various goals. First, they explain a concept that has been appropriated by the state, reclaiming it and contextualizing it within their understanding as Zapotec intellectuals. Simultaneously, they demonstrate how they are thinking about possibilities to organize themselves politically, inspired

by labor movements and potentially other intellectuals that are pulling from Indigenous concepts. Reyes Vera, instead of using the term *guelaguetza*, uses "mutualismo," a popular term that precedes labor unions, highlighting the way that he merges his knowledge of Zapotec worldviews and labor organizing. Similarly, Cruz ends with a call to action, that parallels the way that Mariátegui was thinking of an Indigenous socialism through the concept of *ayllu*. Ultimately, they infuse their *guelaguetza* way of living with the political, theorizing new ways to politically organize within their worldviews.

9. Conclusions

In the pages of *Neza* we find a rich and complex history of Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals living in Mexico City in the 1930s. The student-authors form a community once they have left their home, their Zapotec identity never clearer than once they are in the heart of *Indigenista* Mexico. First, they form the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Zapotecos, a society to come together and enjoy their culture through music, *velas*, and more. They then form *Neza*, meaning "camino," in which they trace their culture dating back to pre-conquest times. In doing so, they look towards the past while thinking about the future in an attempt to continue passing down their culture. They resist homogenizing and assimilationist discourses. Still, they do not lie outside of dominant society. They are government officials, professionals, students at the UNAM, established in the city. They find themselves in the circles of the literary vanguard, Henestrosa being taken in by Antonieta Rivas Mercado and sponsored by José Vasconcelos. They write and print what I call their "manifestos," where they make public their goals, that of preserving their culture and their spirit. They are influenced both by the *vanguardia* and their Zapotec cosmology. They appropriate what benefits them, such as creating an institute, an

Academia de Lengua Zapoteca to create an official alphabet. But even in that, they take a non-normative approach, working with the community and not enforcing the use of their alphabet after laboring to create it. And despite of living surrounded by those dominant discourses, they always return to their Zapotec culture. They publish multiple iterations of an origin story, showcasing an alternative history to that of the Mexican state. They make a claim to their existence before the Mexican nation, and simultaneously mark themselves as knowledge creators, emphasizing the importance of stories and literature for their culture. Then, they explore *velas*, revealing the deeper meaning behind these celebrations, making connections once again to their spirit and their culture of kinship as well as merging embodied dance and *desfiles* to poetry. And even though they claim that they will not touch on politics, they dedicate articles to the concept of *guelaguetza*/*guendalisaa*, and not just delve into the concept, but begin to think about how they can draw from it to organize themselves politically. Throughout, they enact *kab'awilian* strategies, pulling from both the popular movements they were surrounded by and their Zapotec culture. They do so to ensure Zapotec futurities, creating a present to ensure a future.

In the next chapter, about thirty years after the creation of *Neza*, a new literary magazine will appear, *Neza Cubi*, meaning "new road." The pair of intellectuals who founded this new magazine will look back to the path that *Neza* laid out for inspiration. They will merge their cultural interests with the political even more explicitly. And they will continue on their path, contributing to the consolidation of a contemporary Zapotec literature that serves as a site of autonomy.

III. *"Retomando el camino"*: *Neza Cubi* and the Start of a Cultural Movement

Buscar las huellas que dejaron

Y reconstruirlas.

- De editorial, *Neza Cubi,* no.1

The year 1968, one of the most dynamic times in Mexican and global history, saw the birth of a small independent magazine titled *Neza Cubi*, meaning "new path" in Isthmus Zapotec. *Neza Cubi* was the creation of Zapotec intellectuals Macario Matus and Víctor de la Cruz in collaboration with other Zapotec intellectuals. While the world was going through profound societal changes that included hopeful uprisings and violent state repression, these two young Zapotec intellectuals decided that creating a new magazine was a necessity for Zapotec cultural revival. Originally from Juchitán, although at the time living in Mexico City, they were interested in joining, and in a way reviving, a Juchitec literary tradition they pinpointed to the 1930s when the influential magazine *Neza* was founded by a prior generation of Zapotec intellectuals. Following in the footsteps of the *Neza* creators, Matus and De la Cruz were also preoccupied with the use and dissemination of their Zapotec language and its literature. In only fourteen numbers, the editors of *Neza Cubi* covered various themes, through poems, songs, short stories, and articles. In this magazine we see a penchant for exploring Zapotec and Juchitec history, invoking figures of the past. We also see the importance of language and literature through the publication of poems in Zapotec. Even though it's not their main focus, nor ours, we

can also see how the editors situate themselves in the politics of the 1960s.[51] They publish a few pieces that reflect this era, with references ranging from psychedelic drug use ("Octubre") to the Tlatelolco massacre ("Editorial 14: 2 Octubre 2"). The pages of *Neza Cubi* thus offer a snapshot of a specific moment in history, one of great change, but also evidence of a strong interest for Zapotec intellectuals in recalling and reconstructing the past. In *Neza Cubi*'s pages, the founders of the magazine explore their language and literature, forge new Zapotec subjectivities, and think through their history and politics. As was the case with the *Neza* generation, the *Neza Cubi* editors enact *kab'awilian* strategies throughout the magazine. First, they take up the concept of *neza*, and through its exploration, they look to the past and the future, hold their ancestors and their descendants simultaneously, and reveal Zapotec conceptions of time. They emphasize the importance of literature for their movement, pinpointing their literary ancestors and in doing so highlighting the range of themes and styles. They explore politics rooted in Western leftist thought and their own Zapotec customs. And they offer an alternative history, highlighting the impact of Zapotec men in Mexican history. Through their exploration of these topics, they build Zapotec futurities, creating a Zapotec past and a present that will allow for a Zapotec future.

In the following pages, I will provide a brief overview of what was happening in Juchitán at the time of publication of *Neza Cubi,* to better contextualize the circumstances that led to the creation of the magazine. Conflict was everywhere, particularly at the political level between the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) politicians who were now trying to explicitly emerge as the ruling party in Juchitán after the death of Charis, and opposing leaders who tended to lean left, and were in the process of organizing, composed of working-class sectors including students, peasants, and workers. In this context, the editors argue for unity, claiming that

[51] While influence of the global 1960s is clearly present in the magazines, the focus of this chapter is the (re)building of Isthmus Zapotec thought, politics, and history.

Juchitecos can find their way if they return to a Zapotec path laid out by their ancestors. This introductory section is followed by an exploration of the magazine, the sections that were published in every number, as well as other sections that appeared more sparingly. We will also learn about the creators, a young Macario Matus and an even younger Víctor de la Cruz, two prolific writers and prominent cultural promoters from Juchitán. Throughout the pages of the magazine, we see how their ideologies are being formed, informed by their Zapotec culture. Once we have the context, we turn to the purpose: Why did a young recent graduate working as a journalist in Mexico City and a university student decide to publish an independent journal that focuses on literature, history, and Zapotec culture? The answer to this question leads to an exploration of the term "*neza*" which they use as a referent and metaphor and leads to the act of writing as ontology. In the section titled "Old or New Left? Or the Zapotec?" we explore the political tensions in Juchitán that most likely influenced the editors' turn towards culture, focusing our attention on the conflict between the left-leaning groups that saw Indigeneity (understood as the persistence of traditional customs such as fiestas) as hindering progress and modernity and the young Matus who proposed a Zapotec-focused turn. This tension between different understandings of Indigeneity and its role in the construction of a future for the Zapotec people led Matus and De la Cruz to set their focus on culture as their path. Next, in the section titled "Writing a History: Zapotec Viewpoints," we move on to the history that the editors are creating: that of a Juchitán proud of its Zapotec culture, and a reclamation of figures that had a large role in wider national history such as President Benito Juárez. The editors also utilize their magazine to create a feedback loop by publishing letters sent to them praising their publication and comparing their goals to those of the *Neza* generation, their literary ancestors and immediate inspiration. They begin to see themselves as the inheritors of those literary men, starting a

genealogy they will continue in the future even after the end of *Neza Cubi*. Finally, we explore who those literary ancestors are, authors who focused on their Juchitec and Zapotec culture, as well as others who opened themselves up to other literary traditions, highlighting the wide variety of literary production by local Indigenous writers, and the broader literary world that they were engaging with.

1. Juchitán in Crisis: Local Politics and Conflicts

After *Neza* was published in Mexico City during the late 1930s, few Isthmus Zapotec magazines[52] had success until *Neza Cubi* was published in the late 1960s, nearly thirty years after *Neza*. While the publishers of *Neza* had left Juchitán in apparent stability, the editor and director of *Neza Cubi* returned to a changed city. From the 1930s up until his death in the 1960s, General Heliodoro Charis had ruled Juchitán. A polemical figure, Charis maintained the image of a stable Juchitán free from the PRI's hands by negotiating a certain independence with the central government, while retaining some PRI politicians in his entourage. His death, after a reign of thirty-plus years, left a power vacuum, which led to local conflicts between the PRI and other competing emerging groups. These conflicts compounded with the unrest happening at the state level, with Oaxaca's student movement expanding to other social sectors, as well as at the national level with the rise of the student movements and teacher movements in Mexico City.

Simultaneously, at the global level, the decade of the 1960s brought about many changes, with countercultural movements gaining traction, from the Cuban Revolution on the eve of 1959 to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. In Mexico City, university students were also

[52] According to Juchitec historian Gubidxa Guerrero, the newspaper *El Istmo* appeared five years after *Neza*, and even though it was not strictly literary, still served as a repository of Isthmus Zapotec history, art, and literature. Then, *Diidxa'* appeared in the 1950s but did not last long, only producing three numbers.

organizing as the PRI used various methods to stay in power. The event that eventually shook Mexico was the Tlatelolco Massacre, where hundreds of student protestors and other citizens were killed after state forces opened fire in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas on October 2nd of 1968. This event affected leftist student organizers who saw "the intransigence of the regime and the relative ease with which its violent repression destroyed the student movement" (Rubin 107). They decided that change "would come about only as the result of long-term, grassroots political organizing" (Rubin 107).

In Oaxaca, the reverberations of the violent repression of students that was occurring in Mexico City was ever present. The Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO) was the epicenter of protest, where students were aware of the corruption within their own institution and the dire economic situation in Oaxaca (Martínez Vásquez 128). Furthermore, students and professors alike began to organize in response to the repression occurring in Mexico City and in support of the student movement in the capital city. Thus, the students from Juchitán ceased all their activities, starting a domino effect that resulted in a massive boycott, a "huelga general" (Martínez Vásquez 128). The *huelga* was eventually ended as controversy grew surrounding certain PRI leaders being placed in positions of power within leftist organizations. Two students who served as president and secretary of one of the leading student organizations, the Federación Estudiantil Oaxaqueña, were ousted for not supporting the boycott and replaced by right-leaning students, which led to a continuation of the conflict between factions until the military occupied the university (Martínez Vásquez 129). Even after the boycott ended, the students continued to organize inside and outside the university, eventually establishing alliances with farmworkers and workers in other sectors.

All these conflicts were exacerbated in Juchitán with the death of Charis, which resulted in a series of internal PRI conflicts in the effort to organize an official political party. In 1965 and 1968, there were unsuccessful efforts to democratize internal elections within the PRI party, which allowed an opening for other groups to organize in opposition (Kraemer Bayer 63, Rubin 74). These groups ranged from reformists within the PRI to "independent" candidates within the party (Rubin 74). A few leaders in opposition to the PRI arose. The first was Polo de Gyves Pineda, who had been educated in a military academy with socialist tendencies (Kraemer Bayer 63). He wrote in a few newspapers, such as *La Voz del Istmo*, which generally supported Isthmus separatism (Rubin 75). In this sense, he was also sympathetic to the *Neza Cubi* cause of returning to Zapotec culture (Kraemer Bayer 63, Rubin 75). De Gyves Pineda helped form the Comité Cívico Héroes 5 de Septiembre and then was able to run as an independent candidate for municipal elections in 1968 (Kraemer Bayer 64). He lost the elections and denounced fraud unsuccessfully. Three years later another leader emerged, Manuel Musalem Santiago, known as Tarú (Kraemer 64). Tarú was known for being a charismatic leader that was able to rally people to support him through his use of "estilo zapoteco" to organize, such as velas and speaking Zapotec (Kraemer 64). These leaders that rose and fell, many times unsuccessfully challenging the PRI, still served a purpose symbolically, signaling the fact that a PRI takeover would not occur easily.

These groups were reacting to a series of rapidly occurring changes in Juchitán during the 1960s which brought it into the national economy as it harmed the peasants involved. First, the Benito Juárez dam was built, costing a lot of money but not resulting in sufficient revenue (Kraemer Bayer 24). Essentially, outsiders who did not know the land arrived in Juchitán to try to increase profits and left the peasants in worse situations than they had started by pushing for

certain crops that failed in the Isthmus, such as rice and sugar cane. This led to more and more distrust in central government agencies, which were seen as ignoring peasant needs to push a model for economic development that did not consider local populations (Rubin 73). In the case of the Benito Juárez project, not only did the dam not create better irrigation conditions, but it also worsened the region's situation by causing tension with the inhabitants of Jalapa de Marqués, who were displaced because of the dam (Rubin 68). A decree to turn land surrounding Juchitán into *ejidos*, which in theory would benefit peasants, was proposed as a possible solution to the conflict but it only prolonged it, as an anti-*ejido* movement that gathered popular support soon arose. People were distrustful of the change because some had already been displaced for the building of the dam and had lost land due to highway and railroad projects (Rubin 69). There was so much distrust and opposition to the central government, that peasants and large landowners alike united in opposition to the *ejidos*, even though peasants might have benefitted from this land reform. The *ejido* decree was eventually reversed, illegally converting the land into private property. This land ownership disagreement became a source of conflict that contributed to the rise of COCEI[53] in the following decade and continued for years to come.

Anti-Indigenous sentiment was interspersed within many of these conflicts. For example, the agrarian agencies in charge of land and crops blamed "local customs" for the failures they experienced during this time. Various publications by agrarian agencies and researchers were "rife with references to the need to abolish traditional practices and mentalities (Ortiz Wadgymer 1971, 87; SARH n.d., cited in Campbell 1990a, 267n 42)" (Rubin 71). They, such as the assistant director of the Tehuantepec Office of the Ministry of Agriculture (SARH) went as far as to describe Zapotec peasants as "savage" (Rubin 71). This view of Juchitecos as barbaric and

[53] The rise of this organization will be discussed in the following chapter as it parallels the creation of *Guchachi' Reza* and the Casa de Cultura Juchitán.

savage was nothing new,[54] used by both Juchitecos and outsiders for decades. This resulted in ambiguity for the "proponents of moderate reform and of electoral mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s [who] identified some of the difficulties and contradictions of the development process they advocated, and they simultaneously valued and worried about Zapotec cultural practices (Rubin 80). According to Rubin, on the other hand, were "students, intellectuals, artists, and neighborhood storytellers [who] set out to represent a Zapotec past, and their historical efforts indeed promoted radical political mobilization" (81). This discussion around students who strictly supported a Zapotec past, however, is complicated in the pages of *Neza Cubi*, when it is revealed in the first number that there are tensions between left-leaning students and ethnicity-focused intellectuals like Matus. This tension, common within Latin American leftist circles, where ethnicity is subsumed by class identity, becomes a unique situation in Juchitán with the rise of COCEI that combines ethnic identity with leftist ideologies.

2. *Neza Cubi*: The Magazine

Neza Cubi was published from 1968 to 1970. The magazine, small in size and with each issue averaging sixteen pages was published about every two months, a "revista bimestral." Apart from a few exceptions, the magazine was published regularly throughout its two-year life. Based on the calls for donations made throughout the magazine, it is likely that those months could have been skipped due to lack of funding. The magazine published different kinds of pieces. Most of them dealt with cultural topics, with references to music, poetry, and stories/folklore appearing in all the numbers. There were also more political pieces with a focus

[54] Rubin highlights this trope throughout *Decentering the Regime* and cites texts from juchitecos like Andrés Henestrosa and Adolfo Gurrión, by outsiders like Miguel Covarrubias, as well as depictions of rebellions in the nineteenth and twentieth century (27).

on current events affecting Juchitán and Mexico and alluding to the 1968 movements. While the kinds of pieces varied, some recurrent sections were included in all or most of the numbers. I will briefly expand on some of those sections to provide a better idea of what the magazine looked like.

The cover of the magazine usually contained an image, a sketch, a photograph, or a reproduction of other art pieces such as sculptures. Some of the artists featured included well-known artists from Juchitán, Tehuantepec, and Oaxaca and even outside Mexico, such as Alfredo Cardona Chacón, Moisés Cabrera, Raúl Ortiz Urquidi, Hesiquio López Lucho, Enrique A. Ugarte, and Arturo Luciano. Number 11 even includes a sketch attributed to then-established author Gabriel López Chiñas. The images range from figures of women's faces to documentation of current events such as flooding that devasted Juchitán. The last number includes a photograph of the face of what appears to be an archeological piece, it is labeled "binnigula'sa,'" (e.g. see fig. 2) an important topic that had already prominently appeared in the magazine *Neza*.

Figure 2. Cover page of *Neza Cubi*, no. 14. Screenshot by author.

Starting with the first number, each magazine begins with an "Editorial." This section gives the reader insight into the planning that went into that specific number and the intent or questions being explored in its pages. This narrative is not, however, always explicit: the first number, for example, begins with a poem. Still, that poem explains the reason for the editors coming together to create and publish this magazine. Sometimes the "Editorial" is an excerpt of a poem or poems, that then unfolds into a narrative explanation for its inclusion, connected to the theme of that number. Other times, the "Editorial" contains definitions paired with the narrative explanation, such as in the third editorial, where the terms "*neza*" and "*cubi*" are listed as dictionary entries and defined before a paragraph offers a joint explanation of both terms. The "Editorial" section does not always look the same, but it is found in every number and serves the same purpose of setting up the number for the reader, explaining the rationale for the topics selected and the themes explored.

Commonly, a section labeled "Poesía zapoteca," or "Poesía zapoteca actual" also appears. This section includes a few poems by Zapotec authors such as Nazario Chacón Pineda, Efrén Núñez Mata, and Silvia Urania López among others. Even though it is not always included with that heading, poetry is found in every number, though it is not always by Zapotec authors, and the themes vary greatly. However, the constant appearance and permanence of poems highlight the importance that literary production held to the editors.

An especially interesting section found in at least half the numbers is titled "Cartas." This section is essentially a portion of the magazine dedicated to the reprinting of letters sent to the creators, either Macario Matus or Víctor de la Cruz, and their responses to those letters. The letters tend to be from a friend or acquaintance. They often praise the creation of the magazine, congratulating the creators for the work they are doing, and proclaiming pride in seeing their

culture represented on the pages. This section is not found in every number, but I believe, as I will argue later, that it is serving an important purpose in creating a narrative about the success and significance of the magazine, and in consolidating the importance of literature in Zapotec/Juchitec identity.

A section titled "Notas: comentarios de libros y revistas," appeared in many numbers as well. This section was composed of brief reviews of various works, mostly books but also commentary on exhibits and other similar cultural and literary or artistic events. While there was a range of authors included, many times the same authors who were contributing to the magazine were showcased in this section. Therefore, it seemed that they were all in the same circle, reading each other, commenting on each other's work, and promoting it. Works by Henestrosa, López Chiñas, Cardona Peña,[55] and Cardona Chacón,[56] were often mentioned. This section gives us insight into the literary, artistic, and cultural circles the editors and readers were part of. It highlights the efforts to organize events centered on their Zapotec identity and their common interests and evidences their role first as cultural promoters and in the creation of a Zapotec audience.

Many of the numbers also included a section titled, "Noticias para comentar," which looked differently depending on who authored the section. The topics ranged from everyday news like robberies, the appointment of a new treasurer in Juchitán, the discovery of pyramids in Oaxaca, and discussions on social issues. This section was different than the rest in that it had more of a "current event" feel, but they were still very much tied to everyday life in Juchitán or Oaxaca.

[55] According to Gloria de la Cruz, Alfredo Cardona Peña, a Costa Rican journalist and writer was married to a Juchiteca and therefore lived in Juchitán.
[56] Alfredo Cardona Chacón was the son of Cardona Peña and friends with Víctor de la Cruz.

At the end of the magazine appears a list of the people who had donated money to make printing that specific number possible, entitled "Patrocinadores." The donors ranged from well-established writers like Andrés Henestrosa, Gabriel López Chiñas, and Efrén Núñez Mata, to non-Zapotec contributing writers and artists like Hesiquio López Lucho and Alfredo Cardona Peña, as well as community members, potentially readers who were "*profesores*, *licenciados* and *ingenieros*." I believe the list of "patrocinadores" is important, as it allows us to see who was invested in the publication of this magazine. The donations ranged from $5.00 to $200.00 and above. It was not always the same people who donated, but there appeared to be various donors rotating throughout the life of the publication, mostly acquaintances and members of the community who supported the magazine financially. Since this list was published and not kept privately those who donated were well-known, and it is not hard to imagine that the printing of the list was oriented to encourage further donations. All in all, we can perceive that Matus and De la Cruz attempted to weave a tight-knit network of authors and artists, and we can conclude that they succeeded in engaging both wealthy "patrocinadores" and the local community at large in actively supporting their cultural project. While the magazine does not announce its close, after only fourteen numbers the magazine ends due to the differing interests of Matus and De la Cruz (Blas López y de la Cruz Blas).

3. The Creators

The two editors of *Neza Cubi* were Macario Matus and Víctor de la Cruz. Unlike the creators of the *Neza* magazine, these intellectuals were from working and lower middle-class backgrounds. They were in Mexico City during the 1960s and became radicalized through their connections with other social movements of the time such as the student movement. Both editors

would go on to become two of the most prolific writers from Juchitán, influencing future generations of poets, writers, and intellectuals in their hometown.

Macario Matus was born in Juchitán on January of 1943. When he created *Neza Cubi* and served as its director, he was only twenty-five years old. Matus attended the National Teacher's College, which according to Campbell was a site of student radicalism that greatly influenced him (134). Around this time, he was working as a journalist, writing for various newspapers in Mexico City, with a focus on interviewing well-known authors. He would go on to become the director of the Casa de Cultura Juchitán from 1979 to 1989. He published many books throughout his life including *Biulú* (1969), a book of poetry while he was still editor of *Neza Cubi*, and another titled *Los Zapotecos Binni Záa* (1998) that explored Zapotec cosmology through poetry. Matus was also a founding member of the Asociación de Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas (ELIAC),[57] an organization that promoted Indigenous writers and still exists today.

The other *Neza Cubi* editor was Víctor de la Cruz, born in Juchitán in 1948. When he began working on *Neza Cubi* he was only twenty years old. He first studied *Derecho* for his bachelor's degree and then would go on to receive his doctorate from UNAM in Mesoamerican Studies under Miguel León-Portilla, with a dissertation centered on the *binigula'sa*,' or the ancient Zapotecs. Víctor was known for his many intellectual pursuits that ranged from poetry, literary history, archeology, music, and history to translation among others. De la Cruz directed the Casa de Cultura Juchitán from 1975-1979 ("Víctor de la Cruz"). Afterward, he worked in Oaxaca and was a founding member of the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en

[57] The ELIAC was founded in 1993. The organization supports writers who speak and write in Indigenous languages, promotes Indigenous literatures and knowledges, and the use of Indigenous languages throughout Mexico. They also provide translation services and Indigenous language courses ("Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas ELIAC")

Antropología Social (CIESAS) Pacífico Sur[58] along with anthropologist Salomón Nahmad and others. De la Cruz is widely recognized, has won many prizes including the Premio Nezahualcóyotl,[59] and was eventually inducted into the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua.

As we can see, both authors went on to become prolific writers and were committed supporters of Indigenous literary production. We see this through Matus's work in institutions dedicated to supporting Indigenous authors, such as ELIAC, as well as through De la Cruz's contributions to the inclusion of Indigenous intellectuals in fields like anthropology, ethnography, and history. Still, at this time in the 1960s, both were young college students or recent graduates, whose interests would lead them to create, publish, and disseminate a small cultural magazine where they combined their interest in their Zapotec culture and their critique of social issues affecting Juchitán.

4. The Purpose

It is not just the content of the magazine that reveals the editors' goals, but the first three "Editoriales," which provide insight into the reasons for creating this publication. Their goals are four-fold and include their search for a path, their connection to and importance of their ancestors, their concern for their pueblos, and a call to action. These brief texts, which are mostly poems, reveal a Zapotec ontology, a non-settler conception of time and temporality, and finally, a concrete call to action for their audience, who they imagine is a Zapotec audience located both in Juchitán, Oaxaca and beyond the national borders of Mexico. In these "Editoriales," we see

[58] CIESAS Pacífico Sur has contributed to the critical study of race and ethnicity in anthropology in Oaxaca, serving as a research center that offers master and doctoral programs, workshops, and publications on topics pertaining to Indigenous peoples in Oaxaca.

[59] The Premio Nezahualcóyotl de Literatura en Lenguas Mexicanas was created in 1993 to support Indigenous writers in Mexico, therefore pushing the publication and dissemination of Indigenous literatures. It preceded other awards that also focus on Indigenous literary production such as the Premio de Literaturas Indígenas de América.

the *kab'awilian* locus[60] that the editors can undertake, situated both in the capital city of Mexico and in conversation and returning to Juchitán. They were influenced by wider global politics and literatures, but always inspired by their Zapotec culture through their focus on the concept of *neza*. Building on the way Chacón theorizes *kab'awil* as describing social reality, I read these magazines and in particular their use of "path" (*neza)* as a metaphor, referent, and ontology. The authors are inspired by *Neza* and the *Neza* generation and take on the magazine and the concept to explore the role of literature in their cultural movement.

The concept of "*neza*" is used as a referent and metaphor for the Zapotec intellectuals as they call back to the newspaper *Neza* and the intellectuals from that generation. *Neza Cubi* is named after this publication from decades past, *Neza* (1935-1937), which is their referent. In Isthmus Zapotec, "*neza"* is defined as "el camino, lo correcto." The word *cubi* means "new," therefore *Neza Cubi* directly translates to "new path." They then go further to utilize "*neza"* as a metaphor, focusing on a path that is the correct one to follow. This metaphor works because of the polysemous nature of "*neza"* which is used repeatedly throughout the "Editoriales.

They begin their publication with the following three verses:

Un nuevo camino.

Una senda nueva.

Un camino reabierto ("De editorial" 2)

In the first two verses they simply define the title of their publication, pointing to a novel path. This path might be new to them, but is in fact a "camino reabierto," meaning that it is not entirely new, but a path that once was and will be explored again. This points to a return

[60] I use this term to draw attention to the position/place that the two intellectuals were in. Beyond their use of *kab'awilian* strategies, is a *kab'awilian* position, between Mexico City and Juchitán, where the intellectuals are thinking and producing from both and writing to audiences in both. This is not related to Mignolo's "locus of enunciation."

occurring, and we know that the return points towards *Neza*, the literary magazine published in the 1930s that saw the first publications of many Juchitec authors in their youth. They continue this thread in the following three verses which precede the final verse of the *Editorial*:

> para poder seguir la ruta
>
> y después caminar, hermanos,
>
> los Zapotecas
>
> hacia la senda iluminada del progreso ("De editorial" 3)

They continue with the path metaphor and make a calling to the Zapotec people specifically, which they refer to as "hermanos," hinting at a community, a sense of kinship between all those who are Zapotecas. It is important to note the terminology, as they are not only calling to Juchitecos or Istmeños, but to "Zapotecas," which include people in the Valley of Oaxaca and the Sierras, essentially, people all across the state of Oaxaca and potentially beyond. To put it differently, the editors are calling to all Zapotec people to return to the path that their ancestors laid out for them. While they do not explicitly define their concept of "progreso," we know that the word "*neza*" also means "lo correcto," therefore whatever "progreso" they are working towards is the right one for the Zapotec people. They call the path a "senda iluminada," or a well-lit path. While this description might initially point to a western conception of progress based on the Enlightenment, with the metaphor of light as reason and intelligence, the Isthmus Zapotec word for being intelligent is "*xpiàani*"[61] which means to "have light," therefore in Zapotec cosmology, there is a strong relationship between light and knowledge.[62] Still, we must

[61] The Isthmus Zapotec word for light is "piàani."

[62] In "Filosofía zapoteca, diálogo de saberes y transición pos-civilizatoria," Sánchez-Antonio explains the relationship between light and darkness as the root of Zapotec cosmology and draws from the Popol Vuh to strengthen his argument, where light and knowledge (la palabra) are also linked: "Entonces [vino] la Palabra [...]. Y todo fue hecho en medio de la obscuridad" (Popol Vuh 2019 [1701-1703]): 21, 22), incluyendo la palabra que es la luz y, con ella, se instaura la claridad del mundo" (5). In his forthcoming book, *La filosofía de los zapotecas: Hacia un diálogo mundial inter-filosófico transmoderno*, Sánchez-Antonio states that to reconstruct Zapotec philosophy, he

remember the time of this publication, the year 1968, a time of great change not only in Mexico but globally. The editors could very well be inspired by these changes and be referring to them as progress. As evidence of this possibility, it needs to be mentioned that Víctor de la Cruz was a student at UNAM during the peak of the student movement, and according to Gloria de la Cruz, while he was not directly involved in student organizing, he was sympathetic towards it. The editors continue explaining the meaning behind "*neza*" in the second editorial, as they write "después de tanto caminar sin rumbo…/estamos encontrando la ruta trazada" ("Editorial 2" 2). They hint at the fact that there this path was existent, already "trazada," and that they are simply finding it again. In the third editorial, they include what appears to be a replica of a dictionary entry for the words "*neza*" and "*cubi*," followed by an explanation of their purpose where the editors explain that they aim to "seguir aquel camino" that their literary ancestors opened to them ("Neza Cubi" 2). Through the constant use of the term "path"[63] in the editorials, we can see how "*neza*" is used both as a concrete referent – *Neza* as the immediate predecessor of *Neza Cubi* – and as a metaphor – *neza* as the right path towards progress for all Zapotecs.

Another equally important theme that appears in the "Editoriales" is the role and centrality of ancestors, which I believe also hints at a different conception of time and temporality, and their becoming writers following the path as ontology, even though the editors

bases his study on "análisis filológico de la arqueología conceptual de la lengua zapoteca" (46) and since there are no Zapotec codices to refer to, he also support his argument with "arqueología contemporánea, sus descubrimientos y hallazgos referentes a la civilización zapoteca y las áreas culturales afines a la nuestra (mixteca, maya, y náhuatl) (47).

