

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Te 'uayemat+ ta Kiekari Tat❖i Niwetsikak+: Urban Wix❖rika Healing Practices and Ontology

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/79z8m524>

Author

Garcia-Weyandt, Cyndy Margarita

Publication Date

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Te ‘uayemat+ ta Kiekari Tatéi Niwetsikak+: Urban Wixárika Healing Practices and Ontology

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance Studies

by

Cyndy Margarita Garcia-Weyandt

2020

© Copyright by

Cyndy Margarita Garcia-Weyandt

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Te ‘uayemat+ ta Kiekari Tatéi Niwetsikak+: Urban Wixárika Healing Practices and Ontology

by

Cyndy Margarita Garcia-Weyandt

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor David Delgado Shorter, Chair

This doctoral dissertation provides data from ethnographic fieldwork among Wixárika in the city of Tepic, Mexico and neighboring towns to demonstrate how *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) prescribes the health of Wixárika families. Maize ceremonies are a crucial aspect of maintaining well-being. Families cleanse, cultivate, and harvest the land through the cycle of Our Mother Corn in their efforts of maintaining good health. Families often discuss health and well-being in relation to cultivation practices. During the cultivation of Our Mother Corn, the labor of men and women contributes to the overall reproduction of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). In each ceremony, the family learns from Corn their responsibilities during cultivation. Our Mother Corn provides individuals with the vitality to maintain the physical and metaphysical balance of the holistic body. By examining the ontological relationship between Wixárika families and Our Mother Corn, this research shows how healing within Wixárika families encompasses more than just the body of a human person. Through active participatory observations, audio and video documentation, interviews, and surveys, I demonstrate how

Wixárika ways of healing comprise a holistic approach to cure physical and metaphysical bodies in which Our Mother Corn is a central figure in the well-being of the community. Thus, the ontological relationship between Wixárika families with Our Mother Corn nurtures inter-species connections to homelands and all ancestors in Wixárika ways of knowing.

The dissertation of Cyndy Margarita Garcia-Weyandt is approved.

Paul V. Kroskrity

Allen F. Roberts

Kevin Terraciano

David Delgado Shorter, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

DEDICATION

Wa+ritsika ne Kaka+ma Tatei Niwetsika metá Tamatsika, ne nuiwari, ne paapama, ne 'ukilai tsiere ne niwé. Yeme matsi ne nuiwari Y+rata kiekatari ne taatama Muwieri metá 'Ut+ama. Ne kumarima, yemematsi K+p+ri metá ne 'iyarima. Nep+wareuye h+wá wa+kawa ne 'iyarik+.

¡Pampariyutsi!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	ii
DEDICATION	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
VITA	xii
NOTE ON WIXÁRIKA ALPHABET, PRONUNCIATION, AND ORTHOGRAPHY	1
GLOSSARY	2
INTRODUCTION: CONFLICTING ONTOLOGIES	6
CHAPTER ONE: TATÉI NIWETSIKA	38
CHAPTER TWO: WIXÁRIKA WAIYA METÁ KIEKARIEYA	73
CHAPTER THREE: TATÉI NIWETSIKA METÁ ‘IKWARIKA	108
CHAPTER FOUR: KAKA+YARITE METÁ KAKA+MA WAMAWARIKA: STABILIZING RELATIONS AND RE-CENTRALIZING PRACTICES	135
CONCLUSION: ‘ITSANAXA	178
APPENDIX A	185
APPENDIX B	186
APPENDIX C	187
APPENDIX D	188
APPENDIX E	189
BIBLIOGRAPHY	200

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Common Names Related to Corn.....	102
Table 2: Stages in Wixárika.....	123

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Drawing of the Tewi Wai	184
Figure 2.2 Drawing of the Tewi Wai.....	184
Figure 2.3 Drawing of the Tewi Wai.....	184
Figure 2.4 Stage of Corn Tura.....	185
Figure 2.5 Stage of Corn Neika.....	185
Figure 2.6 Stage of Corn Y+ra.....	185
Figure 2.7 Stage of Corn Y+ra Huta.....	185
Figure 2.8 Stage of Corn K+paima.....	185
Figure 2.9 Stage of Corn Zit+ama.....	185

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful for all the help and guidance of my advisors, friends, and family who have contributed to my academic growth and understanding of the scholarship. Since my undergraduate education at the University of California, Los Angeles in Anthropology, my advisors, Dr. David Shorter and Dr. Paul V. Kroskirty, have guided my research. Dr. Shorter and Dr. Kroskirty's research inspired me to pursue my research in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Thank you, David Shorter, for your guidance and your support in the past ten years of my academic life. I could have not conceived this dissertation without your guidance, mentoring, and support. Additionally, I am grateful to my advisor Dr. Allen Roberts and his encouragement to write poetry and include my creative writing in my dissertation. The poetry in my dissertation allowed me think creatively about my research process. Finally, I thank my advisor Dr. Kevin Terraciano for the encouragement to think about Our Mother Corn in all possible ways. I am also grateful to my UCLA family in AAP, specially to Dr. Carolina San Juan and Dr. Liliana Islas who provided me with the strength to continue working on my dissertation in these extraordinary times of COVID-19. Thank you, Carolina, for helping envision my work in a broader sense, for allowing me explore my teaching pedagogy in the ArtsIN program, and for seeing the relevance of my art making in this research from the "heart." You named and understood what I was feeling since the MA, and for that I cherish your friendship. Lilie, thank you for your kind words of encouragement and the long nights of companionship while working from 1202 Campbell Hall, prior to our confinement and self-isolation. You both gave me the courage to finish this dissertation strong.

To my friends Christian Ramírez, Luis Felipe Avilés González, and David Feldman, who encouraged dialogues about Mexico, Indigeneity, Indigenous languages, history, and healing in

many of our Nahuatl classes together. To all of you *tlazcamati miac!* Also, I want to thank my friends Dr. Jacinta Arthur and Dr. Ryan Koons for their guidance and support while developing ideas on personhood, ontology, and world view. Jacinta and Ryan, I deeply admired your research. Moreover, I am grateful to my friends América Martínez and Norma Fajardo for their support and inspiration in my academic life since my undergraduate studies. Finally, to my writing group of Indigenous scholars and mothers in academia (NTV Mama Writing Club), Thalia Gómez, and Brenda Nicolás for the long nights in Zoom meetings. You both motivated me to continue pushing through the difficult times. This body of work is dedicated to all of you!

I am also appreciative for Wixárika thinkers, philosophers, educators, community leaders, and activists who collaborated with me in this research. Special thanks to Maestro Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz and his family. I am grateful for allowing me to take your language classes and for introducing me to other members of the community. Additionally, I am grateful to my *comadre* Felipa Rivera, Maestra Edisa Altamirano, Maestra Leticia Carrillo, Maestra Odalys Marbella López de La Rosa, Maestro Dagoberto Robles González, and Politólogo y Activista Ubaldo Valdéz Castañeda. To all of you, thank you for your warm and long conversations about Our Mother Corn. Special appreciation to Maestro Dagoberto and my *comadre* Felipa for teaching me so much, for your patience, and explanation of concepts in Wixárika ways of knowing. Finally, I want to acknowledge the Comité de Acción Ciudadana at Zitakua for their hospitality and for allowing me to conduct research and the activities of the *Proyecto Taniuki* (“Our Language Project”) in La Casa de La Mujer at Zitakua ¡Pampariyutsi!

This dissertation was possible due to the unconditional love and endurance from my family, especially Ixchel and Josh who have accompanied me through my graduate studies. Thank you both for walking next to me in my academic life, fieldwork, and writing stages of this

dissertation. I know you both have made great sacrifices for me to finish my studies. Thank you for helping me cultivate the field and harvest together Our Mother Corn. I am also very thankful to my parents Petra and Manuel, my siblings Alejandra, Angelo, Roberto, and Manolo for giving me the opportunity to study and continue my education in the United States. You all are very important in my personal growth. Additionally, I am grateful to my aunt Susan Sarnoff and Emiliano García-Sarnoff for their guidance, support, and encouragement to seek higher education. Finally, I want to thank Wixárika leaders, Elders at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), and godparents Rosalía Lemus de la Rosa and Don Eustolio Rivera de la Cruz. Sadly, I will not be able to commemorate this accomplishment with Don Eustolio Rivera de la Cruz, recently deceased. I want to dedicate my work to Papá Costo and thank him for his trust, teachings, and acceptance to the Y+rata community. My commitment and allyship with Y+rata community will continue in honor to the loving memory of Papá Costo ¡*Ne papa Costo Pampariyutsi!* I could not have imagined this dissertation without your support and your wisdom about my ancestors, including *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and *Tamatsika* (“Elder bother”). To all my relatives: human, non-human, and beyond human ¡*Gracias infinitas para toda mi familia!*

I am also grateful for various institutions and departments for their funding and support. My research has been funded by two Graduate Summer Research Mentorship grants from Graduate Division, a Tinker Research Award grant from the UCLA Latin American Institute, a Faucett Research Award grant from the UCLA Latin American Institute, a Sarah Gillifan Fieldwork Award from the Fowler Museum, and numerous research and travel grants from the UCLA Department of World Arts and Culture/Dance.

VITA

EDUCATION

University of California, Los Angeles | Los Angeles, CA-June 2015

- MA, Culture and Performance
- MA Thesis: “Teachings from Within: Urban Wixárika Women Re-making Motherland”

University of California, Los Angeles | Los Angeles, CA-June 2012

- BA, Field: Linguistic Anthropology
- Thesis: “San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec (SLQZ) Transplanted: Language Ideologies of the ‘Dizhsa’ Speech Community of Los Angeles”

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Independent Research Study (Institutional Review Board Certified & CITI trained) |

Summer 2017-Summer 2020, University of California Los Angeles

- Fieldwork in Zitakua Tepic, Nayarit MX: Linguistic Landscape in Zitakua
- Advisor: Dr. David Delgado Shorter
- Advisor: Maestro Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz

Independent Research Study (Institutional Review Board Certified & CITI trained) |

Summer 2016, University of California Los Angeles

- Fieldwork in Tepic, Nayarit MX: Documentation of Corn related vocabulary
- Advisor: Dr. David Delgado Shorter

Graduate Summer Research Mentorship (Institutional Review Board Certified & CITI trained) | Summer 2015 University of California Los Angeles

- Field research in Tepic, Nayarit MX: Wixárika women and Corn cultivation
- Advisor: Dr. Allen Roberts

Graduate Summer Research Mentorship (Institutional Review Board Certified & CITI trained) | Spring-Summer 2014 University of California Los Angeles

- Archival Research: Wixárika’s Pilgrimage to Wirikuta at the University of Southern California, Doheny Memorial Library and fieldwork in Tepic (Life history interviews)
- Advisor: Dr. David Delgado Shorter

World Arts and Cultures-202 Research Methodology (CITI Trained) | Spring 2014, University of California Los Angeles

- Advisor: Dr. Peter Nabokov
- Field methods, techniques and issues conducting research
- Focus on archival research

Independent Research Study | Summer 2013, University of California Los Angeles

- Fieldwork in Tepic, Nayarit MX: “Indigeneity in the Arts”
- Advisor: Dr. David Delgado Shorter

PUBLICATIONS

García-Weyandt, Cyndy. 2019. “*Taniuki* ‘Our Language’ Project: The Challenges of Community-Based Participatory Active Research in Language Revitalization and Production of Art.” Edited Volume the *Community-Based PhD: Complexities, Triumphs, Missteps, and Joys of Community-based & Participatory Action Research as Graduate Students* (Submitted for review).

- García-Weyandt, Cyndy & Robles González Dagoberto.** 2019. “*UXIMAYATSIKA TANIUKI: Tita teteuka xexeiya Taniuki tek+x+amayatat+ teiwarit+a muye hane.*” Edición Especial. *Yolitia* Revista Electrónica, Publicación #8, Noviembre 2019. (Submitted for review).
- García-Weyandt, Cyndy.** 2018. “Living Geographies: Urban Wixárika Places and Spaces of Knowledge.” *Journal Theory & Event*. (Submitted for review).
- García-Weyandt, Cyndy.** 2018. “Mothers of Corn: Wixárika Women, Verbal Performances, and Ontology.” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples. Vol 14, Issue 2.* DOI.org/10.1177/1177180118762696.
- García-Weyandt, Cyndy.** 2018. “Borders in me: Being, Living, and Resisting.” Series of poems, *pacificREVIEW* 2018: STATES OF LA FRONTERA.
- García-Weyandt, Cyndy.** 2017. Review of *Huichol Women, Weavers, and Shamans*. Stacy Schaefer. *Journal of Western States Folklore Society. Vol. 76 No. 2-Spring, 2017.*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Arts Initiative Coordinator| Fall 2019-Summer 2020

1. Support students in art-related research projects across disciplines
2. Mentor AAP undergraduate students
3. Offer academic and professional support to underrepresented students
4. Assist students in exploring arts-related research opportunities
5. Weekly seminars (Winter and Spring quarters) about relevant issues in the arts, interdisciplinary work, activism, social justice
6. Supervisor: Dr. Carolina San Juan, University of California, Los Angeles

Indigenous Language & Arts Educator/Language Revitalization Coordinator| Fall 2018-Present

7. *Proyecto Taniuki* (“Our Language Project”)
8. Course Description: Discuss Indigenous arts in the classroom for the language project Taniuki, a language revitalization project in Tepic, Mexico. Assign art projects and discuss the role of art in education and activism. Discuss the commodification of Indigenous arts and performances, specifically Wixárika art and the production of yarn paintings, beading work, and textiles.
9. Supervisor: Mr. Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz

Instructor in Records| Summer 2018

Academic Advancement Program/Transfer Summer Program-English Composition 100W: Interdisciplinary Writing (Chicanx Cohort)

10. Course description: Writing II Course. Help students in the development of academic papers with range of complexity and length. Focus on conventions of academic prose and genres across disciplines. Assign academic papers such as argumentation, research paper, and/or critical essay.
11. Supervisor: Dr. Alice Ho, AAP Director

Teaching Fellow| Winter 2018

- Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance: W33: “Colonialism and Resistance”

NOTE ON WIXÁRIKA ALPHABET, PRONUNCIATION, AND ORTHOGRAPHY

In this dissertation, I prioritize Wixárika language, concepts, and ideas regarding relatedness. I utilize the Saul Santos García, Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, and Marina Carrillo Díaz's (2008) *Curso de Wixárika como Segunda Lengua* as a resource.¹ Wixárika is an Uto-Aztecan language with an alphabet consisting of the following letters:

13 consonants:

Hh Kk Mm Nn Pp Rr Tt Ww Xx Yy TSts KWkw ‘

10 vowels:

5 Short vowels:

Aa Ee Ii Uu ++

5 Long Vowels:

AA aa EE ee H ++ UU uu

Pronunciation guide:

h sounds like a soft “j” in Spanish

k and “c” sounds like “co” and “cu” in Spanish

r sound like a soft “r” in Spanish

w sounds like “w” or “v” in English

x sounds like the letter “r” in Spanish

ts sound like a “ts” or “ch” in Spanish

kw sounds like “cui” in Spanish

‘ glottal sound for words that begin with vowels

+ sound like “o” and “u” in Spanish

Orthography:

Following the Wixárika orthography, I word capitalize words to denote the ontological status within the community (e.g., Elder Ancestors). When referring to Native seeds, I use Corn, Tatéi Niwetsika, and Our Mother Corn interchangeable. When I use lower case, most of the time I talk to seeds without ontological status in the community.

¹ Saul Santos García, Tutupika Carrillo De la Cruz, and Marina. Carrillo Díaz. *Taniuki: Curso de Wixárika como Segunda Lengua*. (2008).

GLOSSARY

- ‘Ariweme:** Reference to the East
‘Etsima: Woman farmer and female name
‘Iwamari: Relatedness
‘Iyari: heart-memory, cognitive/emotional, or female name
‘+riwame: Fire pit
‘+xatsika waxarikak+: Wixarika tales
‘Utame: Receiving in a bandana Corn and male name
Avierruki: Singer
Chicahualistli: Nahuatl for energy
Coamil: Spanish for field
Comadres: Spanish for co-parents
Compadrazgo: Spanish for godparenting or co-parenting
Curanderos: Spanish for healers
Cusinela: Cooker
Estli: Nahuatl for blood
Hakarima: Sprout and female name of the stage of Corn growth
Haramara: Our Mother Pacific Ocean or West
Haulima: Water from the desert or female name associated with the water
Hautsi K+p+ri: Dew’s Soul, North, or personal name
Herim+: Wixárika linguistic cue for tales
Hiwatsixa: Doll’s ceremony
Huhuetlacatl: Nahuatl for Old man
Huriyutsixi: Youth acting like “Jews” during Easter
Ikú: Cobs of Corn Dolls from the harvest
Ikúxiya: Corn Diseases
Kaka+ma: Female Elder Ancestors
Kaka+yarita: Place of Elder Ancestors
Kaka+yarite (pl.): Elder Ancestors
Kauyumarie: Elder Brother Deer
Kiekari: My house or Cultural Territory
K+iwima: Roots of Squash and female name
K+paima: Silking and female name of the stage of Corn growth
K+p+ri: Soul, energy, female name
K+tsiuri: Woven bag
Kulame: Harvest the dried Cornstalks and male name of the stage of Corn growth
Limpia: Spanish for cleansing
Libro artisanal: Spanish for Artisan Book
Macehuallmeh: Nahuatl for Indigenous peoples
Makutsi: Wild tobacco
Manda: Spanish for deed
Maseca: Spanish for pulverized and pre-made dough for tortillas
Mara’akame: medicine man/woman
Matá: Grinder made of stone
Mawari: Offering

M+ayama: To spike and female name for a stage of growth in Corn
Mulame: Harvest the dried Cornstalks and male name for a stage of growth in Corn
Muwieri: Feather and male name
Namá: Desires/passions
Nawá: Corn-based drink
Naxí: Lime
Neika: To be born and male name for a stage of growth in Corn
Nierika: Rational/consciousness
Paápa: Corn tortilla
Padrino: Spanish for Godfather
Pinole: Spanish for Corn powder
Pipitiyu: White Corn
Proyecto Taniuki: Our language Project
Puwari: Cempasútitl/Mexican marigold flowers
Ramada: Roof made out palm
Saulima: Dried Corn and female name for a stage of growth in Corn
Sawima: When the Corn silk is dried and female name of a stage of Corn growth
Saweleme: Corn is hard and female name of a stage of Corn growth
Samuama: Corn stalk with four ear shoots and female name for a stage of growth in Corn
Sutuli: To bloom and male name for a stage of growth in Corn
Sutulima: To bloom and female name for a stage of growth in Corn
Tamatsika: Elder Brother
Tayeyari: Our Ceremonial Path
Ta+rawime: Pink Corn
Taxawime: Yellow Corn
Tatewarí: Our Grandfather Fire
Taté Haramara: Our Mother Pacific Ocean or West
Taté Haramaratsie: Place of Our Grand Mother Pacific Ocean
Taté Matinieri: Our Mother that emerges from the Earth or Our Mother who watches over us
Taté Neixa: Maize Dance or Harvesting Ceremony
Taté Niwestsika ‘Etsixa: Cultivation Ceremony
Taté Takutsi Nakawé: Our Grandmother Growth
Taté Yurieniaka: Our Mother Earth
Taté Niwetsika: Our Mother Corn or Native Seed
Teiyari: Center of the field, seeds for cultivation, or heart of Our Mother Corn
Teiwarixi (pl.): White people or Non-Indigenous people
Tekuleti: Blue Corn
Tendidos: Spanish for placing blankets on the floor
Tepahtihquetl: Nahuatl for healer
Tepu: Ceremonial Drum
Tetiochiuhquetl: Nahuatl for prayer
Tetlalanquetl: Nahuatl for midwife
Teukari: Grandmother/Grandfather with the ability to name children
Teukarita Ceremonies: Naming Ceremonies
Texixitohquetl: Nahuatl for bone cracker or masseur
Titeucome: Nahuatl for hechicero, brujo, or sorcerer