[63] In another poem published in the fifth number by Silvia Urania López titled "Quetzalcoatl," which I will analyze more in-depth later, the image of a path reappears. As Urania López exalts Jeremías López Chiñas comparing him to Quetzalcoatl, she writes:

> tras la luz de tu muerte
> ascenderá el camino
> de las razas indígenas…

Here, Urania López claims that the death of Jeremías López Chiñas will give away to a path that they can follow that will allow for Indigenous people (not specified as just Zapotec) to rise.

do not explicitly name it as such. The editors' ancestors, and their descendants, are mentioned considerably throughout their "Editoriales," as well as throughout other numbers of *Neza Cubi,* pointing to a conception of time that holds present, past, and future generations on a simultaneous plane*,* which in turn highlights how the editors are walking between western conceptions of time and their own, rooted in Zapotec customs, once again utilizing *kab'awilian* strategies. The editors also center literary production, the writing of their ancestors, and their own, as the path they will take on and leave behind for their ancestors. In this manner, "*neza*" becomes ontological, the writing that their ancestors left behind, and the writing they are engaging in, becomes the path for their descendants.

The editors repeatedly emphasize the role that their ancestors have in following their new path throughout all three of the "Editoriales," revealing Zapotec conceptions of time. First, when describing the path, they claim that it is the one "por el que caminaron nuestros antepasados/ y caminarán nuestros descendientes" ("De editorial" 2). The path they are trying to follow is one that their ancestors walked upon, and they need to retake it so that their descendants can walk it as well. While I initially thought this pointed to a form of cyclicality, further reading on Zapotec time, non-settler conceptions of time, and the importance of ancestors in Zapotec culture have led me to believe that the editors might have been referring to a different kind of temporality. The fact that the path they are once again taking was laid out by their ancestors and that the editors emphasize the importance of their descendants taking that path as well highlights two important components. First, it reveals the way that the editors are conceptualizing time, thinking of themselves, their ancestors, and their descendants simultaneously. Mark Rifkin's explanation of "indigenous narrations and sensations of time" that do not align with the "dominant settler accounts" and which include "the felt presence of ancestors" and "a palpable set of

responsibilities to prior generations and future ones" aligns with the "Editoriales" (19). In *Rethinking Zapotec Time*, David Tavarez explains this important connection to the ancestors as well, emphasizing how Zapotec calendars revolved around rituals dedicated to ancestors so that a time-space made possible exchanges between present humans and their ancestors[64] (266). In Juchitán and Indigenous Oaxaca, rituals centered around death[65] take center stage every year, highlighting the continued important role that ancestors hold in their communities. Professor Juan Carlos Sánchez-Antonio explains more clearly, stating that Zapotec conceptions of time work as a spiral, where the present includes the past (and the future too). While the editors do not explicitly explain this conception of time as they expound on their use of the path, I believe that the inclusion of their ancestors and their constant references to them, as well as the fact that they will dedicate entire numbers of the magazine to their literary ancestors, reveals the way that they are taking part in "indigenous narrations and sensations of time" (Rifkin 19). This once again highlights a *kab'awilian* strategy, because while the editors are very concerned with current events – as shown in their choice to introduce the section "Noticias para comentar," – they are still taking part in indigenous conceptions of time, conceptions that center their ancestors and make them an active part of their present and of Zapotec futures.

For the editors, their ancestors left them traces that guide them in their journey to finding the path again. The editors continue, "estamos encontrando la ruta trazada / por nuestros antecesores, esta ruta" ("Editorial 2" 2), switching over to the present progressive tense, and

[64] In the conclusion Tavarez explains "Nevertheless, Zapotec ritual discourse did not simply revolve, as did mysticism in sixteenth-century Spain, around the absent body. Its central axis was not the remnants of ancestors, but the structure of time interlocked with spaces in the cosmos, a continuum in which feast days wove through cosmic geography in endless movement, and in which ancestors could be sighted in the shape of their animal co-beings. Time–space made possible a web of exchanges between ancestors and humans, mediated by ritual discourse and beegalae xo, the dreams of the ancestors, which did hinge on bodily presence" (266).

[65] Paja Faudree explores the Mazatec tradition of singing and celebrating the dead in *Singing for the Dead: The Politics of Indigenous Revival* (2013). In *Becoming an Ancestor: The Isthmus Zapotec Way of Death* (2011), Anya Peterson Royce explores the various components of celebration when a Zapotec person dies in Juchitán.

therefore highlighting that they are already in the process of finding their way to that path again. Their search for that path has been guided by remnants left behind. They expand on this metaphor as they write:

> Buscar el eco de sus voces
>
> Dispersas por el viento.
>
> Buscar las huellas que dejaron
>
> y reconstruirlas ("De editorial" 3)

The editors are pulling from remnants left behind that are not going to be around for a long time. Both echoes and footprints indicate a trace left behind that can easily dissipate. The editors go further, not just searching for that echo and footprints for inspiration but attempting to recreate them. The editors' discussion of their ancestors leaving behind clues for them, a clear path to retake, once again points to them navigating another temporality than the "settler experience of time" (Rifkin 17). In the Zapotec conception of time, the present, the past, and the future are intertwined, as Víctor de la Cruz explains, "Los zapotecos no segmentaban el tiempo en clasificaciones discretas. Para ellos, el tiempo fue un tejido sin costura que cubría toda la vida y, por supuesto, la muerte"[66] (351). Here, even though their ancestors are no longer present, they still leave behind remnants, clues even, for the editors to follow.

Discussions of their literary ancestors also point to the way that "*neza*" takes on an ontological meaning. The editors describe their ancestors in a variety of ways, but most interesting to me was their description of their ancestors' writing as the path, which turns into the editors' and their writing becoming that path as well.

[66] De la Cruz is citing Arthur Miller in *The Painted Tombs of Oaxaca, Mexico: Living with the Dead* (1995).

We learn exactly who the ancestors are that the editors are referring to in "Editorial 2": the ancestors are Zapotec men who are considered intellectuals, writers, teachers, public figures who in their work centered their Zapotec culture. The editors write:

> aquellas rutas duras que con los ojos ávidos
> recorriera la pluma suave de Henestrosa;
> dulces y terribles senderos caminados
> por Nazario Chacón Pineda;
> ingratos caminos que sintieron los
> de Gabriel López Chiñas;
> pasos recios áridas brechas donde hollaron los pasos firmes
> de Efrén Núñez Mata.
> Los mismos caminos largos y crueles, los queremos
> recorrer guiados por los istmeños ilustres
> e invitados por nuestra sangre y raza Zapoteca ("Editorial 2" 2)

They refer to "istmeños ilustres," all writers and many of them involved with the newspaper *Neza*. The inclusion of these writers points to the importance that authors and literature have for the editors of the magazine. In particular, the editors mention writers and authors who wrote about their culture, both in Spanish and in *Diidxazá*.[67] Essentially, the path that they are trying to retake not only includes but centers on literature. They continue to explain this concept in the third editorial, which opens with the dictionary entries of "*neza*" and "*cubi*" and is followed by a paragraph where the editors explain: "Relacionadas todas las acepciones dan la idea de lazo entre los hombres de la época pasada con nuestra actual juventud, nuestra intención es seguir aquel

[67] Diidxazá is the name of the Isthmus Zapotec language in Isthmus Zapotec, a combination of "diidxa" which means words and "za" which means clouds, in other words, "cloud words."

camino que ellos abrieron" ("Editorial 3" 2). Here they insist on the idea of the "lazo" that exists between them and their ancestors. This connection is achieved by creating their own literary magazine, and therefore continuing the path. They continue in more detail: "Entonces, nuestro propósito como jóvenes Istmeños – recogedores de nuestra sagrada herencia literaria – es servir de ligazón entre dos periodos e invitar a todos los hombres de nuestra región para reanudar la historia literaria en el Istmo" ("Editorial 3" 2). By describing themselves as a "ligazón," they present themselves as a bridge, some type of connection to the previous generation, which we know is the *Neza* generation. Essentially, their work in the literary and cultural front is becoming that path that they are in search of, for themselves and for the next generations of Zapotecs. They also claim specifically a "sagrada herencia literaria" and the need to resume their "historia literaria" ("Editorial 3" 2). This piece only serves to cement the importance that the editors place on literature for the preservation and revitalization of their culture: the Zapotec path forward needs to be rebuilt through literature and language. All in all, through the "Editoriales" of *Neza Cubi*, Matus and De la Cruz begin to plant the seeds for a cultural preservation movement in Juchitán. Interestingly enough, it must be noted that these "Editoriales" were not written in prose, but in verse, thus further emphasizing the importance of literary production by matching form and content.

Besides their literary and cultural preoccupations, the editors are truly concerned about the state of their pueblos. Their concern for the pueblos highlights the community-centered goals at the heart of this literary magazine. The editors believe that by creating a magazine, they can bring together their pueblos; thus, they will also publish a call to action along these lines.

The editors lay out their concern for their pueblos. They write that by losing their own way, they have also lost the way for their pueblos as well. They are intertwined with their pueblos, as their pueblos are intertwined with each other. They lament:

¡Nuestros pueblos!
que vienen del mismo lugar,
tuvieron un mismo origen
y han recorrido una gran parte del camino,
hermanados; ("De editorial" 2)

When they say "pueblos," they refer to the wider Zapotec community that is composed of smaller communities throughout various regions in Oaxaca. Each pueblo has their own way of dress, fiestas, and at times, language, but still they are considered Zapotec. According to the editors, the pueblos have existed "hermanados," or in unity. In an initial read, it is not clear why they highlight this fact, but they will continue to expand on it throughout the poem. They also reiterate that they are one with their pueblos as they say:

nosotros que hemos hecho de nuestras vidas,
de la vida de nuestros pueblos
una vida misma ("De editorial" 3)

The editors believe that their lives cannot be separated from their pueblos. Therefore, when they write that they must retake a path that they have lost, they are not thinking solely of the individual, but also of the collective, of their community which stems from their place of origin. In their call for a strengthening of the wider Zapotec community through cultural and literary revitalization, they contradict the official Mexican state's stance that conceived of only one "path" for Indigenous peoples, that of modernization through assimilation. Soon they return to

their path metaphor to expand a bit on the reason why they are calling for this rerouting: conflict between the pueblos.

The editors claim that just as they feel they are lost, so are their people. The editors believe that the pueblos have lost their way, that:

> hoy se encuentran confundidos
> porque no han buscado la voz
> o por lo menos su eco,
> de los que se fueron adelante,
> abriendo el paso. ("De editorial" 2)

Here they again mention the echo of their ancestors, which has been ignored by the pueblos, and subsequently led to confusion. The ancestors are the ones who "abrieron el paso" of the path they need to retake. This idea of there being a correct and an incorrect path is reiterated, as they reveal the conflicts that plague the Zapotec communities. The editors explain: "Y hay disputas que nos están separando, / queriendo llevarnos por caminos diferentes" ("De editorial" 3). The editors do not inform the reader what those conflicts are, just that there are conflicts between the communities. We know however, that the 1950s and 1960s were an especially turbulent time in Juchitán after the death of Charis. Various contenders were vying for political power, and social turmoil became ever prevalent as the wealthy clashed with the working class over land and other natural resources.

In the second "Editorial," the editors end their poem with a direct call to action for their readers. They write:

> tan solo necesitamos el apoyo de todos
> los que saben que a base de los conjuntos esfuerzos

se logran grandes metas (“Editorial 2” 2)

They very pointedly call to the community, highlighting that their effort of moving forward through the right path must be a joint one. They do not state how support for their cause can be given, but one can assume it is by buying the issues, donating, or contributing pieces to the magazine. Donations were probably particularly important in this case, considering that *Neza Cubi*, – contrary to *Neza* – was led by two intellectuals of working-class origins, a circumstance that must have made community support essential for its editors. Matus and De la Cruz are not attempting to create a magazine that will be read by a select few, they aim to create a magazine that is circulated, read, and supported by the community. This effort is in line with the purpose they share in their first poem: to find their way back to the path their ancestors set out, not just for themselves but also for their pueblo.

The first few “Editoriales” give us insight to a few key elements of the literary magazine *Neza Cubi*. Their form, written as poems, begins to hint at the strong literary component of the magazine, and the importance that literature has for the editors. The “Editoriales” also reveal their use of *kab’awilian* strategies. For them, the notion of *neza*, a path, takes on multiple meanings, allowing them to simultaneously navigate the past and the present, the living (themselves and their descendants) and the dead, and the future of their pueblos, which according to them, is calling for cultural change, as well as for social and political unity. In not only believing, but actively pushing for a specifically Zapotec future, the editors reject assimilationist policies. While they believe that they might have briefly lost the “right path”, the editors are adamant on finding it again, on returning to what they call their “sagrada herencia Zapoteca”.

5. Old or New Left? Or the Zapotec?

Just as in *Neza*, politics are a central concern of the contributing writers and editors of *Neza Cubi*, which provides insight into conversations and tensions in 1960s Juchitán. Two pieces, "Un nuevo istmeño," and "Por una unidad istmeña" published in the first number by an anonymous author and Macario Matus respectively, offer differing perspectives on how to move their community of Juchitán forward. These two opposing pieces highlight, on the one hand, a leftist-leaning perspective and, on the other, Matus' tenets focused on ideas of *comunalidad*. Even though Matus is not as explicit about his political leanings as the anonymous author, I believe his article is in line with the previous *Neza* articles that focused on *guelaguetza*/*guendalisa*. In his text, Matus argues for community support, reinforcing the importance of it, and ending with a call to action for unity. Here, I will briefly describe both articles, highlight the problems each respective writer identifies, and finally end on the solutions that they propose, noting their similarities and differences. I argue that these two articles emphasize two distinct viewpoints about Juchitán from Juchitec youth: one calling for a change that would mean letting go of tradition; the other recalling *Neza's* focus on pulling from Zapotec identity, which focused on community. These pieces, published in the same number and in conversation, offer a view into a Juchitec community that was grappling with various ideologies popular in the late 1960s. These articles reveal two seemingly opposing binaries that eventually collapsed with the rise of the COCEI in the following decade. Here, we see overlapping and contested views about leftist politics, ethnicity, Indigeneity, and long-held stereotypes about Indigenous peoples.

When describing the changing relationship that the Mexican Left has had with Indigenous peoples, Scheuzger provides a brief overview since postrevolutionary Mexico. She

claims that the *Indigenismo* that was consolidated at the time[68] meant that the Indigenous subject was used in murals and painting to serve as someone oppressed, but that their identity as Indigenous peoples was not the main focus (Scheuzger 309). Afterwards, the 1940s to the 1960s are characterized by "un creciente olvido de la cuestión indígena por parte de la izquierda" (Scheuzger 316). Changes occurred in the 1970s with the rise of the New Left and the anticolonial and antiracist rhetoric that was taken up by Indigenous youth themselves, inspired by Third Worldist movements and revolutions around the globe (Dillingham 561). In the pages of *Neza Cubi*, we see the tension that occurred before this change, when leftist-leaning youth in Juchitán, more affiliated with traditional leftist views, are critical of customs and tradition, which are considered a hindrance to progress. Then, Matus provides his contribution, focused on Zapotec worldviews and customs as the guiding principles for the youth to bring about and lead change.

The opening lines of both articles exemplify the authors' goals for their respective pieces. "Un nuevo istmeño" does not include an author, only a pseudonym that appears as "Viga." This word could be, in another form of spelling, "biga," which means left-handed or *zurdo* in Isthmus Zapotec (Cata). This pseudonym could be a nod alluding to a leftist collective for those who speak, read, and/or write Isthmus Zapotec. Furthermore, the title, "Un nuevo istmeño," is also reminiscent of Che Guevara's essay "Socialismo y el hombre nuevo," which was published and circulated in 1965 and focused on the new subject that the triumph of socialism would bring about. "Un nuevo istmeño" begins with an address, to the "estimados paisanos," indicating that

[68] In his article, "From Models or the Nation to Model Citizens: *Indigenismo* and the 'Revindication' of the Mexican Indian 1920-1940"Dawson elaborates on another current of *Indigenismo* that paints the Indian as an "ideal subject" of the revolution with a romanticized and mythologized view of physiology, culture, and politics that was compared to socialism. I note this to emphasize that there were different currents of *Indigenismo* alive simultaneously that were often contradictory.

the author(s) identify as Istmeños as well and are talking directly to the people of the Isthmus. At the same time, they distinguish themselves from the students who created *Neza Cubi* but express their support for the magazine and their interest in collaborating with it because the editors are inspired by "[un] solo ideal limpio, desprovisto de sectarismo, partido o clase social y un solo pensamiento: el de servir a nuestra región" (Viga 5). For some reason, it is important to the anonymous author(s) to emphasize that they are not tied to any political party and instead claim that the well-being of their community is their sole focus. They are publishing "de una manera desinteresada, pensando en que ya es tiempo que nuestros paisanos cambien en su forma de ser, de estudio y de querer a nuestra región" (Viga 5). Even though they claim that they are not aligned to a social class or political party, the pseudonym and their views on traditions indicate their left-leaning allegiance. When Matus, director of the magazine, writes about Istmeños, he has a different call to action, one focusing on community and family. Matus begins his article by claiming that man cannot live alone, "ya es prolijo y cansado expresar que el hombre no puede vivir aislado, sólo cuando es genio o santo" (12). He then lists some of the men who he considers "genio[s]" or "santo[s]" such as Moisés, Cristo, Mahoma, Buda, Milton, Beethoven, Dostoiewski [*sic*], Cervantes, Dante, and Nietzsche (Matus 12). He claims that these were not ordinary men, and needed their solitude to create, but ordinary men, himself and his readers included, cannot live in solitude. With this claim, Matus sets the tone for the rest of his piece which emphasizes the importance and necessity of community.

The author(s) of "El nuevo Istmeño" very explicitly identify the issues they believe are negatively affecting the Juchitec community, for them, traditions act as a hurdle that must be overcome to redirect attention elsewhere, akin to traditional socialist ideologies. First, Viga states that many Juchitecos that return to the Istmo for vacation are only interested in "divertirse

y emborracharse"[69] but they wish to see more of them sacrificing themselves for "algo positivo, como actos sociales, culturales o deportivos" (Viga 5). The writer(s) see these two acts of having fun and getting drunk as mutually exclusive to social and cultural actions. This critique draws from socialist ideas of alcohol as "incompatible with a 'socialist way of life' (Zaigraev 1988)" and "remnants of capitalist decadence" (Connor 1972; Field 1955; Wiseman 1985) (Rouse and Unnithan 220). By avoiding alcohol, workers were capable of orchestrating and retaining… consciousness" (Rouse and Unnithan 215). For the author(s), these actions are reflective of a Juchitán that is at a "nivel tan atrasado y es más sucia todavía" (Viga 5). They argue that people who commit to social acts "actúan porque saben que se lo dicta su conciencia y su manera de querer a su patria chica" (Viga 5). Still in this push for "actos sociales," there is a critique of certain widespread customs. The author(s) continues, "[si] reunieran el dinero que se gasta inútilmente y se depositara en manos de personas responsables se lograría cuando menos asfaltar una calle" (Viga 5). When the author(s) refers to the money spent "inútilmente," they are referring to the money that goes into the *velas*, which are an extremely important aspect of Juchitec tradition, are still widely popular today, and are a prominent marker of Isthmus Zapotec Indigenous expression.[70] Furthermore, the author(s) creates a false dichotomy between social acts which are deemed positive and local customs[71] which are considered negative, useless, and irresponsible. In this article, we see the tension that occurs when traditional leftist/socialist ideals are transposed onto Juchitán, a primarily Zapotec city. One might expect this view from

[69] It is important to note the stereotype that the author(s) choose to draw from, one popular that depicts Indigenous people as drunk and lazy and that dates back to the colonial period.
[70] The velas in Juchitán are a time of celebration in Juchitán that also serve as a source of pride.
[71] Only a few years later, Floriberto Díaz (Mixe) and Jaime Martínez Luna (Zapotec) would publish on *comunalidad*, a concept they theorize to explain a communal way of living that various Indigenous groups in Mexico live under. *La comunalidad: modo de vida de los pueblos indios* (2003) lists five key components: 1) el territorio comunal 2) el trabajo comunal 3) el poder político comunal 4) fiesta comunal 5) la asamblea comunal (Juan José Rendón Monzón). *Comunalidad* acknowledges the importance of fiesta for Indigenous people.

traditional socialists, since, according to Scheuzger, Indigenous people "representaba[n] también para la óptica de la izquierda el atraso, el estancamiento errático, y por consecuencia, todo lo opuesto al proyecto del discurso modernizador dominante" (317). Still, the Indigenous person was not irredeemable, in a view made popular by former President Cárdenas, Indigenous peoples were seen as a "backward proletariat" who was nonetheless "open to redemption" if only they got rid of their vices (Dawson 73). This article by Viga highlights a traditional leftist view that is in opposition to customs in Juchitán that the Zapotec take great pride in. The seemingly opposing view to this discussion is provided by Matus in an article he publishes in the same number of *Neza Cubi*.

Matus, unlike Viga, does not focus on drinking and *velas*, he considers the issue to be entirely different altogether. For Matus, the main problem that is affecting the Isthmus is the existence of opposed factions, which lead to fragmentation of the community. Matus explains that there are various groups composed of "jóvenes istmeños de grandes ideas, de envidiables acciones y que tan sólo necesitan una mínima dirección definida y metas positivas realizables," potentially referring to the youth who wrote the first article, and who he is therefore in conversation with[72] (13). He believes there are people interested in helping their community, but there are too many factions[73] and therefore no clear goals. Matus calls for some type of solidarity between them all as people from the Isthmus. He writes, "acerca de los organismos o facciones que existen, deben de organizarse de tal modo, unificar sus esfuerzos para actuar en beneficio de nuestro Istmo" (Matus 13). Matus is vague on who those factions are and therefore vague on

[72] This intertextuality, with authors writing to each other and published in the same number (or others) was not uncommon, it occurred in *Neza* with various retellings of the *binnigula'sa'* and it occurs in *Neza Cubi* with letters, which I discuss later in the chapter.
[73] This history, of competing factions, is glossed over by Rubin in *Decentering the Regime* (1997), who focuses on the PRI and the reformers within that party as the main source of conflict in the 1960s.

ways in which unifying them could be achieved. And careful to not name anyone, he still pointedly critiques those who he characterizes with "egoísmo mediocre" and "el sectarismo de líderes[74] venales" (Matus 13). While Matus does not name anyone specifically, those readers familiar with the political happenings in Juchitán are most likely aware he is referring to the PRI, who has recently openly emerged as the party vying for control in Juchitán. Matus, careful not to call out the priístas, instead calls into unity everyone and anyone who cares about the Isthmus. At this point, it appears that the issues that Viga and Matus pinpoint are completely different, with Viga calling for a change of the community and Matus calling for unity within the community. But after a closer look at both arguments, it becomes clear that they have some ideas in common.

While initial impressions might point to differing points of view, both in the problems identified and the solutions proposed, the two articles contain influence of Che Guevara's "El hombre nuevo." The influence is clear in the title of "El nuevo Istmeño," and becomes apparent in the themes they choose to tackle, that of social consciousness and value in social service, and in the role they both assign to the youth. The first theme that arises in parallel to Che's "Hombre nuevo" is the consciousness that both the new man and the new Istmeño must develop. According to Guevara, in the transformation that man is undergoing with the end of a capitalist society and the growth of a socialist one, is "conciencia de la necesidad de su incorporación a la sociedad y, al mismo tiempo, de su importancia como motores de la misma" (12). The author(s) of "El nuevo Istmeño," also alludes to this necessary consciousness to make positive changes in the Isthmus. In their opening line, they ask of their paisanos, "Por eso los exhortamos desde estas líneas a que cambiemos, porque ya es tiempo que se haga algo por el Istmo" (Viga 5). The author believes it is time for a change, to invest, to "hacer algo" for their region. They also refer to this

[74] The decade of the 60s in Juchitán was characterized, according to Rubin, by an internal power struggle within the PRI, therefore the leaders Matus is referring to are more than likely PRI reformers (64).

consciousness more explicitly when they mention social projects and claim that the men who should take on this work should do so, "porque saben que se los dicta su conciencia y su manera de querer a su patria chica" (Viga 5). This theme is related to the second one found in "El hombre nuevo," and that is the value of volunteering for society. Guevara explains the value of volunteering "basados en la apreciación marxista de que el hombre realmente alcanza su plena condición humana cuando produce sin la compulsión de la necesidad física de venderse como mercancía" (15). The author(s) of "El nuevo Istmeño" also believe in the value of volunteering, which should arise naturally from this new Isthmian man. The author ends their piece with the following aspiration, "y al llegar cada periodo de vacaciones… digan: han llegado LOS NUEVOS ISTMEÑOS" (Viga 5). The author is not only concerned with there being a change towards social actions but also with the formation of a new Isthmian subject who will undertake these changes. Interestingly, they also place themselves as the people in charge of pushing that change forward. Just like Guevara, who claims that the youth are, "Particularmente importante… por ser la arcilla maleable con que se puede construir al hombre nuevo sin ninguna de las taras anteriores" (20). So too does Viga see the youth, particularly the students, as the leaders of change.

Matus, while not necessarily calling just to the youth, also acknowledges the role of the youth in bringing about change, which is why his is a call for unity between what he sees as too many factions with no direction in Juchitán. For Matus though, it is not *just* the youth who will bring about change, because he thinks of the familial relationships that make up the community of Juchitán. He elaborates: "en beneficio de nuestros padres que nos dieron existencia y que esperan de nosotros, como se espera de las plantas que al dar sus primeros frutos se sabrá lo que será de ellos en el porvenir" (Matus 13). In using this plant simile, Matus highlights the

reciprocal relationship that exists between youth and elders. Parents, and therefore elders are an important reason for there to be unity and community within the Istmo. Even though it is not explicitly stated as such, we can see how Zapotec values[75] are integrated into the call to action. There is a sense of responsibility to community and especially to elders. Contrary to the previous author(s) who criticize Zapotec culture because they value novelty and radical change, Matus pulls from it to strengthen his argument for change. Here in the first number, Matus is giving us a prelude to the themes prevalent in his journal, demonstrating what his and the editors' goals are, returning to a unity that once was that they feel has been lost, pushing through isolation to improve their pueblo, and working in community to do so.

These articles, paired together, provide insight into tensions between the Juchitec leftist community. At this moment in time in 1968, the *kab'awilian* strategies that would allow for Juchitec intellectuals and politicians to merge their leftist ideologies and Zapotec identity, seen clearly in the COCEI, had not arisen yet. Here, some leaders leaned into the traditional Left's pattern of de-emphasizing or altogether rejecting Indigenous identity, considering it as an obstacle to progress. Others, including the creators of *Neza Cubi*, in this case Matus, do not only disagree, but believe wholeheartedly in the importance of the community and their traditions. In the following decade, when the COCEI would rise, it would be a combination of leftist ideology and Zapotec identity that would be the foundation of the movement. By the time the COCEI won municipal elections, they would align with the Mexican Communist party, still a controversial move at the time, and they would fly "a large red flag with the hammer and sickle over Juchitan City Hall," and have "posters and statues of Marx, Lenin, and Che Guevara" (Campbell 86). And

[75] In *Neza*, two articles appear that discuss the concept of *guelaguetza*/*guendalisa*, which the authors explain is a sense of responsibility to their community, that does not require any official laws but is how the community has historically organized themselves. They give a few examples such as when the community members come together to help build newly-wed couples houses or mourn the death of someone who has passed.

yet the mayor, Leopoldo de Gyves, would say that "his government was based on Zapotec cultural principles" (Campbell 86). Many of COCEI's actions were organized after *velas*, and they would "use terms such as guendalizaa (sharing and cooperation) and tequio (communal work) as familial metaphors for the movement's political activities" (Campbell 87, 90). And in the media, Juchitán would be "depicted as a center of Communism and Indian rebellion" (Campbell 87). In other words, COCEI would be an "ambiguous" movement that combined both leftist ideologies and Zapotec identity (Kraemer 81). By that time in the 1970s, the Zapotec intellectuals would be able to merge what at this point, in 1968, appeared as opposing views.

6. Writing a History: Zapotec Viewpoints

The editors of *Neza Cubi* were explicit in the goals that they are hoping to achieve, including writing down their history from their perspective. While they publish many poems dedicated to various aspects of their culture like certain songs or celebrations, they also include many poems dedicated to Zapotec men. Some poems are dedicated to their contemporaries like artist and painter Francisco Toledo, and others are more historical like those dedicated to General Charis and Benito Juárez. Out of these poems, two stood out to me because of the magnitude of their exaltations and the complex relationships to the figures they extol. First, I found it curious that the figure of Benito Juárez was praised in this magazine, since later in *Guchachi' Reza* he is criticized for trying to impose on Juchiteco rights. I also found a poem comparing a military and political figure, Jeremías López Chiñas, to Quetzalcoatl interesting both because of the role that Quetzalcoatl has in Zapotec culture and also because of the extreme glorification that this comparison entails. As we will see, Juárez and López Chiñas are exalted, and perhaps more importantly, claimed as Zapotec figures. The editors take pride in these men, reminding their

readers that they are part of national history, and in doing so, highlighting the important role played by prominent Indigenous/Zapotec men in the construction of contemporary Mexico.[76] These two politicians followed different paths and had different approaches to their Indigenous origins, with Juárez being seen as assimilated while López Chiñas centered his Zapotec and Indigenous identity. Yet, in *Neza Cubi* they are both praised and claimed as Zapotec. In publishing these poems, I argue that the editors are reclaiming well-known Zapotec historical figures to show how Indigenous peoples have contributed not only to local histories but to the broader narratives of "modern Mexico."

The context in which these poems are published informs my understanding of why they stand out from the hegemonic discourse of that period. *Neza Cubi* was created shortly after the 1950s, a decade in which "*lo mexicano*" was a popular topic of discussion amongst various intellectuals. Most relevant to the decade under discussion, is Samuel Ramos and his publication of *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en Mexico* (1934), where he focused on a perceived inferiority of the Mexican man. Afterward, from the late 1940s through the early 1950s, the research group "El Hiperión"[77] undertook the task of writing about *mexicanidad* from a philosophical perspective. In contrast to previous thinkers before them, they shed a positive light on *mexicanidad*, and attempted, through thinking of the Mexican man, to contribute to philosophy about humanity at large (Hurtado XIII). Their work led to a reawakening of this topic, with a flurry of essays and publications released during their active years late in the 1940s

[76] See "La construcción de la categoría 'indio' en el discurso antropológico" by Jorge Hernández Díaz in *Las imagenes del indio en Oaxaca*, for further discussion on the dehumanization of Indigenous people in Mexico following the 1910 Mexican Revolution which highlights how contemporary Indigenous people were portrayed in contrast to the way that De la Cruz is including them in national history.