Titi meiya: Sangrear in Spanish or to mark with animal blood

Tiyu'iaiemave: Nahuatl for curandero

Tip+name: Tortilla maker

Tona: Nahuatl for heat

Tlachixquetl: Nahuatl for seer

Tlamachtihquetl: Nahuatl for teacher

Tlamatquetl: Nahuatl for wise man

Tlatoani: Naáyeri King

T+xi: Pulverized Corn flour

Tukari: Our life

Tuki: Shrine or Ceremonial House

Tukima: Pollen is now visible and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

Tura: Sound or male name for sound

Turama: Female name for sound

Tuxame: White Corn

Tsakuluma: To spike and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

Tsaulima: Dried Corn and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

Tse'+ri: White/Yellow Corn with elongated kernels

Tsinawime: Multi-color Corn

Ts+kuli: Wixárika map of territory

Velada: Spanish for vigil

Wai: Meat

Watakame: Male farmer, first farmer and male name

Waxa: Corn stalk and female name

Waxata: Place for the Cornfield

We'eme: Nature or environment

Weiyak+: Pilgrimage or Estern

Weleme: When the ear shoots grow male name for a stage of growth in Corn

Werika 'uimari: Center

Wixárika's Tsik+ri: Wixárika's land

Wixárika Kiekarieya: Wixárika Geography

Wixárika's Ts+kuli: Wixárika's maps of territory

Xakwitsari: Limed Corn or "Nixtamal"

Xapawiyeme: Chapala Lake or South

Xaureme: When Corn is hard and male name for a stage of growth in Corn

Xetewiyari: Twenty

Xinachtli: Nahuatl for seeds for cultivation

Xitaima: Tender Corn and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

Xiriki: Shrine for Our Mother Corn

Xukuri: Ceremonial gourd

Yeiyári: Wixárika path or tradition "el costumbre" in Spanish

Yeiyarieya: Wixárika history or Wixárika cultural way in the past

Yeturita: Field for cultivation

Yeupa'xetá: The end

Yek+ri tuxa: Orange Corn

Y+ra: To grow greener and male name for a stage of growth in Corn

Y+rama: To grow greener and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

Y+rata: Place to grow greener

Yuawima: Blue Corn

Yuimakwaxa: Drum Ceremony

Yuri 'ikú: True Corn

Zaururricu: Singer trained who obtained shamanistic powers through pilgrimage

Zitaima: Sprout and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

Zit+ama: Tender Corn and female name for a stage of growth in Corn

INTRODUCTION: CONFLICTING ONTOLOGIES

In ethnographic fieldwork, the primary task of the ethnographer is to make sense of the “Other.” What, how, why, and when, people do what they do. To make sense of the Other, the primary role of an ethnographer is to understand other people’s realities and values. However, to understand the perspective of the Other, the task of the researcher is to understand their system of values (axiology) through the basic ideas of what people count as knowledge (epistemology). The knowledge taken from people’s values is the body of information in which the Other comes to existence (ontology). I have founded the premises of my ethnographic fieldwork on the idea of understanding ontological relations among people and plants, specifically plant ancestors such as Our Mother Corn. In my qualitative research, my primary goal was to collect data to show and demonstrate how urban Wixárika relate with Our Mother Corn in healing practices.

As my research progressed, I continued learning on a personal level how to relate with other beings. I learned values and principles of kinship relations that made me question my own kinship with family members. I constantly reflected on my early education, my background and all the factors that took me to study this exact topic with this specific community. I knew my early experiences in life made a great impact. My qualitative research was influenced by my biography and family’s genealogy even. Before exploring concepts of axiology, epistemology, and ontology in my studies, though, I had confronted these concepts in my daily life. Now, I write my dissertation from the perspective of the “self” in order to understand the “other” and find a narrative in between.²

² Michelle Fine, “Working the Hyphens,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

Background

I came to a better understanding of how childhood experiences influence research and research methodologies by looking at how the past informs the present. In Mexico, the color of my skin was the first marker of how I was meant to exist and ultimately relate to others. Reflecting on how my family related to other, I was surrounded by people with similar background as my parents' families in Mexico City who had migrated from other Mexican states to the city. My family migrated to the United States in August 2000, only six years after NAFTA and Mexico's economic crisis, which had led the peso to depreciate by 40 percent and caused a serious recession.³ Personally, I crossed the border "Illegally" and became another undocumented and invisible body in the state of California. My existence in the United States was regulated by one simple principle: my legal status. As I continued my studies, I knew that my legal status in the country would be a stigma of how I was predestined to exist in the United States. After being denied financial aid to continue my studies in a four-year university in California, I decided to attend community college and continue my studies in the hopes that the regulations for undocumented students would change.

In community college, I met my spouse, and we made the decision of marry in order to change my status in the country. After a long immigration process, in which I had to leave the country for almost two years, I became a resident, and I received an "Alien Identification Number." My Alien number determined my existence in this country—I was allowed to stay permanently in the United States, but I did not have rights like other people. Three years later, I decided to become a U.S. citizen and I applied for citizenship. As I transitioned across different

³ Robert C. Shelburne, "The Mexican Economy in the 1990s: Boom or Bust?" in *Economic Transformation In Emerging Countries: The Role of Investment, Trade and Finance* (United Kingdom: Oxford, 1998), http://works.bepress.com/robert_shelburne/16/.

statuses of being and existing in the United States—“illegal alien,” “resident,” and “citizen”—I always questions the politics of citizenships that change the status of people from invisibility. Western communities based existing on many principles; however, citizenship is by far the most crucial factor to determine personhood in the United States.

All the values, knowledge, and ideas of being and existing come from a combination of my studies and my personal and family’s experiences. In the United States, I learned how to exist beyond my identity as a *Mexicana*. I learned how to exist as an invisible body, as a brown body, and as members of a family with ruptured identities and relations with ancestors. I learned about my ancestral lineage and my connections to more than one single state in Mexico. As an undergraduate, I began my collaboration with Indigenous communities in the United States and Mexico, I came across multiple understandings of being and existence. I learned Zapotec, Nahuatl, and Wixárika vocabulary to understand more about how people in the cities communicate and relate with Spanish and English speakers. To me, language is a fascinating venue to understand ideologies and ways of relating. With Zapotec speakers in Santa Monica, being and existence was linguistically marked by the various pronouns to address subjectivities. Valley Zapotec has sixteen pronouns including reverential pronouns to address people, animals, and more. In Nahuatl, the suffix “*piltzin*” changes noun to denote respect. In Wixárika, people express personhood in their language by addressing them as Elders. Natural forces and geological formations are Elders, and thus linguistically correspond to a category *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). My major conflict while learning English was the informality in which speakers address other speakers. As a speaker of Mexican Spanish, at a very young age I learned the use of *usted*, and I carried the ideology of respecting my Elders with a

reverential pronoun. The “You” in English was a very informal and disrespectful way to talk to my Elders.

Overview of the Dissertation

In this dissertation, I unpack the meaning of being and existence to grapple with the conflicting ideas on personhood, relatedness, being, health, and wellness. These conflicted ideas came from personal and biographical experiences. My identity was formed by the many relations I made with other communities based on how I related to them: I see a little of me in them. I am the daughter of two individuals who worked hard to overcome challenges in life. In their life choices, they created theory and praxis in every single decision to cope and adapt to the circumstances and processes of colonization. I am the daughter of Petra and Manuel who gave me “Cultural Wealth Capital.” As Tara Yosso states, Cultural Wealth Capital for communities of color comes from resistance, resilience, linguistics, familial, and navigational. I come from a lineage of weavers and creators of dreams.⁴ Family members who in the midst of colonization and colonization processes transmitted values, produced knowledge to survive, and fostered new relations. I inherited Resistance Capital from my mother—as her name indicates, Petra has been the rock for all the people she has taken care of as a professional care giver. I inherited Resilient Capital from my father who sees life with love, compassion, and kindness to confront realities. The men who gave up his own dreams in life for the care and well-being of my family. My father has worked as a “handy” man for the past twenty years and continues working without certainty of becoming a visible body in the United States. He is the last member of my immediate family living in the United States to remain undocumented. Both of my parents granted me the

⁴ Tara J. Yosso, “Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005): 69–91.

opportunity to live a different reality in the United States. My position as a younger daughter allowed me to continue my education and achieve many of my goals in life. I am certain that my siblings lacked opportunities in life because their age required them to work in order to move forward as a new immigrant family.

From my parents, I have the Cultural Capital to relate with others in multiple realms because I have inhabited multiple spaces and my body remembers the familiarity of being and existing as a woman, mestiza, part-Indigenous, undocumented, documented in Mexico and the United States. I used a genealogy approach to frame my research and understand the missing narratives of my family. As I dig into my family's archives, I make sense from our point of view our role as people with Indigenous ancestry. Our identity was defined by our Oaxacan roots and standards of an Oaxacan family, namely union and kinship responsibilities to others. Our family's traditions are rooted in the life of our Great-grandmother María and Great-grandfather Marciano García from my father's side. From my mother's side, our lineages were broken under unfortunate events that forced my mom to resist and survive as a sixteen-year-old orphan. She became "modern" to depart herself from her ancestors, especially those who had caused her pain.

Part of the settler colonialism agenda in Mexico has been the project of assimilation and therefore elimination. As thinkers and philosophers *forjarón patria* ("forged a nation") in post-revolution times, many families migrated and became disconnected to their familial ties. From the very liberal politics from icons such as Benito Juárez to more philosophical takes on how to de-indigenize Mexico from Manuel Gamio and José Vasconcelos, as Mexicans, specifically mestizos took the ideologies from *Indigenismo* to move towards modernism. In such ideologies, the *indio* disappears as an identity to become part of the past and open up the road to a national identity and modernism. My family assimilated to the mestizo society to cope with the rapid

change of society in the turn of the 20th century, and the stories of my parents predominated modernism and the ideas of progress.

What I inherited from my genealogy was the capital to navigate in society that was not made for people with Indigenous ancestry. For generations, my family and I have lived in the liminal spaces of society—neither poor nor rich, neither fully Indigenous nor white, neither fully Zapotec nor fully Mixtec. But we are mestizos, with deep connections to my ancestral genealogy. In many aspects of my life (social status, color of skin, citizenship, and health), I have lived in the “in-between” spaces and thus, I have forced my body and mind to live at the edge. To an extent, I have lived in “*Nepantla*,” the liminal space that Chicana Feminist Scholar Gloria Anzaldúa describes in her work as the path to consciousness.⁵ In *Nepantla*, identities are always under construction. My work in Tepic showed me the spaces in-between. Those spaces where I did not need a label to make kinship ties. Geographically speaking, I was between my many worlds.

Survivance and Resistance: Scholarship and COVID-19

Scholar and thinker Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out in a recent live-streamed conversation, “Not Our Apocalypse,” how current Indigenous groups continue struggling through catastrophic events that aim to erase the Native. In 2020, for instance, the world’s population faces the pandemic of the COVID-19 virus. For survivance and resistance, many Indigenous communities are “remembering” how to deal with epidemics and organizing themselves to prevent fear among Indigenous communities around the world. Smith’s “Indigenous matrix of survivance and resilience” brings together the knowledge of surviving in

⁵ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/la frontera*, Vol. 3 (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

genealogy, intergenerational support, collectiveness, relationality, self-determination, and honoring achievements of ancestors. Both Cultural Capital and Indigenous matrix of survivance and resilience were inherited from two generations above mine.

In March 2020, as I moved from being a social subject to a quarantined body, I am collectively learning with others the feeling of “socially distancing.” I experience the feelings of constraint, confinement, fear, pain, sickness, and isolation. I enjoyed the feeling of the world stopping for a minute to catch my breath, and I enjoy being home. I wrote poetry and I used my time to reflect and reimagine my new social connections and spaces. I keep in contact with my Elders in my family. Ultimately, I learned how to honor them and celebrate their successful life and teachings via phone and video-chat. In this “distancing,” the honoring resulted in another romantic idea of maintaining social without the physical.

This 2020 marked the first year in the past five years that I stayed home for pilgrimage in Tepic. I performed the bodily practices to offer them in ritual as an actual honoring. I fasted from February 25 to April 12, a week before I went into the quarantine. Although pilgrims fast before making the trip to Huaynamota, this year, the church’s clerk sent an official letter cancelling the *Semana Santa* in *La Sierra*. The routes to the church, via boat or car, were closed. Only the people inside *La Sierra* had access to roads leading to the church. The Rivera family stayed home for the first time in over ten years. We all in our homes prepared for the long celebration of our Elder Brother, Tamatsika. My fasting and the fasting of others showed the sacrifice and devotion to the pilgrimage we were all enduring while at home. I devoted myself to the challenge of maintaining familial solidarity while fasting. In some houses in Tepic, the fasting was due to the food insecurities, and in other households the fasting was a sign of fear. Each and every day in my house, I was grateful to have enough. I prepared for quarantine and physical distancing

knowing I was not alone. My interaction with ancestors shifted from a pilgrimage to La Sierra to a quarantine in California. I prepared for the first time to make offerings to Our Mother Corn cultivating Native seeds in my garden. The quarantine and Lent seemed to be paired up so that many relatives in Tepic offered the physical in exchange for the metaphysical.

In my research, I relied on the Rivera family at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) Community in the outskirts of Tepic, Nayarit to learn how they connect with Our Mother Corn in the urban context. The Rivera family in *Y+rata* is originally from Santa Catarina, Mezquitic, Jalisco. The grandfather, Eustolio Rivera, and Rosalía Lemus left their homelands about twenty years ago. They established their own rancho outside traditional Wixárika rancherías to have access to seasonal agricultural jobs. In the past twenty years, the children born in Tepic and its vicinities speak Spanish as the primary mode of communication. Every year, more children from the community attend Mexican sponsored schools, and they become fluent in the *lingua franca*. Consequently, the population of those three years and older understand only Wixárika; they are unable to speak the language. The third-generation in the community has become passive speakers of the language, and they prefer to communicate with family members in Spanish. Although parents and grandparents speak Wixárika fluently, they also accommodate their speech to their audience. For instance, when elders speak to adults, they usually talk in Wixárika and only switch to Spanish if non-Wixárika speakers are part of the conversation. Unfortunately, bilingual education is not accessible in all communities, and not many language classes are offered in the city. Therefore, members of the community have limited options to learn the language in a class setting. Some members of the community lose aspects of language and culture when they stop speaking their Indigenous language fluently, however, some people still find ways to retain cultural aspects.

Kinship Relations with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”)

Since 2012, I have learned from children and women ways to maintain kinship relations with Our Mother Corn. I returned to the Rivera family every year because they welcomed me into their community and their family spaces. Most importantly, the family adopted me as part of their own family. The Rivera family has been part of a multicultural exchange as many other Wixárika families opened up to share their knowledge in the ranch and outside. This cultural exchange caused a great criticism among academics regarding the “authenticity” of the family.⁶ For my autoethnographic research, interacting with the Rivera family presented the unique opportunity to learn from those Indigenous peoples who live in diaspora. Their “authenticity” was never seen as a matter of importance to my work.

Unlike other scholars, I never wanted to explore Wixárika from the Sierras and their “authentic” practices. My intentions with collaborating with the Rivera family had been to see the process of colonization and the many ways Indigenous groups create knowledge. My focus was on the families who live in the margins and live and breathe the processes of colonization in urban communities. Eustolio Rivera and Rosalía Lemus, the Elders in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), are examples of Indigenous resistance and resilience. Their children and great-grandchildren faced the daily impacts of liberal and neoliberal politics such as migration to the city, health issues, language loss, poverty, lack of education, and inadequate health care. From all of their struggles, the beauty and sacrifice of maintaining a lifestyle centering Our Mother Corn come into being during the *fiestas* and family gatherings. In such events, everyone bilingual or monolingual, young or old Wixárika communicate with the ancestors in the performance of the

⁶ Jorge Luis Marín García, “Rituales y arte huicholes como espacios de frontera: construcción de identidades entre la sierra y el pavimento,” PhD diss., Tesis de doctorado para el Colegio de Michoacán, Zamora, México, 2011.

rituals and preparation of offerings. In Y+rata the pilgrimages, the agricultural practices, and the performances in the *fiesta* become the markers of Indigeneity. Family participated to maintain ties to ancestors and the ancestors recognized the actions by providing well-being. The ones not participating face the consequences of being away from the tradition and self-isolation from family's tradition. People's illnesses are the ultimate consequences and struggle for lack of participation and of living a mestizo life as Wixárika.

In most of my research, I relied on the knowledge of my *comadre* Felipa Rivera Lemus, a great friend, co-parent of my daughter and two of her daughters. I witnessed how Felipa gained the strength to separate from her abusive husband to move forward to a non-traditional life in a very traditional way. Divorce inside the community is prohibited because the couple is energetically tied from the *K+p+ri* ("soul") by the *mara'akame* ("medicine man/woman"). Felipa departed from a life with her husband to find her own path in healing traditions and survive domestic violence. She taught me how to make kinship with Elder Ancestors and we both took traditional Mexican medicine classes to expand our understanding of healing traditions in Mexico.⁷ Although she became a practitioner, she still doubts her own expertise and knowledge. She is learning how to make decisions by herself and to see herself as a strong independent Wixárika woman, and she began her practice of consulting patients.

In many ways, we have taught each other many lessons and encouraged each other to follow our paths. My path has been the writing about healing and her part as a practitioner of Wixárika healing traditions. I admire her hard work, unconditional love for her nine children, and motivation to reinvent a new life. Felipa has supported my research by welcoming me in her home and helping me mediate the difficult task of conducting research. In turn, I became part of

⁷ Certificates in Alternative Therapies, Mexican Herbolaria I and II, and Aromatherapy Massage Therapy.

her family by co-parenting our children together. Through the years, I have sought guidance on my own path to understand healing traditions inside the community. Additionally, Felipa has been my primary advisor in traditional agricultural practices within the family. Her acceptance of my mixed-identity allowed me to fully merge into the ethnographic fieldwork and understand the Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the survival of knowledge. I followed the teachings of Felipa and my genealogy to uncover my family's connection to the land and re-learn land-based pedagogy. In my research, the Rivera family ceremonies and pilgrimages contest colonial agendas.

In this dissertation, I become the “Other” when I remember who I am, who my ancestors are, and where I wish my kinships relations to take me. I “work the hyphen” in the self-other during my qualitative research to merge narratives and become part of the body of work.⁸ In a global sense, the purpose of this work is to understand how views on being and existing differ and create a clash of ontologies. The conflicting ontologies prevent Indigenous communities from having sovereign nations, access sustainable agriculture, and maintain well-being. I investigate the agency of Our Mother Corn, a common species in Mexico among urban Wixárika. I trace the practices of a community with deep and intricate knowledge on Traditional Ecological Knowledge, land-based pedagogy, and symbiotic relationships with ancestral seeds. In a more local or personal manner, this dissertation was a journey of self-discovery to depart from my ancestors who had caused me pain. I moved forward from the relatives who caused pain to establish and foster healthy relationships. In such relationships, I make kinship and learn how to become a better ancestor by fixing and rebuilding relations both in the physical and metaphysical realms.

⁸ Fine, “Working the hyphens.”

Since the day I was born, my identity has been fractured and intersected by multiple factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, citizenship, urbanity, rurality, colonization, broken histories, and health). In this body of work, I embrace all my identities and intersections—I write from the heart, and my experiences help me remember my ancestors, paying tribute and honoring ancestors, my family truths, and Wixárika ways of relating with Elder ancestors. As I wrote the introduction in this dissertation, I reflect on how I have learned to be in relation with my ancestors and in time of “physical distancing.” I utilized all my Cultural Capital to survive and resist another catastrophic event in my life.

I was born in 1985 and as a newborn, I suffered from pneumonia and was transferred to a hospital in Mexico City to be treated. I constantly heard from my parents about my resilience. I overcame sickness alone in an incubator away from my family. I have heard many times, all the stories of me ripping away the oxygen mask to go with my parents when they came to visit. In 1998, I was walking home when suddenly a car crashed on a near by wall narrowly missing me. In 2001, I was in tenth grade when the events of 9/11 occurred. I was watching the news in my fifth-period class unable to understand the meaning of anything because I did not speak English. And, now I am finishing a dissertation during the pandemic of the COVID-19 virus. Like others, I am sharing the uncertainties of life, death, sickness, and wellness with many people around the world. For my future and the future of my research, I will continue to build and connect with the knowledge of my ancestors and living relatives to maintain relations in the “new social” protocols in post-pandemic times. I am an “ancestor in the making” and this dissertation proves how I have reconnected with ancestral roots. By reconfiguring paradigms, remembering the pain of ancestors, and reconciling the conflicting ontologies, I amended broken relations. I lived on the edge of life and death. Every year when I attend the pilgrimages, I am reminded of how

grateful I am to continue surviving. In a very personal way, I alleviated broken bonds with grandmother, mother, and daughter through my ceremonial participation. I found the values and the knowledge of the *Other* to reconcile and reaffirm my own belief system. I love my mother and my grandmother. They are both beautiful—their beauty is in their resistance and I honor them. I see their beauty every day in my daughter.

In my research, I will continue to provide valuable and vulnerable information and knowledge to others about my identity. I see myself as a “hybrid,” a *mestiza*, part Indigenous, ethnically diverse, rich in multi-cultural and linguistic ways. In Sinaloa, a Northern state, I am the *chilanga*, and in Mexico City, I was the *oaxaquita* or the *costeñita* around my neighborhood. In Tepic, I am the *huicholita*, who people in the street confused for a Wixárika woman. I am sometimes the educator and researcher in the community. With my family, I am *Margarita* or *Margara* depending on the mood of my mom. In the United States, I am the scholar and the thinker who unpacks the meaning of my identities. While I cross the border, my identities cut across my body exposing my intersections and exposing me. Sometimes when I cross the United States border, I am just me again invisible, minuscule, and isolated. I am fine with being the three (invisible, minuscule, and isolated) because I can continue inhabiting multiple spaces with the ability to relate linguistically and culturally with many communities across Mexico and the US. I continue using my “repertoire of identities” and performing my many intersected identities to survive and resist.⁹ The invisibility, minuscule, and isolation overtake of myself and allow me to see and continue making sense of the Other or the me inside the Other. All identities are

⁹ Paul V. Kroskrity, “An evolving ethnicity among the Arizona Tewa: Toward a repertoire of identity,” in *Language studies of the Arizona Tewa* (1993), 177–212.

irrelevant in trying to re-connect. When I move beyond the social constructions, cultural, and ethnic constraints, I can see how I am connected to the other. This is relatedness and being.

Chapter Organization

To make sense of Wixárika ways of knowing and relating with Our Mother Corn, I have organized my dissertation in four chapters and a concluding chapter. In Chapter One, I discuss how plants and people co-exist and depend on each other for their survival. I exemplify the use of multi-species ethnography to provide data on how plants communicate. I highlight the role of women in embodied practices, inter-species relations in urban centers. In Chapter Two, I discuss the role of the body in the performance of Indigeneity. I talk about pilgrimage as a movement across properties to reaffirm kinship with the ancestors in Wixárika geography. I also discuss ideas of health and sickness within the Indigenous community in urban centers. I shed light on how many families perform healing practices through the preparation of corn-based meals.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the connection between body and land to understand how choreographically, the body creates theory by walking in pilgrimages, land reciprocity and Indigenous principles of coexistence. I trace the concept of the body in Mesoamerica traditions. I use conceptual metaphors to unpack the meaning of personal names in relation to the body of Our Mother Corn in relation to the human body. In Chapter Four, I self-reflect on urban healing practices and I trace the commodification of healing modalities. I provide a platform for the *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) community to voice their opinion in the matter of sharing ancestral practices with outsiders through testimonies. In the concluding chapter, I discuss my ideas on the future of healing traditions, as well as the benefits of traditional medicine in times of COVID-19 viruses. I reimagine a world in which Our Mother Corn and other medicinal plants are in the epicenter of healing practices in Mexico. In the Concluding Chapter, I reflect on my

own practices and how *Y+rata* became my home to learn and heal generational trauma. Finally, I discuss the role of Native seeds in Mexico and the efforts of many non-profit organizations to push forward politics, laws, and regulations to include Our Mother Corn as the epicenter of culture, identity, and Indigenous sovereignty.

Methodologies

Since the beginning of my research in 2012, my methods of collecting data have been emerging, from my yearning to understanding the worldview of Wixárika families, their epistemic values, and my role inside the community. In the first two years of my research, I relied on the ethnographic and autoethnographic field-methods to understand how Wixárika women teach children proper ways of being Wixárika outside their homelands. To understand the role of *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) within urban families, I conducted oral history interviews, group interviews, and I participated in communal events. Soon, I realized that the only way to understand certain concepts in Wixárika worldview (relationships with ancestors, relationality protocols, and reciprocity) was to participate in the embodied practices of the Rivera families inside the *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) community. I began participating in many of the cultural and ceremonies and pilgrimages by invitation of the family.

Additionally, I organized workshops inside *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) community with the intentions of helping women in the care of children. My active participatory and community-based research allowed me to collect data while volunteering in community matters such as art, language revitalization and Native seeds preservation. Using active participation and community-based methods, I was able to become an ally to the different struggles of urban Wixárika and guide my research to the matters that concern the community’s interest. I

collaborated with members of the Zitakua community (a Wixárika neighborhood in Tepic) and academics in the revitalization of the Wixárika language in the urban context. I helped the Rivera family in the cultivating of Our Mother Corn and documenting the growth of Corn; and the Rivera family began guiding me in the cultivation of my field in a borrowed land and a community garden.

I use mixed-method approaches to understand the role of *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) in the life of urban Wixaritari (pl.). I take the “ontological turn” to explore from the perspective of the community the role of Our Mother Corn in healing, traditions, naming metaphors, interspecies relations, and farming.¹⁰ To better understand the role of Our Mother Corn, I rely on multispecies ethnographic writing to document how Our Mother Corn is interconnected to Wixaritari across Nayarit, especially in urban communities of Tepic. In the following section, I describe the different approaches I utilized to collect data and how the data illuminated my research. First, I discuss my ethnographic work inside the community and how from participant observation I became an active participant in community work. I outline how I relied on the collection of data among other species to understand the relationship between people and Our Mother Corn. I describe how gathering data from actively interacting with Our Mother Corn enables me to see how interspecies communications come to fruition.

Participant Observation

In 2015, I documented the growth of *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Corn”) and the use of native seeds in the preparation for ceremonies from the perspective of women and the production of corn-based substances such as drinks, tortillas, and tamales during

¹⁰ Eduardo Kohn, “Anthropology of Ontologies,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (2015): 311–327.

the first ceremony of harvesting. Through fieldwork, I understood better the role of Our Mother Corn during rituals and the role of women in ceremonial places. To observe and participate in the cultivation season, I attended the first ritual of the cycle of Our Mother Corn that took place at the end of June and continued through July. In the days living in the community, I frequently documented in my field notes the crucial role of women enabling Our Mother Corn relations with other family members. Mainly inside the kitchen and communal patios, women interact with Our Mother Corn in daily practices. While I helped in the preparation of the seeds for cultivation, many in the Rivera family, especially women and children, talked to me about their role in cultivation. I audio recorded, videotaped, and photographed the different stages of cultivation (seed preparation, land preparation, and cultivation). At the end of the summer, I learned how women safeguard the *Teiyari* (“Cultivation Seeds”), husk the Corncobs, and prepare the seeds for cultivation.

During the following summer (2016 through 2019), I attended cultivation ceremonies, preparation of the seeds for cultivation, and cultivation of Our Mother Corn with the Rivera family in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) and the Carrillo de la Cruz family in *El Buruato*. To identify patterns and themes in the behavior of women in the family, I examined my data at the end of every summer. Most women in the Rivera family engaged in the preparation of the cultivation season after the ceremonial gathering in June. For my research, participating and observing the labor women in the Rivera family allowed me to comprehend the importance of Corn in healing practices. When women make Corn-based substances and participate in rituals of Corn, they assure their families maintain close ties to Our Mother Corn and therefore good health. Good health, as I will discuss in the first three chapters, entails a balanced relationship between people and land. Women maintain this balance through their physical labor in the fields

and consumption of Corn-based meals. In most of the families with a *Teiyari* (“Center of the field,” “Seeds for cultivation,” or “Heart of Our Mother Corn”), almost everyone appeared healthy and in good physical conditions to work and perform everyday activity.

Community-based Research

In my participatory research, I organized workshops in the community as a way to collect data. Most of these workshops are for members of Wixárika families in Nayarit, although sometimes outsiders participate as well. In the beginning of my research, I actively participated in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), both in ceremonial and daily life of the community. Although I have strong connections with many families in *Y+rata*, my research extended to families in the Zitakua neighborhood (a Wixárika neighborhood of about 479 inhabitants). I came to Zitakua as a volunteer student when Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, Wixárika teacher, activist, and university professor in the Applied Linguistic Department at the *Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit* (UAN) invited me to collaborate with the *Unión de Profesionistas Indígenas de Nayarit A.C.* Every year, the organization plans an intertribal cultural festival for all Native communities in the state of Nayarit. In the 2017’s agenda for the “1er Festival Cultural de Los Pueblos Originarios del Gran Nayar” (Indigenous Day Festival), I collaborated with a workshop and hosted an acrylic painting workshop for children. In this festival, based on the experiences with the kids at Zitakua, I learned that most of the children living in the neighborhood have lower levels of proficiency in the language. In 2017, during a summer project I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Zitakua to survey the linguistic landscape in the neighborhood. I offered a methodology course geared towards children and youth to gain the necessary skills to document inside their own community.

In this methodology course, we (the students, educators, and myself) used autoethnography as a method of inquiry. Children understood their roles within the community and gained leadership to act in the revitalization of their language inside the community by using autoethnography.¹¹ While we surveyed and interviewed members of the community about preferences for language and the visibility of the Wixárika language, we gathered data to show how the neighborhood would benefit from a bilingual linguistic landscape. For my specific research, I gathered data on the distribution of spaces in the community. I documented how an Indigenous community in the urban context distributes places to accommodate communal spaces for the *Waxata* (“Cornfield”). Many families at Zitakua cultivate in their garden small plots of Our Mother Corn. At the end of the summer, we (my students and I) presented our findings in the “2nd Festival Cultural de Los Pueblos Originarios del Gran Nayar” where local authorities witnessed the participation and leadership of young Wixárika.

My research allowed me to understand how families in the city affirm their Indigenous identity. While children surveyed the community and asked questions regarding language choices, we collected different opinions regarding language use and key words. I was able to connect the list of words, especially Our Mother Corn lexicon, to the growth and the stage of the plant. I created a list of Corn related names that I translated to analyze how names became metaphors of Corn in the Wixárika language. As I continued in my research, I added more names. Rosalía Lemus de La Rosa regarding the ontological meaning of the names. Rosalía is a *Teukari* (“grandmother with the ability to name children”) and she assigns names in ceremonies.

¹¹ R. Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Bacon Press, 1996); Norman K. Denzin, “Analytic autoethnography, or déjà vu all over again,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (2006): 419–428.

I was able to interview her and I audio-recorded our conversation regarding the meaning of the names, how the grandfathers assigned names, and the images pertaining to the names. For example, in one of my lists, many of the people interviewed told me the most common names for females and for males. By using the help of native speakers, I was then able to classify the names. Additionally, I was able to categorize the names by growth stages of Our Mother Corn.

In the Fall of 2018, Benito Carrillo de la Cruz and Dagoberto Robles González, two Native speakers of two different communities and students of Applied Linguistics at UAN, helped to convert the informal workshops into the *Proyecto Taniuki* (“Our language project”), a revitalization program with a language course. I started working with Dagoberto, who was initially my thesis consultant and now a great friend and collaborator in the curriculum for the Taniuki Project. Together with Dagoberto we taught courses in Wixárika. I organized the courses and offered workshops that helped our students understand the value and importance of the Indigenous languages of Mexico. I taught poetry workshops in which students explored issues of indigenous identity, urbanity, and Corn cultivation. I also taught workshops emphasizing Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous embodied practices, emphasizing the knowledge of Wixárika families (farming, reciprocity, traditional food, dance, dance, art, ceremony, and more). While I became very active in the revitalization of the language in the community, I continued gathering data for my research.

For the collection of data, I held art and poetry workshops to encourage the use of Wixárika motifs in creative writing. For the students in the project, worldview became an important part of the creation of poems and art pieces. In the workshops, I encouraged students to use both traditional and non-traditional techniques to explore the different artistic expressions available to them. All of these activities foster language use and documentation to improves

students' abilities to speak the language. For example, when we used color paints such as acrylics or water paint, we practice words for colors in Wixárika and the pronunciation of those words. Students participate in performances to put into practice their knowledge of the language, such as in the "3rd Festival Cultural de Los Pueblos Originarios del Gran Nayar" where the *Proyecto Taniuki* ("Our Language Project") group performed the poem "Zitakua" as part of the program. In the Taniuki, we offer workshops with Wixárika communities to promote the use of language inside public spaces. The Taniuki Project also promotes the creation of Wixárika art and literature following Wixárika aesthetics and artistic standards. We also offer workshops to non-Wixárika speakers to create awareness of linguistic diversity in the state of Nayarit. Additionally, Taniuki is part of a team of institutions and non-profit organizations that contribute to the agenda declared by the UNESCO as the International Indigenous Language Year.

Participating in the planning of all these activities allows me to understand how some of the participants conceive plant-human interaction through metaphors in language, vocabulary, oral tradition, art, gardening, and cultivation. While students creatively made traditional art pieces, poetry, art paintings, and exhibited or performed their work, I learned how third-generation speakers maintain their Indigenous identity and make claims of tribal belonging through their art production. Some of my students produced impressive pieces of art depicting Wixárika ancestors and the interaction between their family and ancestors in the ceremony. A particular art project created in the Proyecto Taniuki was a *Libro artesanal* ("Artisan Book"). This name was coined by Wixárika educator Luis Miguel, a colleague and friend who devotes his work to the implementation of Indigenous education in the public education curriculum in the state of Nayarit. Maestro Luis Miguel offered workshops for our group to create books utilizing oral tradition and Wixárika writing. Some students wrote how Our Mother Corn came to the life

of Wixárika families and illustrated the book. Other students wrote about the Drum Ceremony and depicted how ancestors came during the ceremony. All of these books demonstrate the knowledge of interspecies relations and levels of interaction between humans and beyond.

By conducting community-based participatory action research, I navigated spaces that in my community of study from an ally's perspective. Collaborating in the Taniuki Project while researching in the community brings many challenges, especially as a non-Wixárika woman, non-speaker of the Native language, mother, and Ph.D. student. The first challenge of coordinating the program was to gain the communities' support. I gained the support of the Zitakua community through my mentor and teacher, Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, who brought me to the community and trusted me to offer workshops in the "*Festival de Los Pueblos Originarios*" (Indigenous Peoples Festival) in 2016. Since then, I have been participating in many cultural events in the community. Moreover, networking within the community, by being very clear about my intentions (revitalize the language, gather data, and serve the community of study), has helped me foster collaborative relations.

For my participatory and community-based research, I utilized a decolonizing methodology based on the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith. In Smith's work, Indigenous educators teach students the tools in the classroom to help "regenerate" ancestral knowledge and practices through research.¹² Based on Wixárika methodologies, the Taniuki Project curriculum provides spaces for Wixárika members to offer knowledge to the students; examples include orality as a method of rescuing language, ancestral art as history, data collection on plants and animals, interspecies documentation, and more. Finally, we use the models present in *Indigenous and*

¹² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (Zed Books Ltd., 2013).

Decolonizing Studies in Education, a volume edited by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang. By modeling other Indigenous communities and their practices in education in the Taniuki, we find activities that have an effect on the education, social change, Wixárika sovereignty, land, and relations to establish a curriculum that adapts to the Wixárika education model and that has the effect of social change in each student.¹³

For example, in terms of social change and sovereignty, students of the program have participated since the beginning of the research to diagnose and implement actions to strengthen the Wixárika language. Strengthening actions focus on Indigenous practices from cultural relevance in the community (e.g., creation of art and literature). In the same way, the actions have epistemological value within the Wixárika community. For instance, in the workshops, we implement lessons that convey the knowledge of the Wixárika language from the linguistic perspective and we use cultural aspects of the language inside quotidian activities such as gardening. Students, the majority who are third-generation Wixárika, learn the value of language by learning grammar and vocabulary. Also, students see the importance of orality when they practice vocabulary, collect stories within their own family, or teach us traditional farming techniques.

While my daughter attended the local preschool, I was very involved in her education and connected with other preschoolers' mothers. I understood Wixárika mothers' fears of language loss when families left their Native lands to come to the city. The same way I felt by taking my daughter away from her life in Los Angeles, Wixárika mothers described to me what it felt to leave behind their homelands in La Sierra to work in the city. From all the challenges in the

¹³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang, *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), x.

project, I understood that my role in Zitakua was to facilitate the spaces for members of the community. Through my research, I aimed to open up spaces that foster the sovereignty of the community (e.g., language reclamation efforts, language classes, traditional practices). I collaborated with other teachers in the project to bring more educators. I actively advocated for the need to learn about funding opportunities or how to apply for funding to access resources for the project.¹⁴ As a group, we created a funding campaign and we encouraged donations to give students access to a better working environment, materials, meals, assistance, and entertainment. Through my participatory research in language revitalization, I came to understand how families conceive plant-human interactions through oral tradition, art, cultivation, harvesting, and language. Our work in the Taniuki Project empowers students to become leaders of their community. The collection of data that came from my interaction in the community (drawings, surveys, interviews, art pieces, poetry, workshops) creatively contributes to my understanding of how migrant communities of Wixárika families in urban communities maintain ontological connections to ancestors, specifically to Our Mother Corn, through cultivation and other embodied practices. At the same time, I collected data with the Taniuki participants as they continue in the path of language revitalization in places far from Native lands.

Multispecies Ethnography

In order to understand better how people and Corn interconnect, I decided to approach part of my fieldwork from a multispecies perspective, in which Tatéi Niwetsika (“Our Mother

¹⁴ As a team, we applied for several federal funding to bring resources to the program and bolster the curriculum. The Taniuki Project received the Programa de Acciones Culturales Multilingües y Comunitarias in the year 2019-2020 for funding the activities in the academic year through the Secretaría de Cultura and Dirección General de Culturas Populares, Indígenas y Urbanas. The funds covered materials and stipends for the Wixárika teachers. I served as a project coordinator and administrator of activities remotely. Additionally, the project offered language and arts courses to raised funds for other classroom activities such as fieldtrips and construction inside La Casa de La Mujer at Zitakua.

Corn” or “Native Seeds”) was a major agent of change in the life of people. In the essay “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich discuss multispecies ethnography as a new genre of writing to understand how a multitude of organisms shape and impact the lives of people. In the Summer of 2018, we cultivated Corn in La Labor and documented the growth of Corn from the perspective of Our Mother Corn in the workshop “Multispecies Ethnography: The Science of Our Mother Corn” to see the impact of the plant in the life of people. Using a Canon camera and my iPhone, I documented how plants in the field grew daily and interacted with people and plants. Based on the work of Kirksey and Helmreich, I implemented some “hybrid methods” to capture in my observations how plants grew in contact with other species, including humans.¹⁵ In these recordings, the growth of Our Mother Corn is positively influenced by numerous factors: the acoustics of nature; the migration of predators, such as ants; the human hand of many women and men; pollinators; the wind, the rain, and other natural forces. In these “naturalcultural borderlands,” the observation in the field of ecology formed part of these ethnographic practices to follow the cycle and development of Our Mother Corn.¹⁶ From beginning to end, I followed how human behavior revolved around the fields to bring health and balance with ancestral practices that support the life of Our Mother Corn surrounding.