[77] This group, originally composed of UNAM students Emilio Uranga, Jorge Portilla, Luis Villoro, Ricardo Guerra, Joaquín Sánchez McGregor, Salvador Reyes Nevares, and Fuasto Vega, were eventually led by Leopoldo Zea (Hurtado IX). They originally published collectively in magazines like *Filosofía y Letras* (Hurtado IX). Some notable works include Uranga's, "Analisis del ser mexicano" (1952) and Zea's, "Conciencia y posibilidad del mexicano" (1952).

and early in the 1950s. Around the same time that they were publishing, Octavio Paz released his seminal *El Laberinto de la Soledad* (1950), where he too reflected on Mexico and the Mexican identity. Paz's influence on discussions about national identity cannot be overstated, and whether he reinforced certain ideas (about *mestizaje*, the figure of Malintzin/Malinche) even as he might have attempted to dispel them is still discussed.[78] Regardless of the way that Paz and his *Laberinto de la Soledad* is read, the influence of this collection of essays lies clear. It is considered to mark **"**un momento culminante, conceptual y estilístico, en la construcción del mito de 'lo mexicano'" (Parra 28). For my argument, I simply wish to highlight the impact that *El Laberinto* had in 1950s Mexico, and the focus on the Aztec empire that Paz had, with "other indigenous cultures [as] secondary in his account" (Van Delden 107). This focus could be one driving force behind these Zapotec intellectuals thinking not of "lo mexicano," but of "lo zapoteco," and the role that the Zapotec also had in national history. Through these two poems, we see how the editors of *Neza Cubi* begin proposing an alternative history, one that highlights prominent figures in Mexican history as Indigenous ―and specifically Zapotec, and one that acknowledges different ways of being Zapotec.

Interestingly, Víctor de la Cruz goes back to the figure of Benito Juárez. Juárez, by this time, is a national hero, with statues, street names, and various other public institutions named in his honor. While he is a controversial figure in Juchitán, criticized for attempting to transgress on Juchiteco autonomy, in this poem, De la Cruz reminds the reader that beneath the public figure, Juárez was a Zapotec man who spoke their language and knew the land and their customs. The figure of Benito Juárez, the Benemérito de las Américas, has undergone many different interpretations since the late 1800s. In *El culto de Juárez: La construcción retórica del héroe*

[78] See "How to Read La Malinche" in *Gunshots at the Fiesta* by Maarten Van Delden and Yvon Grenier for further contextualization of this figure and Paz's role in "demythifying" her within Mexican nationalist discourse.

(1872-1976), Rebeca Villalobos Álvarez walks us through those changes, as they relate to the ways that specific interested parties utilized the figure of Juárez for their own goals. Villalobos Álvarez identifies three "ejes nodales" that the figure of Juárez generally fell into: "lo civil, lo indígena y lo popular" (22). First, during the *porfiriato*, leading right up to the Revolution, Juárez becomes a symbol of "el poder legítimo y el orden del Estado" (Villalobos Álvarez 60). At this point, he is also called the "indio sublime," which Villalobos Álvarez states is used to mean that he is someone who has "transcended" race to become a "genuino héroe civil" (57). This once again changed after the Revolution in the 1920s, when Juárez becomes one of the main representatives of the desired version of indigeneity: an "assimilated" Indigenous man, an exemplary figure for the state's and the muralistas's goals of *mestizaje*.

In the poem titled "Padre Juárez," De la Cruz establishes a connection to Benito Juárez as a Zapotec person. He calls attention to their similarities, to the injustices that Indigenous men still face in Mexico, and finally to his quiet exaltation of him. Important to note are the markers that De la Cruz utilizes to identify Juárez as Zapotec. This poem begins in a familiar manner, drawing some parallels to "La raza de bronce," a poem by Amado Nervo. Nervo delivered his poem in 1902 to the Cámara de Diputados, where he exalted Juárez as he drew connections with Nezahualcóyotl, Ilhuicamina, and Cuauhtémoc,[79] all presented as Indigenous heroes. Still, there are some key thematic differences in De la Cruz's poem. De la Cruz begins,

> Padre Juárez,
>
> déjame hablarte en nuestra lengua terrenal,
>
> en nuestra lengua celestial, (7)

[79] Nezahualcóyotl was an Aztec ruler, scholar, and poet most well-known for his poetry. Ilhuicamina, another name for Moctezuma I, was an Aztec ruler, under his reign, the Aztec empire was consolidated. Cuauhtémoc was the last ruler of the Aztec empire and faced the arrival of Cortés and his men.

De la Cruz refers to Benito Juárez as "padre," immediately setting a tone of reverence, of respect towards Juárez. Still, he speaks to him in the familiar "tú," also connoting a certain closeness. This familiarity is further emphasized when he claims that they speak the same language, it is a language "terrenal" and "celestial," referencing both a belonging to the land and the skies. It is also shared between them, as shown using the possessive "nuestro." Here we see yet again the importance of Zapotec language; this time it establishes a connection between the author and the former president. Moreover, De la Cruz is also already creating connections between the Zapotec language and the natural world, a theme that will remain central for Isthmus Zapotec authors to come. De la Cruz explicitly names that language in the following verses:

> tú que comprendes esta lengua de las nubes,
> esta lengua del pueblo de las nubes,
> tú que entiendes el Didxaza
> y comprendes a los Zapoteca (7)

De la Cruz calls his language, Isthmus Zapotec, "Didxaza," which translates to "cloud words." He references not just the language, the "lengua de las nubes," but also the inherent connection to the people who speak it, the "pueblo de las nubes," or the Zapotec people, whom Juárez understands. This opening resembles Nervo's poem in the way that the author's voice is exalting Juárez, but the key difference lies in the connection that De la Cruz establishes with the former president, unlike Nervo who writes, "Señor, deja que diga la gloria de tu raza, /la gloria de los hombres de bronce." In Nervo's opening, there is a distinction between the voice exalting Juárez, separate from the figure who belongs to the "raza de bronce." This separation disappears at the end of the poem, yet in the beginning, it is very clear. In his poem, De la Cruz directly reverses that separation, instead drawing a connection between himself and Juárez, who even though was

not from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, is said to speak "Didxaza" because he is a Zapotec person.

De la Cruz continues to establish this connection by signaling to traditions that are still occurring in the Sierra of Oaxaca, where Juárez is originally from. De la Cruz explains,

todavía en La Sierra
con el mecapal en la frente escalamos los montes,
con el egipcio arado roturamos la tierra

Here, De la Cruz calls back to a way of carrying heavy loads "en la frente," traditionally used by Indigenous peoples. He also mentions the landscape, "los montes," emphasizing the connection to the land in the Sierra that is worked by Zapotec peasants. The land had been and continues to be a source of conflict between Indigenous peoples and the state, therefore De la Cruz's emphasis on the land reminds the reader that both Juárez and De la Cruz have a special connection to the land as Indigenous people, specifically as Zapotec. Furthermore, in contrast to Nervo's poem, he is reminding the reader that Indigenous peoples, Zapotecs included, are still alive. Contrary to De La Cruz, in his poem, Nervo conflates various Indigenous populations from Mexico and beyond, and he places them all in the past. He claims, "os traigo mis canciones; /¡oh enorme raza muerta!, te traigo mi elegía." For Nervo, who is speaking to "espectros" of famous Indigenous men, "como Hamlet," these ghostly figures represent not just themselves, but an entire "raza muerta." De la Cruz rejects this claim, instead including in his poem very specific markers of Zapotec identity and situating them not only in the yesteryear of Benito Juárez but in the very present of his writing.

This poem reads to me as a microcosm of what the editors of *Neza Cubi* are attempting to do with their publication, focusing on their Zapotec identity but also criticizing social issues

affecting their pueblo, in this case, all Zapotecs. After establishing that connection to Juárez and reminding the reader that Indigenous people still live, De la Cruz shifts his focus to call attention to the injustices that many people, including the Zapotec people, are facing, like poverty and hunger. De la Cruz continues the previous stanza of his poem,

> caminando sobre espinas pastoreando ovejas
> de nuestros nuevos amos;
> mientras muchos hombres mueren de hambre
> a los explotadores les sobra comida
> para dar a sus perros

This is where the shift in time occurs, referring to what is still happening in the Sierra, and potentially also referring to what is occurring in the Isthmus. He claims that the people have "nuevos amos," and that men still die of hunger even when their "explotadores" have so much food they can feed it to their dogs. He does not get any more specific about who these "amos" are, but there is an unequal power dynamic between them and the Zapotec people. To elucidate what he is referring to, we need to remember that De la Cruz is writing and publishing this poem after a protracted land conflict has been ongoing in Juchitán and neighboring areas. As we know, the building of the Benito Juárez Dam (ironically named after the man De la Cruz is honoring), has caused the displacement of the people of Jalapa de Marqués and there is also a deep social fracture around the creation of ejidos. These conflicts have caused tension between the peasant communities in Juchitán and state agrarian agencies who are seen as unknowledgeable outsiders who cannot be trusted. The building of the dam not only displaced communities, but caused crop failure, meaning that the peasants' livelihoods were sacrificed for the promises of a future profit that none of them would see. This stanza breaks from the theme of the previous ones, moving

from the exaltation of Juárez and focusing instead on the issue of social and economic inequality, which is an important topic for De la Cruz. As I mentioned earlier, I believe here De la Cruz is starting to experiment thematically, as a poet, by merging his interest in centering his Zapotec identity and culture with his critique of the social issues that are occurring in Juchitán at the time of the writing.

Afterward, De la Cruz returns to the theme of connection and praise. Once again, he utilizes markers of Zapotec culture, this time turning to dance and music. He writes:

déjame homenajearte en mi soledad
con la música de la Zandunga
y la danza de la Guelaguetza.

La Zandunga was a song that was important to the *Neza* generation as well, and it made frequent appearances on its pages, where it was claimed as a Zapotec song. It appears here once more as a marker of Zapotec culture along with the well-known Guelaguetza dance.[80] If De la Cruz is utilizing these traditions in the same way that the *Neza* intellectuals were, that is, to reclaim their autochthonous culture amid the state's co-optation of Indigenous culture as Mexican culture, then we see a direct contrast to Nervo's poem. Nervo writes:

y que su sino fue, en la Historia,
tender puentes de bronce entre la gloria
de la raza de ayer y nuestra raza.

While "Raza de bronce" began establishing a distinction between the poetic voice and the Indigenous men being exalted in the poem, towards the end, Nervo highlights Juárez as a bridge

[80] The *Zandunga* along with la *Guelaguetza* and the *traje de Tehuana* emerged in the 1930s and through the 1960s as preferred markers of Indigeneity, decontextualized from the Zapotec and Juchitec peoples, for the consumption of the Mexican nation.

between those two men, the Indigenous rulers of an empire long gone, and the inheritors of that past, the *mestizo*/*criollos* of the present, thus situating *criollos* and *mestizos* at the center of the Mexican body politic. For Nervo, Juárez is an apt symbol for this bridge as an Indigenous man who is considered to have assimilated and becomes representative of the Mexican nation. De la Cruz once again provides an alternative to this erasure of Indigenous people from the present time, as well as to the myth of *mestizaje* as he claims a historically uninterrupted Zapotec identity, referencing land, language, music, and dance.

De la Cruz wraps up his poem by once again using the inclusive "nosotros," emphasizing the connection between himself and Juárez. He ends his poem with the following verses:

Así, Padre Juárez,
en solitaria quietud es mi homenaje,
tan árido como nuestras tierras,
tan pobre como nuestras sierras.

De la Cruz returns to this theme of solitude as he closes. He compares his "homenaje" to the arid and poor land of the Oaxaca *sierras*. Still, he is honoring Juárez, reminding the reader of their shared Zapotec identity, of the land, the language, and the community that they share. Even though Juárez was a controversial figure for the Juchitecos, here De la Cruz takes the opportunity to establish a connection with him on the grounds of their common identity as Zapotecs. For De la Cruz, Juárez is not an Indigenous man that can be conflated with other Indigenous peoples in the Americas; he is not a remnant of a "glorious past" either: he is specifically Zapotec, and an important figure in Zapotec history as he is in national Mexican history. This move by De la Cruz actively resists mainstream tendencies in Mexican historiography since the nineteenth century, which could only incorporate Indigenous figures into historical narratives at the expense

of erasing their ethnic specificity and at the expense of turning them into the romantic inheritors of a grand but dying past. Contrary to this, De la Cruz reclaims that Juárez's Zapotec identity is by no means at odds with his central role in the construction of a modern Mexico. This poem to Juárez is only the first of a series of writings, mostly poems, dedicated to historical political figures published throughout the 14 numbers of *Neza Cubi*.

The poem that follows is dedicated to Jeremías López Chiñas, who was a part of the *Neza* generation and brother to Gabriel López Chiñas. He was a military captain and "profesor de táctica en el Colegio Militar" (De la Cruz 178). While he published some works in *Neza*, his longest piece, a story titled *Lexu ne Gueu'* (*Conejo y Coyote*) was published postmortem by his brother Gabriel (De la Cruz 179). Also, as mentioned in the first chapter, he would join the Federación Indigenista Revolucionaria Oaxaqueña (FIRO),[81] "a popular organization created in the late 1930s to mobilize Indians" (Dawson 136). As the secretary general, he encouraged members not to rely on the state, which he claimed had differing goals from Indigenous peoples. More importantly, he was one of the more established men who supported the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos and the *Neza* newspaper. When writing about the long trajectory of Isthmus Zapotec literature in his article "Las literaturas indígenas y la Revolución Mexicana," Víctor de la Cruz shares about the "tres militares que apadrinaban a estos jóvenes intelectuales zapotecos: El general Genaro López Miro, el coronel Enrique Liekens Cerqueda y el capitán Jeremías López Chiñas," and he further explains, "Los nombré de acuerdo a sus grados en la jerarquía militar, porque según la influencia que ejercieron entre sus coterráneos el orden es justamente al contrario" (113). According to De la Cruz, Jeremías López Chiñas was a key

[81] The FIRO was created in 1939 by Víctor González Fernández, chosen by President Lázaro Cárdenas to be the governor of Oaxaca, in an attempt to have some control from the central government over local affairs. González Fernández created the FIRO as he gathered popular support and began having conflicts with his opponents, such as Charis (Smith 246).

contributor to this literary history. He goes further to contrast him with Andrés Henestrosa as he continues, "… los nombré porque la influencia moral e intelectual que ejercieron en la generación Neza fue decisiva; sobre todo Jeremías López Chiñas, quien fue el impulsor de una mentalidad para la recuperación de lo propio de los binnizá, el hombre seguro de su identidad ante las contradicciones y ambigüedades de Henestrosa, por ejemplo"[82] (De la Cruz 114). Víctor de la Cruz, who would go on to become one of the most significant writers and critics from Juchitán holds Jeremías López Chiñas in grand esteem. This sentiment can be seen in the pages of *Neza Cubi* too.

Víctor de la Cruz was not the only author to highlight the importance of López Chiñas for Zapotec cultural and literary history. As such, in the fifth number of *Neza Cubi* a reprint appears of a poem entitled "Quetzalcoatl" by Silvia Urania López[83]. This poem originally appeared in a supplement of *La Opinión* called *Lunes Literario*, published in Los Angeles in 1942. No other details about the author are given on why this poem originally appeared in a newspaper in Los Angeles. Urania López opens the text by addressing López Chiñas as she writes, "Desde arriba/ recoge mi voz, Jeremías" (6). Most of her poem is about the role that López Chiñas had as a leader of Juchitán, both politically and as a supporter of the Zapotec language. Even though he left Juchitán to live in Mexico City, he continued fighting for Indigenous rights as a leader of the FIRO and supported the use of the Zapotec language as a published author (Dawson 136). According to Urania López, López Chiñas is well-versed in the politics of the pueblo, she claims:

[82] De la Cruz is writing after Henestrosa gave ambiguous statements about the importance of writing in Isthmus Zapotec, which contrasted greatly against his initial stance where he pushed for the creation of an alphabet and a dictionary.

[83] According to David Ruíz Martínez, from the Biblioteca Henestrosa in Oaxaca City, Sylvia Urania was Gabriel López's Chiñas adoptive daughter.

Tú has visto bañarse

la tierra con llanto

y has hecho correr

en desierto los ríos. (6)

The first two verses point to the fact that López Chiñas has been concerned and involved with his pueblo even throughout hardships. The last two verses point to the power that he had as a person, hyperbolically able to make rivers run through the desert like Quetzalcoatl,[84] who is related to the wind and is often "associated with the rain gods," and who "puffed the sun into motion, swept the roads, [and] moved storm clouds" (Read and González 225). Urania López continues,

En tu mano

el porvenir de las razas indígenas

Quetzalcoatl Zapoteca.

Sabiduría. Fuego Eterno (6)

The author places López Chiñas in the role of a god, who has the future of not just Zapotecs or Juchitecs, but of all the "razas indigenas" in his hand. This works because Quetzalcoatl is a polysemous figure, another one of his characteristics is as a god of wisdom and someone who "legitimated emerging states" (Read and González 223), parallel to López Chiñas' role in the government and with FIRO, who focused on "mobilizing" Indigenous peoples. He is exalted for his wisdom, hence Quetzalcoatl, which is described as eternal. This thread continues through the end of the poem, which closes with the following stanza,

[84] According to Read and González, "Western historians believe that the cult of the feathered serpent emerged around A.D. 900 at Xochicalco in the Mexican highlands and spread from there throughout Mesoamerica as far south as Guatemala and Chichén Itzá in the Yucatán, where he appeared as Kukulcan (225). Quetzalcoatl also makes an appearance in "Guee Queela ¿Sacerdote o demonio?" a story by Gabriel López Chiñas that was originally published in *Neza* and then appears in his book, *Vinnigulasa* (1943). There, he serves as a bridge between the Aztec and Maya civilizations, as a reminder of their Zapotec religion before the Conquest.

Jeremías López Chiñas

Quetzalcoatl Zapoteca

tras la luz de tu muerte

ascenderá el camino

de las razas indígenas... (7)

Once again, Urania López calls López Chiñas, "Quetzalcoatl Zapoteca" for emphasis. She refers to his death for the first time, and sees it not as a moment of loss, but a moment that will shed light (related to intelligence in Isthmus Zapotec), and will help "el camino de las razas indígenas" to ascend. Once again, we see the "camino" present in poetry, referring to the path that must be followed to return to a Zapotec way of living. And even though the author writes in Spanish, I argue that she too uses the other meaning of *neza*, as "lo correcto." The path that she is also trying to follow, the one that Jeremías López Chiñas followed, is the one that continues the Zapotec ways of life, the language, the customs, the celebrations, all that these intellectuals consider important. Urania López hints at this when she writes: "Dame fuerza y poder/ para hacer su grandeza/ como tú lo soñaste" and "su" refers to their pueblo, that of Juchitán, that of the Zapotecs. Here, even though Urania López does not explicitly write about the "camino" like in the "Editoriales" we can piece together the imagery, the same referent that is being used with a similar goal in mind, that of the Zapotec path. As we learn from De la Cruz, Jeremías López Chiñas, like his brother Gabriel, was one of the main proponents of Zapotec culture in the 1930s. For De la Cruz, the role that López Chiñas had in pushing forward the use of the language and the return to Zapotec culture cannot be overstated. Urania López wants to follow that same path, and in her poem, she prays to Jeremías, her Quetzalcoatl, her god of wisdom, to guide her. We see once again who the heroes of Juchitán are. López Chiñas is held in such high regard, that this

poem comparing him to a god is published not in Juchitán, not in Oaxaca, nor in Mexico City, but in a newspaper in Los Angeles. This poem was published a year after his death; therefore, it was still fresh in the memory of the writer and the transnational Juchitec community.

The inclusion of these poems highlights which historical figures the Juchitec writing community deems important. In writing these poems, they are creating their genealogy, choosing who is important, and who should be exalted through poetry. Sometimes it is national heroes like Benito Juárez, whom the editors of *Neza Cubi* reclaim as a Zapotec contributor to the formation of modern Mexico by emphasizing his Indigenous identity. Other times it is political and literary figures that greatly shaped the trajectory of early twentieth century Zapotec cultural flourishing. In any case, the creators of this magazine are (re)constructing a glorious political and literary history for the Zapotec peoples and, along the way, building their own "panteón de (hombres) ilustres zapotecos."

7. The Letters: Reinforcing Goals, Creating a Literary History

One of the most interesting components of the magazine *Neza Cubi* are the letters that are exchanged between the creators and their audience, including contributing writers, a correspondence that is then republished in the magazine. These letters point to one of the key goals that the editors had: the consolidation and dissemination of the official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet. As we saw in the former chapter, after the *Mesa Redonda de 1956*, an official alphabet was established. Still, we know that a push for an official alphabet can be traced back to the mid-1930s, when multiple members of the *Neza* generation created the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca. The official alphabet was established in 1956 through the collaboration of Zapotec intellectuals and a group of linguists from the Instituto Lingüístico de Verano (De Korne 160).

By the time the editors create *Neza Cubi*, they believe that literature written in Zapotec by Zapotec authors is essential for their cultural revitalization movement. They highlight the importance of this idea through the printing of letters sent by the readers and by creating an intergenerational dialogue with authors from the *Neza* generation.

Nine letters are published throughout the life of the magazine, a substantial amount considering there were only fourteen numbers in total. Out of those nine letters, five are dedicated to praising the creation of *Neza Cubi*. I believe that these letters were printed to garner further support for the magazine. As the editors kept publishing issues, they were interacting with their audience and trying to attract more readers and supporters by printing evidence of the importance of their magazine. In this way, the pages of the magazine themselves serve as a platform for their own promotion, creating a feedback loop that engages with the audience and pushes forward a narrative that stresses the impact of the magazine among a community of Zapotec readers. According to the letters, *Neza Cubi* as a magazine achieves four overlapping goals: first, it begins to address the Isthmus and Istmeños as a group; second, it stresses the importance of community; third, it highlights the role of literature and culture; and, lastly, it emphasizes the emergence of a new generation ready to return to a Zapotec path.

For my argument, it is necessary to focus on four letters and their respective authors. The first letter was published in the third number, by Marco Aurelio López Ávila. While not much biographical information is available on this writer, we know that he was an adopted son of Gabriel López Chiñas, and therefore born into the network of Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals. The second and third letters are published in the fifth number. The second letter is by Pedro Piñón Rustrían, who was a journalist originally from Santo Domingo, Tehuantepec. He would go on to create the Asociación de Periodistas de Oaxaca. All that is known about the third letter writer,

Odilón Hernández López, and the fourth letter writer, Rafael Pineda León, who appears in the twelfth number, is that they were professionals, with the titles "profr." and "C.P." in their signatures respectively. Pineda León also writes that he is a cousin to Andrés Henestrosa in his letter.

One of the central arguments that is found in the letters is the idea of Istmeños as a cohesive group. We know from previous editorials that there is a push to "return to unity", most likely because of the political dissent occurring in Juchitán both within the PRI and between the PRI and emerging leaders (with socialist tendencies), and between the community and local agrarian organizations opposed to central government officials. In three of the letters published, the idea of an Istmeño community is highlighted. First, Marco Aurelio López Ávila, writes to congratulate Víctor de la Cruz, the "redactor" of the magazine for an "extraordinaria revista" (9). He begins his letter by praising the work that the creators of the magazine are doing, by bringing back "las ideas" that he believes were once lost. He argues, "Se va perdiendo aquello que alguna vez conocimos, por muy agradable que nos sea, y esto precisamente estaba sucediendo con la pequeña gran familia istmeña que una vez tomó posesión de nuestra ciudad capital" (López Ávila 9). For López Ávila, Istmeños are part of a small but grand family. Interestingly, he utilizes the same language of the "Editoriales," with terms like "hermanos" and "hermanados." The idea of kinship between various pueblos in the Istmo is notable because it evidences the centrality of this imaginary of a Zapotec greater community for both the writers and the readers of *Neza Cubi*, a community that spans across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and does not remain tied solely to Juchitán. López Ávila still looks to the *Neza* intellectuals as he emphasizes the power they held in the capital city. Their position, in the heart of post-revolutionary Mexico is significant, in that they were a part of prominent intellectual circles there while simultaneously

thinking about and working through their Zapotec identity that always called back to Juchitán. Interestingly, Matus and De la Cruz were originally in Mexico City and then decided to return to Juchitán while publishing *Neza Cubi*, showcasing the connections and shifts happening from the capital city of Mexico to Juchitán, and a sort of *kab'awilian* locus as they navigated their place between two cities and two audiences. This letter, coupled with the articles and editorials I mentioned previously, point to the imagining of an enlarged community of Istmeños that, contrary to the focus that *Neza* put on Zapotecs from Juchitán, now includes the people from the Istmo overall. This expansion of the community highlights the various intersecting identities that come into play for the *Neza Cubi* editors: they are Zapotec, they are Juchitec, but they are also Istmeños. The boundaries of these overlapping communities, as well as the concrete contours of their ethnic identities, shift over time and can transform depending on the topic they are discussing.

While the contributing authors, and potentially the editors, are beginning to imagine a wider community of Istmeños, there is still a reference to the term, "espíritu zapoteca,"[85] potentially narrowing down the focus of the Isthmus family to include (Isthmus) Zapotecs only. Whereas this term was used throughout the pages of *Neza* decades before, in the pages of *Neza Cubi* this concept is only mentioned by López Ávila, precisely as he references the previous *Neza* generation. Here this term is used in conjunction with the "familia istmeña" previously mentioned (López Ávila 9). I include a lengthy section of his letter because I believe it highlights the importance of this newly imagined Istmeño community while also revealing its connection to the past, as weaved throughout the pages of *Neza Cubi.* López Ávila writes:

[85] For a more comprehensive explanation on the term "espíritu zapoteca," which was used by the *Neza* generation, seemingly in conversation with the cultural and artistic movement of the *vanguardia* please see chapter 1.

> Sin embargo, de pronto encuentro ante mí algo que parece un sueño, ¿han resucitado aquellos hombres? ¡no, eso es imposible!, ha resurgido el espíritu del zapoteca en los cuerpos jóvenes de este nuevo grupo que ha empezado a luchar por hacer brillar en todo su esplendor, a esa admirable raza que por un momento me pareció había desaparecido. Han surgido en ellos los nuevos exponentes de la familia istmeña, iniciando una nueva etapa reflejada a través de esa extraordinaria revista que se llama 'Neza Cubi.' (9)

This excerpt includes a couple of relevant themes. First, the term "espíritu zapoteca" makes a reappearance just as it did in *Neza* thirty years before. This spirit was present in the *Neza* generation and is once again present here with the *Neza Cubi* generation. López Ávila does not explain explicitly what this spirit is or how it becomes transferred from one generation to the next, only that part of having it means that one must attempt to "luchar por hacer brillar en todo su esplendor a esa admirable raza" (9). We know that there is a connection between "espíritu/alma" and actions because of Antonio Sánchez's philological analysis[86] of the word *láchi* in Zapotec. According to Sánchez-Antonio, "… el alma y el corazón se manifiestan o son visibles a través de nuestras conductas…" ("La psicología/medicina"). Therefore, when López Àvila writes about how this Zapotec spirit has returned and is manifested through a "lucha por hacer brillar… esa admirable raza," we can understand that in Zapotec cosmology there is a real connection between espíritu (or soul) and behavior. In other words, the "espirítu zapoteca" has returned in the editor's quest to write, publish, and disseminate literature in Zapotec and on the

[86] In his article, "La psicología/medicina del alma y el cuerpo en los zapotecos: una aproximación desde la filología de la lengua," Sánchez-Antonio explains various key terms necessary to understand psicología zapoteca, one of them being "alma," which he uses interchangeably with "espíritu," as he explains: "El alma tiene que ver con el modo en cómo uno se comporta, es decir, las razones, fines o intenciones (làchi) sociales que motivan la acción o el modo de ser (pèa-láchi), y que son necesarias revisarlas para ver en retrospectiva o prospectiva los errores o aciertos de nuestra conducta (pèa) en el tiempo. Así, por ejemplo, làchi se traduce también como "costumbre" (folio 096, columna 2), es decir, los hábitos sociales o comunitarios que hemos heredado y construido en la vida" ("La psicología/medicina").

Zapotec. Also important to note, is the language that the letter writers utilize. Here, the letter writers use similar language as assimilationist policies did, claiming that the Zapotec people had been asleep, and had been dormant for a generation or two. But they do not believe that they are truly asleep, they have awakened, in other words, the Zapotec people are not gone, their spirit is alive, and there must only be an effort made to return to their culture. Even though the Zapotec spirit seems to have skipped a generation or two, it has made a reappearance, meaning that it is not entirely lost, so that it can return at any point thus jeopardizing *Indigenista* state goals of Indigenous assimilation and eventual elimination. We can conclude that letter-writers such as López Ávila recognize that building up a true "Istmeño family" is a process long in the making. The new generation of intellectuals is simply picking back up after the intellectuals of the previous decades, renewing their "espíritu Zapoteco" by thinking, writing, and publishing about their people and culture.