In the context of Our Mother Corn, seeds depend on the many communities in Mexico for the cultivation. The livelihood of Our Mother Corn depends mainly on the political, economic, and cultural forces of Wixárika families. Politically, Our Mother Corn’s livelihood depends on the decisions politicians make, favoring big corporations, the introduction of Genetically

¹⁵ S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” (2018): 548.

¹⁶ David Shorter, “Binary Thinking and the Study of Yoeme Indian lutu'uria/truth,” *Anthropological Forum* 13, no. 2 (2003): 195–203.

Modified Organisms, and pesticides in the Mexican agriculture. Economically, Our Mother Corn's livelihood depends on the consumption of mainly Indigenous communities that maintain ancestral ways of cultivating the land. Wixárika families and their behavior in the Cornfield (e.g., making sure they cultivate properly, following protocols to cultivate, and exchanging offerings). Through following people's actions in regard to the cultivation of Our Mother Corn, I was able to see the impact of the growth of Corn among Wixárika families. Due to the lack of land to cultivate, however, many communities utilize products such as *Maseca* ("pulverized and pre-made dough for tortillas") in replacement of Our Mother Corn for tortillas. Culturally, Our Mother Corn's livelihood depends on human interaction for the devotion and consumption in ceremonial spaces that assure the cultivation and promote the relationship between species, spanning plants, animals, and humans. In my multispecies ethnography, I experienced how Wixárika families sometimes cultivate only enough to participate in ceremonial spaces. Since during the ceremonies, ancestors communicate with people and grant them health and wellness, many families decided to cultivate to bring offerings to the ceremony. In many Wixárika households, *Yuri 'ikú* ("True Corn") continues to impact the lives of family members. When people do not cultivate, they are more concerned about their health and fear that they will not be able to complete another year in wellness.

For my multispecies ethnography, I documented the growth of Our Mother Corn using video, photography, and audio. From 2015 to 2019, I spent summers in the of *Y+rata* ("Place to grow greener") community and multiple fields from different families in Tepic. Particularly in the summer of 2019, I 1) cultivated *Tatéi Niwetsika* ("Our Mother Corn" or "Native Seeds") in a borrowed piece of land on the outskirts of Tepic, 2) visited multiple fields with friends, 3) discussed cultivation practices with Native seeds experts, and 4) organized a community garden

in the *Casa de La Mujer* at Zitakua. I documented the growth plants in my personal “Corn Journal” and I collected footage to see how Our Mother Corn communicates with people. I placed Our Mother Corn as a major protagonist in my research to see how for many families the different species of Corn form part of their network of connections. People and Our Mother Corn interacted in social contexts (e.g., kitchens, patios, fields, and ceremonies).

In this dissertation, I use mixed-method approaches to grapple with ideas of personhood and relationality. The data I collected over the years allowed me to understand the central role of *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) in the life of urban Wixaritari (pl.). The same way I gathered data, I learned about people and myself. My research practices and research methodologies came from building ethical and sustainable bonds with Wixárika families. Using multispecies ethnography, I was able to understand how the life of people and plants is interconnected through the symbiotic relation in cultivation and harvesting. Ceremonial encounters dictate the levels of interaction depending on ceremonial responsibilities. Some families spent weekends visiting the field and working together in the preparation of the land for cultivation. In every visit, mothers bring offerings and exchange prayers so that Our Mother Corn grows. The amount of labor invested in the cultivation and harvesting of Corn guided me to see how the life of the plants impacted the life of people on many levels. Wixárika families, such as the Rivera family, devoted all summer to the cultivation of Our Mother Corn. I spent days working with families and learning from them about their intimate relationship between people and plants. In some activities, women gathered in the patio to husk the kernels of the Yuri’Ikú and talked about the genealogy of each of the batches of seeds. Sometimes before the cultivation ceremony, when women came from other ranches, we all sat with Mamachali and helped her husking the seeds for the cultivation. Usually, Mamachali talked about Our Mother Corn and we

listened. Other times, I asked open-ended questions about their interaction in the field and in the kitchen. The topics of conversation ranged from cooking, healing practices, and ultimately motherhood in relation with Our Mother Corn.

After five days, families came back to the field to make sure the plant grew above the ground. Some families spent nights sleeping in the field. Through interviews and personal communications, I constantly asked family members about the importance of the cultivation and most of the comments directed me to the impact of the plant in their Indigenous identity and health conditions. Additionally, I was in the fields interacting with Our Mother Corn to see how she communicated her needs through growth, color of leaves, or size of roots. In my interactions with the plants, I was able to care for another species by making notes of the important factors that impact the livelihood of Our Mother Corn such as weather, predators, and stages of growth. In my journal, I documented all the details to make connections with how Wixárika families related with Our Mother Corn in a very intimate and personal way.

In the community-based research, especially in the work in the Proyecto Taniuki (“Our Language Project”) students participated in summer courses to learn about the language in context, which includes activities such as planting or harvesting Native crops. For these courses, I organized a collective planting with members of the community. The students learned about the science of *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) and the importance of Native Corn for the subsistence of Wixárika families. We cultivated our own garden and visited relative’s gardens. In those two practices, children take care of their own plants and later visit other plots to compare and contrast the growth of plants. I printed pictures with the stages and children ask relatives the names in a short survey. In Zitakua, we walked around the community to visit neighboring plots and implement the same measurements. Children take photos and learn

how to interview people while learning about Our Mother Corn. As a result, the members of the student group learn the vocabulary of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). We gathered data to understand the growth of Our Mother Corn and cultivation vocabulary in Wixárika using flashcards with pictures of plants. I examined all of the material and took notes of how art, language, and embodied practices such as cultivation demonstrate community ties to ancestors and Native land. Furthermore, my data collection in the dissertation allowed me to create pedagogical material to collaborate with Wixárika teachers in the revitalization of the language using TEK.

In our community garden, the participants of the Taniuki project reflected on how *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) form part of their daily life. I collected data from poetry writing, drawings, and growth/stages of Our Mother Corn. Using multispecies ethnographic methodologies allows me to see how people grant Our Mother Corn agency in their social lives between humans and “other-than-humans.” Because for Wixárika families, distancing from Our Mother Corn only threatens the symbiotic relationship between humans and plants, in which plant intelligence is dismissed and disregarded people maintain the interaction through cultivation and consumption of Corn. Disrupting the organic entanglement between people and Our Mother Corn has a great impact on the environment (e.g., land depletion, scarcity of food, and pollution). Without community-based research and my involvement in community spaces, my data would have been limited to collaborating with one Wixárika family as opposed to working with fifteen to twenty students from at least ten families.

In 2018, after the cultivation of Corn with the Taniuki students, I visited the field to see how the plants were growing. In the harvesting ceremony, I accompanied Felipa Rivera to visit the field for the exchange of offerings. We drove to the field (about twenty minutes by car) and

stopped at the entrance. We walked and delivered a *Nawá* a Corn-based drink. Felipa chanted while I lit a candle. We were worried about our trip because we had to be back to the main ranch to continue the ceremony with the others. When we were walking, I lit a cigarette to calm the nerves and Felipa pointed to the road, motioning to me to blow the smoke in front of us. I followed her directions and asked her more. She told me that the smoke would scare away animals. When we finally arrived at the center of the field, we opened the offerings and placed them in the field. Felipa chanted some words she had previously recorded in her cellphone with Mamachali. I took a couple photos to remember the day. We left the offerings to the open air for the exchange of energy between the plants and the food offerings.

In the short interaction between the plants and us, I began looking at how ceremonial offerings become part of an exchange transaction. We had delivered an offering to take the offerings of the land. The following day, we came back to get our *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) for the *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz,” “Harvesting Ceremony” or “Drum Ceremony”). We selected the best Corncobs from the plants to collect the ones with two ears. I honestly felt lost looking at the anatomy of the Corn. Felipa knew what she was doing and selected what she described as the most beautiful. Those Corncobs became our dolls for the dance ceremony. In the ceremony, we placed *Tatéi Niwetsika* and other Corncobs on the altar for the weakened ceremony. At night we danced with the dolls and prepared them for consumption.

These opportunities to participate and observe the behavior of other allowed me to question human-plant interactions, offerings, and therefore my contribution to some of the practices. In 2019, I asked Felipa for her guidance in the cultivation of my Corn plot in Tepic and inside the Zitakua neighborhood. She was happy to help me. In the Corn plot, we cultivated native seeds from El Roble. First the workshop “*Manejo Tradicional de Cultivos en la Sierra del*

Nayar,” I learned about traditional techniques and I obtained Native seeds. I utilized these Blue Corn to cultivate my field. Later, Felipa provided guidance on the cultivation and Angelica (Felipa’s niece) helped me with the labor. We spent three days preparing the land, cultivating, and making offerings. We visited the field to document the growth biweekly until the end of September. In the fall 2019, after one month I left Tepic to come back to finish my degree, I returned in October for the final *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz,” “Harvesting Ceremony” or “Drum Ceremony”) I was able to collect my final data: Corncobs for ceremonial purposes in both Zitakua and personal field. In our community garden at Zitakua, we cultivated the same seeds from El Roble in garden beds. At night, I made my doll, placed her in the altar, and danced during the ceremony *Tatéi Niexá*. I did not document much of the ceremony, partly because I was so engaged in participating in the dance and making offerings. The methods I employed were very connected to my practices in the field as a person, learning from a community of study, and making kinship. In this way, the methods in this dissertation are inseparable from learning about me and the Wixárika families at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”).

Poema I

Rajada, partida en dos, mutilada
Sin poder hablar.
Invisible, minúscula, aislada
No existo más!

I cried all my tears, my mother’s tears, my grandma’s tears. All women’s tears.

I felt all my fears, my family’s fears, the world’s fears.

I felt all the pain. My body’s pain. Other’s pain. I cannot longer breath.

Oh, but wait! I have been here.

Under this skin.

I remember, I know how it feels!

My energy rises:*In/visible, Mi/brújula, Yo/soleda*

The wound is healed

Stitched up

Parchada!

I can now exist!

Curada con cicatriz

Healed with scar
Maps on my body
My own destiny!
I'm me still *rajada* cut in pieces
But breathing from within
Under the thin layer of skin
I reclaim my kin!
I survive. I resist.
With all my relationships.
I exist.
Time to Blossom
I will rise, I will pick up my piece, and I will show my splendor.
Even if I become invisible, minuscule, and isolated again. Because I will feel again
We are all connected

-Winter 2020

CHAPTER ONE: TATÉI NIWETSIKA

While growing up in El Tablón #1, in rural Sinaloa, México, I remember my next-door neighbors cultivated corn every year in the field across our home. I remember looking out from my window and seeing the stalks of corn growing tall. When the field was ready for harvesting, our neighbors would invite us to harvest the field. Sometimes we would receive a *costal* (“woven bag”) full of corn; we would eat the corn and later my mother would return the *costal* full of another vegetable, as a sign of appreciation and reciprocity. In some seasons, we would help them harvest and as we “worked,” we the kids would run through the field and hide.¹⁷ Sometimes the fur in the stalks would make our body itch. Nonetheless, we loved running and playing in and around the corn. Although I am not sure if the corn harvested in my community was *Maíz Criollo* (“Native Corn”), this was my first encounter with the body of Our Mother Corn (“Native Corn”). I did not know that my relationship with Native Corn would grow and become very intimate in the following years. I can still remember running in those fields and how happy I was. Now as an adult, helping the Rivera family at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) cultivate the field, cultivating my own plot, and having a community garden continues being my happiness.

***Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and Wixárika Ontology**

In the life of many Wixárika, *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) holds an important role within families. In the ceremonial and everyday life of the community, *Yuri 'Ikú* (“True Corn”) is present in many cultural and everyday aspects of the life of Wixárika families. The interspecies relation between Our Mother Corn and Wixárika families

¹⁷ Throughout the dissertation, I write corn in lower case and Corn in upper case to convey the difference between common *Zea Mays* species and Wixárika ancestral relative.

demonstrates how species co-exist and maintain balance in the environment. In urban communities, Wixárika families find ways to interact with ancestors such as Our Mother Corn. In this chapter, I grapple with theories of ontology to frame Wixárika ways of being and existing by unpacking personhood and kinship among the urban Wixárika families in Tepic. I contextualize the role of Our Mother Corn as a relative by applying four major ideas to Wixárika ontology: 1) language, 2) relatedness, 3) principles and protocols of interaction, 4) agency, and 5) oral tradition. I provide the example of the *Yuimakwaxa* (“Drum Ceremony”) to show how Our Mother Corn comes to the ceremonial patio of the Rivera family at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), a Wixárika family from Santa Catarina, Mezquitic, Jalisco. To showcase Wixárika’s practices inside the kitchen, I later discuss the historical interaction of Our Mother Corn and people from the field. Finally, I examine how plants communicate, specifically in the cultivation of Our Mother Corn of urban Wixárika. I introduce literature on the communication of plants to understand how Corn communicates with people using principles of co-existing in the same environment. Exemplifying the case of Wixárika families, I show how families interact, cultivate, talk, and co-exist with Our Mother Corn to create bonds, learn principles of beauty, and ultimately promote the health of children.

To understand the role of Our Mother Corn inside the Rivera family, I ventured to understand Wixárika ontology, or being and existing.¹⁸ Wixárika’s being and existing draws from the ideas that humans not only possess the quality of personhood, but animals, plants, topographic formations, bodies of water, and otherwise “inanimate objects” such as art, feathers,

¹⁸ The Rivera family originally from Santa Catarina, Mezquitic, Jalisco, immigrated about 20 years ago to have access to agricultural jobs in the state of Nayarit. Since then, they have established their ceremonial center in different locations. Now, *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) is located outside Tepic, Nayarit. Although extended family members live in other towns in the state, they all travel during ceremonies and continue holding ceremonial duties similar to La Sierra.

looms, drums, crystals, and natural forces. Linguistically, Wixárika speakers distinguish a category for ancient ancestors, which includes all extensions of Wixárika kinship: *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). In this category, “inanimate objects” are part of the network of ancestors. Similar to Anishinaabe ontology, in A. Irvine Hallowell’s essay “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View,” people distinguish a category of persons in which humans, animals, and plants are subcategories.¹⁹ Hallowell’s research demonstrates through oral tradition how persons and “other-than-human” interact in everyday life. These interactions and encounters between persons and “other-than-human” disclose information about the levels of power among beings and how they interrelate. This article opens up the possibility to think about Wixárika ontology and the ways people relate to other beings using language. Within the category of *Kaka+yarite/ Kaka+ma*, ancestors interact with Wixárika at different levels. Some ancestors possess the ability to change their form, to come to people in dreams, or be present in ceremonies depending on their power. For example, *Yuawima* (“Blue Corn”), the daughters of Our Mother Corn, who first became human to interrelate with the first farmer, in Wixárika ethnohistory.²⁰

Additionally, “Our Mother Corn” comes through the chants of the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) during ceremonies to embody the different *Iku* (“Cobs of Corn Dolls from the harvest”) of Our Mother Corn in the altar.²¹ Finally, ancestors come to Elders during dreams to manifest their wishes or demands.²² Thus, personhood in Wixárika families extends

¹⁹ A. Irvine Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View” (2002).

²⁰ Zingg, 2004.

²¹ Yuimakwaxa’s ceremonies (“Drum Ceremony”) 2015–2019.

²² Mamachali and Felipa’s interview on dreams.

from everything in nature, such as *Yuri 'Ikú* (“True Corn”) plants to material objects created by members of the community such as yarn paintings or familial gourds.

In the Rivera family at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), their perceptions of being and existing involve multiple layers when children are speaking Spanish and listening to their relatives speaking Wixárika. First, members utilize semantic extensions of kinship terms language to address ancestors, and community members refer to entities using the Wixárika name for each ancestor such as *Tatewarí* (“Our Grandfather Fire”), *Tatéi Yurieniaka* (“Our Mother Earth”), *Tatéi Haramara* (“Our Mother Pacific Ocean”), *Tatéi Takutsi Nakawé* (“Our Grandmother Growth”), or *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”). Additionally, families make exchanges with particular ancestors to acknowledge their presence. When the extended family arrives at the ceremonial patio, families approach the *Tatewarí*’s pit, and they walk around one-time reciting words of gratitude for being home with *Tatewarí*. By addressing *Tatewarí* as “Our Grand Father Fire,” even when members of the community do not speak Wixárika fluently, denotes the great respect of families in encounters with the extension of kinship.

***‘Iwamari* (“Relatedness”)**

In Wixárika ontology, in addition to language, relatedness provides evidence to categorized *Kaka+iyarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”) in close proximity to kin. Using the work of Anthropologist Nurit Bird-David’s article, “‘Animism’ Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology,” the author provides a new framework to understand the relationship between people and environment in which social relations include “supernatural” entities.²³ Bird-David contributes to the theories of personhood and environment when she examines Nayaka families and their relatedness with their local environment. To the Nayaka

²³ Bird-David, “Tribal Metaphorization of Human-Nature Relatedness,” S68.

people, a person exists in their relation to their social environment. Nakaya persons are conscious of how other beings exist and invite them to make kinship. Also, Nakaya identity is closely tied to their relationships with other beings.²⁴ In their social environment, people and nature live in reciprocity. To exemplify Bird-David's idea, the interaction in ceremonial spaces allows people to develop a cognitive orientation to conceive Corn under the category of a person. Wixárika families relate with their environment and everything in their environment in which ancestors such as Our Mother Corn or specific pieces of art, crystals, and musical instruments—Yarn Paintings, ceremonial gourds, drums—form part of Wixárika's social networks. All ancestors are invited to interact with families in ceremonies and make kinship through their participation. Through this constant interaction, even material, animals, plants, topographic formations, bodies of water, and otherwise “inanimate objects” such as art, feathers, looms, drums, crystals, and natural forces possess the attribute of personhood. All these beings, including material objects, reciprocate by providing blessings and being present in their life to offer aid.²⁵ To be a person in Wixárika's view, subjects must encounter other beings through the ceremony, pilgrimages, and throughout life, the length of their life by the rules and protocols of encounters.

In communities closer to cities, Wixárika families interact with their local environment in ceremonies, pilgrimages, and communal gatherings using the same principles and protocols of interaction with ancestors. A key concept to understand how Wixárika and other beings interrelate is the concept of *Kiekari* (“Mi casa” or “Cultural Territory”).²⁶ Wixárika concepts of land encompasses all living beings inside the borders of Kaka+yarita (“Places where Elder

²⁴ Bird-David, “Tribal Metaphorization of Human-Nature Relatedness,” S73.

²⁵ Neurath, 2013, 43.

²⁶ As defined by Paul Liffman, *Huichol territory and the Mexican Nation: Indigenous Ritual, Land Conflict, and Sovereignty Claims* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011), 59.

Ancestors reside”). Many families approach these places and encounter different ancestors during pilgrimages and ceremonies across Wixárika’s Ts+kuli (“Wixárika’s maps of territory”). I will discuss more details on the relationship between land and body in Chapter Two.

Many families pay respect in the church and adjust their principles and protocols of interactions to Catholic traditions. Wixárika families in urban settings adapt their ontological principles and protocols of interacting with others to maintain and sustain relations with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). Families extend their ontological principles and protocols to anything and everything that they conceptualize as part of their network of connections. For example, many adopt Catholic Saints to pay devotion and establish kinship through exchanges of offerings. In this *kincentric* relationship, or the idea that Indigenous communities make kinship outside Western notions of kinship, Indigenous communities see nature and the environment as part of their extended family.²⁷ In Huaynamota, for example, the Rivera family make kinship with the Saint in the location (church) through family interactions in *Weiyak+* (“Easter”). *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”) or the wood Christ inside the church is resurrected as a Wixárika relative.

The proximity between the rural and the urban allows the daily interaction of not only animals and plants but also topographic formation, land, and natural forces. For example, when visiting another city, many members come across bodies of water such as rivers, and to pass by or through the water many Wixárika families will use a metal coin to cleanse and exchange energies. This is the case of the Santiago River in the Presa Aguamilpa. When families attend the pilgrimage to Huaynamota, many people drive and cross the River in Aguapán. When crossing

²⁷ Enrique Salmón, *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food, Identity, and Resilience* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012), 8.

the river, everyone in the family passes around a metal coin and cleanses themselves. In this interaction, families acknowledge the presence of the body of water and before “trespassing,” they follow a protocol of encounters, including an exchange of energy. When discussing this idea with family members, they all agreed that the coin, a metal object, comes from the Earth. While passing and rubbing it through our bodies, it catches the energy. Later, we throw the coin in the river and the water receives all the energy back with the metal coin.

Similar to the example of approaching bodies of water, such as the ocean or rivers, many families use a stick that they use to rub their bodies and then throw into a fire as an exchange of energy. Like the metal coin, the stick absorbs the energy of the person and returns to the fire as an exchange of energy. Each family member uses one wood stick to cleanse their body and transfer their energy to the stick. Later, they offer the piece of wood to Tatewarí as a sign of gratitude for getting home safe. Rubbing a piece of wood is also a practice to cleanse and present yourself “clean” before the appearance with Tatewarí. Wixárika families know the protocols of interactions among *Kaka+iyarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”) in order to initiate interactions.

Since urban Wixárika children attend state-sponsored schools, children as early as five years of age begin their formal education in mainstream schools. Although in many families, education begins at birth because birth children participate in ceremonies. Mothers and grandparents become the first educators in the family. Later, as a child builds up kinship with relatives, the child interrelates with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”) in ceremonies. In urban communities, some children learn from community-based knowledge of their responsibilities on ontological principles and protocols. During my fieldwork, I learned how Wixárika babies encounter their relative Corn for the first time, even before the initiation ceremony. Indeed, as soon as they are born, babies consume *M+ka 'iyarinik+* (“They have a

good heart/thought”) as way to receive good thoughts as well as a reminder of their connections with *Tatei Takutsi Nakawe* (“Our Grandmother Growth”) and *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”). Mamachali says: “*Muniuwenik+ nunutsi metá ‘iyarinik+ xeiinuiwari heutineyu/para que el niño aprenda a hablar y a pensar con corazón a los seis días/so that the child learns to speak and think with heart in the sixth day.*”²⁸

Children’s Health

Children with more exposure to Our Mother Corn exhibit better health in families. Later, when children participate in the *Yuimakwaxa Ceremony* (“Drum Ceremony”) they remember that from the beginning of cultivation to the harvesting of Our Mother Corn, they cannot consume any type of corn cobs. Our Mother Corn’s relationship with Wixárika families develops since the early stages in the life of children. Since birth, children learn how to conduct relationships during ceremonies such as specific protocols of engaging with Corn through consumption or restriction of Corn-based meals. When a child does not take part in ceremonies, the parents usually feel concerned about the child’s health. In response to their concerns, the parents increase their offerings and exchanges with the relative Our Mother Corn to seek protection in other forms of relatedness. Thus, Our Mother Corn acts as an important agent in the life of children, their health, and child development.

Since my first visit to *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) in 2013, I have noticed how the families cultivated Corn in the back of their homes and neighboring fields. I paid attention to how families devoted their times to the cultivation of Our Mother Corn. When we arrived at *Y+rata* community in 2014, my daughter Ixchel and I became part of the second part of the *Hiwatsixa* (“Doll’s ceremony”), the ceremony that marks the beginning of the cycle of Corn. In

²⁸ August 2, 2016 field notes personal conversation with Mamachali at *Y+rata*.

this ceremony, the family prepares everything for the season of the Corn, which is a process that requires everyone's hard labor. The day before we arrived, the family spent the night in the *velada* ("vigil"), singing and making the preparation of the Corn Doll. For the community, the ceremony marks the end of the dry season and scarcity of *Yuri'Ikú* ("True Corn") for tortillas. In the following months, they will begin the new cultivation using leftover seeds from the *Teiyari* ("Center of the field," "Seeds for Cultivation," or "Heart of Our Mother Corn").

The year of 2014, I was fortunate to eat from the last batch of blue Corn; throughout the year, Mamachali feeds children with the heritage Corn, and by the summer is almost gone. Mamachali saved some Corn for us to try the tortillas. The morning we arrived, she had made the tortillas. She woke up really early in the morning to boil the seeds in the '+*riwame* ("Fire pit") and grind the seeds using the *matá* ("grinder made of stone").²⁹ With delicacy and precision, Mamachali took the paste and made a small ball, a beautiful light pink dough stretched from the *matá* stone from top to bottom. Later, she made the tortilla in the *Hiwatsixa* ("Doll's ceremony"), *tip+name* ("Tortilla maker") and slowly placed the tortilla in the '+*riwame* under the bright fire. She mentioned that now they were ready to begin the season of Corn. She had saved seeds from the other colors merely for the cultivation. One afternoon she sat on the floor with a bag of maize and began separating. She made five different batches of Corn colors—blue, red, yellow, white, and multicolor—by separating the seeds with care. While separating she talks about the origin of the different seeds. Some were given to her from his paternal side of the family and some from the maternal. After separating the seeds, the family is ready to begin planting using traditional agricultural techniques. Each batch accompanies other batches forming a rhomboid shape

²⁹ Through the manuscript, I will capitalize words to denote the ontological status within the community. For example, Corn when referring to Our Mother Corn. When I write in lower case, I refer to other species.

Tsik+ri (“Wixárika cosmo-geographic map”) that shows five *Kaka+yarita* (“Places where ancestors reside”) in Wixárika worldview. All patterns of the Corn field follow the first rhomboid *Teiyari* (“Center of the field” “Seeds for Cultivation” “Our Mother Corn”). The *Teiyari* takes the offerings (chocolate, water, candles, and chants) and functions as a synecdoche by feeding the entire field.

Women’s Work and Physical Labor

Among the Rivera family, the role of women in the preparation of the ceremony entails more physical labor than the role of anyone else in the family including the *mara’akame* (“medicine man or woman”) of the family. The role of women includes the preparation of Corn tortillas and *Nawá* (“Corn-based drink”) that would be distributed to all the members, cooking, and setting up altars. Although the *mara’akame* sings all night long, the mothers and the daughters of the family make the traditional *Nawá* for the night and the little tortillas to share during the day among other foods. The women are also responsible for feeding the family and coordinating the event. However, the most important role of women during the *Hiwatsixa* (Doll’s Ceremony’) takes place during the final stages of the reversal of genders.

When Wixárika women speak about the Corn, they usually refer to the seeds as the *’Ikú* in the production of *paápa* (Corn tortilla). Every morning when the seeds are available (usually before the summer), women undertake the task of preparing the corn seeds to make *tortillas*. The process of *nixtamalization*—boiling the corn with *naxí* (lime) and water to prepare the seeds for its consumption—takes a couple of hours. Usually, young girls grind the *Yuri’Ikú* (“True Corn”) in the grinder or in the *matá* (“grinder made of stone”) to prepare the tortilla dough. The labor of women in tortilla-making takes years to master but a good *cusinela* (cooker) should be a master in the tortilla-making. For outsiders, it appears that women solely handle the seeds during food

preparation, both in everyday life and during ceremonial aspects of the community. Yet women also play a crucial role in healing practices through the preparation and cultivation of Our Mother Corn. Women's role in healing practices begins in the kitchen, when everyone in the family consumes tortillas made with Yuri 'Ikú and continues the consumption of other Yuri'Ikú-based foods through the ceremonies. Additionally, the ingestion of Yuri 'Ikú contributes to the vitality of the family by providing an organic source of nutrients in contrast to eating t+xi ("pulverized corn flour") with Generically Modified Organisms as ingredients

In the morning after the *velada* ("vigil") in the *Hiwatsixa* ("Doll's Ceremony"), all the participants gather inside the *Tuki* ("Shrine") to escort the doll to the patio. In the patio, the doll burns on fire while the women distribute the *Nawá* ("Corn-based drink") to everyone in the circle. Before sharing, the boys in the ceremony take the role of the Corn Doll and dress with the traditional clothing of women by undressing the doll and passing all the clothing and jewelry to the other boys in circle. Once the doll remains in Corn stalks, the *mara'akame* ("medicine man or woman") of the family burns the doll. Without the Our Mother Corn and her daughters, the first Wixárika man would have died of hunger in the beginning of time. They help little boys dress and wear the jewelry, and most importantly pass the *Nawá* and tortillas for the sharing of the food. With the performance of the ceremony, the family offers their gratitude and entrusts Tatéi Takutsi Nakawé and Tatéi Niwetsika for a good season. A good season assures the amount of *Yuri 'Ikú* ("True Corn") in the family for daily consumption of tortillas.

Following the ceremony, members return home and continue their everyday life. Since some members have specific *mandas* (duties) because of past illnesses or just to pay tribute or gratitude, they immediately begin planting *Yuri 'Ikú* ("True Corn"). The *comadres* ("co-parents") plant the *Teiyari* ("Center of the field," "Seeds for Cultivation," or "Heart of Our Mother Corn")

for their sick children and their husbands. Mamachali and Papá Costo plant two for each one. The other members of the family plan independently from the family in their ranches. Each family receives a Teiyari when the *mará'akame* (“medicine man or woman”) dreams about giving away the Corn cobs to certain members of the family or when a member of the family gets sick and needs to establish relationships with Our Mother Corn to get well. Receiving a Teiyari is a very important responsibility because the main duty lies on continuing the genealogy of Corn by cultivating the multiple species of Native Corn. Thus, a person with a Teiyari holds a closer relationship with Corn than the other who simply helps cultivate the land.

After burning the Corn Doll, in the ceremony *Hiwatsixa* (“Doll’s Ceremony”), we all went inside the *Tuki* (Shrine). I had received from each of the girls and women a drink of *Nawá* (“Corn-based drink”) and a small tortilla. I used my *K+tsiuri* (“woven bag”) to carry my *mawari* (“offering”). I also received a handful of purple cooked Corn to share with the Grandfather Fire. At the end of the offerings, Papá Costo and one of his older sons began playing music. Following the music, all the kids started dancing. Most of them young boys, in a two-two tempo danced a choreography that has been rehearsed in every ceremony. At the rhythm of the small guitar and violin the kids stomp their feet. I observed seating and encouraged everyone to dance, even my daughter Ixchel. This concluded the ceremony. Everyone resumes their responsibilities. Papá Costo sat by the fire, he looked exhausted. Judith also sat next to him and I followed them. Then Papá Costo in a broken Spanish began talking about the importance of the ceremony.

One major sentence stood out about the recent hospitalization of one of his grandsons, Armandito, was due to a car accident. He said that it happened because their family does not follow the tradition anymore “*Por eso tenemos que sembrar*”/That is why we have to cultivate the land” making references to the accident. The entire summer everyone in the family was

concerned about the little boy's health. He was crossing the main highways and a car hit him. His body flew across the street and lay down the street inert. Two hours later his mother came. Thirty minutes later he received medical attention. For the family this accident was a consequence of the lack of participation in ceremony and in the harvesting of the land. When I talked to Mamachali about the accident she mentioned that since her daughter Rosario had surgery everything changed. She lost her vision and she was distant from the family during the ceremonies. She is now a Wixárika converted to Christianity and follows "the faith." I immediately thought about the consequences of having a *mestizo* life. Having Western medical attention and Western religion meant that they did not rely on the *mara'akame* ("medicine man/woman") for healing nor ceremonial guidance. Thus, the daughter was not required to reciprocate to the ancestral healing during ceremonies. She had no responsibility during the offerings, which included harvesting the land.

I did not have the courage to visit Armandito in the hospital. However, before I left, I requested to see him. He was already home. I took Armandito's brothers Juan and Octavio. I spent the summer with three brothers Beto, Octavio, and Juanito that through their stories I met Armandito. Beto and Octavio felt responsible for the accident since they crossed the street first and did not notice his little brother was following behind. They did not speak much about the accident; but I knew they felt guilty and concerned about his brother. For the month Armandito was in the hospital the brothers did not see him. When we arrived at the house, they were excited to see him and played with him. We were all surprised to see that Armando could not move or talk nor play. Her mother told the boys to talk to him since they would make him feel better, he would begin talking again. When Armandito saw the brothers, he smiled. I knew he was going to get better. That night I could not stop thinking about the accident and the relationship between

Corn and harvesting of Corn. How can the harvest of Corn keep you safe? Did Armando's family plant the previous year? What caused Armando's accident? During the following year, I have kept in contact with Armando's family and I have learned that the action of eating Corn every day, cultivating the land, and being in relation with Our Mother Corn provide the family with a constant blessing and transmission of the properties in the ingestion of the seeds.

Several years have passed since I first learned about the accident and many answers have become more evident. As many people move to urban centers, many traditional practices become obsolete; tortilla making is one example in the urban context. Since tortillas became a commodity in Mexico, many people would rather just buy a kilo of tortillas from the store than make the tortillas at home. Since Armando's accident, his family has been very careful to attend ceremonies and cultivate Our Mother Corn.

In the Fall 2018, Julia invited us to the *Yuimakwaxa* ("Drum Ceremony") and after the ceremony we delivered offerings to *Tatéi Haramaratsie* ("Our Grand Mother Pacific Ocean") which included *Nawá* (Corn-based drink), chocolate, candles, cookies, animal's blood, and a metal coin. Despite their location (about forty-five minutes away from the main ranch) she comes to each ceremony in the main ranch and cultivates in her small plot. Armando now walks, speaks, and continues dancing with some side effects from the accident. He suffers from fear and paranoia after the accident; but he is able to continue a semi-normal life. The family is grateful Armando is with us today and they make the effort to maintain a close relationship with *Tatéi Niwetsika* ("Our Mother Corn" or "Native Seeds") to assure his health. In a conversation with Julia in December 2018, I asked her what happens if someone in the family does not cultivate? A question that I asked many times to multiple members of the community and Julia told me: "*Si*

no siembras, todo se pierde el maíz y así te enfermas/if you do not cultivate, everything goes to waste the corn and that is how you get sick.”

Then she explained how her husband lost all his heritage Corn and he became ill:

Pues todo se pierde el maíz y hasta te enfermas, Mariano perdió una vez todo el maíz todo, es que su abuelito se le murió, este se durmió, no trabajó un año así sin sembrar y se enfermó aquí le sacaron maíz [pointing to the belly], ahora que lo tenemos sembrado, le digo al señor mira este maíz esta nuevecito plántalo, como se dice siémbrale y que nazca, le vas echando agua o tierra para que nazca para que te de maíz, es que no tienes la perdiste y ya dijo si es cierto si lo perdí, es maíz rojito y ya dice es más rojito el de ellos/Everything gets lost the Corn until you get sick, *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Mariano lost all Corn once and, because his grandfather died, and this [guy] slept, did not work one year and like that without cultivation and he got sick here [pointing to the belly] they took out a Corn, now that we have her [Corn] cultivated, I say to the mister look this Corn is newly planted, as it is said cultivate it and it will grow, you will give water or soil so [Corn] can grow and you can get Corn, because you do not have any you lost it and he said yes it is true I lost [Corn] it’s red Corn and he said it is more red than theirs³⁰)

In another conversation with my *comadre* Felipa, she shared the same sentiment:

Pues pasa de que con el tiempo este nos podemos enfermar porque no conservamos las cosas antiguas de la cultura y entonces pues como de hace muchísimo tiempo como viene el maíz de que le ofrendan le dan de comer y lo siembran lo siguen conservando y entonces puede que con el tiempo nos pueda enfermar no a nosotros pero a los niños/What happens with time is that we can get sick because we do not preserve the ancestral things from the culture and then, well, like a long time ago like Corn came from the offerings and from what they feed [Corn] and cultivate they continue preserving and then with time [Corn] might make us sick, not to us but to the children³¹)

When my *comadre* Felipa says: “*no conservamos las cosas antiguas de la cultura/we don’t conserve the ancestral things of our culture*” she refers to the genealogy of Our Mother Corn and the relationship with ancestors. In many Indigenous communities in the Americas, Heritage Corn is an essential component of the daily life and ceremonial life of families. Our Mother Corn provides families with the nourishment and food staple. Additionally, Our Mother Corn is a source for connecting with ancestral ways of being or the *yeiyari* (“Wixarika path” “El

³⁰ Interview May 2019.

³¹ Interview May 2019.

Costumbre”). *Tatéi Takutsi Nakawé* (“Our Grandmother Growth”), manifests in the cultivation when families cultivate Native seeds. Women in the active role of cultivating the land and their labor assures that everyone in the family participates in the cultivation and gains the blessings of the plant. Women’s labor and discourse are the two fundamental practices that assure that everyone in the family establishes connections with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”), and with *Tatéi Takutsi Nakawé* through oral tradition.

The Rivera Familia and Inter-species and Non-human Interactions

Within the Rivera family, inter-species and non-human interactions occur very often. Families interact with beings such as plants in multiple terrains. In ceremony, families conceive heritage Corn as a person when Corn actively participates and forms part of every ceremony. Our Mother Corn acts as an agent in the life of families when she provides one of the main food substances of Wixárika families in the daily life: *Yuri ‘Ikú* (“True Corn”). Families maintain the genealogy of Our Mother Corn through the constant cultivation of seeds, live near the Cornfield, and plant Corn for ceremonial and everyday use. Thus, Wixárika families invite Our Mother Corn to share with them many aspects of life. Corn, then, plays a vital role in shaping the life of Wixárika families. Relatedness with Corn determines the health and well-being of families.

Finally, another way to understand being and existing within the Wixárika frameworks is through their oral history. In Wixárika epistemology, many families make a distinction between history and stories in which both are passed orally from one members of the community to another but contain different sets of information. The history narrates previous events in time while a tale teaches the community about social norms. Both narratives possess the ability to preserve traditions and teach the community about aspects of Wixárika life. Linguistically,

speakers in the *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) community identify two genres by signals at the beginning or the end of the narrative.

Historical events occur in the beginning of times and are accounts of *Wixárika yeiyarieya* (“Wixárika history” or “Wixárika cultural way in the past”); they are always recognized by the community as real. The second genre of tales or ‘+*xatsika waxarikak*+ (“Wixarika tales”) are marked by the linguistic cue *herim*+.³² Throughout out the story, the audience repeats the cue to disassociate with the forces coming out from the story that can have an effect upon the audience. At the end of the story, the narrator closes the tale with the linguistic term *yeupa ’xetá* (“the end”). The narrator use of the cue “*yeupa ’xeta*” helps the audience identify the ending of the narrative.³³ The narrative about Watakame and Our Mother Corn corresponds to a historical moment in the Wixárika time. The community narrates the history over and over as a way to transmit cultural knowledge such as the origin of Our Mother Corn. Following the tradition, Wixárika families cultivate Corn like their ancestors did since they were granted the *Yuri ’Ikú* (“True Corn”). Watakame was the first man to work the land and obtain the Corn for tortillas. Although first the seeds were a gift, they were eventually taken away, and finally returned back in exchange for the hard labor of men. From the history of Watakame and the Corn, Wixárika families learn how to interact with Our Mother Corn by exchanging offerings in the field. Wixárika live in relation with Heritage Corn by maintaining balance during cultivation

³² Terminology was explained and translated by Maestro Dagoberto Robles González.

³³ Recording GPO11830- Part 1.

16:30 [he’rimu para que no salgan pelones, cuentos tenemos que decir he’rimu por que te quedas calvo y si te duermes creencia Wixa].

20:23 *yeupa ’xetá* (“the end”).

Recording GPO11830- Part 2

1:51 Historia (it really happened)

and providing offerings during the ceremonies and cultivating Corn in a sustainable way. Narratives keep community members aware of their responsibilities towards ancestors by the repetition of behaviors thought through the themes found in both the history and the tales. From the very beginning, however, women's role in the cultivation of Corn extends beyond the daily production of Corn-based foods. Women narrate Wixárika ethnohistory and keep tracing the genealogy of Corn in their embodied practices.

***Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) Origin Stories**

In Wixárika ways of knowing, *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) gave the first man and farmer, Watakame, her daughters, the Corn maids. Watakame took *Yuawima* (“Blue Corn”) in marriage. Every day Yuawima gave Watakame *Yuri'Íkú* (“True Corn”) for the substance of the family. Wixárika women tell other women that Watakame's mother did not take care of Yuawima and made her work. Yuawima to please her mother-in-law, ground herself to make tortillas for Watakame. She ground her body until blood started coming out and it became very painful. As a punishment of Watakame for not taking care of Yuawima, *Tatéi Niwetsika* took her daughter back. Watakame was left without *Yuri'Íkú* and with the arduous responsibility of harvesting the land, working in the field. With Yuawima, all other Corn maids and the crops left (beans and squash). Later, Yuawima felt bad about Watakame's situation and she gifted herself to Watakame. She became a Corn person and all other Corn came with her. They continue cultivating the different species of Corn in La Sierra Madre Occidental: *Tsinawime* (“Multi-color”), *Tekuleti* (“Blue”), *Pipitiyu* (“White”), *Ta+rawime* (“Pink”), *Taxawime* (“Yellow”), *Yek+ri tuxa* (“Orange”), and *Tse'+ri* (“Yellow with elongated

kernels”).³⁴ To be cautious, women and men take care of Our Mother Corn as part of the family, so the crops do not leave them again as in the oral tradition.

Through the cultivation of the land, the Rivera family maintains kinship in ceremony with ancestors. In each ceremony, the family at the end of the season, usually in October, attends the *Yuimakwaxa* (“Drum ceremony”) ceremony. In the *Yuimakwaxa* ceremony, people prepare themselves to receive Our Mother Corn. The first night, women use *puwari* (“*cempasútitl*/Mexican marigold”) flowers to adorn the *Tuki* (“Ceremonial house”) by marking the altar inside and outside in the shape of “crosses” signifying each *Kaka+yarita* (“place where an ancestor lives”). In 2019, I was part of the ceremony for the fifth time. My *comadre* (“co-parent”) Felipa asked me to help them when other women began placing the flowers. Mamachali taught me by saying the names of all the *Kaka+yarita* out loud and we followed: *Xapawiyeme* (“South”), *Hautsi K+p+ri* (“North”), *Haramara* (“West”), *Ariweme* (East), and *Werika ’uimari* (“Center”). We placed “crosses” in the altars and around *Tatewarí* for a total of five per *Tuki* (the ceremonial patio has two). These flowers along the road allowed Our Mother Corn to find the altars.³⁵ We sprayed the flowers with water, we proceeded to swipe and clean the patio. In the night we all slept outside to be in the presence of the ancestor of Our Mother Corn when she came to embody the Corn Dolls in the altar. The second night, the *mará’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) invoked the presence of ancestors using his chants and the drum.

³⁴ In the work of Victor Antonio Vidal Martínez (et al.), an expert on Corn in the state of Nayarit, he reports thirteen Native species of Corn come from the state of Nayarit. Seven of them are primary species: *Tabloncillo*, *Elotero de Sinaloa*, *Blando de Sonora*, *Bofo*, *Elotes Occidentales Tuxpeño y Vadendeño*. Six of them are secondary species: *Tabloncillo x Tuxpeño*, *Tuxpeño x Tabloncillo*, *Elotes Occidentales*, *Tabloncillo x Olotillo*, *Tabloncillo x Blando de Sonora* and *Elotes Occidentales x Elotero de Sinaloa*.

El Roble, Josefina

³⁵ Fieldwork 2019.

Wixárika families conceive of Our Mother Corn as a relative outside ceremonial spaces such as in the field and the kitchen. Their relationship extends to a more practical interaction between human and plants. The interaction between people and plants serves the purpose of maintaining the balance between species in their environment. While humans cultivate Native seeds using sustainable agriculture plants offer a food substance for the community and the survival of both species is reassured in their symbiotic interaction. In such symbiotic interaction, Our Mother Corn depends on families to grow and families depend on *Yuri 'Ikú* (“True Corn”) for a primary source of food. Native Corn depends on the intervention of people to assure their survival of species, and people depend on Corn for maintaining good health and environmental balance while cultivating Native Corn in sustainable agriculture. *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Seeds”) teaches Wixárika families about human and plant interactions. Families make kinship through the cultivation and the interaction with Our Mother Corn.

When the two species (plant and human) encountered themselves for the first time in Mesoamerica they entangled their life until present times. John Staller, in his book *Maize Cobs and Cultures: History of Zea Mays L*, writes about the domestication of Corn through the analysis of scientific data and subsequently the evolution of *Zea mays*. Staller concludes that Wild Corn, *Teosinte*, was domesticated in the highlands of Mexico between 5,500 and 4,000 years ago and about 6,000 years ago societies across Mesoamerica began consuming Maize as well as other domesticated plants such as bean and squash.³⁶ The domestication of Corn by Mesoamerican communities marked the beginning of sedentary life and maximized chances for human survival. With the domestication of Corn and other plants and animals, people stayed

³⁶ John Staller, *Maize Cobs and Cultures: History of Zea Mays L* (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), 159–163.

longer in places rather than moving around in the quest for sources of food. Stallers' study provides a scientific perspective to human and plant interactions, although the author does not discuss how the plant became edible to people and central for cultural practices. In Wixárika ways of knowing, Our Mother Corn and Wixárika encountered themselves for the first time when *Tatéi Niwetsika* ("Our Mother Corn") gave Watakame, the first farmer, her five Corn daughters for cultivation.³⁷ Since the first encounters, the two have been part of the same field of relations.

Historically, people and plants continued interacting since their first encounters. For instance, in *Tortillas: A Cultural History*, Paula Morton provides an overview of the consumption of tortillas across Mesoamerica. In her introductory chapter, the author describes the traditional way to process kernels and the procedure of transforming seeds into dough and later tortillas. The major advantages of preparing the kernels for consumption is that the human digestive system access niacin, six amino acids, and calcium from the limed-infused masa.³⁸ The human body cannot digest corn unless the outer layer is removed. Once the outer layer of corn is peeled off the digestive system is able to absorb all the nutrients in corn, particularly Vitamin B. Corn kernels for consumption undergo a process referred to as *nixtamalization* ("To infuse kernels with lime"). The process of nixtamalization provides humans with more benefits than eating the unprocessed seeds. Once Corn undergoes the process of nixtamalization, the mixture or masa acquires a greater nutritional value. Tortilla as a Corn-based product gives more caloric energy than raw Corn, thus populations in Mesoamerica relied on the crop for nutrition. Early in the interaction between humans and Corn, people learned how to prepare tortillas and other

³⁷ Zingg 2004.

³⁸ Paula E. Morton, *Tortillas: A Cultural History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 12.

meals using the process of nixtamalization. According to Morton, Mesoamerican communities discovered the benefits of processing Corn for its consumption since 700 BC. Morton provide us with archeological records of how tortilla and tortilla making in multiple communities helped in the development of complex societies by the adaptation of Corn as food staple.³⁹ Since then, many communities choose to acquire caloric energy from Corn-base meals, thus developing recipes to prepare meals in a variety of food representations.

In Wixárika families, once the community harvests, dries, and stores the Our Mother Corn for ceremonial or everyday purposes, women's primary role is to hull/thresh the *Yuri'Íkú* ("True Corn") for their consumption. Women begin the process of making *Xakwitsari* ("Limed Corn" "nixtamal"), then they grind the Yuri'Íkú in the traditional *matá* ("grinder made of stone") and prepare the pulverized hominy or *T+xi* ("dough") for tortillas. As I discussed in the article "Mothers of Corn: Wixárika Verbal Performances, Ontology" Wixárika women perform the specific role of preparing the Yuri'Íkú, making *Xakwitsari*, and grinding the Yuri'Íkú in every family to learn the importance of Our Mother Corn as a food staple. Anthony A. Shelton and Stacy Schaefer note that women and men have particular roles in the cultivation and the ceremonial cycle of Corn.⁴⁰ Both scholars agree that women are primarily concerned with the preparation, handling, distribution, and safeguarding of the seeds, while men work in the field involved in cultivation and harvesting. Women prepare meals, take care and handle Yuri'Íkú, and participate in the harvesting. At a certain age, Wixárika girls must learn how to feed community members and all other extensions of kinship with Corn and Corn offerings, Wixárika families consume tortillas as the main staple even when other sources of food are available in the

³⁹ Morton, 2014, 13.

⁴⁰ Anthony A. Shelton (1996); Stacy Schaefer (2002, 2015).

community and even when Corn offers no economic gain. Families continue to choose to cultivate Maize over other options.

As I discuss in the article “Mothers of Corn: Wixárika Women, Verbal Performances, and Ontology,” plants and humans communicate, share space, and reciprocate among each other.⁴¹ In addition to working within the domestic sphere, Wixárika women also actively work in healing practices surrounding *Tatéi Newestsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) as an agent in the health of children. I take the activities of women in the *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) community during their daily routines to show how the family avoids sickness and seeks protection in the cultivation of Corn. Our Mother Corn, in the life of Wixárika, act as major agents in the life of people by granting them physical and metaphysical wellness. The cultivation assures a constant exchange of health when Corn grows healthy to feed people and people grow healthy to cultivate Corn. In this symbiotic relationship, both Corn and Wixárika depend on each other for survival. Wixárika pay gratitude to *Tatéi Takutsi Nakawé* (“Our Grandmother Growth”) and *Tatéi Niwestsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) when they harvest the land and honor all daughter of *Tatéi Niwestsika*, five color Corn maids, in sustainable agriculture. The relationship between Corn and people demonstrate how multiple species interact in the environment. For instance, in the *Tatéi Niwestsika ‘Ets+xa* (“Cultivation Ceremony”), *Yuimakwaxa* (“Drum Ceremony”), and the *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz”), people gather first to make offerings and initiate the cultivation and ending of the season of Corn. In between the two ceremonies, families devote time to embody practices in the Cornfield such as cleansing the land for cultivation (“slash-and-burn”), ceremonies of cleansing (delivering offerings), cultivation of Corn, cleansing of weeds in the

⁴¹ García-Weyandt, 2018, 117.

field, holding a “kincentric relationship” with Our Mother Corn in which women are active agents in fostering this relation.

Through the handling, preparing, and offering Our Mother Corn and meals to the family, women enable relationships by 1) interacting with plants in cultivation, 2) practicing sustainable agriculture, and 3) preparing products from the land to ingest the nutrients of the crops. This relationship assures Our Mother Corn’s survival. Without the labor of Wixárika mothers, children will be unable to initiate a relationship with Our Mother Corn and receive the healing properties from consuming *Yuri Iku* (“True Corn”) and participating in ceremony.

In Wixárika urban communities, especially inside the city, as in the case of Zitakua, families cultivate their small plots. However, most of the time families return to their main ranches to cultivate the land. For Wixárika families, cultivation inside the urban context becomes a difficult task due to accessibility to land. For example, in Zitakua only the families with a big plot cultivate in their backyards. Others traveled to their ranches to cultivate Corn. Many of the children leave the community during the summer to help their family cultivate in their ranches. In the case of *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), each family cultivates their *Teiyari* (“Center of the field,” “Seeds for Cultivation,” or “Heart of Our Mother Corn”) in the family’s land and share the crop at the end of the season.

Interactions between Plants and Humans

In the interaction between different species, plants and humans interact more often than any other species. In their interactions, for many people the impact on plants on their lives is irrelevant. However, plants are very important in the life of humans on multiple levels such as food, medicine, and primarily oxygen. Humans depend upon plants for their survival. Additionally, the survival of some plants such as Our Mother Corn depends on the interaction

with humans and vice versa. Most of the species on our planet are part of the plant kingdom and our diet heavily relies on plants. The study of plants over the years has increased the understanding of how plants relates to human beings. Specifically, talking about communication and interspecies communication learning about plant's communications has enlightened my understanding of how Corn communicates with Wixárika families in the context of cultivation and ceremonial spaces. Although within ceremonial spaces the *mara'akame* ("medicine man or woman") has the role to mediate communication with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* ("Elder Ancestors") in public spaces such as the *Waxata* ("place for the Corn" or "Cornfield") or private spaces such as the kitchen Wixárika families communicate with Corn using the language of plants such as color, bodily form, and growth. The messages that Our Mother conveys are important in assuring the survival of their many species of Native Corn. Wixárika listens to Our Mother Corn to continue co-existing and maintaining the balance and the health of many in their families

Beyond the relationship between people and land through reciprocity, plants communicate in a very specific way with people, especially Our Mother Corn with Wixárika families. To see from the perspective of Our Mother Corn plant communication, I prepared workshops and active participation research to examine how Corn co-exists with humans in contemporary and urban landscapes in Zitakua, a Wixárika neighborhood inside Tepic, Nayarit.⁴²

⁴² A group of Wixárika artisans and *mara'akate* (pl.) founded the neighborhood of Zitakua on October 2, 1988 as the first "Colonia Indígena Huichol, Zitakua" (Carrillo de la Cruz, 76). Vicente Carrillo López, Maximino González Salvador, José Benítez Sánchez, Rutilio Benítez Carrillo, José Hernández Sánchez, Vicente Montoya, and their families were the founders of the neighborhood. Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz argues that the name Zitakua is a mystery to many people living in the community. Since the term implies a very deep meaning of the name, Carrillo de la Cruz explains the literal meaning and the metaphoric meaning. Carrillo de la Cruz mentions that Zitakua comes from the Wixárika term "Xitatakwa" and the literal translation is *patio del cabello del elote tiernito* ("patio of tender corn's hair"). Carrillo further explains that *Xita-* means spike and *takwá* comes from *xita takwá* or patio of the tender corn's hair (84). In the metaphoric language, Zitakua refers to the new Wixárika establishment, with new seeds that will continue working this land.

I reviewed the literature on how plants communicate to conclude that plants, as opposed to humans, use a different type of language and express this language through a myriad of cues. According to Daniel Chamovitz, biologist and professor at Tel Aviv University, plants experience the world through light, smells, feelings, sounds, information they know and remember. A plant sees the light and through phototropism, which includes the growth of a plant towards light and how a plant responds to light. A plant is capable of emitting odors and also sensing the others of other plants. As Chamovitz discusses, a plant uses a “nose-less process” in which a plant “perceive[s] odor or scent through stimuli.” For instance, the molecule ethylene found in Chinese incense induces ripening in lemons.⁴³ Plant communication exemplifies the type of information a plant is capable of transmitting using their intelligence and their knowledge of the environment to act. Our Mother Corn for example, grows vertically to maximize the consumption of light during the day. Other plants such as squash and beans grow together to maximize the production of oxygen, avoid predators, and grow healthier (“Manejo Tradicional de Cultivos en la Sierra del Nayar” workshop). In the absence of wind, the stalks grow weak and are unable to stand strong.

In our society, inter-species communications often are limited to what humans perceive as communication. Plants communicate in several ways using a language that can be understood if we pay attention to their behavior. For my research, understanding the idea that plants communicate limited my understanding of how Our Mother Corn communicates. For those who cultivate the land every year and maintain relations to plants, though, this knowledge comes very easily. In my research in Mexico I took several *herbolaria* (“Herbalism”) classes to understand

⁴³ Daniel Chamovitz, *What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses* (Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 29–30.

how plants form part of our lives from food resources, medicines, and ancestors. In my personal life, my main concern was to keep my plants alive. I took a long time to understand that I was lacking the human-plant interactions with my plants to allow them to grow. Although I grew up surrounded by plants and trees in Mexico, my mother and paternal grandmother had a very extensive botanical garden, I was detached from my local environment when my family immigrated to the United States. My relationship with plants was only part of my memories. I learned, from the perspective of Our Mother Corn, how plants communicate using a specific language. I cultivated Corn in the garden in *La Casa de la Mujer* at Zitakua, as part of the *Taniuki* (“Our Language”) Project. Also, I borrowed a piece of land of about fifteen by twenty meters in San Cayetano, Tepic. For our seeds we utilized native seeds from El Roble. I acquired the Native seeds from the Carrillo Rios family in a traditional cultivation workshop. Additionally, Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz gifted us some seeds for the children in the project to cultivate.

Learning the Language of Plants

Through the labor of many collaborators and family, I learned the language of plants by analyzing how Corn plants behaved and interacted in the field. I documented how plants communicated through 1) color and the bodily form, 2) mobility and acoustics, 3) reproductive stages, and 4) beauty. First, Our Mother Corn communicates through the color of the leaves and the size of their body when first, the leaves come out of the ground five days after and begin growing green and *Y+ra* (“Grow Greener”). In our school garden, we cultivated on August 1st of 2019. By August 5th, the plant was one centimeter above the ground signaling the germination of the seeds. For many families, this is the first message telling families that the plant is already growing and thus needs more care so that predators do not consume the plants. By August 6th,

our plants were between two-three point five centimeters. Some other plants were between four and four-point five centimeters in height. On August 19, the plants in the school garden grew to be thirty centimeters, and by August 31, the plants had eight ears four on each side. The growth of the plant shows the body of Our Mother Corn. The vertical structure of the plants provided the support for other crops such as beans to grow in co-existence. Wixárika families recreate in the *coamil* (“Field”) a space for multi-species interactions from edible and medicinal plants to predators. Some families cultivate beans, squash, chilies, tomatoes, and herbs. Wild medicinal plants grow around corn such as Dandelion (*Taraxacum Officinale* W.), Epazote (*Telexys Ambrosioides* L.), Malva (*Malva Parviflora*), and Chiclacayote (*Argemone Mexicana* L.). Additionally, the *coamil* serves as an ecosystem for many other species such as corn worms, fungus (*huitlacoche*), ants, and pollinators.

Second, Our Mother Corn communicated through the plants’ mobility and acoustics when her ear shoots (leaves on the plant) were mobile with the wind and dropped to the sides. In this stage, Our Mother Corn communicated that she grew fully, tall, and green. The stalks were strong to stand next to the other stalks of Corn. When the winds make them dance to the tip of the spike, at that moment, Our Mother Corn communicated how fully and healthy she grew. Our Mother communicated when the roots of the Cornstalk grew under the ground and expanded, like *K+iwima* (“Roots of Squash”) and the bean roots growing alongside. The extension of the roots from the beginning of the cultivation exemplifies the growth of the Yuri ‘Ikú family. Some plants from the school garden, got damaged by the water from the rain gutter. Thus, the leaves were not as green as the other, and this difference seemed to affect their growth. In this case, I documented how the plant was growing but still missing some parts in the leaves. The color changed from a green color to a yellow color to signify the nutrients in the soil. When plenty of

nitrogen was present in the soil, the plants grew greener. Our soil was fortified with nutrients since we found prepared soil from a nursery. The plant was communicating that the water caused damaged and would not grow greener than the others. In my “Corn Diary,” I wrote how Our Mother Corn communicates through the acoustics and sounds of the stalks when the wind moves them and makes the *tura, turaaa . . .* sound. This sound becomes a personal name and a mental image that Wixárika speakers share when mentalizing a sound of popping, busting, or clashing. When Corn grew, the plants interact with natural forces providing cues to confirm her existence. In dreams, the same interaction. My godmother confirmed this when she elaborated on how the plant communicates in her dreams to give her a name. The names denote the interaction between the forces of rain when the thunder strikes the land and makes the sound *tura, turaaa . . .*⁴⁴ This description of the name related to the growth of Corn provided the first image of how Corn communicated with people.

Finally, Our Mother Corn communicated through the different stages in reproduction when the Cornstalk grew the spike, *Zit+ama*, or *Xitakame*, was ready for reproduction.⁴⁵ In this stage, the plant told us that she was ready for pollination and Corn cobs will be coming soon. We prepared so that we could protect the ‘Ikú (“Corn cobs”). Other families began preparing for the ceremonies. Later, when the silks began to form, the plant communicated the color of Maize. Although we knew this because we cultivated by diving the fields in different colors. In our case, we only cultivated *Yuawima* (“Blue Corn”). The color of Maize shows from the silks and they looked blue like Yuwima in the South, or *Tuxame* in the North, *Ta+lawime* West, *Taxawime*

⁴⁴ Mamachali explanation the origin of the name Tura as a Teukari or grandmother with abilities to dream in the Winter 2019. The word Tura in Wixárika is an onomatopoeia in the lexicon.