Related to the first theme of "istmeños" is the focus on community and unity and a critique of individualism, paralleling the notion of *comunalidad* which both Floriberto Díaz (Mixe) and Jaime Martínez Luna (Zapotec) will theorize only a few years after this publication. Once again, it is López Ávila who hints at the importance of making his community well-known, and the focus on community versus the individual. He writes:

> ¿Qué había pasado con aquel grupo que luchaba por dar a conocer su región? ¿por engrandecer sus pueblos?, ¿los había absorbido el nuevo ritmo de vida?, o se había apoderado de ellos el egoísmo y se habían dedicado a luchar individualmente en beneficio personal olvidándose de la comunidad. (López Ávila 9)

López Ávila's priorities include not just thinking about the community and the pueblo, but also bringing a positive light onto the pueblo. He wants his region to receive recognition, to

"engrandecer" their pueblo. Still, his main argument lies in critiquing those who do not focus on their pueblos as a collective, claiming that they are "luch[ando] individualmente," won over by "egoísmo," and focused on their personal benefit[87] (López Ávila 9). Their actions lay directly opposite Zapotec notions of community, previously explained in *Neza* by Wiflrido C. Cruz as *guelaguetza/guendalisaa* and then explored by Díaz and Martínez Luna more in-depth as *comunalidad*. This theme of community is important, as it is reiterated by Pedro Piñón Rustrián. First, Piñón Rustrián writes, "NEZA Cubi tiene un papel importante, no sólo como desahogo literario de nuestros hermanos zapotecas, sino como impulsadora de un nuevo ideal por el bien de nuestra patria chica: esa unidad, que tiende a la elevación de todas las aspiraciones" (Piñón Rustrián 13). Piñón Rustrián believes that *Neza Cubi* will drive change towards a "new ideal" a unity. Unity is an recurring concept, as Macario Matus writes about it in the first number. Piñón Rustrián also returns to the concept of the youth as promoters of culture, "jóvenes progresistas," which I will return to, and he ends his letter with the following call to action, "¡Hay que despertar a nuestros pueblos! Y decirles de los hombres malos que los quieren así, divididos, porque de ellos es el triunfo" (Piñón Rustrián 13). We once again see the sleeping metaphor by Piñón Rustrián, who believes the community must be "awakened," to thrive. He also calls out certain "hombres malos," who remain unnamed but could potentially be the men fighting for power within the PRI, allowing peasants to lose their land.

Also apparent in these letters is the importance of literature and culture to the editors and audience, which also appears tied to a return to the spirit of the past. In other words, not only is

[87] It is important to note that while López Ávila does not name anyone specifically, his adoptive father, Gabriel López Chiñas and Andrés Henestrosa had a life-long rivalry. Often, they were cast as opposites, with Henestrosa characterized as someone who decided to assimilate, turning away from the Zapotec language, while López Chiñas always worked towards Zapotec cultural preservation. Both authors will be explored further in the pages of *Neza Cubi* and in this chapter.

literature seen as a key element for the editors, but there is also a connection being laid out between literature and a change that some of the letter-writers see coming. Hernández López touches on the importance of culture and hints at change when he states, "Realmente todos tienen ese ideal y espíritu de creación y renacimiento de la era nueva, de la cultura nueva y de la sabiduría zapoteca. Hacer renacer el deseo vivo del acrecentamiento cultural de nuestras gentes, es identificarse con el propio pueblo y sus idiosincrasias" (13). For this letter writer, Zapotec culture is growing, and the editors of the magazine are at the forefront of that push for growth. Once again, this growth is not something completely new but is rooted in "sabiduría zapoteca" (Hernández López 13). Their use of the word "nuevo," which we saw in the article "El Nuevo Istmeño," is interesting in that it does not hold the same meaning in each context. For the anonymous author(s) of "El Nuevo Istmeño," the turn to progress meant ridding themselves of their Zapotec and Juchitec culture, such as the *velas*. For Hernández López, the "new" era and culture aren't truly new, but a return to a "sabiduría zapoteca" that had been lost for a bit. We see here the way that the editors are merging the influences from their Zapotec culture while they adopt the rhetoric typical of the 1960s, an era of radical and fast transformations.

The final important element to note, because it connects *Neza Cubi* to *Neza,* is the focus on the youth as agents for change, a change which we have seen is not towards something different, but a return to the past when Zapotec culture was at national heights. Pineda León first mentions the previous generation of *Neza* to draw a comparison with the *Neza Cubi* editors and authors. He writes that when he was reading *Neza Cubi* he was reminded of "aquellos tiempos de una generación estudiantil que también escribió hechos en los anales sociales de México, entre ellos la autonomía universitaria, la lucha vasconcelina y la formación de nuevos valores culturales y artísticos" (Pineda León 15). For Pineda León, there is a clear connection between

the *Neza* generation and this new *Neza Cubi* generation. Part of the pride in the *Neza* generation is how they positioned themselves within the heart of post-revolutionary Mexico, within artistic and intellectual circles that ranged from Vasconcelos to Rivera, and *los Contemporáneos*. As they were a part of those circles, they still worked towards their goals of Zapotec cultural, linguistic, and political autonomy, creating an Academia, creating an alphabet, and publishing about their Isthmus Zapotec culture. He appreciates and encourages this new generation, "NEZA Cubi me ha gustado porque coincide con el pensamiento de una generación… un grupo de jóvenes progresistas, estén levantando la voz muerta que hace tiempo quiere revivir" (Piñón Rustrián 13). This letter writer, like López Ávila, believes that the Zapotecs from the previous generation were asleep and even if they might have been interested in raising their voice, that did not occur. This is probably due to the vast internal conflict that Juchitán saw after the death of Charis that resulted in a power vacuum and in different factions vying for that power. During that turbulent time, in the eyes of the editors, there were either not very many Zapotec intellectuals writing or publishing in Juchitán, or they were not preoccupied with the state of Zapotec culture. López Jiménez also praises the new generation for their publication and their interest in Zapotec culture and hints at a change occurring. He calls this new generation "un faro de luz," and "una nueva generación (*binni cubi*)" [new people] (López Jiménez 14). He believes that they are on a new path "La *riza niru* (camino adelante) por el bien cultural de nuestro pueblo" with "inspiraciones juveniles" (López Jiménez 15). López Jiménez ends his letter on an aspirational note: "*Neza Cubi* es la flama inquietante de una nueva generación istmeña, que va en pos de muchos avances, que desea profundamente por una mejor convivencia llena de trabajo y optimismo, para su tierra y su raza de bronce" (López Jiménez 15). Here, López Jiménez gives us insight into a couple of themes. He believes that this new generation is seeking better

coexistence, which is an "avance." These "avances" are in favor of their people, which he describes as the "raza de bronce," and their region. If it were not clear that the letter-writers were referring to Zapotecs, the use of the term "raza de bronce" leaves that clear. Once again, the intellectuals are expanding their audience, keeping in mind all Zapotecs and not just Juchitecs and, in the case of López Jiménez, embracing an optimistic 1960s rhetoric that praises the transformational power of progressive and energetic youth.

Through the letters that the editors publish, the reader begins to see the importance of *Neza Cubi* as a publication for its audience. The letters, sent in by various authors, overlap in the topics they address, coming together to highlight four main themes. The editors and readers are beginning to think of themselves as a community of Istmeños, including the entire region of the Isthmus and not just Juchitán. Furthermore, community and collective endeavors are highlighted, with various authors critiquing individualism. The importance of literature in their cultural revindication movement is also emphasized, with the magazine labeled as a vital piece in the awakening and revivification of Isthmian communities and culture. Finally, keeping in the spirit of the 60s, we see the anticipation of a change. The key difference here is that the change is not towards something radically different or unknown, but the return to a Zapotec path that their ancestors have already laid out for them. Once again, the youth, including the editors of *Neza Cubi*, are at the forefront of this change. This change has firm roots in the past and is built upon a long tradition of Zapotec customs and ways of understanding the world. And as they write about their goals, they play with the language of *Indigenismo*, claiming that they are not gone, but had simply been asleep. To reawaken, they call back to a generation of men they consider their forefathers, the *Neza* generation.

8. Literary Ancestors: An Intergenerational Dialogue

Another function that *Neza Cubi* serves is as a hub of a literary genealogy for Isthmus Zapotec. In creating their genealogy and pinpointing their literary ancestors, the editors of the magazine emphasize the breadth and depth of Zapotec authors. In doing so, they highlight the way that these authors have utilized *kab'awilian* strategies, being in networks in Mexico City, and influenced by world literatures, and yet always returning to their Zapotec culture to aid its continuation. Following their "Editoriales" where the creators claim that they are retaking a path laid out by their ancestors, they publish four numbers dedicated to those ancestors of not so long ago. They name Nazario Chacón Pineda, Gabriel López Chiñas, Andrés Henestrosa, and Efrén Núñez Mata, all Zapotec authors from Juchitán who belonged to the *Neza* generation. The editor and director are interested in honoring these authors, creating a direct link between themselves, other current authors, and the aforementioned writers from the *Neza* generation. Half of four separate numbers were dedicated to these authors, with the introductory "Editoriales" providing some background, then the first half of the number including excerpts of their texts, as well as critics' reflections on their work. The editors chose to include authors who dedicated their work to Zapotec culture, as well as authors who belonged or were more closely aligned to *Los Contemporáneos*[88] and did not focus on Zapotec culture. In this section, I will focus on the decision of the editors to dedicate an issue to four prominent authors, whom Matus and De la Cruz evidently must have considered their most immediate literary ancestors.

The first literary ancestor they mention, in the eighth number, is Nazario Chacón Pineda, a Zapotec author who was praised by *Los Contemporáneos* and José Vasconcelos alike. The second, in the tenth number, Andrés Henestrosa, was a key player in the *Neza* generation; he was

[88] *Los Contemporáneos* were a group of modernist intellectuals and authors in the 1920s and 30s who published their own magazine by the same name.

the initial director of the magazine before moving to the United States thanks to a Guggenheim Fellowship to attempt to create a Zapotec dictionary. By the 1960s, Henestrosa was an established intellectual inducted into the Mexican Academy of Language. The third, in the eleventh number, another key member of *Neza,* was Gabriel López Chiñas, who took over the newspaper once Henestrosa left. By the 1960s he was a recognized professor in Mexico City and kept researching and publishing on Zapotec culture. The last author the editors honored in the thirteenth number was Efrén Núñez Mata. He was also a member of the Mexican Academy of Language and a professor and journalist who published extensively. In *Neza Cubi* we find poems, excerpts of longer texts, and brief articles penned by all four authors, as well as essays written by their critics. The four numbers highlight the importance placed on creating and continuing a specifically Zapotec literary genealogy, a canon of Indigenous writers that would serve as an inspiration not only to present readers but also to future Zapotec creators.

The poets highlighted showcase the wide range of themes that Zapotec authors have written about. The first two authors I present here, Chacón Pineda and Núñez Mata, are linked because they are both considered members of the group *Los Contemporáneos*. The editors decide to highlight their connection to that group, and their simultaneous focus on Zapotec stories and other literary traditions. Then, I pair Henestrosa and López Chiñas together, because they are often cited as the main proponents behind *Neza*, but just as they are often named the fathers of contemporary Zapotec literature, they are also cast as opposites, with Juchitec audiences aware of their rivalry.

Nazario Chacón Pineda is the first Zapotec author to which half a number is dedicated. Chacón Pineda is considered a member of the *Neza* generation, though somewhat younger than the rest of those from that generation (Pineda 299). He began writing poetry at the young age of

twelve and later published a few poems in *Neza*. He is recognized for his book titled *Estatua y danza* (1939) and his poem "Canción de Sangre" (1962). Chacón Pineda's book was prefaced by Carlos Pellicer, a member of *Los Contemporáneos,* a detail which the editors of *Neza Cubi* highlight to argue for the poetic value of this author's literary works. They also utilize José Vasconcelos' praise of Chacón Pineda's poem to further underline the importance of this Juchitec poet. Specifically, they quote Vasconcelos stating, "Nazario Chacón Pineda es un gran poeta… es un gran poeta y no lo sabe el país" ("Editorial 8" 2). Through this introduction, the editors place Nazario Chacón Pineda more centrally in Mexican literary history, highlighting a poet that might not be known to a wide audience, nor immediately recognized as Juchitec and Zapotec by his readers.

While the editors simultaneously highlight the fact that Chacón Pineda was a member of *Los Contemporáneos*, their opening piece is an excerpt that once again explores the origin story of the *binnigula'sa'*, returning to the importance of orality and origin stories for the Zapotec. The story, "Nisaguiee" (La Lluvia), reads like an excerpt of the *binnigula'sa'* story that we have seen before in the pages of *Neza*. But instead of focusing on the longer story starting with the creation of the Zapotec, it focuses on conflict between the ancient Zapotec, the *binnigula'sa'*, and their gods, who are not too pleased with the people who think themselves wise (Chacón Pineda 4). The gods watch the *binnigula'sa'* and notice how they sing and dance and believe themselves to be "los primeros pobladores del Universo" (Chacón Pineda 4). A song that is included in the story of the *binnigula'sa'* by Wilfrido C. Cruz and Andrés Henestrosa also appears in Chacón Pineda's story: it predicts the end of the world for the *binnigula'sa'* and ends with the threatening verses "Ziaba gu/ Ziaba yu/ Zarah guidxilayu" which translates to "lloverá fuego/ lloverá tierra/ desaparecerán todos los hombres de la tierra" (Chacón Pineda 5). This piece

highlights the origin story of the *binnigula'sa'*, a story that has preoccupied Zapotec authors since the 1930s and has been written and rewritten by many of them. Even though Chacón Pineda had recently published "Canción de sangre," which touches on themes of life and death, and for which he is much praised, the editors of *Neza Cubi* decided to publish, once again, like in *Neza*, the story of the *binnigula'sa'*. It is not surprising that this continues to be a topic of interest, as Víctor de la Cruz himself will include the topic of the *binnigula'sa'* in his doctoral dissertation a few years after this. Through their inclusion of Nazario Chacón Pineda, we see once again how the editors are focusing on authors who wrote and published about their Zapotec culture, even as they were members of other literary groups and traditions, highlighting the *kab'awilian* strategy of navigating the various worlds they were a part of as authors.

Núñez Mata, another Juchitec poet who was close in age to the *Neza* generation but was never published in that newspaper, serves as another literary ancestor. The editors claim in their "Editorial 13" that Núñez Mata was a part of *Los Contemporáneos* "por sus sonetos y madrigales labrados con rigurosas líneas clásicas" (2). Apart from being a poet, he was also a journalist who wrote extensively on literature and politics. Involved in education for much of his life, he served as a professor at various levels at public middle schools, the Colegio Americano, the UNAM, and Mexico City College, as well as an inspector[89] at various schools ("Efrén Núñez Mata"). In another piece that the editors include on Núñez Mata, fellow writer and journalist José Muñoz Cota wrote, "Efrén Núñez Mata, aureolado con muchos años de amor a la educación, académico de la lengua, poeta y escritor, vive en la paz de una existencia creadora" (Muñoz Cota 3). The

[89] "Fue inspector de escuelas primarias del Distrito Federal; jefe de la Sección Técnica de Primaria y Normal, de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP); director de Educación Federal, en el estado de Tamaulipas; jefe de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal del Distrito Federal; director de Educación General, en Oaxaca; secretario particular del titular de Educación Pública, José Ángel Ceniceros (1952-1958) y como director de Alfabetización y Enseñanza Extraescolar" ("Efrén Núñez Mata").

editors of *Neza Cubi* thus highlight the long career that Efrén Núñez Mata had as a writer as well as an educator and a scholar.

In the case of Efrén Núñez Mata, who was also a member of *Los Contemporáneos*, the focus for the editors is on the other literary traditions he was a part of, showcasing the versatility of Zapotec authors. Interestingly, the editors do not focus specifically on any Zapotec themes that Núñez Mata wrote about, instead comparing him to the Japanese poet Matsuo Basho. In the "Editorial 13," the editors exclaim, "Sus *Voces de Cielo y Tierra* son sentencias y pensamientos que a veces están bañadas de una sutil ironía y otras veces de una sabiduría oriental" ("Editorial 13"). Matsuo Basho was a Japanese poet who was well known for his haikus and themes that focused on reflective moments from everyday life. The editors do not connect this author to the Zapotec tradition, but instead, they open their literary world to faraway influences, such as Japanese poetry, thus directly connecting Zapotec writing to global literature. This theme is also reflected in the piece by Muñoz Cota who also compares Núñez Mata's poetry to haikus and writes: "A veces bastan unas cuantas líneas y en otras ocasiones se adelgaza la emoción tanto que evoca el Hai-Ku japonés, por su factura y delicadeza" (3). This theme of Japanese influence appears repeatedly in the pieces that the editors choose to publish in regard to Efrén Núñez Mata. In doing so, it becomes clear that the editors are not solely focused on highlighting Zapotec authors who wrote about Zapotec culture – even though that is their focus considering that one of their main goals to retake their Zapotec path –; they simply aim to spotlight Zapotec authors whose literary influences and inspiration can spring from anywhere in the world, who are writing and publishing successfully, and whose work they consider to have literary value not only for Zapotecs, but potentially for a global audience. Apart from these two poets, who they associate

with the current of *Los Contemporáneos*, the editors then highlight two additional Zapotec authors who devoted their literary career (or at least the beginning of it) to Zapotec culture.

The following poet "homenajeado" is Andrés Henestrosa, with the literary and aesthetic value of his first book, *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* as the focus. Henestrosa has long been a controversial figure, starting his literary career at an early age by publishing his book with the help of Antonieta Rivas Mercado, and by sharing the same social circles with Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. He was also friends with Alfredo Cardona Peña,[90] a Costa Rican journalist and famed science fiction writer, who married a Juchiteca woman and moved to Juchitán. Ultimately, Henestrosa became a PRI politician, after which he stopped advocating for the use of Indigenous languages in literary production, a significant contrast to his initial efforts as a young university student who published his first book on Zapotec stories and worked on a Zapotec dictionary. Yet, in the 1960s, the two young creators of *Neza Cubi*, Matus and De la Cruz, still hold him in high regard. They toy with the idea that he has profited off his Indigenous identity, but ultimately acknowledge the value of his literary creation in Spanish that is infused with Zapotec legends and tales.

The number dedicated to Andrés Henestrosa highlights him as a key literary ancestor and provides non-Zapotec critics viewpoints that showcase the different ways Henestrosa is read. In the "Presentación a su obra completa (fragmento)," Ernesto Mejía Sánchez[91] writes:

> Parece cosa de leyenda que el niño indio y desvalido, que hasta los catorce años sólo sabía expresarse en lengua de su raza, haya podido, tras ávidos y cruentos años de aprendizaje, con rapidez inigualada, escribir en nítido español el Popol Vuh de su nación

[90] Alfredo Cardona Peña was the link between Henestrosa and other Central American authors such as Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, who was a Nicaraguan poet, and Luis Cardoza y Aragón, a prominent Guatemalan writer who was exiled in Mexico after 1954 (De la Cruz).
[91] Ernesto Mejía Sánchez was a Nicaraguan author and poet who also served as a professor in the UNAM.

> indígena, texto de la memoria que traducía la mitad de su alma, apremiada por la conquista de la otra mitad. (3)

Here, we see first how Henestrosa's life is seen as "cosa de leyenda," he retells this story many times: his arrival to Mexico City, his demand to Vasconcelos to fulfill the promises of the Revolution, and his quick rise in the literary world of the capital city. And unlike Debra Castillo, who claims that Henestrosa contributes to the mainstream, state-sponsored *indigenista* discourse,[92] Mejía Sánchez acknowledges the part of his "alma" that is *indígena,* counterposing it to the other part that has fallen prey to the Conquest. Mejía Sánches still falls into the Indigenous-Spanish binary, but at the very least acknowledges Henestrosa's background. This piece stands differently than the "Editorial 10," where the editors first present Henestrosa and his work. The editors begin, not by asking whether one can separate the art from the artist, but claiming that this separation happens naturally, "como muchas veces sucede, hombre y obra llegan a tomar su propio camino después de recorrer juntos un trecho" ("Editorial 10" 2). They recognize that critics have called Henestrosa a "regionalista" and "nacionalista," and that he might have exploited both those "epítetos" (Editorial 10" 2). Still, they believe the value of his work cannot be ignored, "asumiendo esta revista su responsabilidad, ante los paisanos que lo niegan, ante sus apasionados defensores, y todos los errores que hombre u obra tienen, afirmamos los valores estéticos de 'Los hombres que dispersó la danza'" (Editorial 10 2). The editors acknowledge that Henestrosa has been a polemical figure, but regardless of the stance on him, his influence and the value of his work must be recognized. And because this is the first piece in the issue that is presented to the audience, it influences the way we read the rest of Henestrosa's pieces. Mejía Sánchez too frames Henestrosa as a Zapotec author even though he

[92] See Debra Castillo's "Engaging Intellectuals: Andrés Henestrosa and Elena Poniatowska" in *Mexican Public Intellectuals* for a detailed discussion on Henestrosa's role in "creating" Juchitán.

writes in Spanish. He highlights that even though language is an essential component of identity, writing in Spanish does not make his literature any less "Zapotec" since he is writing about important oral traditions that give insight into Zapotec ways of understanding the world. Henestrosa is an important figure for the editors and for the literary genealogy they are creating and recreating, therefore his accomplishments and contributions to Zapotec literature are also discussed.

The focus of Henestrosa's contributions is centered on his book, *Los hombres que dispersó la danza*, and the impact that it had on the Indigenous literary field. Both Mejía Sánchez and Cardoza y Aragón put forth what they believe the significance of the book is. Mejía Sánchez claims that *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* is the first book to be published about "la mitología antigua y mestiza del Istmo de Tehuantepec," and that Henestrosa was able to offer us a "mundo de leyendas zapotecas que el autor vivió de niño en su propia lengua" (3). He also believes it is the first time that these "leyendas zapotecas" are being reconstructed in Spanish (Mejía Sánchez 3). This idea of the construction and reconstruction of the stories Henestrosa tells, are part of a narrative that Henestrosa himself perpetuated,[93] something that his critics emphasize too. Cardoza y Aragón writes, "Ha soldado, autógenamente, con materia de poesía y de la propia poesía zapoteca, las piezas que encontró en sus estudios filológicos e históricos, en su sangre y sus recuerdos de infancia, así como en lo que han provocado esos recuerdos en su adulto corazón" (7). He characterizes Henestrosa's work as a combination of "poetry" which he probably considers "western poetry" because it is contrasted with "poesía zapoteca," as well as philology, history, his blood (meaning his Zapotec culture), and memories. I believe this becomes clearer because of his following words: "Clara es la unidad en este mosaico mitológico

[93] In interviews and various texts, Henestrosa has said that he writes what he remembers, and it might be half-lies or half-truths.

de su raza. No es posible distinguir entre lo suyo y entre lo que casi hecho encontró en labios de contadores de consejas y leyendas en su Juchitán nativo" (Cardoza y Aragón 8). Once again, Henestrosa is described as a Zapotec author. Furthermore, his contributions to the Zapotec literary field are acknowledged as a blend between the stories he knew and the stories of the community, being impossible to ascertain in his prose what belongs to his individual creativity and what is a product of the collective literary imagination of Zapotecs. Henestrosa being an icon for the *Neza Cubi* editors is not surprising given the status that he had at this time. Still, it is important to note how when these editors are looking to the past and creating/recreating their history, they look to authors, writers, and creators who pushed forward their culture by digging into the collective heritage of Zapotec language and stories shaped by the community generation after generation.

The last author they center on is Gabriel López Chiñas. Even though he is not as well-known outside of Juchitán —where there is a library named after him— and Oaxaca, López Chiñas was still publishing in and on Zapotec culture and language. In any case, the number dedicated to López Chiñas is equally as exalting of him as Henestrosa's number. Two pieces in the eleventh number dedicated to Gabriel López Chiñas give us insight into the view that the editors have about this celebrated author. The first piece is a reprint of the prologue to the third edition of *Vinnigulasa*, entitled, "Prólogo a Vinnigulasa (fragmento)" by Rafael Heliodoro Valle, an exiled Honduran author. The second is simply titled, "Gabriel López Chiñas" by Jesús Arellano. Both pieces point to the capacity of López Chiñas for understanding exactly what "lo zapoteco" is, specifically in Juchitán, and for being able to convey that in his writing. For example, Arellano writes, "En estos [sus libros de prosa], en la magia de estos, Gabriel López Chiñas ha encontrado riquezas hasta ahora no descubiertas por otros autores: la inocencia y

profundidad del espíritu zapoteca" (9). Once again, we see the preoccupation with the "espíritu zapoteco," even as that concept is not fully explained. Both for the *Neza* generation, and the *Neza Cubi* editors, there are two lines of influence. For the *Neza* generation, the influence was most likely stemming from Vasconcelos and his exploration of the concept or "espíritu."[94] For the *Neza Cubi* editors, there appears to be a parallel to widespread philosophical currents of their time that interrogated the concept of "lo mexicano," mostly from the Grupo Hiperión discussed previously. But just as both generations are influenced by widespread non-Zapotec currents, so too do they draw from Zapotec cosmology. While we do not find descriptive material in the pages of *Neza* or *Neza Cubi* on the "espíritu zapoteca," later, another Zapotec scholar will explore the topic in his master's thesis, Gregorio López y López. Presently, Professor Juan Carlos Sánchez-Antonio at the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, building on López and López,[95] has written on the concept of "*guenda*" which apart from being the word for "*espíritu*" is also the word for darkness, the darkness that lies at the center and beginning of life in Zapotec cosmology (5). "*Guenda*" is traced back to the definition provided by Fray Juan de Córdova in his dictionary, "ser el-ser de cualquier cosa (folio 377, columna 3)" (Sánchez-Antonio 14). This concept of "*guenda*," is also related to "*làchi*" which is defined as behavior or motivation behind that behavior. Sánchez-López argues that there is a connection between the soul (*espíritu*) and behavior that includes being aware of and practicing customs.[96] Therefore, I

[94] This is explored in the first chapter of the dissertation.
[95] López y López, apart from citing dictionaries by Juan de Córdova and Francisco de Burgoa, also cites Wilfrido C. Cruz, Andrés Henestrosa, and Gabriel López Chiñas in his bibliography, showcasing the importance of their work in reconstructing Zapotec thought.
[96] "Así, por ejemplo, làchi se traduce también como 'costumbre' (folio 096, columna 2), es decir, los hábitos sociales o comunitarios que hemos heredado y construido en la vida. Tener conciencia de nuestras costumbres parece ser importante, e implica, según nuestra hipótesis de interpretación, examinar o preguntarse lo que ha hecho el alma, por ejemplo, en la construcción lingüística de conciencia, Córdova registra la siguiente expresión: pea-hue-còna-láchi xi+tóla-ni que se traduce como "conciencia generalmente" (folio 084, columna 2)" ("La psicología/medicina").

believe that these authors argue that López-Chiñas' works are embedded with that "espíritu zapoteca" because he has always centered his Zapotec culture, that is through his focus on the language and writing down oral traditions that include insight into Zapotec cosmology and history.[97] A similar argument is made by Heliodoro Valle, but he does delve more into what exactly López Chiñas is able to capture in his texts. Heliodoro Valle opens the prologue to *Vinnigulasa* with the following statement:

> Gabriel López Chiñas guarda muchos secretos, como si fuera el intérprete de un códice en el que está dibujada una geografía de peces y de luces. Por la claridad gozosa de Juchitán se deslizan pájaros que hablan el idioma de los hombres. He aquí que las piedras, las aves y los ríos, renuevan antiguos diálogos y que voces recién nacidas fluyen, como bálsamos, de las cortezas en que el que el hombre sin nombre dejó señas silenciosas. (3)

Here we see a theme that we have seen in the pages of *Neza* as well, that of the secret that these Zapotec authors hold, just as we are taken back to that origin story of the *binigula'sa'*, the ancient Zapotecs. Heliodoro Valle refers to the origin story that includes Zapotecs descending from large, winged birds or roots of enormous trees, who at this point speak the language of man. Here, Heliodoro Valle claims that López Chiñas is important as an author, and an accomplished Zapotec author, because he can tell these origin stories that stem from the collective knowledge and memory of the community. Even more, he is an "intérprete de un códice," linking his stories to those found in codices, creating a link between these distinct forms. And he further complicates his argument with his next statement, bringing in the concept of time once again, as he writes, "Se diría que habla en la lengua del tiempo en que el tiempo estaba más allá del

[97] His book, *Vinnigulasa* (1942) is a collection of stories that include explorations of the ancient Zapotecs as well as fables with lessons that reflect Zapotec values.

calendario" (Heliodoro Valle 3). For Heliodoro Valle, López Chiñas' stories accurately capture timeless Zapotec stories, that lie outside of calendrical time. He places the stories outside of time, as always existing – passing through codices and then through the writing of López Chiñas – and therefore, continuing to exist. Overall, López Chiñas is described as a Zapotec author who captures the origin stories, like Henestrosa, and that can convey that elusive "espíritu zapoteca" that so often appears in these texts.

The inclusion of these authors in the magazine provides insight into how the editors view Zapotec literary production and authorship. First, we see how the first two authors, Chacón Pineda and Núñez Mata, are not solely concerned with their Zapotec identity. In fact, they are even compared to Japanese poets. Their inclusion as literary ancestors highlights the scope that Zapotec authors can have: even if they pull from and focus on their hometown of Juchitán and on their language and customs, their works touch upon universal[98] themes, are inspired by global literature, and can be reminiscent of Japanese haikus. The Zapotec intellectuals are not closed off to the outside world; on the contrary, they are in conversation with it, and have been since the 1930s and before, when Chacón Pineda and Núñez Mata were writing and publishing. On the other end of the spectrum, we get Henestrosa and López Chiñas, two authors who were seemingly concerned with their Zapotec culture. And even though Henestrosa has been a controversial figure, the editors recognize the merit of his work in collecting Zapotec stories. On the other hand, we see how López Chiñas is read unequivocally as an author who had deep insight and understanding into Zapotec creation stories /cosmology. Second, the fact that a total of four numbers are dedicated to each author highlights the important role that writers and

[98] In "Tukë'y: La universalidad de las lenguas," Yásnaya Aguilar Gil touches on how Indigenous languages are not considered universal languages simply because they are not tied to hegemonic nation states. She argues that Indigenous languages, just as all languages, are able to express universal ideas.

therefore literature, including creation stories, had in the resurgence movement that the editors were advocating for. Thus, they centered writers and literature as key components of their project of cultural revitalization. The inclusion of these four authors was thought out, and planned since the beginning of *Neza Cubi*, since all authors are named in the first "Editorial." In choosing these multifaceted writers (both those who focused on Juchitán and Zapotec culture and others who did not but were in conversation with a non-Zapotec literary world), the editors show their preoccupations and aims, as well as their focus on their Zapotec identity, an identity that is not forged in isolation but in constant contact with global politics and cultural influences.

9. Conclusions

A few months before the Tlatelolco massacre, a university student and a recent graduate/journalist living in Mexico City but originally from Juchitán decided to create a magazine. After living in the city during a turbulent time of student activism and government repression, these two students formed their journal. Their goal was to return to a literary tradition that had begun in the 1930s with the publication of the magazine *Neza*. They saw themselves as inheritors of a Zapotec culture and tradition present in Mexico since before contact. Their Zapotec identity, just like the *Neza* generation, was their main concern. Through the pages of *Neza Cubi* they explore themes of subjectivity, language and literature, and employ *kab'awilian* strategies walking between the past and the future, western politics and Zapotec customs, and local versus national concerns.

The editors' explanation of their goals, and their purpose in creating the publication all ties back to the concept of "neza." Inspired by the 1930s publication, they explain the meaning behind the word in Isthmus Zapotec in more detail. They are determined to return to a path that

their ancestors laid out for them, a path they think to be the only correct one to follow, since "neza" means "camino," as well as "lo correcto." They also repeatedly refer to the *Neza* generation's "espíritu zapoteco," in search of "lo zapoteco" which mirrors the search for "lo mexicano" of the 1950s. For them, the "espíritu zapoteco" ties back to practicing one's customs, which is why they are concerned with and celebrate authors who push for the creation and dissemination of their culture and language, because there is that connection between the soul and one's actions. Caught in between political conflict in Juchitán between the priistas and left-leaning groups that saw Indigeneity as an obstacle to modernity, the editors made their own path. They refused to renounce their Zapotec culture, instead holding on to it as their strength. They wanted to reroute their future by returning to the past, a Zapotec understanding of time where the present includes both the past and the future. They also wrote their own poetry, reclaiming figures like Benito Juárez, reminding their audience that he too was Zapotec. By focusing on specific political figures, they were shaping their history, highlighting the fact that Zapotec people, Indigenous people, were still alive and not just in the past. Furthermore, the editors of *Neza Cubi* emphasize that Zapotec men had been key figures in national history as well, thus counteracting dominant narratives that erased the role of Indigenous peoples in the creation of modern Mexico. They also centered literature in their movement. They published letters that their "paisanos" sent to them, exalting the magazine and confirming its need. In doing so, they highlighted the importance of preserving language and producing literature for the vitality of Zapotec culture. They also looked to their literary ancestors as central figures for their culture. They focused both on authors who had centered their Zapotec identity and culture and on others who had imbibed faraway literary influences, such as Japanese poetry.

In the next chapter, we will explore *Guchachi' Reza*, the longest-lasting Zapotec literary magazine created by the same editors. In *Guchachi' Reza*, a publication that spanned over two decades, we will analyze the shifting goals of the editors, as well as their consistent focus on Zapotec ethnic identity in relation to current events unfolding in Mexico between the 1970s and the 1990s. As we will see in the pages that follow, *Guchachi' Reza* becomes a space where Zapotec and non-Zapotec writers alike write on, reflect, expand, and solidify Zapotec literature, history, and political autonomy.

IV. *"La iguana no muere"* (Iguanas Do Not Die): *Guchachi' Reza*, Ethnic Pride, and Political Resistance

Y la iguana nostálgica de siglos
en los perfiles largos de su tiempo
fue, es, y será.

- Carlos Pellicer, "Esquema para una oda tropical en cuatro voces," *Guchachi' Reza*, n.1

In the 1980s Juchitán came to the attention of the world when COCEI, the Coalición Obrera Campesina Estudiantil del Istmo, won local municipal elections considered "the first time a leftist government" was in control since the Mexican Revolution (Campbell). Juchitán became a symbol for leftist authors and artists, and a cultural movement flourished around the creation of a literary and cultural magazine, alongside the opening of the Lidxi Guendabiaani, or the Casa de Cultura. Through the magazine *Guchachi'Reza*, one has a window into what occurred in Juchitán from the 1970s through the 1990s, what intellectuals were concerned with, and what conversations were occurring around local history, culture, language, politics, and autonomy. In this sense, we can say that *Guchachi' Reza* functions as an archive[99] of communal life in Juchitán at that time.

The creators and contributors of *Neza Cubi* – the magazine I discussed in the former chapter – and this new magazine, *Guchachi' Reza,* overlap and specifically, Víctor de la Cruz

[99] Here, I am thinking of historian Jean O'Brien when she writes how there are "'unexpected' archives that have been underutilized and unappreciated" for Indigenous communities such as material objects, language, and oral histories such that "the communities themselves constitute 'archives'" (20) *Guchachi' Reza* gathers many of these elements in its pages.

has a central role in *Guchachi'*. Though they function as independent magazines, many of the same themes we have seen in *Neza* and *Neza Cubi* also appear in the new publication. For instance, the contributors are still concerned with language and literary production, history, and politics; also, they continue to think of themselves not just as Zapotec but also as Juchitec and take on the symbol of the iguana as their own. They tie this symbol to the concept of Indigeneity, as existing in the Americas before the arrival of the Spanish, republishing colonial *relaciones* that focus on this animal. They also return to their concern on the Zapotec language: they write about language as a political issue, as a vehicle that holds their worldviews and therefore ensures Zapotec futures. Still, the editors begin to expand their focus beyond the Zapotec to include other Indigenous peoples in the surrounding areas and beyond. They express solidarity with the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, which through different methods, aims for the same goal of Indigenous autonomy. Through various avenues, and once again enacting *kab'awilian* strategies to collapse binaries, the Zapotec intellectuals involved in the creation and publication of this magazine work towards linguistic, cultural, and political autonomy to ensure the viability of Zapotec futurities.

In the next few pages, I will contextualize the creation of the magazine in the mid-1970s, provide some background on its creators, and a brief description of this magazine that spanned decades and therefore saw various eras. Then, we will explore the way these intellectuals were thinking of themselves, taking on the symbol of the iguana, imagining the use and importance of their Zapotec language, creating a past that pushed against national narratives and centralized forms of government, at the same time that embraced ways to think Indigeneity beyond the boundaries of Juchitán/the Zapotec, a broader imaginary of Indigeneity that would allow for new forms of solidarity with ethnic-based movements such as the Zapatista uprising. This magazine,

like the other two, highlights the way that these Zapotec intellectuals were navigating the various worlds they were a part of. In *Guchachi' Reza*, we see once again how these intellectuals organize networks of support, restart a path towards cultural vitality, and ensure Zapotec futurities by drawing inspiration from past Zapotec authors and training future ones.

1. *Guchachi' Reza* is Born: Local Politics in Juchitán

Guchachi' Reza was born after a particularly tumultuous time in Juchitán and spanned through three crucial decades in the history of Mexico. At the local level, some important changes were happening within Juchiteco politics: one of the most important was the formation of COCEI. The creation of COCEI brought new political fractures to the region, renewed conflict, and death. It also brought with it a more representative form of government, one strongly reliant on Zapotec ethnic identity. To understand the goals of *Guchachi' Reza*'s editors, one must understand the events that were transpiring in Juchitán, but also the broader context of contemporary Indigenous politics. According to Elisa Ramírez, the editors of this magazine were particularly inspired by the initial Declaración de Barbados in 1971 and, years later, by the first Declaración de la Selva Lacandona in 1994.[100] Ramírez claims that the politics of *Guchachi'*

[100] The "Declaración de Barbados," or "Por la liberación indígena," was a document drafted by a group of anthropologists convened at the Simposio sobre la fricción inter-etnica en América del Sur in Barbados in 1971. In their declaration, they criticized the way that Indigenous peoples were still living as "sujetos a una relación colonial," and the role that the government, religious institutions, and the field of anthropology had in maintaining that (Bartolomé et al. 169). They set forth suggestions for changes to enable liberation. This declaration influenced anthropologists for the coming years. The Declaración de la Selva Lacandona released in 1994 introduced the world to the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). In their Declaración they claim that they are the "herederos de los verdaderos forjadores de nuestra nacionalidad" and are rising up to combat their oppression. They appeal to the Constitution in their right to make their demands. They reveal that theirs is a declaration of war against the Mexican government and make six demands of their own army. The Declaración, is the way that the Zapatista's would continue communicating to the outside world. According to Elisa Ramírez, these two declaraciones were influential for all of the creators of the magazine, but especially for Víctor de la Cruz in the way that Indigenous liberation and the role that intellectuals could take in supporting that liberation. The third Declaración de Barbados is published in the forty-fifth number of *Guchachi' Reza*, supporting Ramírez's claim that it was important to the main organizer behind *Guchachi'*, Víctor de la Cruz, and prompting further study on the influence between the Declaraciones and the editors and magazine.

Reza cannot be understood without these two manifestos, which shaped the intellectual path of its founding members.

Just like the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos was a three-pronged movement that was the Sociedad, the magazine, and the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca, so was *Guchachi' Reza* tied to other entities. In this case, *Guchachi'* was intertwined with the Casa de Cultura/ Lidxi Guendabiaani and the COCEI political party. The intellectuals and members of the political party overlapped with the editors and contributors of *Guchachi' Reza.* The Casa de Cultura was directed by Matus, who was also in the same circles. These three entities were strongly aligned in their political and cultural goals. In the following pages, I will provide a brief overview of local politics in Juchitán in the years leading up to the magazine's creation and continued publication.

Local politics in Juchitán have been the source of study for various political scientists and anthropologists[101] attempting to make sense of what led to the creation and continued success of COCEI. In the 1960s, when *Neza Cubi* was created, local tensions were high in Juchitán after the death of Charis, the local boss, who had provided an illusion of stability through his negotiations with the central government. After his death, conflicts over land, dams, and labor left many peasants in worse conditions than ever before. Two new political leaders that emerged in this period, Génico and Tarú[102] did not last in power but inspired the new generation of youth, many of whom had already been radicalized by the student movements in urban universities like UABJO and UNAM (Campbell 148), to become engaged in local politics.

[101] For detailed analysis of Juchitán politics and the rise of COCEI, look at *Zapotec Renaissance* by Howard Campbell, *Decentering the Regime* by Jeffrey Rubin, and *Autonomía de los zapotecos del Istmo* by Gabriela Kraemer Bayer.

[102] Génico and Tarú are discussed by both Campbell and Rubin, as leaders who quickly rose to some power in Juchitán but fell just as quickly as they rose.

Both Campbell and Rubin identify the rise of the COCEI with changes occurring within other organizations that held some power and prestige in Juchitán. These organizations arose in opposition to the PRI. At the start of the 70s, a few student leaders emerged within the Sociedad de Estudiantes Juchitecos. Their first political triumph was their takeover of a clinic in Juchitán that was charging students for physical examinations that should have been free. After this takeover, some of the leaders allied with a group of peasants to create the Juchitán Peasant-Student Coalition (CCEJ) (Campbell 150). They were active as a group[103] for some time, and soon grew to include labor issues, which resulted in a name change, Juchitán Worker Peasant Student Coalition or COCEJ in 1974 (Campbell 151). In 1975 they finally changed their name to Coalición Obrera Campesina Estudiantil del Istmo, or COCEI.

For a few years, the Coalition focused on direct action to get results, but in 1974 they attempted to compete for legal office, proposing Héctor Sánchez as a mayoral candidate. Not only were they unsuccessful, but political tensions led to violence and the death of a pregnant Coalition supporter. Despite this initial failure to access political office, as well as the violence that ensued, the Coalition continued giving classes in political ideology, organizing peasants, and fighting to control local agricultural businesses (Campbell 155). In the meantime, various COCEI leaders were kidnapped, jailed, exiled, and even tortured.[104] Much of the violence was blamed on "armed civilians linked to the local PRI, large landowners, and commercial groups" (Campbell 157). These tensions reached a new height in 1977 when "military platoons took control of Juchitán, occupying City Hall and stationing troops near the Coalition's headquarters"

[103] "Accomplishments of the Coalition during this period of intense activism included freeing political prisoners, obtaining indemnification for families of bus accident victims, securing wage increases for local workers, and forcing the rehiring or indemnification of fired workers (El Satélite, various issues during 1973-1975). With each political victory, the movement grew stronger, and its plans became more ambitious" (Campbell 151).
[104] Some of the main leaders, like Polo, López Nelio, Sánchez, and Víctor Yodo, Irma Pineda's father, were victims of this repression.

(Campbell 157). That same year, the COCEI entered elections once again and were again unsuccessful. Instead, the leadership of this organization set up a parallel government in the face of the PRI-backed government, which they called the *Ayuntamiento Popular* (Campbell 159). According to Campbell, the fact that the COCEI lost key leaders as a result of the repression but was still able to continue its activities proves that it was a well-organized grassroots movement.

Following the intense and violent repression of the 1970s, in 1980 the COCEI took an unprecedented and somewhat unexpected step when they decided to ally with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), after years of tension between both political organizations. This decision was controversial and had initially been rejected by the coceístas, but they eventually determined that this alliance was "in the movement's best interest to run a candidate for mayor" (Campbell 162). The COCEI-PCM alliance provided something for almost all disenfranchised sectors of Juchitán: "poor landed peasants, artisans, landless rural workers, fishermen, students, urban laborers, female market vendors, small merchants, and intellectuals" (Campbell 163). A victory for the COCEI candidate resulted in what many call the "first and only major municipality in Mexico controlled by the left" (Campbell 169). According to Campbell and Rubin, various factors contributed to this victory, first the COCEI's "strength and capacity for agitation," the "national left's support of the movement, divisions, and weaknesses within the PRI at the local and state level," and finally "the national government reforms" (163, 169). This victory carried symbolic weight; for COCEI militants, "it was as if the Zapotecs had regained control of the Isthmus for the first time since the Spanish Conquest" (Campbell 169).

The first few years of the 1980s, when the COCEI organized through its *Ayuntamiento Popular*, or people's government, and won municipal elections are considered the golden years of local administration. In those years, coceístas were able to make many changes in Juchitán.

They were able to pave roads, build hospitals, secure higher wages for workers, and create new settlements. Land continued to be a source of contention, and sit-ins were organized multiple times. Even though not much land was retained, the protests served the symbolic purpose of highlighting the organizing power of the people (Rubin 169). Many of these achievements were done despite the lack of funds, which were withheld as a way to control the *Ayuntamiento* (Campbell 194). This meant that they resorted to their tried and tested methods, organizing protests and marches, sometimes to the capital city of Oaxaca. One of their most significant achievements lied in the area of culture, with the creation of the Casa de Cultura or Lidxi Guendabiaani, the magazine *Guchachi' Reza*, and an independent radio station working in parallel with the COCEI. Through the Casa de Cultura, founded by Francisco Toledo and Elisa Ramírez and led first by Víctor de la Cruz (1975-1977) and Macario Matus (1979-1989) (Campbell 180), Zapotec culture became a source of inspiration for workshops, language lessons, art, and publications. Both Campbell and Rubin connect the focus on Zapotec ethnic identity to the social and cultural power that COCEI was able to build up and maintain. The Zapotec language became the primary language spoken at meetings and rallies; this was seen as a way of resistance because people had been forced to speak Spanish beforehand (Rubin 167). However, even though the COCEI was able to implement many changes both on practical matters like land and labor, as well as on cultural matters, such as the increased use of the Zapotec language in public affairs, this golden age could not last forever.

In 1983, a violent confrontation between coceístas and priístas was the excuse the central government was looking for to oust COCEI from local power in Juchitán. Despite the support the working-class people gave to COCEI, there were still wealthier landowning priístas who opposed this organization and who were able to label COCEI members as leftists, communists,

and sympathizers of the Central American revolutionary processes. The COCEI did openly support left-wing and revolutionary movements in Central America. In particular, they wrote and printed articles about their support of the Sandinistas, delivered speeches in public events, and even "timed [the COCEI's] literacy work to coincide with the Sandinista's well-publicized literacy campaign"[105] (Rubin, 168), to the point that they were accused of "Sandinismo on a smaller scale" (Rubin 170). Once ousted from local power, the members of the COCEI nevertheless continued to organize and regularly meet, though not in public for fear of persecution (Rubin 181). They also continued with other activities like defending workers in labor disputes, fighting increases in irrigation rates, and negotiating with housing authorities in Oaxaca to regularize land ownership (Rubin 182).

The COCEI survived their ousting and ran for local elections again in 1986, this time, in a new way. For the first time since their inception, they decided to be in a coalition government with the PRI (Campbell 201, Rubin 183). This occurred after PRI candidate Heladio Ramírez was elected as mayor, coceístas gathered proof of corruption, and another priísta candidate was named instead. (Campbell 201). At the end, three officials from each group composed the coalition (Campbell 201), "an arrangement overseen by the governor of Oaxaca" (Rubin 183). Even as they governed in a coalition with the PRI, the COCEI continued to distinguish itself as a grassroots movement, as "children of the people" who unlike other reformers and leftists did not advocate for development or criticize local customs of the Juchitecos (Rubin 186).

In 1989, the COCEI once again continued to change its political allegiances by deciding to join the "concertación social." This program launched by President Salinas de Gortari offered

[105] The "Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización," was launched by the Sandinista government in 1980 to reduce illiteracy rates in Nicaragua. Adults and teens traveled to rural areas of the country to teach those populations. Apart from tackling illiteracy, the Sandinista's also aimed to raise political consciousness.

"substantial economic and political support to established oppositions in return for a reduction of militant tactics, along with public acknowledgment of negotiation and coexistence with the regime" (Rubin 190). While this was a controversial move for COCEI, the decision was ultimately taken, according to Rubin, because it "responded to the immediate needs and interests of supporters of grassroots movements and COCEI had always achieved gains and strengthened itself by taking advantage of the opportunities and concessions that the regime offered, while at the same time maintaining its militancy and independence" (190). Still, this move meant that the COCEI had to engage in more negotiations with the Mexican state, a criticism that was highlighted when the Zapatistas —a movement that never aspired to seize state power— rose in Chiapas. After 1994, COCEI's dependence on the Mexican government was highlighted by its critics. Nevertheless, COCEI was still considered by many as an example of grassroots autonomy in Mexico, which was highlighted by the fact that ex-COCEI mayor Leopoldo de Gyves was invited to attend the Zapatistas' National Democratic Convention (Rubin 193).

In any case, and even as COCEI political strategies substantially changed over time, their main goal of achieving autonomy for the Juchitec people remained the same (Rubin 163). And how COCEI conceived this autonomy did not only operate in the realm of politics but also in the sphere of culture. The pages of *Guchachi' Reza* would be the place where the Zapotec intellectuals' (and the COCEI's) ambitions for Zapotec cultural autonomy —with a focus on art, music, poetry, and language— would be fully put on display.

2. The Pages of *Guchachi'*: Themes, Sections, Eras

Guchachi' Reza, a magazine that spanned over two decades, went through various changes in terms of who financed it, who was on the editorial board, and where Víctor de la

Cruz, its main proponent, was situated. Still, the contents of the magazine remained constant throughout with only some slight variations. The magazine gathered and published historical documents, songs, poems, short stories, and articles on politics and history. I believe the main themes captured in the magazine fit broadly into four categories: social science, cultural and literary production, historical accounts, and regional issues.

The publication contains various texts about anthropology and archeology like "Los palacios antiguos de Mitla" by Juan B. Carreido, some on education, and many on what I am calling "ethnic identity," which are articles not just about the Zapotecs, but also about other Indigenous peoples from the Isthmus and surrounding areas, like the Chontales and Huaves. These pieces range from texts that discuss cultural issues related to specific peoples, such as "Medicina Zapoteca" by Andrés Henestrosa or "Los Chontales de los altos: una cultura serrana viva" by Alvaro González R., to more encompassing pieces like "La cuestión étnica en la obra y práctica de Guillermo Bonfil, un visionario de la sociedad multiétnica mexicana," by anthropologist Salomon Nahmad Sitton.

Many pieces focused on cultural and literary production, which could be classified into articles dealing with stories, language, literature (including poetry), music, and visual art. Compared to *Neza* and *Neza Cubi*, *Guchachi' Reza* is the magazine that includes the most visual art, most likely due to the direct involvement of artist Francisco Toledo. The stories published in this magazine fall under origin stories and folktales, along with stories about morals. Language was discussed too, in pieces like "Reseña del Vocabulario zapoteco-castellano," by Thomas C. Smith Stark and "Conclusiones generales de la mesa redonda sobre comunicación y escritura: procesos de desarrollo de la lengua zapoteca," a report of a meeting between representatives of the three regions of Oaxaca to discuss different alphabets. There were many poems published as

well, and oftentimes they would appear bilingually in Spanish and Zapotec. Music was also always present, with lyrics published often under a section titled “riuunda’”.

In addition to these categories, many pieces focused on Juchitán and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec were also published, with an emphasis on natural resources, land, and the building of the railway. Sometimes these texts were colonial accounts, or pieces written by foreign authors like “Viage a Méjico” by Mathieu Fossey and “Crónicas de viaje” by Thomas Gage.

Finally, the last theme that the publication explored was history. This meant they published pieces on historical political events. Many of these texts focused on famous men from the region like General Charis, rebel José. F. Gómez, and even Zapotec “king” Cosijoeza. These texts trace specific Juchitec history from the eyes of Juchitecos.

Unlike the previous publications that had specific sections included in each number, this magazine only publishes three sections steadily: “riuunda’,” “poemas,” and “document(s)”. “Riuunda’” is the Isthmus Zapotec word for “song.” This section makes a constant appearance and includes lyrics to Zapotec songs. These songs usually appeared in their original Zapotec only, but sometimes included translations into Spanish. The other section that appeared consistently was “poema” or, at times, “dos poemas.” These poems were written either by Zapotec poets, like Enedino Jiménez and Rocío González, and published in Zapotec (sometimes with a translation), or by non-Zapotec authors like Ludwig Zeller, Pablo Neruda, or Juan Bañuelos. The themes ranged from love poems to social justice poems calling for the return of *desaparecidos*. The section titled “document(s)” consisted in archival documents from the City of Oaxaca or Mexico City, oftentimes published in conjunction with accompanying texts that helped build a more comprehensive story of certain events. Apart from these three sections, there are no others that include a fixed header.

Regarding the chronology of *Guchachi' Reza*, there were various eras that the magazine went through. When it first appeared in 1975, it was only as a *suplemento* to another weekly Juchitec newspaper, *El Satélite*. Two suplementos appear that year and they declare that it would return as a magazine. The first three numbers of the magazine as an independent publication appear in 1975 (Luna Jiménez 253). Then there is a pause, and the magazine does not make a reappearance until 1980. After 1980 it continued to be published steadily through 1998, the year that the publication ceases.

3. The Creators: Authors and Artists, Zapotecs and "Outsiders"

There is an overlap between the creators and contributors of *Guchachi' Reza* and those of the previous magazine, *Neza Cubi.* While Víctor de la Cruz had been the editor for *Neza Cubi*, he played a more central role in *Guchachi' Reza*. On the other hand, Macario Matus, the director of *Neza Cubi*, does not take as prominent of a role in *Guchachi'*. According to Gloria de la Cruz and Elisa Ramírez, other founding members of the third magazine, this is because of personal disputes between Víctor de la Cruz, Macario Matus, and Francisco Toledo, the fifth and last founding member who also served as the financial support of *Guchachi' Reza* (Ramírez Castañeda).

We are already familiar with Víctor de la Cruz, the editor of *Neza Cubi* a few years prior. By the time when *Guchachi'* is launched, de la Cruz is more established as a researcher and working as a "Profesor de Filosofía, Historia y Redacción en el Instituto Tecnológico del Istmo, de 1974 a 1979" and "profesor en el programa de formación profesional de Etnolingüistas del Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), entre 1979 y 1980" (García). He would lead the publication of *Guchachi' Reza* for the next

several decades, seeing it through various changes, including proximity to CIESAS – a research institute for the social sciences – as Víctor worked there while in Oaxaca. While Víctor de la Cruz continued to publish elsewhere his works of poetry and his translations (like the posthumously translated and published works of Pancho Nácar, *Diidxa' Sti* in 1973), he was always at the helm of *Guchachi'*. Based on various informal conversations and interviews I conducted with literary critics like Elisa Ramírez and with other prominent Zapotec intellectuals like Irma Pineda, Víctor de la Cruz was ever the heart of the magazine, its biggest supporter, and it was because of him that *Guchachi' Reza* became the longest running bilingual Indigenous literary magazine published in Latin America. As such, de la Cruz's interests are heavily reflected in the magazine, with music, poetry, archeology, and history being prominent themes throughout the publication. For his contributions to the study of Isthmus Zapotec culture and his literature, Víctor de la Cruz won various awards like the Premio Casa Chata (1992 and 1997), the Premio Nezahualcóyotl de Literatura en Lenguas Indígenas (1993), and was "electo integrante de la Academia Mexicana de la Lengua correspondiente a Oaxaca, el 25 de agosto del año 2011" (García).

Gloria de la Cruz is also often credited as one of the founding members of *Guchachi' Reza*. She was born in Juchitán, Oaxaca, and is the younger sister of Víctor de la Cruz. Gloria herself considers her role in the creation of the magazine solely as a researcher. She was living in Mexico City at the time and was therefore able to access various archives, like the Archivo General de la Nación and the Hemeroteca in the UNAM. She would receive instructions via mail from her brother Víctor, giving her the directions for what was needed, and she would find the articles or documents requested in various archives in Mexico City. Gloria de la Cruz was a researcher for *Guchachi' Reza* for the first couple of years but then moved on and did not

continue collaborating with the publication. Still, her name appears on the contents page as a member of the "dirección colectiva," until the twenty-sixth number which was published in 1986. When the Casa de Cultura was established, she would lead Isthmus Zapotec language courses there. According to Gloria de la Cruz, she was one of Natalia Toledo's[106] language teachers, and although she does not take much credit for her role in the magazine, I find it important to highlight the labor of women intellectuals that went both into the creation of the magazine, the establishment of the Casa de Cultura, and the language training of future poets.

Francisco Toledo was another founding member of *Guchachi' Reza*. He was born in Mexico City in 1940, the son of Francisco López Orozco and Florencia Toledo Nolasco. Toledo began to study at the School of Fine Arts in Oaxaca when he was still a teenager. According to Toledo, he went to Oaxaca City because his father wanted him to be like Benito Juárez, and because they had previously had family members living and studying there, like porfirista Rosendo Pineda[107] and rebel José F. Gómez[108] (Espinosa de los Monteros). Soon after graduating from the School of Fine Arts, he went to the School of Design and Crafts, back in Mexico City, and it was around this time that he first exhibited his work in Texas. Then, in his early twenties, he "established himself in Paris, where he befriended artists such as Octavio Paz and Rufino Tamayo" ("Biographical Note"). Toledo recounts the generosity and support he received from Tamayo, a fellow painter from Oaxaca, as someone who believed in him as an artist while he was still young and not yet established (Espinosa de los Monteros). While in Europe, he began to exhibit at places like the "Kunstnerner Hus, in Oslo, Norway (1962), at the Karl Flinker Gallery,

[106] Natalia Toledo is the daughter of Francisco Toledo, and one of the most widely recognized Isthmus Zapotec poet. She is also a designer and helped create a language revitalization program with Víctor Cata consisting of "language nests."
[107] Rosendo Pineda was an Isthmus Juchitec man who studied in Mexico City and became a trusted advisor to President Porfirio Díaz.
[108] José F. Gómez, considered a hero in Juchitán, is known for organizing rebellions in the Isthmus in the 1900s and was assassinated for his attempts.

in Paris (1963), and at the Dieter Brusberg Gallery, in Hannover, Germany (1964)" ("Biographical Note"). Once he returned to Mexico, he headed straight to Juchitán where he became involved with politics and soon became a cultural promoter. Toledo, along with Elisa Ramírez, was the main proponent behind the Casa de Cultura Juchitán, a model cultural institution that would later spread throughout other regions in Oaxaca. In parallel, Toledo was also financing the magazine *Guchachi' Reza*. After founding and supporting *Guchachi',* he would focus his efforts on the capital city of Oaxaca, where he worked to establish and create various museums and other institutions dedicated to art, language, and history. He is credited with the founding of the Institute of Graphic Arts of Oaxaca, the Fray Francisco de Burgoa Library, which focuses on colonial and Indigenous texts, and the Ethnobotanical Garden, among many other cultural institutions. At many of these venues, there are large collections of art pieces and texts that Toledo collected over the years and subsequently donated to these institutions. Apart from his extensive work as a cultural promoter in the City of Oaxaca, Toledo was also responsible for the creation of the Premios CaSa (Centro de las Artes San Agustín), which encourages up-and-coming writers in Indigenous languages, and literary creation in Indigenous languages overall. Finally, Toledo was also an activist artist, concerned with the preservation of Indigenous languages and cultures. Most famously, he is known for stopping the building of a McDonald's in Oaxaca's historic center. He also created various exhibits to protest injustices occurring in Mexico, like the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students in 2014. Interestingly, based on multiple interviews he gave while he was still alive, Toledo did not necessarily see himself as an activist and had trouble stating why he was interested in giving back to the community (Espinosa de los Monteros). Still, his contributions not only to art but also to Zapotec

and other Indigenous languages, as well as the creation of museums and libraries in Oaxaca, cannot be overlooked.

The fourth founder of *Guchachi' Reza*, Elisa Ramírez, arrived in Juchitán with Francisco Toledo in the 1970s. Ramírez was born in Mexico City in 1947, the daughter of a prominent psychologist in the capital city, where she studied Sociology at UNAM. Along with Toledo, she helped found the Casa de Cultura Juchitán, and she also served as the president of the Patronato de la Casa de Cultura from 1972 to 1979. Her research focused on oral narratives, ethnology, and community education. She was one of the creators of *Guchachi' Reza*, but as she told me herself, a lot of what she wrote for the magazine was not credited to her because no individual names appeared in the first few numbers. After her work in Juchitán, she worked for the SEP; later, she served as the Coordinator for Ediciones Toledo for a while and then as a professor for the ENAH (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia). Currently, she is still involved with publishing Indigenous literatures and languages at Pluralia. As we can see, Ramírez has had a long career in publishing, always centering Indigenous languages to showcase that "las lenguas indígenas siguen existiendo" (Mateos-Vega).

As we already know, Matus was the main promoter of *Neza Cubi* in the 1960s, but according to Gloria de la Cruz, he was only involved with *Guchachi' Reza* very early on. Still, some of his works appear published throughout the magazine. However, at the time that *Guchachi'* was published, Matus was more involved with ELIAC, the Asociación de Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas, and then he would serve as the Director of the Casa de Cultura from 1979 to 1989. In any case, he would also write about *Guchachi' Reza* in his role as a journalist, announcing the return of the magazine after its first hiatus, in 1980 in *El Satélite* (Luna Jiménez 253).

The previously mentioned names are those that were floated around while I was in Juchitán. These names were different than what appears in the first publication of *Guchachi' Reza*, the *suplemento*, in 1975. In the first number, the "consejo de redacción" also includes Gilberto Sánchez Ortiz and Guillermo Petrikowsky Reyes. Both Sánchez Ortiz and Petrikowsky Reyes were friends of De la Cruz. When the magazine initially started, they were all coworkers at the Instituto Tecnológico Regional del Istmo (Petrikowsky Reyes). Once Toledo got involved, he pushed for the publication of a proper magazine (Petrikowsky Reyes). Sánchez Ortiz was involved administratively and Petrikowsky Reyes, a poet and photographer, was published in the magazine (Blas López and De la Cruz Blas).