⁴⁵ “To come into ear.”

East and *Tsayule* in the center. Additionally, when our plants dried, the plant become *Xauxeme*.⁴⁶ In this stage, the plant is mature enough and already completed her cycle. Our Mother Corn communicated through dreams when Mamachali dreamt about seeing her in the *coamil* (Cornfield) and manifesting a message such as '*Utame* ("receiving in a bandana 'Ikú") when Mamachali places Our Mother Corn inside the *Xiriki* ("Shrine for Our Mother Corn").⁴⁷ Our Mother Corn conveyed principles of fertility (when germination occurs), femininity (colors of silk in the maids of Corn), fertility (during pollination) and maturity (dried of the plants). All of the different stages of the plant regularly communicated relevant principles inside the Wixárika community. The principles serve both plants and humans. For plants, the principles communicated successful cultivation and assures the survival of the seeds. When Wixárika families harvest enough Heritage Corn, they can save the seeds for the following years. Thus, Our Mother Corn continues her lineage of ancestral seeds. For humans, the principles seen in the growth of plants serve the community as indicators of when the ceremonial season will commence. Also, when families utilize the terms in everyday conversations and activities the terms become part of their language and later become common personal names. For instance, in using some of the stages in naming ceremonies or the properties of beauty in cobs of Corn. I will discuss more of the names and their functions in Chapter Three. The language of plant persons provided cues denoting growth, stages of maturity, interactions with other species, and feelings such as stress, happiness, or sadness.

In Wixárika aesthetics, *Tatéi Niwetsika* ("Our Mother Corn") is an important agent in the properties of beauty, especially the cobs of Our Mother Corn. I attended multiple events such as

⁴⁶ "Dry Corn stalks."

⁴⁷ Place the Teiyari inside the shrine.

the Niwetsika Fair at El Roble to understand the properties of beauty in cobs of Corn. In March 17, 2019, I observed how a community in La Sierra organized an event to showcase Native Corn. In the community of El Roble, Wixárika community in the Municipality of Del Nayar many families centralized the role of Native Corn in multiple activities related to Tatéi Niwetsika. The main goal of the fair is to promote the cultivation of Native Corn. In this fair, local families prepare Corn-based meals and products to offer to the people visiting the community. The preparation committee organizes dances, workshops, culinary representations of Corn-based foods and a Corn-cob contest. The *Proyecto Taniuki* (Benito, Dagobert, and I) offered a workshop on “*Lengua en práctica: Gastronomía Wixárika y Elaboración de Productos Hechas a Base de Maíz*” (Language in Praxis: Wixárika Culinary Arts and the Development of Corn-based Products).

In this workshop, we created flashcards with Wixárika words related to the preparation of tortillas and traditional foods. With the help of multiple women in El Roble, we showcased Wixárika culinary arts and the use of the language in the kitchen. While Benito pronounced the words, I held the cards and Dagoberto talked to the women in Wixárika about the techniques and procedures of cooking. Everyone in the workshops, mainly mestiza women, made tortillas using the traditional materials and the help of our cooking master Josefina. In this workshop, Josefina and her mother from El Roble offered her knowledge on Corn and they discussed the different species of Corn in their community: *Tsinawime* (Multi-color), *Tekuleti* (Blue), *Pipitiyu* (White), *Ta+rawime* (Pink), *Taxawime* (Yellow), *Yek+ri tuxa* (Orange), and *Tse'+ri* (White/Yellow with elongated kernels).⁴⁸ After cultivation families store the best *Ikú* (“Corn Cobs”) for next year’s

⁴⁸ Although many families have different names for Corn, as discussed in the article “Mother of Corn” some referred to Corn by their colors and not the name of the species.

Teiyari (“Center of the field,” “Seeds for Cultivation,” or “Heart of Our Mother Corn”) inside the *Xiriki* (“Shrine for ‘Our Mother Corn’”). Wixárika place on their altars the best Corn cobs to save them for the next year’s cultivation. To select the next ‘Ikú, men go to the field and look for the plant with more than one cob (usually maximum two).

In 2018–2019, I was able to visit multiple fields and select the best cobs of Corn with Don Audencio Rivera and my *comadre* Felipa Rivera. In our visit, I asked them what the selection process entailed, and they agreed that the plant needs to have two cobs of Corn and a perfect line of *Yuri’Ikú* (“True Corn”). They also looked at the Corn silk and the color. Additionally, Agricultural Engineer Gilberto González explained in a private conversation that the judges in the Niwetsika Fair at El Roble look for perfect alignment in the *Yuri’Ikú* and length of the variety of Maize for a “good cob.” The devotion of El Roble to *Tatéi Niwetsika* demonstrates the important role of Native seeds in the community. Many experts in El Roble offer workshops such as the workshop “*Manejo Tradicional de Cultivos en la Sierra del Nayar*” (Conducting Traditional Cultivation in La Sierra del Nayar) by Juan Carrillo Rios and his family to promote Native seeds cultivation. In such workshops, I learned about how in El Roble the community dedicates time and labor in the cultivation of heritage Corn. In the festival, families such as the Carrillo Rios showcase their best Native seeds and all the representations of Our Mother Corn.

In this chapter, I explained plant’s communication and cultivation of Our Mother Corn in Wixárika urban contexts. I discussed the historical interaction of Our Mother Corn and people, and I outlined the relationship between Our Mother Corn and the Rivera family. I provided examples of some of the attitudes within the Rivera family regarding Our Mother Corn and sickness. Finally, I defined the meaning of personhood inside the Wixárika community by giving

examples of how people encounter ancestors. *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) teaches Wixáritari (pl.) principles of coexistence and symbiotic relationships between people and plants. Wixárika involved in cultivation practices and cultivation ceremonies become cognizant of Our Mother Corn through a multiplicity of modes such as color and bodily form, mobility and acoustics, reproductive stages, and beauty. From cultivation to harvesting, the levels of interaction between people and plants increases, as well as the levels of intimacy among the two species. The intelligence of *Tatéi Niwetsika* in the fields acts in the life of urban Wixárika. When people consume *Yuri ‘Ikú* (“True Corn”) they consume all the nutrients of an organic plant with health benefits such as good nutrition. Wixárika families maintain ways of communicating with Our Mother Corn through a “consensual relation” as Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamomsake Simpson posits in her article “Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious.” In such relation, Wixárika, as many other Indigenous communities in the cities have learned how to “connect to the land and to live our intelligence no matter how urban or how destroyed our homeland have become (Simpson 2014: 23). Wixárika learn through interactions with Our Mother Corn a pedagogy from the land. In the science of Our Mother Corn, Wixárika families gather the knowledge and the wisdom to continue practices that become vital to Wixárika identity and health. Our Mother Corn becomes a relative to maintain Wixárika humanness.

The Entangled Histories of Plants and Humans

Since I began listening to the stories of Our Mother Corn, reflecting on how Corn is central in the life of the Rivera family, and becoming more involved in the cultivation, I realized how plants and humans have entangled histories. In my own history, as a child I grew up surrounded by local plants and trees on the ranch. As an adult, I began growing my own little

garden in Los Angeles and later cultivating in small plots in Tepic. Most of the time, I was not very successful in keeping my plants alive. Later in Tepic, when I cultivated Native seeds in the school garden and the borrowed piece of land, I experienced the dedication and arduous work in cultivating the land. I learned about plant-human relations from speaking about plants with experts in the Wixárika family and I began talking to plants, literally speaking to them, and also speaking to them through other types of communications such as exchange of offerings (incense burning, candles, chocolate etc.). When Ixchel and I completed the fifth year of *Yuimakwaxa* (“Drum Ceremony”), we brought our bag of Yuri’Ikú from the field to the altar, we placed the bag in the altar for *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”), and we danced with our *’Ikú* (“Cobs of Corn Dolls from the harvest”) at the sound of the drum at night.⁴⁹ Seeing how my hard work and the hard work of my family granted us the possibility to be in the presence of *Tatéi Niwetsika*, I became devoted to Our Mother Corn.

Poema II

En el silencio largo de mi corto sueño me pregunto:/In the long silence of my short dream I ask myself:

Quién soy? /Who am I?

Veó mi cuerpo desnudo en el reflejo de la luna en el agua, la negredad de mis cueros. /I see my naked body in the reflection of the moon in the water, the darkness of my skin.

Siento mi pelo largo y liso tocar mi cintura y no evito ver el color negro que corre entre mis dedos. /I feel the long and straight hair touching my waist and I can’t help to see the black color that runs between my fingers.

Me acerco a mi reflejo y veo la intensa mirada oscura de mis regados ojos. / I get closer to my reflection and I see the intense dark stare of my elongated eyes.

Al pasar saliva, siento el gruesor de mis oscuros labios /Once I swallow saliva, I feel the thickness of my dark lips

Veó mis pies descalzos y no alcanzo a distinguir el limite de mi piel y la tierra, como barro untado en mis pies que me sostiene! / I see my bare feet and I can’t distinguish the limit between my skin and the dirt, like sculpted clay in my feet that supports me!

Camino entre la milpa y siento el picazón correr de mis pies a lo mas sensible de mi espalda erecta que me detiene. /I walk between the cornstalks and I feel an itchy sensation running from my feet to the most sensitive part of me erect spine that supports me.

⁴⁹ Yuimakwaxa’s ceremonies (“Drum Ceremony”), 2015–2019.

Levanto mis brazos y alcanzo el cielo ya sin luna, estrellado y profundo, siento mis manos tocar el vacío que me abstiene. /I raise my arms and I reach the sky now without a moon, full of stars and profound, I feel my hands touching the emptiness that abstain my body.

Se colapsa el cielo y la tierra y yo en medio para entrar en el vientre de nuevo
Y regreso en una mazorca azul profunda casi negra como el azul índigo del mar

/The sky and Earth collapses with me in between to enter the womb again

And I come back as a dark blue Corn cob almost black like the indigo blue of the Ocean.

O como el color de mi cuerpo desnudo baja la eterna luna, viendo mi cueros en su reflejo estelar./ Or like the color of my naked body under the eternal moon, seeing my flush in its stellar reflection.

-Summer 2016

CHAPTER TWO: WIXÁRIKA WAIYA METÁ KIEKARIEYA

Since the summer 2016, along with the *Programa de Revitalización de la Lengua Wixárika en Zitakua* and the *Unión Indigenista de Profesionistas de Nayarit*, Tutupika Carrillo de La Cruz and myself, organized workshops with children and youth in the urban Wixárika neighborhood, Zitakua. In the workshop “*Talleres de Lengua Wixárika*” as our Wixárika teachers Benito and Dagoberto explained the parts of the body to the students, they struggled in finding a word for “body” and simply wrote in Spanish “*partes del cuerpo humano*” (“Human body parts”). They said that the figure on the board represented a *tewi* (“person”). Finally, they listed all the parts including the heart, and the memory (See Appendix A: Figure 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3). In one of our teacher conferences, I asked them about one word that could encapsulate the meaning of “body,” and they could not think of any. The concept “body” in Wixárika differs greatly from Western notions of corporeality. In Wixárika ways of knowing, the body serves the purpose of connecting the interior to the exterior and beyond. The body is an instrument to transmit knowledge as a result of having a connection to the metaphysical realms. To make references to all the parts, Wixárika speakers divide the “human body” into the *wai* (“meat”), *‘iyari* (heart-memory), *k+p+ri* (“soul”), *nierika* (“consciousness”), *tukari* (“life”) and *namá* (“desires”) (Velazquez Castellano, 1991).⁵⁰ The *wai* is nothing more than a conduit to pass information and nourish the *‘iyari*, *k+p+ri*, *nierika*, *tukari*, and *namá*. In theories of phenomenology, the body plays an important role in perceiving and engaging with the world.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Namá* was a Wixárika word I found in the Velazquez Castellano’s article, however, three of my Wixárika teachers did not know the meaning.

⁵¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Translated by Colin Smith (New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge, 1962).

In many Wixárika practices, the body is key in perceiving the presence of “other-than-human” or “persons” otherwise known as *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). Wixárika bodily practices during pilgrimages—fasting, praying, walking, dancing, chanting, and meditating on one specific *manda* (“deed”)—serve the purpose of proving good health to the community. Bodily practices are common expressions of reciprocity between Wixáritari (pl.) and *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma*. By offering the body while walking the land Wixárika gain the energy and blessings from *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma*. *Kaka+yarite* and *Kaka+ma* inhabit places and spaces across Wixárika *Ts+kuli* (“Wixárika map of territory”). Some of the places are: Tatéi Haramara, in San Blas, Nayarit (West), Huaxa Manaká, Cerro Gordo in Durango (North), Xapawiyemeta, in the island of Alacranes in Chapala Lake, Jalisco (South), Wirikuta, Real del Catorce, in San Luis Potosí (East) and Te’akata, in the heart of La Mesa del Gran Nayar in La Madre Occidental (Center).⁵² They communicate with people through the constant exchange of offerings. The body and bodily practices connect people to all ancestors who inhabit the land.

***Compadrazgo* and Ethnographic Research**

This chapter emerges from ongoing ethnographic research with multiple Wixárika families from Tepic, Nayarit. My participation within the *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) community emerged as I established ties to many families through *compadrazgo* (“godparenting” or “co-parenting”) or as Stephen Gudeman characterizes it, *compadrazgo* entails

⁵² I use the term *Ts+kuli* as a visual representation of the extension of the land in relation of the major locations such as a map. Paul Liffman uses the term *Kiekari* (*Kie* [casa]+*kari* [nominal root for generalization]) to describe Wixárika’s territory (2011: 105). Wixárika communities outside traditional land can recreate their own *Kiekari* outside the Wixárika’s *Ts+kuli* since *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* can be present at any time in any location given through the chants of the *mara’akame*. In a private conversation, Ubaldo Valdez, Wixárika activist, used the word *Kiekari* to describe the territory as the place where *Wiyakate* (ancestor men and women) support the universe. Maestro Dagoberto Robles used *Takwe* or *Takie* (Our house or territory). Ubaldo, Dagoberto and I agreed that for the visualization of the territory *Ts+kuli* was the best word to describe Wixárika’s map in relation to major ancestral sites.

the “kinship ties to meet the economic, spiritual, and social need.”⁵³ My ties to the community emerged when Isabel asked me to become her godmother to guide her through her educational path. In the following years, I was asked by multiple parents to become a godmother to Judith, Erika, Juanito, and Tura. In many cases, I became a godmother to guide children in their educational path and in some other cases to help them fulfill their ceremonial path by providing funds and encouragement. Later, I asked Mamachali and Papá Costo to become my godparents. At the same time, I asked Felipa and Martin to be the co-parents of my daughter Ixchel. *Compadrazgo* (“co-parenting”) within the Y+rata community serves the purpose of making ties and kinship relations with members outside of the family to assure children follow an educational and ceremonial path.

My responsibilities inside the community increased as my daughter and I became more involved in the ceremonial life at Y+rata (“Place to grow greener”). I have been traveling to Tepic since 2012. I finally moved to Tepic in 2018 to begin writing my dissertation from the Y+rata. Since my initial visit, I have actively participated in ceremonies and the everyday life of the community. In my intersubjective participation, I interviewed (life history interviews, open-ended questionnaires), documented (audio, photo and video record), surveyed, gathered linguistic data, offered workshops for children and youth, and actively participated in events. I have personally and corporeally participated in the choreographic movements to make kinship with “other-than-human” beings. Guided by our Y+rata family, my daughter and I, took offerings to Kaka+yarite and Kaka+ma across many Wixárika ceremonial places to make in Wixárika terms, kinship and establish relationship with our ancestors. We follow the *Tayeyari*

⁵³ Stephen Gudeman, “The Compadrazgo as a Reflection of the Natural and Spiritual Person,” *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (1971): 46.

(“Our ceremonial path”) in order to find the true meaning of life and learn from our elders how to cure our world with Our Mother Corn.

Corporeality and Everyday Practices of the Body

Contemporary corporeal theorists grapple with ideas about the body to understand people’s concepts and representations of corporeality. In Western societies, the body holds social and cultural significance to members of a community. Therefore, to examine the body is to examine the actions that give meaning to everyday practices. Among Indigenous communities, the body reveals connections to metaphysical realms and connections to the ancestors. Choreographic movements, such as dancing and walking, among Indigenous communities correspond to the archive and repertoire of knowledge exchanged between people and “other-than-human” beings.⁵⁴ For instance, among Wixaritari (pl.), the physical action of moving across spaces signifies more than a political, social, or cultural event—moving across spaces is the embodiment of social relatedness and being with the land.

Phenomenologist Marcel Mauss expands on the tendencies of the body to move in accordance to social and cultural factors.⁵⁵ People’s bodily practices—such as swimming, squatting, or even walking—are learned through the embodiment of cultural and social behaviors. Michel De Certeau expands on the notion of how bodies navigate to resist hegemonic structures.⁵⁶ However, Western notions of the body fail to address the metaphysical connections of bodily practices to the land. In this chapter, I examine how Wixárika families in Tepic seek to

⁵⁴ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁵⁵ Marcel Mauss and N. Schlanger, “Techniques of the body,” in the *Techniques, Technology and Civilization* (New York: Durheim Press/Berghahn Books, 2006).

⁵⁶ Michel De Certeau and S. F. Rendall, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

attain good health or well-being by living in reciprocity with land. They achieve health and well-being through bodily practices such as dietary restrictions, praying, walking, dancing, and chanting for extended periods of time. I examine Wixárika concepts of the body in relation to Our Mother Corn. I use conceptual metaphors to unpack the human body in Wixárika ways of knowing and notions of land and territory. Drawing on evidence from pilgrimages to specific geographical locations and the movement of Indigenous bodies across settler colonial spaces, I will show how, for many Wixárika, the body becomes an extension of one's land.

***Weiyak+* (“Pilgrimage”) Huaynamota**

In the Spring of 2016, my husband and I decided to take a family vacation to visit family and friends in Sinaloa, Mexico. We flew to the city of Culiacán and took a bus to Mazatlán. After visiting family and friends, we decided to visit our goddaughters in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”). I knew that most of the Rivera family would not be home that week since it was Holy Week. The family travels to El Gran Nayar to visit *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”) in Huaynamota. When we arrived at the bus station in Tepic, we took a taxi to Y+rata. As soon as we entered the lot, we saw a group of people waiting in the patio. I saw Kaenyumarie (“Elder Brother Deer” and “the truck”), and I knew the family was still home. I got off and all the children came out to greet me. I saw Erika, Poncho, Angel, and Judy and I knew something was wrong. Their participation in the pilgrimage to Huaynamota is necessary to complete a *manda* (“deed”) that Mamachali promised long time ago. After greeting everyone in the family, Mamachali told me that they were waiting for the driver. Every year the family asks a friend to drive Kayumarie to the highlands. The distance between Puga and Huaynamota is of about fifty kilometers and it takes approximately eight hours depending on the speed and the driver's

familiarity with the road. Because the dirt road is very steep and full of curves and cliffs the family requires an experienced driver to take the entire family to Huaynamota.

After talking to Mamachali, Julia and Mariano approached me and asked if their compadre Josh, my spouse, could drive the pickup truck. I told them I would ask him and let them know. Josh immediately agreed. We left around five in the afternoon, but first we stopped in the gas station and everyone gave Papá Costo money to buy gasoline. I was sitting in the truck's cabin with Ixchel in my arms, my *comadre* (“co-parent”) Felipa and her twins, Mamachali, Papá Costo, the compadre José, and Josh. Everyone else was in the back of Kauyamarie either standing or sitting in the bed of the truck. After we crossed the river in Aguapán, we started going uphill. We were going twenty kilometers per hour and Josh was driving carefully. At one point on our trip, we had to get off the truck and walk so that Kauyumarie could go uphill. We arrived to Huaynamota around midnight. When we arrived, the family entered all together as a group and the elders kneeled down to enter on their knees, crawling. I looked back, and the girls were missing. After ten minutes of looking for them, we learned that the girls had gone to the restroom, and we all missed the opportunity to go as a group. We stood in line for four hours waiting to greet Our Elder Brother or *padrecito* (“Our Father” in diminutive) of Huaynamota.