4. The Goals

Guchachi' Reza started as a *suplemento cultural* to the newspaper *El Satélite.*[109] This meant that the original publications were a single sheet of paper, one-page printed front and back, crowded with text and some art. In the first *suplemento* we find the creators' "Presentación," where they introduce the publication and provide some insight into how it came to be. This first version included pieces by Víctor de la Cruz, Francisco Toledo, Alfredo Cardona Peña, Guillermo Petrikowsky Reyes, and Alfredo Cardona Chacón, but the "Presentación" explicitly details the goals of the creators.

The "Presentación," compared to the introductory pieces in *Neza* and *Neza Cubi*, is briefer and more direct about the creation of this new magazine/*suplemento*. In three short paragraphs, the creators explain how this publication came to be and the significance of its name, which will tie into the themes we will see early on. The creators explain that *Guchachi' Reza* was

[109] *El Satélite* was a Juchitán-based weekly newspaper that published on local news including land and labor issues.

originally suggested as a *suplemento* to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the newspaper *El Satélite*, they explain, "para conmemorar el hecho de que este semanario subsista gracias o a pesar de sus errores de un medio tan pobre en tantos aspectos como es el nuestro" (1). Initially, it appears that there would be collaborations between various authors, one of them being Macario Matus, but they do not know if Matus "ha tenido éxito en el Distrito Federal para cumplir su encargo" (1). The *suplemento*, initially called, "Suplemento de Recuerdo," "fue bien recibido con bastante entusiasmo hasta el grado de haber rebasado el proyecto original: No solamente se queda en un 'Suplemento del Recuerdo', sino que se funda una revista cultural[110] que aparecerá mensualmente, la cual tendrá independencia absoluta de criterio y dirección respecto de *El Satélite*" (1). In the first issue, we also learn that the director is Víctor de la Cruz and that the other members "que con él forman el Consejo de Redacción [son] Gilberto Sánchez Ortiz y Guillermo Petrikowsky Reyes" (1). The connection between *El Satélite* and *Guchachi' Reza* was Petrikowsky Reyes, who was the assistant director of the newspaper and friends with Víctor de la Cruz (Petrikowsky Reyes). In contrast to the previous two publications that opened themselves up to their audience and asked for their support, this "Presentación" reads differently: "No nos hacemos muchas ilusiones sobre ayudas que no provengan de los Guchachi' Reza. La aventura es nuestra y el compromiso de llevarla adelante también es nuestro: pero en caso de que llegare el auxilio externo será bien agradecido" (1). While the creators would welcome any support, they also claim full responsibility for the magazine. The way they direct themselves to the audience stands in contrast to the hopeful pleas found in *Neza* and *Neza Cubi*, where the creators interacted with their audience in varying capacities. While not stated explicitly in the magazine, I believe this might be the case because, by this time, those involved are more established, as

[110] According to Gullermo Petrikowsky Reyes, the idea for this *suplemento* originated with Víctor de la Cruz, Gilberto Sánchez Ortiz and himself. Then Toledo joined and pushed for the creation of a proper magazine.

academics, teachers, and artists. Toledo probably most of all, is widely connected not just within Mexico but in Europe as well.

The name of the publication is significant because the symbol of the iguana will be taken on by the Zapotec intellectuals not just for themselves, but for the people of Juchitán to signify their resilience and survival. The iguana will appear in many of the initial articles, poems, and *relaciones* that are published in the magazine, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Focusing on the "Presentación" now reveals how the editors refer to themselves and their readers as "los Guchachi' Reza," meaning that they are thinking/imagining their pueblo of Juchitán as iguanas. A little later in the "Presentación," they further elaborate on the magazine's goals when they write explicitly: "Con el título *Guchachi' Reza* (Iguana Rajada) se quiere rendir un merecido homenaje a tan sufrido animal nuestro, uno de los símbolos de la cultura zapoteca" (1). The animal here is representative of the region, the people, and the culture. The creators continue sharing how the iguana has been and is still used and found in the Isthmus:

> Consumido por generaciones de istmeños, desde aproximadamente un mil quinientos años antes de nuestra era hasta la actualidad, ha dejado huellas de su paso por estas tierras: Hay cabezas de iguana labradas en piedra procedentes del Preclásico, un son zapoteca llamado Guchachi' Reza de donde proviene el nombre del grupo que editará la revista del mismo nombre, y un grupo de música latinoamericana de reciente creación llamado del mismo modo. Estamos, entonces, en el Istmo de Tehuantepec en el Año Internacional de la Iguana Rajada.

The iguana is food, it is in Isthmian art and architecture, it is in music. And, as is highlighted by the creators, it has been around for a long time, in fact for thousands of years. This excerpt also gives us insight into the fact that there is a self-named group, Guchachi' Reza, that will edit the

magazine. It is safe to assume that the members are those previously mentioned in the "grupo de redacción," but it is unclear from the publication whether others, like Francisco Toledo and Elisa Ramírez are also a part of the founding group. Even if his name is not explicitly mentioned in these initial texts, now we know that Toledo was financing the publication of the magazine in those early years from the "ganancias" he made from selling his art.

It becomes apparent too, that this magazine is not as straightforward about its goals and history as the others. In *Neza* and *Neza Cubi*, the editors address their audience directly, and in doing so they print pieces that give us insight into their goals. This third magazine, however, requires gathering fragments of information from different oral histories to put the pieces together. Whereas the "Presentación" of the *suplemento* does not provide much specific information, interviews with Gloria de la Cruz and Elisa Ramírez provided more clear insight into why the publication arose. Before the magazine was created, Elisa Ramírez, Víctor de la Cruz, and Francisco Toledo were gathering information from archives and printing documents out independently as "small pamphlets." At the same time, they were also organizing exhibits within the Casa de Cultura (Ramírez Castañeda). After a certain point, they had collected plenty of material and realized that publishing loose pamphlets was not their best option; thus, they thought of creating a magazine where they could publish their research in a more organized manner (Ramírez Castañeda).

The editors revisit their goals in the twentieth anniversary combined numbers 49 and 50 of *Guchachi' Reza*, which was released in the Spring of 1995. This double issue begins with a "Presentación," just like the very first *suplemento* in 1975 did. The first *suplemento* is reprinted on the inside of the magazine cover, reminding the audience of how the magazine first started, twenty years earlier. The second "Presentación" lists no single author but is simply signed by

"La Redacción." Also only a few short paragraphs, this piece provides insight into the reason for the editors of the magazine to publish a double issue, an acknowledgment of the historical context they found themselves in, and their goals in starting *Guchachi' Reza* twenty years earlier. The "Presentación" underscores three essential themes for the editors and the magazine. The first is the importance of their Zapotec history. Not just them creating their narrative, but also showcasing the long political struggle that recently took place. The second theme that reoccurs is the tension between tradition and modernity. For the Zapotec intellectuals, they were successful because they were supported by others who did not see their work and modernity as contradictory. The last important theme is how the magazine opens itself up to the world by showcasing researchers, artists, and poets from other backgrounds and other places in the world. *Guchachi' Reza* demonstrates that the Isthmus Zapotec are not only concerned with themselves and Juchitán but see themselves as members of an international community. These three intertwined themes become apparent in the pages of *Guchachi'* because of the breadth and depth of articles, poems, songs, and art that are published.

History, collecting archival documents, balancing those with oral histories, and recognizing themselves as a people with a history is one of the main preoccupations of the editors. This is reflected in the second "Presentación." First, the editors reveal that it is the twentieth anniversary of their publication as well as the "medio centenar", meaning the fiftieth number of the magazine (2). They also note the tumultuous times that their publication has covered, meaning the rise of COCEI and the leftist local government that took over Juchitán politics for a few years:

> En estas dos décadas se ha concentrado uno de los proyectos políticos y culturales más importantes del país por el hecho de haber demostrado la viabilidad de su ejecución. Los

> zapotecas de Juchitán han ganado democráticamente puestos de representación popular y han manejado su municipio con su propio proyecto y sus propias contradicciones. (2)

At the time of this publication, COCEI had won elections, been repressed, local leaders had been disappeared, and Zapotec had become the main language in use. In sum, significant changes had occurred both politically and in the realm of education, intellectual life, and language revitalization. This recent history, as well as a longer history beginning before the arrival of the Spanish, will prove important for the publication and its editors. The language the editors utilize, their repeated emphatic use of "propio" highlights how they take ownership of their history, even its "contradicciones." (2). This history is shared in the pages of their magazine. One of the most significant achievements of the magazine is the vast collection of archival documents that they are able to access and reprint. Many of these documents were from large archives in Mexico City, such as the Archivo General de la Nación (De la Cruz). Therefore, if it were not for the magazine, the readers would not have had easy access to the documents. Creating an Indigenous people's history does not remain within Juchitán, as they attempt to replicate their efforts for the EZLN in Chiapas.

The editors also hint at a perceived tension between modernity and tradition that, through their use of *kab'awilian* strategies, they can collapse. We see this as they continue to elaborate on what their goals were and continue to be: "*Guchachi' Reza*, desde su inicio en el ya desaparecido diario *El Satélite de Juchitán* de Taurino López Cruz, ha mantenido una misma dirección: contribuir al estudio de la historia de los *binnizá* y divulgar las manifestaciones tanto políticas como culturales del Istmo de Tehuantepec" (2). We saw this marrying of politics and culture begin to occur in the previous chapter. In *Neza Cubi*, Macario Matus was thinking through how to push for change but still hold on this his Zapotec identity when others denounced it as a reason

for local "atraso." We see a hint of this conflict in *Guchachi' Reza* too when the editors write, "en las épocas transcurridas, lo que permitió enfrentar los adversos temporales fue la solidaridad de los amigos, de aquellos que a pesar de los embates de la 'modernidad' confían todavía en la vitalidad de 'las causas perdidas'" (2). Here we see a recurring theme: the opposing forces of modernity and Indigeneity represented as tradition. This is the case with the previous two publications as well. The Zapotec intellectuals do not see a contradiction in being Indigenous intellectuals partaking in "Western" intellectual currents and remaining Zapotec. The Zapotec intellectuals used this publication, a printed text, for their goals of remaining Zapotec. The editors explicitly state that their literary production is a "renacer de las culturas indígenas a través de la palabra escrita" (2). For them, there is no contradiction between tradition and modernity, orality and the written. They continue to use these strategies throughout their magazine, pushing for the use of an official Isthmus Zapotec language based on the Latin alphabet. They appropriate the tools necessary for their goals of ensuring Zapotec futurities.

Guchachi' Reza, perhaps more so than *Neza* and *Neza Cubi*, opens itself up to the world and publishes many more pieces that are from non-Zapotec authors and about non-Zapotec topics. We see that it was not just the Zapotec or Juchitec community, but also a variety of intellectuals both in Juchitán and Oaxaca who contributed various pieces to the study of Zapotec culture and history. Finally, in this "Presentación," the reader is reminded of the goals of the editorial team. They claim, "El camino, como la vida misma, ha resultado tener encuentros y desencuentros, pero en este largo proceso siempre se ha buscado generar un espacio abierto donde distintas voces puedan ser escuchadas, diferentes puntos de vista puedan ser analizados, y múltiples imágenes puedan ser disfrutadas" (2). Their goal of having a variety of voices reflected in their magazine is clear. Just as in the previous two publications, where pieces with opposing

viewpoints and letters revealing personal conflicts between intellectuals were printed, as well as a wide variety of themes were presented, *Guchachi' Reza* continues that dialogical and polyphonic tradition. A magazine format already allows for the simultaneous and consecutive coexistence of multiple voices, and the editors continue to allow multiple perspectives to flourish. In this statement, we also see the recurrence of the image of the path, and while in this magazine the meaning of this path is not explained, we know from *Neza Cubi* that it alludes to the Zapotec path of "lo correcto." The editors acknowledge their role and that of *Guchachi' Reza* in continuing that path when they write: "La Iguana Rajada, en su público transitar, siguió los pasos marcados por *Neza*, *Guiengola*[111] y *Neza Cubi*, al mismo tiempo que *Guchachi' Reza* ha abierto nuevas veredas, ahora recorridas por otras revistas oaxaqueñas, en este renacer de las culturas indígenas a través de la palabra escrita" (2). The biggest difference for this magazine is the introduction of non-Zapotec intellectuals, like anthropologists and ethnographers who also started to publish regularly in the magazine. They not only focused on the Zapotec but other Indigenous peoples as well, contributing to the field of ethnography and anthropology in Oaxaca. *Guchachi' Reza*, though not an academic journal, begins to publish these researchers, bringing these texts to a non-academic audience.

5. Becoming the Iguana: Juchiteco Symbolism and Identity

The name of this magazine and of the intellectual group[112] that is the force behind the magazine at its start points to the way that Zapotec intellectuals think of themselves throughout

[111] Here we learn that there was another magazine before *Neza Cubi*. Not much information is available on *Guiengola*, but there were a few other newspapers and magazines created by Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals throughout the years that did not last very long and therefore did not receive as much attention, such as La *Raza* and *Didcha* (Guerrero).

[112] In the "Presentación," the editors reveal that the group behind the magazine is also called *guchachi' reza* and is composed of Zapotec intellectuals, artists, poets, and photographers.

time. The iguana – an animal that functions as a symbol of the Zapotecs and of their existence – becomes the entryway into colonial *relaciones* published in the first few numbers of the magazine. Through the symbol of the iguana, the Zapotec intellectuals behind *Guchachi' Reza* begin to draw history from their point of view, different to that of the nation-state, one where they existed before the formation of the Mexican nation, one where Zapotecs continue to exist in the present and will continue to exist in the future. Through their use of the iguana, calling to it like a nahual, the intellectuals use *kab'awilian* strategies, combining colonial *relaciones*, Maya sacred texts, and their own Juchitec spiritual beliefs to decenter the Mexican nation and assert their continued existence.

The iguana becomes an important topic since the beginning of the magazine and, in fact, in the first *suplemento* of *Guchachi' Reza* there are already various pieces dedicated to this animal. At the top of the first page, there are two quotes dedicated to iguanas (e.g. see figure 3): the first is by Carlos Pellicer and the second is by Pablo Neruda.

Figure 3. The first page of the first *suplemento* of *Guchachi' Reza*, no. 1, Feb. 1975, p. 1. Screenshot by author.

The iguana is discussed in the "Presentación" of the first *suplemento,* where the writers briefly explain why they refer to the animal to name themselves and their magazine, hinting at the way this animal will be utilized symbolically. They refer both to the biological facts, the long existence of the animal, and the cultural significance of the iguana. The animal has existed since the previous era and is found both in preclassical architecture and in music. Some of the themes introduced here will be expounded in the other pieces published in this *suplemento*. Lower on the page is a piece by Francisco Toledo, "Lo que sabemos de la iguanas," which reads more as a reflection on the different kinds of iguanas and the way they are prepared for cooking and eating. The theme of the iguana continues in this *suplemento* and throughout the next numbers. In taking on the iguana as their symbol, the Zapotec intellectuals lay claim to their continued existence.

One piece by Víctor de la Cruz begins to point to the relationship between the iguana and the Isthmus Zapotecs, drawing from the Chilam Balam, a series of Maya books,[113] to collapse binaries between the past and the present, as well as the mundane and the sacred. Víctor de la Cruz's piece, titled "Más sobre las iguanas," begins by citing the *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel* (translated by Antonio Mediz Bolio). He begins:

> *Yokol-Chee, Pupulní-huh*. Las iguanas eran sus genios cuando salieron de allí. *Dzodzil*. *Tiab*. *Bitun-chchen*. Sucedió que entraron a *Tipikal*, nombre de este pozo. Y sucedió que allí se hicieron más numerosas. Y fueron a *Pochuh*. Y este es el nombre del pozo en que sucedió que asaron iguanas. Y fueron a *Maní*. Allí olvidaron su lengua. Así se lee en el *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel*, traducción de Antonio Mediz Bolio. (1)

[113] This is not the first time we have seen this occur, where these intellectuals draw inspiration from the Aztec and the Maya. Since *Neza*, Gabriel López Chiñas was writing about a "Quetzalcoatl Zapoteca," and later on Sánchez-Antonio will draw from the *Popol Vuh* to rebuild Isthmus Zapotec cosmology.

This quote is from the "Libro de los Linajes," which explains "la memoria de las cosas que sucedieron y que hicieron" (Mediz Bolio 16). De la Cruz cites this book, credited to a Maya priest, with stories that existed since before the arrival of the Spanish to the Yucatan Peninsula that contain pre-Hispanic histories, cosmologies, and rituals. In this manner he signals to the reader the longevity that iguanas have had in the Americas, so much so that they are a part of sacred texts. After this introduction, this quote with only the explanation "Así se lee en el *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel*," De la Cruz moves on to explain the way that iguanas are prepared for food (1). His grandmother, who was from the "segunda sección" of Juchitán, "todavía sacrificaba iguana como hacía su madre" (De la Cruz 1). In explaining the use of the iguana for sacrifice occurring in Juchitán, De la Cruz draws connections to books that hold information on religion, rituals, and cosmology. He alternates between the mundane and the sacred, as if the distinction itself is blurry, from a sacred text to the way that his grandmother prepared various types of iguanas for food, only to return to the sacred, the sacrifice of these iguanas by his grandmother. Just like in the *Chilam Balam*, where "los hombres mayas (…) sabrán el significado de lo que hay aquí cuando lo lean," (Mediz Bolio 16), so does De la Cruz leave out details on the sacrifice, only sharing where these rituals take place, but not anything else on the ritual itself. In contrast to previously didactic and detailed pieces related to customs and clothing, as well as music and dance published in *Neza*, this piece by De la Cruz only provides hints. Here, De la Cruz writes more like other authors in *Neza* when they tell their version of the *binnigula'sa* origin story. They reveal that in writing down their story to share with their audience, they are only lifting a veil, but some aspects remain a mystery. De la Cruz also leaves the details of the iguana ritual in mystery, so that the ritual itself remains in the hands of the Isthmus Zapotec. Important to note however, is the clear connection between the mundane

and the sacred, the connection between Juchitecos and iguanas that these intellectuals are starting to draw, as well as the long history of iguanas in the Americas, since before the arrival of the Spanish. In this piece, De la Cruz relies on the *Chilam Balam*, but the editors will utilize other sources to continue shaping their history of the iguana.

Iguanas continue to be a central theme for the editors, as the section titled "Lo que sabemos de las iguanas" continues to make an appearance in the first three numbers once the *suplemento* is turned into a magazine. In the next numbers, the sources that these intellectuals draw from range from contemporary poets to American Indian songs and colonial *relaciones*. In the first number of the magazine *Guchachi' Reza*, the illustration appears with the title, a mirrored and inverted iguana lying on what appears to be a branch (e.g see fig. 4). Interestingly, just like the representation of *Kab'awil* as a bicephalic eagle looking in two directions, so does this mirrored iguana looks in two directions. In contrasting black ink to the yellowed page, the title sits above the image of the iguanas.

Figure 4. The title and accompanying image to the section "Lo que sabemos de las iguanas" that appears in *Guchachi' Reza*, no. 1, p. 2. Screenshot by author.

In this section, there are two pieces dedicated to iguanas, "Iguanas y lagartos," by Fray Diego de Landa, and "Iguana de iguanar," a poem by an anonymous author only identified as a Juchiteco.

In the second number, the section appears again, this time with a poem titled "Canto de la iguana Negra," which is labeled as a "canción pima" found in "American Indian…" by Cronyn.[114] This collection of poetry was originally published in English, titled "Song of the Black Lizard," and it is not stated who translated this poem into Spanish to be published in *Guchachi' Reza*. The last time that this section, "Lo que sabemos de las iguanas," appears, is in the third number of the magazine. In this final appearance, there are two poems published by Rafael Alberti, from *Poesías Completas*[115] (1961).

A noticeable feature of *Guchachi' Reza* is the use of colonial *relación*, originally employed to transmit information to the Old World, used here to highlight the long history of both iguanas and Zapotecs in the Americas. In a way, they turn the *relación* on its head, from a tool to transmit information to colonial powers, into a tool to demonstrate the long history of the Zapotec in the continent. In the first number of the magazine, the section "Lo que sabemos de las iguanas" is composed of "Iguanas y lagartos," by Fray Diego de Landa, a text found in the *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (1566). This piece is a description of iguanas, the way they look and the way they are used as food and medicine. De Landa writes how they are eaten by the Spanish, "las comen los españoles en tiempo de ayuno y la hallan muy singular comida y sana" (2). He also notes the way that the Indigenous people catch them, "péscanlas los indios con lazos, encaramadas en los árboles y en agujeros de ellos" (2). De Landa continues to explain that these iguanas are not just used for food but also as medicine. He elaborates, "el estiércol de éstas es admirable medicina para curar nubes de los ojos, puesto fresco en ellas" (2). This section is only an excerpt of this colonial *relación* but presents a first-person account of the introduction to

[114] The book referenced is *American Indian Poetry: An Anthology of Songs and Chants*, edited by George W. Cronyn and first published in 1918. This collection includes songs from various nations situated in the United States.
[115] *Poesías Completas* (1961) by Rafael Alberti, a Spanish poet from the Generación del '27, gathered all the poetry he had published in the previous 30 years.

iguanas from a Spanish point of view. These *relaciones*, which were originally meant to catalogue and provide information to the Old World are being used in a different manner by the Zapotec intellectuals. Through this piece, the editors are using *relación* to highlight the continuity of the iguana, staking a claim to their immemorial existence in the Americas.

The temporal shifts that occur throughout these first few numbers of *Guchachi' Reza* highlight the way that the Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals think of iguanas and therefore themselves. They choose to publish pieces that are sacred texts containing stories and knowledge that date back to before the Conquest. They include colonial *relaciones* that highlight how iguanas were a part of the land since before the Conquest. And they point out the way that iguanas have been and continue to be a part of Zapotec life, as food and as ritual. The Zapotec intellectuals, calling not only their magazine but themselves, their group, *guchachi' reza*, liken themselves to this animal. The iguana is a symbol of resistance, of survival. Though not explicitly stated in the "Presentaciones" or first articles, Toledo's fascination with iguanas and *nahuales*[116] in his art,[117] points to the fact that there was a deeper spiritual connection to the animal for him. In choosing the iguana as a *nahual* of all Juchitecos, the Zapotec intellectuals and creators of this magazine attribute the iguana's survival and tenacity to themselves. They were part of the American landscape, and an important feature of Indigenous material and spiritual life well before the arrival of the Europeans, and they still are. And just like the iguana, the Zapotec and other Indigenous peoples are also still present. The centrality of the iguana in *Guchachi' Reza* thus contributes to the affirmation of a history from their point of view that they

[116] *Nahuales* in Juchitán are an animal spirit that is connected to a person for various reasons. Some people say the day that someone is born affects one's *nahual*. Others that every person has certain attributes that are similar to a specific animal, making that animal their *nahual*.
[117] Toledo has various art pieces that include iguanas such as *La Iguana* (1976) and his *Guchachi* print series (Del Toro 75). Various gallery sources have also described the iguana as Toledo's own nahual, as well as the nickname his father gave him (Del Toro 75).

will begin writing in the pages of their magazine. For them, the iguana symbolizes the continuity of Zapotec existence since before the arrival of the Spanish and the creation of the Mexican nation-state, decentralizing the nation-state and focusing more on the local, Juchitán and the Isthmus.

As we have seen, the symbolic connection between Juchitecos/Zapotecs and iguanas is a long one, and it is still very much alive today. One need only walk through the streets of Juchitán and see the abundance of street art with the symbolism of various animals, the iguana included (e.g. see fig. 5).

Figure 5. Mural in Juchitán, 2023, Oaxaca. Photograph by author.

This mural is reminiscent of a well-known photograph, “Nuestra señora de las iguanas,” by Graciela Iturbide, where a woman poses with various iguanas on her head (e.g. see fig. 6).

Figure 6. Nuestra señora de las Iguanas, 1989. Photograph by Graciela Iturbide.

The importance of iguanas for Juchitecos can also be seen in the language revitalization program called "El camino de la iguana," where its creators – linguist Víctor Cata and poet Natalia Toledo – call back not just to the iguana but also to *neza*, the "right" path for Zapotecs (Manzo). This program was created to organize workshops for youth in Juchitán and surrounding towns so that the Isthmus Zapotec language would not be lost. In a similar way that these workshops established an equivalence between the preservation of the Zapotec language and the path to Zapotec futures (in the form of an iguana that moves forward), the importance of the Zapotec language to the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* becomes more explicit in the pages of the following issues of the magazine.

6. Language as Vehicle, Language as Tool

Guchachi' Reza as a magazine, in requiring the use of the official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet, and publishing works about the alphabet, served both as a space where the written

language was consolidated and the importance of the language was highlighted. Creating an official alphabet had been a source of concern for Zapotec intellectuals since the 1930s. The history and efforts of the Academia de Lengua Zapoteca can be found in the pages of *Neza*. Still, it is not until 1956 that linguists and Zapotec intellectuals meet in a "mesa redonda" and agree on an alphabet. De la Cruz claims that: "En su generalización ha jugado un papel definitivo la revista *Guchachi' Reza*, porque fue el espacio donde los escritores aplicaron dicho alfabeto para difundirlo a sus lectores; ya que uno de los criterios para publicar en esta revista, fue el manejo de este alfabeto" (493). The motivations behind making the use of this official alphabet a requirement can be found in the magazine itself, reflected both in the fact that they published articles in Isthmus Zapotec across thirty years, as well as in the various pieces dedicated exclusively to the topic of Zapotec language and its official alphabet. Moreover, I claim that in consolidating the use of an official alphabet through *Guchachi' Reza*, De la Cruz and the rest of the editors enact *kab'awilian* strategies by appropriating a system of writing not originally their own to further disseminate and revitalize Zapotec language and therefore culture.

Before delving into the appropriation of this alphabet, we must look into why the Zapotec language was so essential for De la Cruz. Various articles on this topic appear in *Guchachi' Reza* that reveal how the continuation of this language, both in speaking and in writing, is of central concern to the Zapotec intellectuals. The pieces fall into three general categories: updates on the *mesas redondas* about the Zapotec language; linguistic studies; and articles on the politics of language, specifically as related to Indigenous languages. For example, "Conclusiones generales de la mesa redonda sobre comunicación y escritura: procesos de desarrollo de la lengua zapoteca," published in the thirty-eighth number of the magazine, provides an overview of a recent meeting that took place among Zapotec intellectuals not just from the Isthmus but also the

Sierra. The articles that focus on linguistics range from historical perspectives such as "La gramática y el diccionario zapoteco de Juan de Córdoba," by Paul Radin to more recent pieces like "Identificación de la unidad de la palabra en Zapoteco: ¿Que es una palabra?" by Velma Pickett. Regarding the politics of language, Víctor de la Cruz's political and identitarian reasons for requiring the use of the official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet are published early in the fourth number of the magazine.

In "El idioma como arma de opresión y liberación," De la Cruz begins with the conquest and ends with current Juchitán to argue for the importance of the Zapotec language. De la Cruz traces language as a tool for colonization but also liberation. He explains the way that colonization was not just a physical process but also an epistemological one, with the metaphor of the sword and the cross (De la Cruz 5). Then he delves into Mexico's current educational system that is concerned with literacy but does not take into consideration Indigenous people. He accuses the educational system of actively trying to: "Castellanizarlos, ya sea por el método directo o a través de sus propias lenguas, es introducir con el nuevo idioma otra ideología que modificará – no necesariamente en beneficio de ellos – la cultura, la ideología y las lenguas nativas" (De la Cruz 8). He argues that the current educational model, with a focus on Spanish literacy, is only another tool for oppression, even when Indigenous languages themselves are sometimes used as vehicles to introduce foreign ideologies to the communities. After referring to various intellectuals ranging from Mariátegui to Fanon, he ends the article by returning to the case of Juchitán. Even though De la Cruz would later publish a few other texts on the Zapotec language, most notably a speech he gives at the "Encuentro sobre la política de lenguaje en México," this initial article lays out De la Cruz's argument most thoroughly, as it reveals how he

centers himself and his goals in his Zapotec language and culture, even as he is inspired by intellectuals from other traditions.

Just like the *Neza* generation was inspired by widespread intellectual currents of their time and fused them with their Zapotec cosmology, so does Víctor de la Cruz find inspiration in Marxist, *indigenista*, and postcolonial authors of the twentieth century. De la Cruz bases his argument on a combination of Marxist authors, mainly José Carlos Mariátegui who wrote about indigenous socialism in the Andes in his *Siete ensayos* (1928), and Frantz Fanon, who wrote about the colonizer and the colonized in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Through his reading of these intellectuals, De la Cruz argues for the importance of Indigenous languages in allowing for Indigenous worldviews and histories to continue and lead to liberation. However, while he is inspired by these various tendencies and intellectuals, he still sets himself, and Indigenous people by extension, apart from these major movements, once again returning to Juchitán and the Zapotec worldview as his crux.

While De la Cruz cites other thinkers throughout his article, Mariátegui stands out to me for a few reasons. First, Mariátegui, who was trying to think about politics in the Andes through the concept of *ayllu* as an autochthonous form of socialism, is relevant as he functions in parallel to the *Neza* intellectuals who were thinking through *guelaguetza/guendalisaa* as a way of organizing politically through strictly Zapotec social practices. Here, De la Cruz cites Mariátegui's essay, "El problema del indio" (1928), to highlight the long history of issues derived from colonial and republican notions of "indigenous education." De la Cruz affirms, "Entre las críticas hechas a la política educativa del indigenismo encontramos el ensayo de José Carlos Mariátegui, desde la posición marxista, la cual, a pesar de haber sido escrita en la segunda década de este siglo, sigue siendo actual y punto de partida para cualquier trabajo sobre este

asunto por la forma certera y sintética en que la plantea" (9). Even though Mariátegui was writing decades before, closer to the start of the twentieth century, De la Cruz believes that his argument still stands. For both Mariátegui and De la Cruz, *Indigenista* educational policy continues to be problematic because it stays at the cultural and philosophical level, but it is truly an economic and political issue. In other words, not much has changed in the realm of indigenous education, not in Mexico nor the Andes, and by extension, throughout Latin America. By citing Mariátegui, De la Cruz not only joins the continental conversation on Indigenous education, but he also highlights the way that this problem has persisted through time.

De la Cruz is also in conversation with Fanon, citing him a few times throughout his essay. Most interesting is when he adds to Fanon's argument about epistemological colonialism, and therefore epistemic violence. I cite the quote here in its entirety to highlight what De la Cruz takes from Fanon's argument, and to show how this Zapotec author pushes Fanon's arguments even further, getting close to theorizations on epistemological violence that would later be presented by the authors of the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality working group. De la Cruz writes:

> Estamos de acuerdo con Frantz Fanon en cuanto afirma que "el colonialismo no se contenta con apretar al pueblo entre sus redes, con vaciar el cerebro colonizado de toda forma y de todo contenido"; sin embargo no creemos que la distorsión, desfiguramiento y aniquilamiento del pasado del pueblo oprimido lo hagan los colonizadores o una perversión de la lógica, sino precisamente lo contrario: la distorsión y aniquilamiento del pasado de un pueblo forma parte de la lógica de la opresión, porque sin esta tarea de privarle de su pasado, de su tradición, de su idioma y de la ideología que a través de este

> les da cohesión; en fin, sin aniquilar su cultura no se podría sujetar definitivamente a ningún pueblo. (9)

While Fanon writes that colonialism unintentionally results in the distortion of Indigenous and Black knowledge, De la Cruz argues that it is not an unintentional act, but an essential component of colonialism. Robbing people of their "pasado, tradición e ideología,"[118] is a requirement for oppression. In this article, De la Cruz dialogues with Fanon to build his own argument about the centrality of the Zapotec language in the process of liberation.

Víctor de la Cruz uses Mariátegui and Fanon to place his argument in the context of anticolonial thought, but he soon distinguishes himself by returning to Zapotec language, traditions, culture, and cosmovision as the center and most important axis of his claims. First, De la Cruz makes it clear that while he is inspired by thinkers like Marx and Engels, who he cites throughout his article, he is not entirely in agreement with them. He critiques the idea that capitalism is a historic necessity as it is a prerequisite stage for the birth of socialism, because "los indígenas luchan contra aquel sistema de producción y explotación renegando de él porque los destruye física y culturalmente (genocidio y etnocidio) sin ventaja alguna para ellos" (10). Where orthodox Marxism lacked a sustained theorization about the role and effects of racial and gender differences, De la Cruz places Indigeneity at the center of his reflections. In his view, capitalism only serves to destroy Indigenous peoples, which is why they need to find another system to live under, one which they potentially already have with their practice of *guendalisaa*/*guelaguetza*. Still, in this piece, De la Cruz does not elaborate on what that new system[119] would look like. De la Cruz then returns to the importance of the Zapotec language. He

[118] De la Cruz and *Guchachi' Reza* do the job of recovering and disseminating Zapotec history, tradition and ideology.

[119] In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard similarly argues that Marxism is not the way for Indigenous liberation but is a necessary part of the conversation: "rendering Marx's theoretical frame relevant to a comprehensive

acknowledges the resistance capacity and regenerative force of the Indigenous languages that have survived, "aunque fragmentada[s]," which means that "se ha conservado una visión propia del mundo de sus hablantes" (10). De la Cruz reminds us that every language holds a specific worldview, therefore the preservation and continued existence of Indigenous languages is crucial. Then, De la Cruz arrives at his final and most important argument in his article:

> Por esto en la primera etapa de la lucha por la liberación de un pueblo, o paralelamente con esta, deber ir ligada la tarea de rescate, revalorización y divulgación de las lenguas indígenas como una medida para dar cohesión a la lucha de las minorías y motivar la conducta de sus miembros hacia la transformación revolucionaria de las estructuras opresoras, deformantes y aniquiladoras de la cultura y el idioma de los grupos étnicos. (10)

In other words, liberation cannot be separated from language preservation, revalorization, and dissemination. This article provides insight into why the use and revitalization of Isthmus Zapotec was so important for De la Cruz, and sheds crucial light on his activities as a cultural promoter and political agitator in Juchitán. Under this light, we can better understand why he helps launch a magazine that publishes bilingually, why he fully supports the *mesa redonda* for the creation of an official alphabet, why he collaborates with key linguists like Velma Pickett in Juchitán, and why he eventually conducts his own linguistic research on Zapotec language. For De la Cruz, language is political, and the liberation of his people and his town cannot be separated from its preservation.

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understanding of settler-colonialism and Indigenous resistance requires that it be transformed in conversation with the critical thought and practices of Indigenous peoples themselves" (8).

In "Neza diidcha guchachi' (el camino de la palabra de la iguana)"[120] De la Cruz shares an anecdote that highlights the *kab'awilian* strategies that not just the intellectuals but also the children of the community enact when appropriating the Spanish alphabet for expressing themselves in Isthmus Zapotec. In this speech, De la Cruz traces the history of written Isthmus Zapotec, pinpointing the work of pioneer author Arcadio G. Molina from San Blas Atempa, Tehuantepec who published *La rosa del amor* in 1894 (12). He of course then names *Neza*, acknowledging how those wealthy students were writing from the capital city of Mexico but still thinking through and contributing to Zapotec thought and language. De la Cruz also includes *Didcha* by Andrés Henestrosa and *Neza Cubi* by Macario Matus and himself (14). The rest of the speech is a call for the continued study, dissemination, and use of the Zapotec language, for the support of Casa de Cultura, and for the return of *Guchachi' Reza*, whose publication was paused at the time. Finally, De la Cruz demands "una política no colonialista en nuestro país hacia los grupos indígenas" (17).

The focus of this speech moves from the creation of an official Isthmus Zapotec alphabet towards its consolidation and highlights the *kab'awilian* strategies that the Zapotec intellectuals utilized, appropriating an alphabet that was not their own to continue writing and publishing in Isthmus Zapotec, therefore keeping Zapotec alive. The anecdote that De la Cruz shares is a personal one, something that occurred at his daughter's fifth or sixth birthday party. To celebrate, De la Cruz and Toledo gift the attending children a copy of a book written by De la Cruz himself and illustrated by Toledo, *Diidxaguca' sti' lexu ne gueu'*, a bilingual (zapoteco-español) version of *Conejo y coyote*. He tells us that he was surprised when he heard the children, who had not

[120] The article referenced is published in number 31 of *Guchachi' Reza* and is cited as "Ponencia corregida presentada en la sesión sobre 'Oralidad y escritura' de la XIII Mesa redonda de la Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, celebrada en Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chis, del 11 al 16 de agosto de 1991" (11).

previously been taught to read in Zapotec, begin reading the book aloud, together. De la Cruz explains this occurrence by mentioning that "a pesar de la situación de diglosia que viven los niños, el alfabeto práctico fue un puente entre las dos lenguas, ya que casi todas las letras del alfabeto castellano pasaron con el mismo valor fonémico al alfabeto zapoteco" (16). In this manner, the children, who had been taught to read in Spanish under the rationale of "castellanización" promoted by the Mexican public education system, were however able to also read in Isthmus Zapotec without any previous formal teaching. Therefore, even though De la Cruz aligns Spanish with modernity and with linguistic/epistemic violence when he mentions that "El discurso de su partido [PRI] es de la modernidad, representado lingüísticamente por la imposición del español" (16), the Spanish alphabet also can become a useful tool for the Zapotec. What we find here is not a blanket rejection of Spanish nor of modernity, but instead an appropriation of their tools and tenets for a very different goal: to continue being Zapotec. This anecdote captures the success of a language revitalization movement that had started decades before. The creation of an Isthmus Zapotec alphabet out of the Latin alphabet meant that Juchiteco intellectuals appropriated a colonial writing system to their own benefit and put it at the service of preserving and revitalizing their language and culture.

This move towards linguistic autonomy also leads to the viability of a Zapotec future, as signaled by De la Cruz when he closes his speech. He first highlights the fact that the youth are now writing in Zapotec, most likely thanks to the workshops held at the Casa de Cultura.[121] He rejects the notion that writing in Zapotec is an "ocupación de viejos nostálgicos," (16) and, by echoing Gabriel López Chiñas and the *Neza* intellectuals, claims that Zapotec is "un elemento

[121] In "La literatura de los binniza'," Irma Pineda writes how Víctor Terán, Natalia Toledo, and other writers of their generation were trained in the Casa de Cultura, where they took language courses and attended writing workshops (301).

viviente de la cultura actual de los zapotecos istmeños" (16). Through the consolidation of the alphabet and with publications like *Guchachi' Reza*, De la Cruz plans for a vital Zapotec future, and ends his text with a rhetorical question: "Una reflexión final: El zapoteco [,] los zapotecos ya llegaron al V Centenario de su 'descubrimiento' o de su 'encuentro' con los europeos, según la terminología de Miguel León Portilla, ¿llegarán al primer milenio de ese choque sangriento que casi los acabó?" (17). Even though De la Cruz ends with a question, his piece has demonstrated just how the Zapotecs will continue living and resisting, just as they have already been doing so under five hundred years of colonization.

When De la Cruz claims that *Guchachi' Reza* played "un papel definitivo" in helping consolidate the official Isthmus alphabet, he is referring to a movement that began in the 1930s and that continued through the publication of *Guchachi'*. In this way, De la Cruz conceives of himself and his group as contributing to the next stage of this linguistic revitalization movement. The alphabet is approved in 1956, and in *Guchachi' Reza* all authors had to use it to be able to publish. As we have seen in this section, the concern with the use of Isthmus Zapotec language for Zapotec intellectuals is due to various reasons. First, they have always argued that Indigenous languages hold worldviews. Second, especially through Víctor de la Cruz, language becomes political. The continuation of the Zapotec language is tied to the continuation of the Zapotec people, and to the recovery of their own thought and ideology. Thus, for the *Guchachi' Reza* creators, investing in the Isthmus Zapotec language is synonymous with investing in Zapotec futurities.

7. A Specific History: "La heroica ciudad Juchitán de Zaragoza"[122]

Just as the editors are creating a specific Zapotec future, so too do they create a specific past, one of rebellion and resistance that precedes national history but also contributes to it, enacting *kab'awilian* strategies to converge two seemingly opposing stances. The past that the editors create serves two purposes: on the one hand, it contests or adds to official national history, revealing a Zapotec history before the arrival of the Spanish; on the other hand, it props up Juchitán as a heroic town of resistance both to outsiders and to the central government and presents Juchitecos as sometimes fighting against the nation while at other times defending it heroically. This focus on the past is quite remarkable if we consider that throughout the lifespan of *Guchachi' Reza,* more than one hundred pieces on Juchitec and Zapotec history are printed. These texts are a combination of articles by contemporary Zapotec intellectuals and documents from archives that are transcribed and/or reprinted. In this manner, the editors strike a balance in showing how Zapotecs have been historically seen and read by others, and how they represent themselves. Especially interesting is their combination of methods, as the published pieces are based on archival research and on oral histories told by people in Juchitán who had lived-experience of certain events. They deem it important to collect oral histories from the people present at crucial moments and to place these testimonies on the same plane as archival documents and scholarly articles. The magazine does not follow a chronological order, instead interspersing the texts on Zapotec rulers with colonial *relaciones*, texts documenting rebellions, and biographical information on José Gregorio Meléndez[123] and José F. Gómez[124] throughout the

[122] The official name of the city, even though it is commonly just called "Juchitán."
[123] A Zapotec version of his name is Che Gorio Melendre.
[124] Also called Che Gómez. There is more work dedicated to José F. Gómez and the rebellion he led. For more information consult *Cuarenta días que conmovieron al Istmo: Hemerografía, documentos y testimonios del movimiento chegomista Juchitán 1911* (2010), by Elisa Ramírez Castañeda, and *A Revolution Unfinished: The Chegomista Rebellion and the Limits of Revolutionary Democracy in Juchitán, Oaxaca* (2018) by Colby Ristow.

numbers of *Guchachi'*. The editors of *Guchachi' Reza* pick and choose episodes of the past to create their particular history and, through *kab'awilian* strategies, position Juchitecos both as rebels against the national government and as national heroes, combining both orality and text as their source material.

The long timeline that begins before Contact is all connected by a common theme of resistance against colonial authorities and the national government, as well as by its relevance to national history. According to Howard Campbell, the goal of the historical narratives advanced by COCEI was to place this organization in a centuries-long tradition of resistance. He notes how "prominent *Juchitecos* who fought on the 'reactionary side of history' are omitted from COCEI's discourse" and, as examples, he cites Juvencio Robles and Rosalino Martínez, two local generals[125] who are never acknowledged because they do not fit into the narrative of resistance against central authorities (Campbell 52). In a similar manner as COCEI, the Zapotec and Juchitec history that the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* will push forward is selective in who to include, who to leave out, and who to highlight to contribute to this narrative of resistance.

Their history of rebellion begins before the arrival of the Spanish, in a Zapotec kingdom. Focusing on the Zapotec also serves to decenter the Aztec empire, showcasing a history that has not been central to the nation, but that is equally as important to the Zapotec intellectuals. When writing about Zapotec society before contact, Cosijoeza,[126] his son Cosijopi, and the city of Guiengola[127] are main topics that provide an alternate history to that of the nation-state. Through the focus on these ruling men and their capital city, the editors provide insight into a civilization

[125] "For example, a *Juchiteco* general (Juvencio Robles) who ravaged Morelos while in pursuit of Zapata, and another general (Rosalino Martínez) who committed a massacre of workers at Rio Blanco – one of the incidents which touched off the Mexican Revolution – are never acknowledged" (Campbell 52).
[126] Cosijoeza was the second to last ruler of the Zapotec, who is able to make an alliance with the Aztec; his son Cosijopi is the last Zapotec ruler.
[127] The Zapotec capital was originally Zaachila in the valley, but eventually gets moved to Guiengola, in present-day Tehuantepec.

that existed at the same time as the Aztec, was able to resist their invasion, and in turn allied with them.[128] In the article titled, "Cocijoeza, rey del pueblo de las nubes, y la princesa Copo de Algodón," by Ursula Thimer-Sachse, the author details a long history of conflict between the Zapotec and other invaders. In this creative retelling of pre-Conquest rivalries, Thimer-Sachse details how Cosijoeza and his people were attacked by the *tlatoani*[129] Ahuitzotl. The author begins her story with a simple sentence to situate the reader: "Era el año 1500" (Thimer-Sachse 17). She then proceeds to use terms that are seemingly contradictory, if not ambiguous: "En México aún no se presentían los cambios inminentes, aún no se tenían conocimientos del arribo de los extranjeros asesinos a las zonas costeras del puente continental centroamericano. No habían llegado tales noticias a Anáhuac, la tierra entre el mar oriente y el occidente" (Thimer-Sachse17). Here, the author uses both the term México and the term Anáhuac, one referring to a modern nation-state and the other to a territory that preceded the formation of Mexico. She also calls the colonizer an "extranjero asesino" but she had previously called him an "aventurero" (17). By setting the scene in this way, Thimer-Sachse emphasizes that the Aztec empire was not the only one in existence before the arrival of the Spanish. Before there was Mexico, there was the land and the people who lived there, with their societies and their battles. The fact that the focus is precisely on the battle between the Zapotec and the Aztec with the "triunfo de los zapotecos," also serves to perpetuate the history of Juchitán as a pueblo that has always resisted outside invaders (28). In this case, before they resisted the Spanish, they resisted the Aztec.

To continue highlighting the rebellious spirit of Juchitán, they turn to Gregorio Meléndez and José F. Gómez, two men who led significant uprisings in the 1850s and 1910s. The editors of

[128] Cosijoeza and his son Cosijopi appear in a few articles in *Neza* in the 1930s, and then in 2010 Elisa Ramírez publishes a book titled, *Cosijoeza y la Coyolicatzin*. They, and the battles against the Aztecs, play an important role in Juchitec/Zapotec history.
[129] Leader or king in Nahuatl

the magazine published a series of texts on José Gregorio Meléndez – who led a rebellion against the central government to secure municipal autonomy in the administration of local salt deposits (Lara Gómez 128)[130] – to demonstrate the way he was portrayed by outsiders versus the way that the community in Juchitán saw him, an example of their long history of resistance through the defense of the land and autonomy. While there are not as many articles dedicated to Che Gorio Melendre as there are to Che Gómez, the tenth number of the magazine appears to be dedicated to the former, with five articles/texts about him and the rebellion he led. The texts published combine different genres, ranging from a letter by then President Benito Juárez, news articles reporting on Che Gorio Melendre, and an oral history gathered by Víctor de la Cruz. In combining official archival documents and oral histories, the Zapotec intellectuals showcase the way that their leaders and their city are portrayed by others and how they portray themselves.

The anonymous author who presents the compilation of documents introduces them with a clear purpose, going beyond the two figures to argue that there is an official national history that is that of the victors, and then there is another version of the "vencidos." The author begins, "La historia oficial es el discurso del poder. Para el historiador oficial y oficioso no existe la voz de los vencidos o tal vez exista, pero solo como coro, parte del decorado que hace resaltar la voz del Héroe, del Prócer, que es la voz de la Patria" ("Testimonios" 9). The official documents that they provide serve as an account of national history, which they claim is that of the victors, whose purpose is supporting the nation. The author continues, "Para dar [voz] a los juchitecos rebeldes que intervinieron en los sucesos, hemos buscado y encontrado un testimonio, transmitido por tradición oral, que es la versión de los vencidos que se creen vencedores" ("Testimonios" 9). The editors of the magazine are not satisfied with simply reprinting archival

[130] The rebellion was briefly paused due to the war with the United States but resumed soon after. In 1850 then governor of Oaxaca Benito Juárez sent troops to quell the rebellion.

documents, they also want to provide their point of view. They achieve this through collecting oral histories from a local man. They present a different vision of Meléndez, the more common in Juchitán.

The newspaper articles that the editors choose to republish highlight the way that Meléndez was represented by outsiders in the capital city of Oaxaca who saw him as a criminal. The editors republish an article from the Oaxacan newspaper, *La Cucarda*, which was a Vallistocrat[131] newspaper that published on Meléndez in 1851 (Chassen-López 324). The author of the news article, "La Revolución de Meléndez,"[132] establishes his point of view of Meléndez as a universal truth that "todos los oaxaqueños sabe[n]" ("Revolución de Meléndez" 11). The author claims that Meléndez wanted to take what was not rightfully his, "terrenos," "frutos," y "salinas" to "enriquecer[se] sin el trabajo" ("Revolución de Meléndez" 11). The news article continues to build a negative character profile of Meléndez:

> ¿Meléndez es el hombre justo que solicita garantías para sostener los derechos del pueblo oaxaqueño, cuando es el primer ladrón, cuando con el incendio ha devorado las poblaciones, cuando ha asesinado a sus conciudadanos y cuando ha cometido toda clase de excesos en los lugares indefensos que han sido víctimas de sus crueldades? ¡De cuánto es capaz una conducta viciosa! ("Revolución de Meléndez" 11)

In these few sentences, Meléndez is called a thief and an assassin who has committed cruelties. One of the goals of the author in publishing his piece is to portray Meléndez in a certain light.

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[131] Chassen-López explains that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, "interrelated family networks" ruled Oaxaca from the capital city. She elaborates, "This oligarchy, which dominated the state capital and the Central Valleys region, had economic and political tentacles reaching out into the other regions of the state, especially the Sierra Juárez and the Mixteca, to neighboring states, and to the nation's capital. Oaxacans from other regions refer to inhabitants of the Central Valleys as Vallistos (valley people). But given the aristocratic pretensions of the ruling elites of the Central Valleys, Oaxacan scholars have recently dubbed them the 'Vallistocracia' (248). Víctor de la Cruz coined the term "Vallistocracia" (Chassen-López 248).

[132] Republished from *La Cucarda*, number 21, Oaxaca, January 5, 1851 ("Revolución").

This newspaper, published in Oaxaca City, represents the way that Meléndez was portrayed to the rest of the state. This depiction contrasts with the way that Juchitecos view Meléndez, where he is a hero of rebellion.

The oral history by Toribio Baltazar is meant to show a differing point of view, one that comes from the people and showcases two opposing parties. This man's story was told to him by another man, who was an "anciano" by the time he shared his story. That man was called Toribio Dxeñu, and it was he who knew Meléndez and was with him during the events he would share. Meléndez and his men are battling with an *hacendado*, who they accuse of selling the land and blocking their access to a water well. During their battle, they capture a young lawyer who advises Meléndez and his men on how to "reach an agreement" with the wealthy *hacendado* who owned "dos o tres haciendas" (Baltazar 14). The young lawyer suggests that they burn the *hacendado's* biggest *hacienda*, and continue burning his property until the *hacendado* seeks Meléndez for peace. The men begin to burn the *hacienda*, which, from Baltazar's perspective was righteously done, because it was for the people, or "hombres pobres" (14). Once they burn his biggest hacienda, the rich *hacendado* surrenders, and Meléndez and his men can access water. In this oral history, two sides are battling, one is the rich *hacendado* who is accused of selling land and blocking access to drinking water. The other is Meléndez and his men, "hombres pobres," who are simply attempting to defend their land and gain access to water. The editors' sympathy towards Meléndez and his men is highlighted in the starkly different characterization of the *hacendado* and Meléndez. According to the introduction preceding these texts on Che Gorio Melendre, this oral history is "la version de los vencidos" ("Testimonios" 9). By placing this oral history on the same plane as archival printed documents, the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* acknowledge the knowledge that the people have that is passed down through oral tradition.

They have their understanding of Meléndez as a historical figure: as Juchitecos see him, he fought for the people, for communal rights to the land and salt mines, and was therefore righteous in his rebellion. The figure of Meléndez, thus, is a prominent one in the history of rebellion that they are creating. But even as they focus on the rebellions and the local nature of Juchitán conflicts, the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* also reinforce the idea that the rebellious nature of their town led to them being active and at times key players in crucial moments of Mexico's history.

Just as the editors highlight a history of rebellion, they also called attention to the way Juchitecos contributed to national history, two seemingly opposing roles for Juchitán and themselves through their use of *kab'awilian* strategies. One such battle that brings in the Juchitecos into national history is the May 5th battle in Puebla against the French. In this specific moment, the Juchitecos stand with the nation, proud to defend their "patria," against invading forces. The documents printed about the battle are letters by generals and government officials that give the reader insight into the key role that the Oaxacan, majority Juchitec troops had during the battle. By reprinting these documents, the *Guchachi'* editors highlight the role that Juchitecos had in important episodes of national history but are still able to connect this active participation to a history of rebellion.

In these letters, the Juchitecos appear as proud Mexicans who fight for their nation, not a common trope about Juchitecos, but true in this instance. The reprinted letters are first introduced by Francisco José Ruiz Cervantes, who from the beginning highlights the role that Oaxaca and Juchitecs had during the battle of Puebla. The piece begins: "La contribución oaxaqueña para la defensa de la República Mexicana amenazada por la llamada triple Alianza (España, Inglaterra y Francia) fue generosa, pues según reportes de la época, la entidad cumplió con creces [*sic*] la

cuota humana fijada por el gobierno juarista de tres mil hombres armados" (Ruiz Cervantes 11). Ruiz Cervantes quantifies the "contribución" as "generosa," an argument that will be supported by the proceeding letters reprinted. The "contribución oaxaqueña" though, was in large part from Juchitán, placing Juchitecos once again on another level. Ruiz Cervantes reveals, "Los contingentes istmeños, provenientes en número considerable de Juchitán, estaban jefaturados por el comandante Pedro Gallego. A las tropas oaxaqueñas les tocó resguardar los flancos del fuerte de Guadalupe" (Ruiz Cervantes 11). Not only were they majorly Juchitec, but they also had a central role in defending the Guadalupe fort. In this moment, the Juchitecos are, as the following reprinted news article from *Alcance*, will state, "Valientes hijos" defending the "República Mexicana" (12). This is an image that is not common when reading Juchitec history, as a city and people who have resisted the central government for centuries. Still, the following two reprinted letters will demonstrate that these "brave" Juchitecos are still resisting invading forces in defense of their rights.

The letters reprinted provide details about the battle, but also mention specifically the role that the Oaxacan troops, many of which were Juchitec had in the defeat of the French, highlighting, for the *Guchachi'* editors the role of Juchitán in national history. The two letters reprinted were penned by a general and a government official. In these letters the Juchitecos are portrayed as brave soldiers and the theme of resistance against invading outsiders is taken up again. Ignacio Mejía writes to a friend only two days after the battle, on May 7th. In his letter he describes the role that the Oaxacan troops had in defeating the invading French army, mostly with praise but also sharing some details about the dead. He writes, "Nuestras tropas han rivalizado todas en decisión y valor. Oaxaca como tiene de costumbre" (Mejía 12). He once again places the Oaxacan troops on a pedestal and accounts their valor in combat to their being

Oaxacan, because it is "costumbre," or the norm, and thus expected. The theme of standing up against invaders appears in his letter too, as he writes, "Nuestro ejército ha conquistado un laurel eterno, poniendo a raya a los vencedores del mundo. Duró la refriega hasta las cuatro y media de la tarde, y perdieron muchísima gente" (Mejía 12). As he continues to share details on the battle, he also categorizes the French as the "vencedores del mundo," differentiating the Mexican nation from these "vencedores" and in that way highlighting how much the Mexicans overcame. This theme continues in the letter by Macsimiano R. Vera, a government official. He opens his letter with a clear argument: "Cuando el pueblo se arroja al combate en defensa de sus derechos nunca sus esfuerzos son infructuosos" (Vera 12). Even though he is not speaking specifically about the Oaxacan and Juchitec troops, he reiterates the common cause of the Juchitecs, "defensa de sus derechos." He claims that people cannot lose when it is their rights they fight for. He elevates this argument as he continues, "Con este hecho glorioso se deja demostrar a la faz del mundo el vivo entusiasmo de los mexicanos, que antes sacrificaran su ecsistencia [*sic*] que someterse a una nación estraña [*sic*], como lo sueña Francia" (Vera 12). For him, "los mexicanos" proved that they would rather die than be ruled by an invading, foreign nation. This argument is also one common in Juchitán, they have found themselves in countless rebellions exactly for that, because they will not be ruled by outsiders. Even as the letters contain common nationalistic tones, the *Guchachi'* editors reprint them specifically because they mention the role that Oaxaca and Juchitán had. This nationalism seems to be in stark contrast to the rebellious streak that has been painted for Juchitán, but for the editors, they hone on their contributions to defending themselves against outside invading forces.

In *Guchachi' Reza*, the editors create a specific history for Juchitán, focusing on a tradition of resistance dating back to Zapotec kingdoms and extending into the near past.

Simultaneously, they bring to light the ways that Juchitecs have played vital roles in national history, focusing on their role in the Battle of Puebla during the French invasion, and defending the nation. This seemingly opposing role (against the nation and yet still defending it, rebellious but brave) that Juchitecs take up in the pages of *Guchachi'* falls in line with what Campbell has stated about the way that COCEI utilized a history of rebellion to feed into COCEI, "COCEI politicians and intellectuals have created a political ideology which invokes visions of the past and selected aspects of Isthmus Zapotec culture to justify their current political projects" (Campbell 51). The intellectuals create a history that works for them, at times at odds with national history, seeing a hero when others see a villain, placing themselves centrally when official history had kept them in the periphery.

8. Beyond the Zapotec: Thinking Indigeneity

Through their use of *kab'awilian* strategies, the Zapotec intellectuals can manage a magazine that is simultaneously very local, specific to the Juchitecos, and in conversation with the world. They begin to think through Indigeneity as a political concept, and in doing so contribute to the growth of Indigenous intellectuals in the social sciences as researchers and scholars, not just as objects of study. We have seen thus far how Víctor de la Cruz cites not just thinkers like Mariátegui but also Fanon, who did not originally write in Spanish. Just as interesting are the pieces that begin to appear on other Indigenous peoples like the "Huaves" and "Chontales"[133] from the surrounding areas, and even the Nahuatl. The publications range from stories collected by an "informant" and someone on the editorial team to folktales and poems. Eventually, more academic articles appear that touch on the topics of Indigenous anthropology

[133] Here, I utilize the names that were used in *Guchachi' Reza*, but now these groups are called by their own name, Ikoots and Yokot'an.

and ethnography, and implicitly push for the inclusion of Indigenous intellectuals in these fields. In *Guchachi' Reza*, the intellectuals wrestle with self-identifying only as Zapotec, as they begin to think through Indigeneity as a tool for broader solidarity and resistance.

The first texts on non-Zapotec themes or topics appear early in the third number of the publication. These stories are titled, "Sueño de una mujer huave," told by María Albina Espinosa and compiled by Elisa Ramírez. This story, though short, only spanning about three pages, reveals information on Huave beliefs, such as the importance of dreams, the role of *nahuales*, and the landscape. In this same number "adivinanzas" appear on the last page and are credited as "Nahuatl," "Chamula," and "Maya." Each riddle is printed first in Spanish and is translated to Isthmus Zapotec as well. Throughout the rest of the publication of *Guchachi' Reza* other Indigenous stories appear, such as "Koyotl moxikouanik," a Nahuatl oral story of a coyote and various "textos huaves" such as "El corazón del árbol," explaining how the tree is a living being with a heart. Quite a few of the oral stories collected are written by Elisa Ramírez, but these kinds of texts do continue being published even after she is no longer involved with *Guchachi'*.

Academic texts that focus on people other than the Zapotec also begin to appear soon in *Guchachi'*. These texts read as anthropological, ethnographic, or linguistic studies. Some of these texts include, "Los Chontales de los altos: una cultura serrana viva" by Álvaro González R., and "La chontalpa oaxaqueña" by Juan Pablo Camacho. Along with these texts, De la Cruz also publishes articles reflecting on Indigeneity, Indigenous peoples, and their relationships with social scientists.

In "Hacia el V Centenario," De la Cruz reflects on the terms "indio" versus "indígena," as he discusses the five hundredth year anniversary of the arrival of the Spanish. De la Cruz acknowledges the way that this moment in time has different meanings for different people,

calling it a "descubrimiento, invasión, o encuentro" (16). He bases his argument on two definitions that stand in stark contrast to each other. Initially he only defines "indígena" as those who "se han establecido en un lugar desde tiempos inmemoriales" (De la Cruz 17). Then he cites anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil when he defines the term "indio," as "la condición de colonizado y hace referencia necesaria a la relación colonial" (De la Cruz 17). He continues to elaborate on this definition, placing the term "indígena" and "indio" in stark contrast, and claiming that those who are Indigenous are "los que resistieron y se rebelaron y mantuvieron la continuidad de su cultura durante casi quinientos años hasta llegar a la actualidad defendiendo sus recursos naturales, sus culturas y sus lenguas," and not "los usurpadores, los impostores, los indios de la guelaguetza y para consumo turístico" (17). He distinguishes between the "Indigenous" and the "indios," who are defined by colonization and who according to De la Cruz, play into dynamics of exotification and folklorization, performing for outsiders for the benefit of the State. Interestingly, De la Cruz specifically names the Guelaguetza, a topic found in *Neza*, where Zapotec intellectuals theorize and think through this Zapotec concept to organize politically; however, by the time De la Cruz is writing, the Guelaguetza has been co-opted by the state, turned into a folkloric festival for tourist consumption and detached from its original meaning. De la Cruz's rejection of the term "indio" parallels what Hernández Díaz writes in his article "La construcción de la categoría de "indio" en el discurso antropológico." Hernández Díaz aims to highlight how the term "indio" was used for state policy and how it contains inherently racist and negative connotations. He ascribes various definitions to the word "indio," such as living in the "pasado pretérito" (Hernández Díaz 22), and not having capability for abstract thought (Hernández Díaz 20). He argues that it makes sense that people would not want to be considered "indios" because it means to be "dominado, discriminado y explotado,"

although renouncing to the category of "indio" does not necessarily mean to renounce being "zapoteco, mixteco, huave, triqui, etcétera" (24). As we can see, Hernández Díaz's explanation of the terms "indio" versus "indigenous" align with De la Cruz's.

These early explorations on the differences between the terms "indio" and "indígena" are not too distant from more contemporary reflections on this topic, such as the ones presented by Ayuujk linguist Yásnaya Aguilar Gil's,[134] an author who is concerned with the particular productivity of the category "indígena" for political mobilization and resistance. In "We Were Not Always Indigenous," Aguilar Gil claims that she did not realize she was "Indigenous" until she went to the city and that her grandmother rejected the term when applied to both her granddaughter and herself. Aguilar Gil explains then how "indígena" was the preferred term, widely used by the Mexican state for the last two hundred years, whereas "indio" was created by the Spanish crown and used for three hundred years before then. Even though Aguilar Gil considers herself Ayuujk / Mixe, she does see how the term "indígena" can also be useful. She argues, "Indigenous is not an ontological category; there is nothing essential about it, nothing determinant. Indigenous is not a cosmovision or a culture, it is a political category" that groups disparate peoples historically subjected to colonization, peoples that cannot (or, rather, would not) organize their communal life according to the logic of the nation-state. It is under this political understanding of the category "Indigenous" that she, and other women like her, can organize for resistance. Like De la Cruz, Aguilar Gil makes a distinction between being Ayuujk (or Zapotec in De la Cruz's case) and being "Indigenous," and they both recognize the political power in uniting with other colonized people across the Americas. At the core of De la Cruz's recognition of the word "indígena" as a political stance, is the idea that to identify as an

[134] Yásnaya Aguilar Gil is a linguist and activist who writes extensively on the relationship between Indigenous languages, peoples, and the nation-state.

indigenous person means to resist, to keep traditions alive, to be united with other collectives in the condition of colonization and, therefore, to act in solidarity with other Indigenous peoples across the globe.

As we will see, this expansive interest in Indigenous peoples that are not Zapotec also extends into the political publications of *Guchachi' Reza*, in particular in the multiple articles dedicated to other social movements happening in Mexico and beyond. Of particular interest and recurrence is the Zapatista uprising.

9. Building Indigenous Solidarity for Indigenous Futures: The Zapatista Uprising

The intellectuals involved with *Guchachi' Reza* are also COCEI sympathizers and publish repeatedly about this political organization. Even though the strategy of COCEI involved organizing for autonomy within the system of municipal elections, the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* and COCEI sympathizers support the Zapatistas who pursued the same goal via alternative methods. In sum, the editors of the magazine do not see a contradiction with the Zapatistas despite the different avenues through which they pursue their common goal – autonomy – and, thus, they fully publish their support for the rebels in Chiapas.

Guchachi' Reza had a political stance that included both local and national politics. Throughout the publication, various articles appear on land, the construction and impact of the railroad, and social movements in and outside Juchitán. In addition, as COCEI sympathizers, the editors continuously published articles on COCEI. Some of the many articles on the COCEI include, "Juchitán, un pueblo con destino propio," by José Joaquín Blanco which includes some exotifying elements regarding the local population. There are mentions of "indígenas sabios," and describe the women as flowers, a common trope also seen repeatedly in *Neza*. Some articles

by non-Zapotec authors include, “La COCEI: el deber y la necesidad” by Carlos Monsiváis, and “Los zapotecos, el PRI, y la COCEI: enfrentamientos alrededor de las intervenciones del estado en el Istmo de Tehuantepec” by Marie-France Prévot-Shapira and Helene Riviere d'Arc, about the history of the COCEI, as well as the necessity for such a movement and a call for support from outsiders. Other non-Zapotec contributors include Howard Campbell and Jeffrey Rubin, who spent considerable time in Juchitán and wrote extensively on the political situation with the rise of COCEI. Víctor de la Cruz also publishes his own pieces such as “Las razones del pluralismo y el proyecto cultural de la COCEI.” These pieces appear consistently throughout the life of the magazine, naturally so since many *Guchachi’* intellectuals were aligned with the party. Even though the rise of COCEI is the main political source of concern and interest, the contributors of *Guchachi’ Reza* also expand beyond Juchitán and are especially interested in Chiapas and the rise of the Zapatistas.

The first time that the *Guchachi’ Reza* group expressed their support of the Zapatistas in Chiapas was in the forty-third number, in a text that lies outside the table of contents, and is printed on the inside cover, both in the front and back. The art that the editors choose to use in this specific number is also aligned with the theme. This number, which contains various pieces focused on Chiapas, introduces “*grabado,*” an art form that is popular in Oaxaca and is commonly used for social commentary.[135] This type of art appears on the cover of this number, (e.g. see fig. 7) setting the tone for the articles to appear, and throughout the rest of the forty-third number.

[135] Oaxaca City is an artistic hub, with its many museums and galleries, but also with its street art that often calls attention to injustices both at home and abroad. *Grabado* is one very popular type of street art found throughout the city.

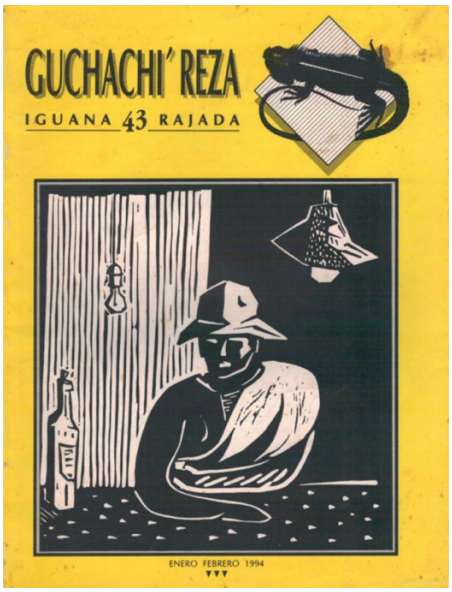

Figure 7. The cover page of the forty-third number of *Guchachi' Reza*, no. 43, Jan-Feb 1994.

The artist credited in this number is Ignacio Manrique, an artist and teacher who specialized in *grabado* and opened his studio, El taller profesional de Grabado, in 1964. Several of his pieces appear throughout this number and the following one; among them, an image of a person with a sombrero and a rifle (e.g. see fig. 8), reminiscent of revolutionary imagery, appears at the top center of the article titled "Chiapas: ¿solución social o militar?" by Carlos Montemayor. Through the use of these visuals, the editors further point to the connection between the current-day Zapatistas and the earlier struggle they take on. They are not fighting for a new cause, but for the failed promises of the Revolution, embodied in the figure of Zapata.

Figure 8. The art included on the first page of Montemayor's article "Chiapas: ¿solución social o militar?" in *Guchachi' Reza*, no. 43, Jan-Feb 1994, pp. 2-3. Screenshot by author.

All of the pieces published on Chiapas are sympathetic towards the Zapatista cause, but most prevalent is the editors' own "declaración." This "declaración" mirrors the way that the Zapatistas themselves communicated with the public, signaling the respect and support that the editors had towards the EZLN. By putting out this "declaración" and signing it with their names, the editors make a clear statement of support. In other words, not only do they choose to dedicate a number to the Zapatistas, publishing supportive pieces, but they also feel the need to speak to their audience directly. This "declaración" runs along the inside front and back cover of the magazine, independently from the rest of the articles, and is not included in the table of contents. In this way it is set apart from the rest of their articles and cannot be ignored. This proclamation titled "De declaración [*sic*] de la revista *Guchachi' Reza* ante la rebelión indígena en Chiapas," restates their goals as editors and publishers of the magazine in sharing "expresiones literarias de los pueblos indígenas de Oaxaca, ensayos sobre la cultura e historia de los mismos y documentos sobre las rebeliones y las aspiraciones de los indígenas del sur del Istmo" (De la Cruz et al.). They also highlight how they feel "obligados" to clearly state their position on the Zapatista

rebellion because of the type of magazine that they are, one that aims to disperse Indigenous knowledges. The other articles that they publish, though different in focus, all contain overlapping themes that further highlight the concerns that the editors have. Through the publication of *Guchachi' Reza*'s number 43, as well as additional articles about the Zapatistas in other issues, I believe the editors are doing for Chiapas what they aimed to do for themselves in Juchitán, provide and shape a history from their point of view. In these articles, the underlying themes emphasize the pervasiveness of racism, how Indigenous peoples are viewed as people incapable of organizing and ruling themselves, how Indigenous peoples have a history even if it is not widely known by others, and how these "rebellions" are fights for Indigenous futures.

The three articles that I discuss here, apart from the "Declaración," are penned by three distinct authors. The first one was published in the already mentioned forty-third number and is titled, "Chiapas: ¿solución social o militar?," by Carlos Montemayor. Montemayor explains why a military reaction by the Mexican government towards the Zapatistas is not the right choice. He argues that this is a social problem and therefore should be addressed as such. In the forty-fourth number two other articles, "Chiapas desde el sur," by Guatemalan anthropologist Ruth Piedrasanta and "De la resistencia india a la liberación (la insurrección de Chiapas y la recuperación de las utopías indias)," by journalist Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado are published. Piedrasanta lists various misconceptions surrounding the Zapatistas that are steeped in a history of racism and anti-Indigeneity. Maldonado Alvarado's argument is similar, but with a focus on the way that the Zapatista uprising is allowing for alternative futures to be imagined. Though these articles all have different emphases and distinct argument, they all hold overlapping themes that align with the goals of *Guchachi' Reza*.

The first argument that these authors are concerned with is the racism that occurs when Indigenous people organize for rebellion. De la Cruz addresses this overlying theme in his "Declaración," directly tackling an "acusación" that "la rebelión indígena está manipulada por personas ajenas a los rebeldes." He explains that this reaction highlights "[la] reiteración del racismo de los criollos mexicanos quienes creen que solo ellos pueden pensar y dirigir al país y que los indígenas no son capaces de hacerlo por sí mismos" (Cruz et al.). This appears to be a common misconception because Piedrasanta also addresses it in her article, when she states early on how "[e]n la imagen social 'moderna' las identidades 'atrasadas', pero vivas, con proyectos alternativos que precisen de cierta autonomía y control sobre sus recursos naturales, culturales y sobre sus territorios, aun manteniéndose integrados al país, han sido impensables" (10). According to Piedrasanta, the "imagen social 'moderna'" cannot even imagine a possibility where Indigenous peoples are autonomous and participate in alternative forms of collective organization. In other words, Indigenous people are not granted agency, they continue to be seen as passive objects instead of active subjects in their culture and territory. This image of Indigenous peoples has contributed not only to the shock caused by the Zapatista uprising, but also towards a widespread a disbelief in Indigenous peoples' capabilities. In this critique, De la Cruz and Piedrasanta push back against stereotypes that place Indigenous people as incapable of organizing and of governing themselves. That pushback against stereotypes of Indigenous people as incapable of governing themselves, is also seen in the pages of *Guchachi',* where the editors painstakingly create a history of rebellion and heroism to prove otherwise. Just as they showcase the ways that Juchitecos have pushed for autonomy for themselves, they highlight the way that the EZLN is capable of organizing for autonomy.

These authors also discuss history in two capacities. On the one hand, they acknowledge the colonial legacy present in Chiapas, and they highlight the continuity of the rebellions and uprisings that have taken place in the region since the colonial period; on the other hand, they discuss the stereotype of Indigenous peoples as ahistorical. Both Montemayor and Piedrasanta address the history of oppression that Indigenous people have faced, but also make a point of highlighting the parallel history of rebellions. Montemayor asserts that "los pueblos indígenas se han resistido al despojo (…) durante décadas" (2). He also reminds his readers that Indigenous and popular rebellions are not created overnight but are "largos procesos que marcan de manera indeleble nuestra historia," calling back to the Mexican Revolution of 1910, a process that had been brewing since the late nineteenth century (Montemayor 3). In drawing a comparison between the Zapatista uprising and the Mexican Revolution, Montemayor places both uprisings on the same plane, and therefore acknowledges the importance of the Zapatistas and also the prior conditions that led to their uprising. Piedrasanta also drives this point when she explains how "han surgido rebeliones o alzamientos que denotaban igualmente desesperación o un abierto desacuerdo o desacato ante el gobierno federal o central" (10). In this insistence on focusing not just on any history, but specifically on a long history of rebellion, these two authors push back against a common stereotype about Indigenous peoples, the one that represents Indigenous peoples as being ahistorical. Piedrasanta addresses this when she elaborates on popular misconceptions about Indigenous peoples: "Son seres ahistóricos… No tienen historia: son culturas ágrafas de mentalidad mítica y primitiva cuyos conocimientos [son] escasos y anacrónicos" (10). Contrary to these common tropes, and by highlighting the history of rebellions instead, both Montemayor and Piedrasanta emphasize Indigenous peoples' histories of resistance, fitting the Zapatista uprising into a longer history that is part of national history. As

we saw in the former sections of this chapter, this argument is also a driving force behind *Guchachi' Reza*, where Zapotec intellectuals collected and disseminated a Zapotec and Juchitec history that is at times at odds with official national history but is presented as an integral part of it. As such, the editors continuously remind their readers that Juchitán, and therefore Zapotec and Indigenous peoples, have always been an important part of national history.

The final argument that lies implicitly in the articles about Chiapas and the Zapatistas, is the imagining and creation of alternative futures, Indigenous futures. This argument for imagining and creating Indigenous futures goes directly against the stereotypes of Indigenous peoples that Piedrasanta describes. In her article, she explains how they are seen "en una especie de inanición;" whereas they might have had "esplendor en el pasado," they are now in an "estado degenerativo o de profunda depresión que les impide generar algún tipo de proyecto futuro" (Piedrasanta 10). According to Piedrasanta, this is a common belief about Indigenous peoples, but the EZLN has proven otherwise. Journalist Maldonado Alvarado elaborates on what the Zapatista uprising symbolizes when he writes, "Así, los zapatistas han logrado hacer ver nuevamente que es posible un futuro distinto al que ha pretendido imponer el gobierno. Ello es en gran parte un llamado directo a la imaginación, a su rearticulación con lo propio y a la movilización liberadora" (Maldonado Alvarado 28). They are "convocando a la construcción de futuros nuevamente posibles" (Maldonado Alvarado 28). According to Maldonado Alvarado, they have sparked their own and other Indigenous peoples' imagination, opening the doors for the creation of alternative futures. This notion of the possibility of a different kind of future is central to the Zapatista movement, and is reflected in their sayings, "otro mundo es posible" and "un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos." With their rebellion, they are fighting for alternative futures and opening spaces for Indigenous autonomy. On their end, the editors of *Guchachi'*

Reza, through their support of COCEI, their support of the Zapotec language, and their dissemination of Indigenous knowledges and histories, are also organizing for another world, one where Zapotecs continue living.

The editors of *Guchachi' Reza* could not be clearer about their support for the EZLN. And in publishing numbers 43 and 44 with a focus on the Zapatistas, they are establishing a parallelism between what the Zapatistas are doing for the Indigenous people of Chiapas and what they are doing for themselves as Zapotecs in Juchitán. The dedication of the editors in highlighting and demonstrating their support of the Zapatista uprising in the pages of *Guchachi' Reza* reveals the way that the publications originating in Juchitán have changed over time. *Guchachi' Reza* especially opens itself up to the world, focusing heavily on Zapotec and Juchitec topics, but also drawing national and transnational connections to other intellectuals, and publishing in solidarity with other movements. When the Zapatistas rose in Chiapas, the COCEI was already established in Juchitán, they had already accepted the model of "concertación social," negotiating power with the central government. Even though their methods were different, the Zapotec intellectuals supported the uprising in Chiapas because they had similar goals of creating spaces for autonomy. There was no contradiction for the Zapotec intellectuals in charge of *Guchachi' Reza* and involved with the COCEI, because even though they had differing methods from the Zapatistas, they were all working to build alternative futures, autonomous Indigenous futures.

10. Conclusions

Through various avenues, the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* strived to create different spaces for autonomy. They continued to explore their identity, taking on the symbol of the iguana to

signify resistance and highlighting their connection to the land since before the arrival of the Spanish. They also continued to create their own history, like in *Neza Cubi*, this time around focusing on a history of rebellion and resistance that culminated with the COCEI. They argue how language was political, how it held their worldviews and therefore ensuring the vitality of Zapotec language meant also ensuring the possibility of Zapotec futures. They continued supporting COCEI and expressed solidarity with Indigenous rebellion/resistance in Chiapas after the rise of the Zapatistas. By intentionally creating spaces for historical, linguistic and political autonomy, they were ensuring Zapotec futurities where they would live on their own terms. The unwavering commitment of the editors of *Guchachi' Reza* to this mission spilled over outside of the pages of the magazine, and manifested as well into their work as scholars, artists, and cultural promoters. While writing for *Guchachi'*, Víctor de la Cruz would also contribute immensely to the fields of Indigenous literatures and anthropology, eventually becoming a founding member of CIESAS. Francisco Toledo would invest his earnings not just into Juchitán but also into Oaxaca, turning the city into a cultural capital with museums that hold some of the best Indigenous collections of literature and various forms of art throughout all of Latin America. Additionally, he would create the Premio CASA to increase Indigenous publications. On her end, Gloria de la Cruz started teaching Zapotec to some of the most prolific contemporary poets from the Isthmus still active now, like Natalia Toledo. Finally, Elisa Ramírez would go into publishing, also focusing on Indigenous languages and authors, and responsible for one of the most successful publishing houses in Indigenous languages. A more detailed history of the prolific activity that all of these Zapotec intellectuals sustained beyond the pages of *Guchachi' Reza* will have to wait to be told another time, elsewhere.

V. Conclusions

Xiñee qué ruca' nu' xa guibá'

guirá' ni riniíquenu

ne riale ladxido'no…

Tu laanu, tu lanu?

¿Por qué no escribimos en la superficie del cielo

Todo lo que dicen nuestras mentes,

Lo que nace en nuestros corazones?...

¿Quiénes somos, cuál es nuestro nombre?

- Víctor de la Cruz, "Tu laanu, tu lanu/¿Quiénes somos? ¿Cuál es nuestro nombre?"

When I sat in my bedroom in Juchitán in 2018 during the first summer of my graduate program flipping through the pages of *Neza Cubi*, I could not have known what an undertaking my project would be. I was aware that I would have to engage with a large corpus (to some extent since I would not be able to access all three magazines until years later). There was a newspaper with twenty numbers, a fleeting magazine with only fourteen numbers, and the last magazine with fifty-eight numbers, with each number ranging from twenty to forty pages depending on the era. Even knowing that, I was not prepared for how rich the magazines would be, as the student authors – ambitious, intelligent, well-read, and well-connected – published on a broad range of interests, from Zapotec origin stories to disease in the region, from poetry dedicated to Benito Juárez to Quetzalcoatl, and from colonial texts about iguanas to statements

of support for the Zapatistas. Within the limited scope of a dissertation, I could not possibly cover the full breadth and depth of the magazines, so I decided to focus on the themes that remained steady preoccupations for these student authors and intellectuals throughout the twentieth century. Zapotec subjectivities, history, language, and politics, became the focal points for each magazine and therefore each chapter of this work. The intellectuals worked through their subjectivities, creating connections between their Zapotec identity, philosophy, and cosmology to contemporary intellectual currents. They began language revitalization movements, at times creating institutions, and other times consolidating the use of an official alphabet through their publications. They shaped their history, from their point of view and for themselves as Zapotecs and as Juchitecs. And finally, they drew from their Zapotec culture to think through ways they could organize politically. As we saw in Chapter 1, dedicated to the magazine *Neza* (1935-1937), the first generation of Indigenous intellectuals based in Mexico City and well-inserted into the cultural and political sphere of post-revolutionary Mexico turned their attention to the study of Isthmus Zapotec language and traditional customs, publishing origin stories and articles about *velas* and *guelaguetza*, as well as founding important organizations, such as the Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos and Academia de Lengua Zapoteca. Through the pages of *Neza*, we can perceive how Indigenous intellectuals both navigated within and resisted the pervasive *Indigenista* discourses and practices implemented by the Mexican state. In Chapter 2, dedicated to *Neza Cubi* (1968-1970), I analyzed how a new generation of intellectuals – led by Macario Matus and Víctor de la Cruz – looked back for inspiration to the first magazine, presenting a new version of the "correct Zapotec path" that reimagined Juchitán history of rebellion in the context of a present marked by student mobilization and political turmoil. In Chapter 3, dedicated to *Guchachi' Reza* (1975-1998), I

traced how the *Guchachi' Reza* generation advocated, once again, for the importance of formalizing the Isthmus Zapotec language as a vehicle for cultural preservation and revitalization. Furthermore, the intellectuals linked to this magazine were adamant about reclaiming their land and autonomy vis-à-vis state authorities and invading forces. To do that, they published numerous articles that presented the history of Juchitán as a heroic city and that emphasized the fact that Indigenous peoples were still present in their territories after centuries of colonization. Finally, the *Guchachi' Reza* generation started to think through Indigeneity beyond the Zapotec to include other Indigenous peoples from Oaxaca and other regions of Mexico, as well as established networks of solidarity with ethnic-based political and social movements, such as the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. Ultimately, Chapter 3 claims that the *Guchachi' Reza* generation was successful in creating a rich archive of Juchitec history, language, and politics that would influence Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals to come.

1. Contributions

The preceding pages have argued that the Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals used *kab'awilian* strategies to create spaces for historical, linguistic, and political autonomy both within and outside the magazines. In doing so, they were enacting Zapotec futurities by creating a present where they safeguarded their language, history, culture, and identity.

The concept of *kab'awil* was useful for reading both the goals of the intellectuals and their works in a more nuanced manner. It allowed me to push back against the binaries imposed on Indigenous authors that try to pigeonhole them within Western categories. I was able to highlight the way that these intellectuals were influenced by various people, ideas, and places. I was also able to mold the concept for my analysis. For instance, in the second chapter, when the

intellectuals are living halfway between Mexico City and Juchitán and are thinking in and writing for both national and local readers, what I call a *kab'awilian* locus, emerged. This meant that the intellectual's place, between Mexico and Juchitán, became their own point of analysis and reflection, as they were in conversation with and writing for both an audience in Mexico and in Juchitán. It was from that locus that they began to think of an Isthmus Zapotec politics that merged their leftist beliefs and their Zapotec customs. This particular understanding of politics would eventually influence the ideology of COCEI, perhaps the most important political organization in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec during the second half of the twentieth century.

While working through my thesis, other topics and concepts of great importance emerged. One of the earliest to arise was my reading of the student-authors and editors/creators of the magazines as Indigenous intellectuals who helped shape contemporary Zapotec literature. For this, I was inspired by Kelly McDonough and her discussion of Nahuatl intellectuals. She calls Nahuatl intellectuals those who are "producers and interpreters of wisdom (broadly defined as cultural, historical, and political knowledges), acquired by experience and/or study and shared in and/or beyond his/her own community." I argue that these Zapotec student-authors and young professionals were intellectuals, collecting, creating, and disseminating knowledge on their culture. Through the lens of *kab'awil*, I highlighted the ways that these Indigenous intellectuals were inspired and drew from both their Zapotec culture and popular intellectual currents of their time. This meant reading certain polemical figures, like Andrés Henestrosa, as an Indigenous intellectual, even as later in his life he became a complex figure who eventually would not support writing in Indigenous languages. The magazine editors/authors were concerned with establishing genealogies as well, dedicating certain numbers, articles, and poems to those they considered their literary ancestors. In turn, the men of the *Neza* generation would lay the

foundation for the work of the *Neza Cubi*/*Guchachi' Reza* generation. This last generation would also influence more contemporary authors through their creation of the Casa de Cultura /Lidxi Guendabiaani, where they organized workshops and taught Zapotec language. My time in Juchitán was crucial for me to understand not just the respect that Juchitecos still feel towards these authors, but also their influence in contemporary Zapotec literature. Their influence can be seen not just in the names of institutions like schools and libraries (e.g see fig. 9), but also as one walks through the streets of Juchitán (e.g see fig. 10).

Figure 9. The door that leads to the courtyard in the Biblioteca López Chiñas in Juchitán, with a stanza of his poem "*Diidxazá*/Zapoteco" at top. Photograph by author.

Figure 10. Mural of the poem "*Neza*/Camino" by Irma Pineda in Juchitán. Photograph by author.

Though I did not anticipate it, my work also contributes to the growing field of Mesoamerican philosophies and cosmologies. The concept of a Zapotec spirit arose both in *Neza* and *Neza Cubi* as the authors searched for its meaning and linked their culture and their spirit to the concept of *neza*. Many of the authors studied in this dissertation went on to publish their works after their contributions to *Neza*; some of them, such as Andrés Henestrosa, who wrote *Los hombres que dispersó la danza*, Gabriel López Chiñas, who published *Vinnigulasa*, and Wilfrido C. Cruz, who penned *El Tonalamatl Zapoteco*, also furthered the study of Zapotec cosmology. Another remarkable example is Gregorio López y López, who wrote his master's thesis*, Esquema del pensamiento filosófico zapoteca*, at UNAM in the 1940s. López y López was in search of "lo zapoteco" at the same time that the members of the Grupo Hiperión were in search of "lo mexicano." It is important to note that many of the aforementioned authors often referred to Maya cosmology and Maya texts like the *Popol Vuh* and the *Chilam Balam*, showcasing the way that they used another culture's texts to help recreate their own. Whereas I have not been able to trace these Mesoamerican cosmological cross-pollinations, I believe they are worthy of further study in the future.

The last concept to emerge from this dissertation is that of Indigenous futurities, in this case, Zapotec futurities. I realized, when reading the authors' goals that, while they were worried about Zapotec existence under an *Indigenista* state that pushed for assimilation, they were also creating a present for themselves that would ensure a future in which they still existed. In other words, they were enacting Zapotec futurities. They did not wait around to disappear, assimilated by the state, but instead set up institutions and created publications that would ensure their continued existence, thinking of both their ancestors and their descendants. They did not write down their oral histories, origin stories, philosophies, cosmologies, and language, simply to preserve them, but to ensure that they would continue. My dissertation is an attempt to highlight how these Zapotec intellectuals went about their goals, as well as how the magazines themselves served as spaces of autonomy and as a reflection of the world they were envisioning, one where they made the decisions regarding their language, their history, their politics, and their community.

2. Limitations and Future Directions

For various reasons, including time and the diverse themes that arose from the magazines as I advanced through the project, there were some concerns that I was not able to address. One of those questions was the following: where were the women? As is often the case, many women were involved in the making of these publications, and some of them were pivotal figures but were not recognized for their work. One good example of this sidelining is Alfa Ríos Pineda (mentioned in Chapter 1), who led a few numbers of *Neza* when Andrés Henestrosa left for the United States, and who also published an article on girls' education in the newspaper. Eventually, she would marry Henestrosa, and almost all the biographical information I found on

her focused exclusively on that one aspect of her identity. In discussing Alfa Ríos with Irma Pineda while in Juchitán, she informed me that Ríos had published a book of recipes, but it was not easy to find the publication. In the second chapter, I found a few women authors published in *Neza Cubi*, including López Chiñas's adopted daughter, but again, there was not much biographical information available about her. In the case of *Guchachi' Reza*, while in Juchitán, I learned that two women were part of the original founding group, Elisa Ramírez Castañeda and Gloria de la Cruz. Ramírez Castañeda's name, however, barely appears in *Guchachi'* because at the time that she was involved, the group, as a collective, chose not to sign their contributions with their names. On the other hand, Gloria de la Cruz was the main researcher for her brother Víctor, since she was living in Mexico City and could access the archives there, but neither her nor Ramírez Castañeda are commonly mentioned in printed accounts about the creation of *Guchachi' Reza*. In sum, the invisibilized role of Zapotec women intellectuals – as well as, more broadly, the gender politics of these magazines – is an important issue that will require further study in the future.

Because of the breadth and depth of the magazines, several other lines of inquiry emerged as I worked through the dissertation. One of those emerging questions would require tracing the concept of *binnigula'sa,* a notion that appears repeatedly in *Neza* and also in the first books published by the key intellectuals who led these efforts. I believe that *binnigula'sa* is related to the concept of the *espíritu zapoteca* which is also related to the concept of *neza*. More than just the name for two of their publications, *neza* becomes of great concern to these intellectuals, as a guide to lead a "right" Zapotec life. All of these concepts, together with their relationship to Mesoamerican philosophies and cosmologies, as well as to Western ideas about "espíritu" that were commonplace in Mexico at that time will require further research. The other

significant theme that emerged is the question of the archive and what the Indigenous intellectuals are creating with their publication. Both Irma Pineda and Elisa Ramírez told me, when I asked about local history, to consult *Guchachi' Reza*. What does it mean then, that in Juchitán, to learn about local histories one must go to a literary magazine? Why were the Zapotec intellectuals so concerned with collecting and archiving material? And further still, with disseminating that material through their publication? This question can also be applied to other literary magazines, especially regarding the development of Zapotec philosophies and cosmologies. The intellectuals who led *Neza* then published their books, which contained overlapping chapters/articles with *Neza*. Their work was then used by future scholars and is still being referenced today. What becomes clear is that centering these literary magazines and drawing attention to their importance and the importance of the editors/creators, opens the possibility for various themes and questions in the field of Indigenous Literary Studies.

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