When we finally approached the Saint, I did what everyone in front of me did. I respectfully touched his face, his hands, and his clothing. I cleansed my body with his sash and cleansed Ixchel's body. I asked him to allow me to come back again and to bless my family. I left my offerings and left with everyone else. We sat in front of the Saint for the rest of the night with our candles and the smell of roses permeated in my hands even after I left to sleep. I have participated in this pilgrimage four times and experienced the devotion to *Tamatsika* (“Our elder

Brother”). When we arrived for the first time to Huaynamota, around midnight, we witnessed the devotion of hundreds of other bodies from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds.

The first time I had heard about Huaynamota, the kids told me their stories about the Saint. Isabel told me how the Saint moves and sees you as you approach him in the altar. I heard other stories about people in the family going and asking for good luck in exchange for coming back again to leave offerings. Mamachalis’ testimony of the effectiveness of the Saint’s powers was revealed in a dream. In her dream, the Saint came and talked about the health of one of her grandsons. Poncho was a baby and he was very sick. *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”) came to Mamachali’s dream and told her he was going to take him. She asked him to save him, and Tamatsika agreed in exchange for Mamachali’s devotion. Poncho got better and since then the family goes to the pilgrimage to Huaynamota every year to fulfill this *manda* (“deed”).

Mamachali tells the story of Erika and how she was also sick and made a promise to visit the Saint in Huaynamota in exchange for Erika’s health. Poncho and Erika attend this pilgrimage every year. In addition, Papá Costo and other members of the family asked Tamatsika to provide different skills. For instance, Papá Costo brought his set of curing feathers and opened up his box to gain the energy of the Saint when we all approached the altar or when we attended the mass on Holy Friday. Mamachali’s sons and daughters attended this pilgrimage to pay tribute to the Saint and pray for the family.

Significance of Fasting

Our visit to greet *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”) always follows the same series of steps. Each person places their intentionality of the visit to open the space for prayer, we place our body as an offering to the land and to make connections with everyone. The body as an offering comes from the fasting before, during, and after the pilgrimage. Some families give up

more bodily practices. As a beginner, my offerings have been periodically increasing from not fasting at all to fasting for half of the day to an entire day for my visitation to the church. Some families walk barefoot for a month, stop eating salt, or drinking alcoholic beverages. Other offerings include material objects made by the pilgrims or items we wish to bless. When we first greet Tamatsika, we give our offerings, which have been rubbed against the body and left in the altar, usually a candle, or the instrument or tool you wish to bless. Later, we make room for our *tendidos* (“placing blankets”) inside the patio of the church and in front of the Saint. We set candles for our prayers. When it gets dark, we light the candles and remain awake all night to exchange blessings while we offer our bodily practices from before the trip and in the present moment. Some rest their eyes for minutes and lay down on the floor; however, the *Huriyutsixi* (“Jews”) wake you up to continue the prayers.⁵⁷

Many members of the Rivera family fast and stop eating salt as an offering to the ancestors in the land. In front of the fire of our candle, we meditate and spend the night in vigil. *Veladas* (vigils) are key in creating the space to reconnect with ancestors in the midst of settler colonization in El Gran Nayar. The temporal space created in all the veladas serves as the space for individuals to establish an intimate relationship with ancestors. Although the knowledge collected in such spaces is limited depending on the experience of each person, the veladas offer many teachings. For instance, basic teachings of coexistence among members of the community rely on the experience of other to survive in places. When, we arrived the second year to Huaynamota, I made my entrance crawling to follow all women from Y+rata. My *comadre* “(co-

⁵⁷ During Holy Week at La Sierra, the Catholic Church refers to Huriyutsixi as those who paint their bodies in black and make sure people pray and pay devotion to Tamatsika. According to Mamachali, if one makes the commitment of being a judio you have to maintain the commitment for five years. In 2018, Gabriel following a group of friends, he painted his body using ashes in order to stop cars in El Aguacate and asked them for money. The kids later gave the money to the local church. When Gabriel came home Mamachali reprimanded him because he did the action of becoming a judio without asking the Elders and thus getting permission.

parent”), Felipa and my goddaughter Judith, were holding my arms to help me crawl. Ixchel was walking in front of me crying and without a clue of what was happening. After, reaching the front of the line I stood up and held Ixchel in my arms to greet Tamatsika (“Our Elder Brother”). Once we were sitting in our blankets in front of the Saint, I was offered a piece of *Hikuri* (“Peyote cactus”) for the pain. I could not move any more due to the severe burns in my knees: I had crawled on a stone road around noon and the stones had absorbed all the heat from the sun to fulfil a *manda* (“deed”). The comfort of having my daughter, godmother, and my comadres with me helped me to transform the pain of my body into an offering to the Saint. I thought, if my godmother and daughter could do the pilgrimage, I was very capable of enduring the same and more. Also, through the pilgrimage many members of the family saw my wounds and offered words of compassion. Even youth such as Porfirio and José, two teenage boys who came along to the pilgrimage, saw me with surprise and acknowledged my deeds.

Recovery and Scar Tissue

After the pilgrimage, I learned information about how to take care of the wounds using pork lard and honey to build a double skin and protect the tissue. While I was crawling, I was thinking about the scars of my body and how much I was hoping for my crawling not to leave any visible marks after the pilgrimage. Yet even now, the marks remain on my knees to remind me of the day I had the courage to crawl with the help of my *comadre* (“co-parent”), goddaughter, and daughter to show my devotion to the Saint. I could not have been able to learn about principles of coexistence, endurance, devotion to a Saint, and traditional medicinal treatments without attending the pilgrimage and exposing my body to the ordeal.

Urban Wixárika bodies relate to land through the choreographic movements during pilgrimage when they travel across spaces. Wixárika bodies intertwine with geographical

location to create nodes of knowledge in places and spaces. While Wixárika walk and demonstrate their devotion to the land delivering offerings and exchanging body and land ancestral knowledge. In the archive and repertoire of Wixárika, bodies, land, and the ancestors who inhabit those geographies emerge as one of the main sources of knowledge to continue the *Tayeyari* (Wixárika ceremonial path). In *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), geographies encompass more than the physical features of the land. Geographies constitute many branches of spaces and places where knowledge is collected, reproduced, and transmitted by Kaka+iyarite/Kaka+ma (“Elder Ancestors”). As Keith Basso discusses in his work, Apache communities affirm identity through place-names.⁵⁸ While members of Apache communities observe the physical and material terrain in Apache geographies each location recounts a story of how to become proper members of the community. Basso examines place names and the historical narratives behind each of the names in Apaches’ geography to conclude that each narrative provides meaning to Apache families.

Wixárika *Kiekarieya* (“Wixárika Geography”) and the Constant Interactions between Body and Land

Similar to Apache communities, Wixárika’s geographies provide meaning to families through the constant interaction between body and land. In Loni Kantor’s work “Wixárika Landscape Conceptualization and Suggestions for its Archaeological Relevance,” the author examines the meaning of landscape through the linguistic analysis of place-names and place-talking.⁵⁹ Although his analysis provides an in-depth description of the meaning of “landscape,” Kantor dismisses the impact of the land on people’s life, such claims disregard the ontological

⁵⁸ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

⁵⁹ Loni Kantor, “Wixárika Landscape Conceptualization and Suggestions for its Archaeological Relevance,” PhD Diss. (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2015).

status of geographies. “Landscapes” in Kantor’s work emerge as static places without the efficacy of providing people with Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Paul Liffman’s scholarship theorizes Wixárika land, territory, and identity from a Western perspective in which land is a “set of properties” and nothing more than space where people make meaning. When Liffman speaks of land, Kaka+yarite and Kaka+ma become absent of this conversation, specially Kaka+ma (the female ancestors). Instead Liffman speaks of pilgrimage to visit ancestors as just places people travel to maintain ceremonial spaces.⁶⁰ Both Kantor and Liffman neglect to give agency to the land and incorporate an analysis of how geographies serve as epistemological nodes inside Kiekari or Wixárika’s Tsik+ri.

In understanding land with will and intention, I began seeing how land has the power to impact people’s health. Therefore, the acts of walking across spaces, provides the knowledge from the land to maintain good health and well-being through bodily practices in exchange for ancestral knowledge. The act of walking across the land grants many families the opportunity to learn about reciprocity. As Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee sociologist Vanessa Watts notes, “Indigenous peoples, we are extensions of the very land we walk upon, that we have an obligation to maintain communication with it.”⁶¹ People and land form part of the same framework in which both are intrinsically connected to assure the survival of all beings. In his work “Land: An Extension of the Peasant’s Ego,” anthropologist Richard Berg Jr. studies Zapotec people and their sentiments toward the land. In the community of Zinantepec, Berg Jr. explains that the relationship between agricultural activities and people’s identity is closely

⁶⁰ Liffman, *Huichol Territory and the Mexican Nation*, 105.

⁶¹ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous Place-thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!),” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 20–39.

connected. People's labor in the land mirrors a reflection of their personal identity.⁶² Raramuri scholar Enrique Salmón from Chihuahua, Mexico, emphasizes the "kincentric relationship" between people and nature by demonstrating how in within Raramuri families, many maintain a reciprocal relation with the land as part of their extended family.⁶³ When people and land rupture communications through cultivation such disconnection causes health problems, in both Indigenous bodies and land.

Mawari ("Offerings")

Before the Rivera family at *Y+rata* ("Place to grow greener") attempts to visit any location inside the Wixárika's Tsik+ri (Wixárika's land), each family prepares their offerings. The offerings are made by each member, thinking about the intention of his or her visit. Some aspire to become healers, some wish to gain health, and some just want to offer their greetings to *Kaka+yarite* and *Kaka+ma* ("Elder Ancestors"). When a Wixárika at *Y+rata* aspires to become a healer, the offerings increase and become more elaborate. For instance, Yolanda is a twenty-four-year-old woman who lives in Puerto Vallarta and is a *mara'akame* ("medicine man/woman") apprentice. She was born with the gift of curing and seeing illnesses in people.⁶⁴ For her, attending any location requires not only tangible offerings but intangible offerings in exchange for power. In her yearly visits to *Tatéi Haraamaratsie* ("Our Grand Mother Pacific Ocean"), Yolanda along with others in training to become *mara'akate*, leave the main camp to open their prayers in the dark. For those people seeking better health, they make offerings such as woven bags, votive arrows, and bring food offerings such as chocolate, cookies, and Nawá

⁶² Richard L. Berg Jr., "Land: An Extension of the Peasant's Ego," *Anthropological Quarterly* (1975), 4–13.

⁶³ Salmón, *Eating the Landscape*, 22.

⁶⁴ Life Story interview (transcription pending), Fall 2018.

(“Fermented Corn drink”). In many locations people bathe, drink water, or eat medicinal plants found in the environments to gain health benefits from all ancestors. For instance, the water in certain locations provides those drinking and bathing in it with both healing properties and illnesses. As Wixárika scholar and advisor Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz reflects:

se cuenta la historia de que una persona en un lugar sagrado, hay lugares sagrados donde tienes que ir y tener mucho cuidado de no tocar, este y en ese lugar sagrado no debería no debía de haber tomado agua de ese lugar y tomó de ese lugar perdió la conciencia, lo que nosotros llevamos, bueno eso que se llama k+p+ri, tenemos varios en el cuerpo

a story is told that of a person in a sacred place, there are sacred places where you have to go and be careful of not touching, and in that sacred place you should not have drunk water from that place and if you drank from that place you lost consciousness, or what we have, well that which is called k+p+ri (“soul”), we have several in the body.⁶⁵

Drinking water or interacting with ancestors without permission (“*no habia de haber tomado agua*,” “I should have not drunk water”) in some places disrupts the relationship between people and ancestors. All the disrupted interactions have consequences while interacting with Elder Ancestors. Similarly, balanced interaction with ancestors provides health benefits.

After the *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz,” “Harvesting Ceremony” or “Drum Ceremony”) in October 2018 at El Cerrito, Julia, Mariano and their kids made a trip to *Tatéi Haramaratsie* (“Our Gran Mother Pacific Ocean”). When we arrived at *Tatéi Haramaratsie*, we parked our car in one of the many touristic restaurants located by the beach. We all approached *Haramaratsie* and first, cleansed our body with a coin, threw the coin to the water, lit the candles, and delivered all of our offerings. Julia brought *Nawá* (“Corn-based fermented drink” or “tejuino” in Spanish), cookies, candles, chocolate, and blood. We cleansed our body so that *Haramara* acknowledges our presence and we do not get sick. Some of the offerings came back with the

⁶⁵ Interview with Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, Summer 2016 (31:05).

waves and the kids threw them back to the water. Julia bathed Armando, who had suffered severe injuries in a car accident couple years ago, and prayed for him. Julia took Armando and bathed him, so Haramaratsie gave back some of the k+p+ri Armando had lost when he had the accident.⁶⁶ After we delivered the offerings, we came back to the restaurant, ate, and contemplated the water. Those who wish to greet and establish connection with ancestors, visit geographical location and spend the night camping in the open. In all visits, the exchange of offerings assures families that Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma acknowledges their presence in the space and provides healing.

Pilgrimages and Walking to Learn about One's Own Role in the Family

Within Wixárika families, yearly pilgrimages to multiple geographies on Wixárika's *Ts+kuli* (Wixárika's map) assure their cultural survival while families walk to learn about the land and their own role in the family. Many of these properties, now private territory, formed part of Wixárika's Ts+kuli. From *Tatéi Haramaratsie*, in San Blas, Nayarit (West), *Hauxa Manaká*, Cerro Gordo in Durango (North), *Xapawiyemeta*, in the island of Alacranes in Chapala Lake, Jalisco (South), *Wirikuta*, Real del Catorce, in San Luis Potosí (East) and *Te'akata*, in the heart of La Mesa del Gran Nayar in La Madre Occidental (Center) form part of the Wixárika's Ts+kuli. Wixárika land covers regions from the lake in Jalisco, and the Sonoran Desert in San Luis Potosi, to the Pacific Ocean in Nayarit and La Sierra del Gran Nayar.

When participating in ceremonies and festivities the Rivera family at *Y+rata* ("Place to grow greener") community usually trespasses other properties to hunt, cultivate, leave offerings, and interact with elder ancestors in ceremony. Many Wixárika families travel from afar to encounter ancestors and move across private property. For instance, in the pilgrimage to

⁶⁶ Personal communication Fall 2018.

Huaynamota, families drive across the highlands to reach the church. In the church, families trespass the patio and they camp inside the church. When we were in Huaynamota, many placed blankets even on the steps of the church to be in the presence of the Saint. Indigenous families from different ethnic backgrounds travel to greet *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”). In this place, the mountains and the surroundings mark the area where this entity once lived. This town is also a landmark for Indigenous resistance, syncretism, and cultural preservation.

In the pilgrimage to Wirikuta, families at Y+rata now use trucks to drive across the Sonoran Desert and find a place to camp. After, visiting *Tatéi Matinieri* (“Our Mother that emerges from the Earth” “Our Mother who watches over us”) close to the town of Yolialt in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, the Rivera family makes a camp to rest and later continue the pilgrimages. Many acres in the desert are now in the ownership of *ejidatarios* (“ranchers”).⁶⁷ Even in the most important place in the desert, Cerro Quemado in Real del Catorce, ejidatarios control the access of Indigenous communities. Ejidatarios ask for a permit granted by the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los pueblos Indígenas to allow Wixárika families entrance. Huaynamota, Haramaratsie, Wirikuta are key places in recreating the space to reconnect with ancestors in the midst of settler colonization in El Grand Nayar and in all *Ts+kuli* (“Wixárika’s map of the territory”). Thousands of Indigenous families travel from afar to greet their ancestors. Members of the community travel with offerings across land to reconnect with ancestors in specific places. Thus, land is the core of many branches of localized spaces and places where *Kaka+yarite*/*Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”), and human persons make kinship and exchange, collect, reproduce, and transmit knowledge. Wixárika families actively trace places and recreate space by moving across properties.

⁶⁷ Fieldwork, Spring 2018.

Wixárika Activists and the Struggle for Indigenous Lands

Wixárika activists continuously expose their problems to regain access, maintain access, and assure land's agency in public demonstrations. The activist work of many Wixáritari (pl.) has aided in delaying mining, eco-touristic, and hydraulic projects. In 2012 in the movement to protect Wirikuta, twenty Wixárika communities joined their efforts to defend the land. "Wirikuta no se vende; se ama y se defiende" ("Wirikuta is not for sale; [Wirikuta] is loved, and [Wirikuta] is defended") was the title of the movement that caught the attention of Mexican musicians and in collaboration created the Wirikuta Fest to collect funds to stop the mining project in Real del Catorce. Although the UNESCO and the San Luis Potosí government declared Wirikuta a protected area and cultural patrimony in 1988, neoliberal politics and NAFTA allowed foreign companies the rights to extract natural resources from the area. Wixárika communities formed the "*Frente en Defensa de Wirikuta*" ("Wirikuta Defense Front") and denounced to the United Nations the extractive projects in Wirikuta. In July 2012 the local authorities of Mexquitic and Bolaños, Jalisco sued the Mexican Secretary of Economy for the violations of human rights and for allowing mining companies to enter Wirikuta (Torres Barreto & Castrejón García 2016).⁶⁸ The ecosystems in *Wixárika's Ts+kuli* (Wixárika's map of territory) are the home of many Kaka+yarite, Kaka+ma, and species of plants, animals, minerals, and water. The colonization, domination, and exploitation of Wixárika homelands benefit the settler colonists, mining industries, and tourism industries. These conflicting ontologies, one from the Mexican as the exploitation and extractive ideologies, contradict Wixárika's views of relatedness and being with the land.

⁶⁸ Arturo Torres Barreto and Gabino Eduardo Castrejón García, "La Lucha Wixarika por Wirikuta y su territorialidad: La responsabilidad patrimonial del estado como Instrumento Jurídico de defensa," *Multidiciplina* No. 23 (Jan-Apr 2016): 48–77.

Since colonization, Wixárika communities and other Indigenous communities in Mexico have struggled to maintain their original lands, battling mining corporations, and the tourist industry. While the Mexican authorities fail to understand, protect, and support Indigenous resistances to settler colonization, Indigenous families stand strong defending ancestral ways of being, relating, co-existing, and existing in this time and space. The constitution granted farmworkers accessibility and rights to communal land holdings. After the Mexican Revolution, between 1916 and 1940, the government redistributed the land to farmworkers and Indigenous communities. However, in 1992, after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), new amendments to the constitution permitted the privatization of communal land. The government in conjunction with private corporations now had access to communal land to purchase, own, sell and exploit natural resources and cultivate goods (López Bárcenas 2017).⁶⁹

In El Gran Nayar, Wixárika communities maintained the fight to regain access to ancestral land since colonization. Huajimic in 2018, a forty-year conflict and ten years of litigations against ranchers, *Tatéi Haramaratsie* (“Our Mother Pacific Ocean”) in 2011 against the tourist industry, *Xapawiyeme* against the Mexican state to avoid the privatization of the lake, and Wirikuta 2014 against the Canadian mining company First Majestic Silver. These are some struggles that made the news within the following ten years. However, many other struggles remain in silence. In *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), the family relocated closer to Tepic to have access to services and work. In Tepic, they bought a piece of land and live within the Mexican nation but with their sovereignty in the ranch. The family follows the traditional *cargo* system and exchange only cargos for ceremonial positions. According to Stacy B. Schaefer, the

⁶⁹ Francisco López Bárcenas, “¡La Tierra No se Vende! Las Tierras y Los Territorios de los pueblos Indígenas en México,” *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales* (Mexico, 2017).

Wixárika cargo system consist of community, government, church, and temple cargo. This system was introduced by Spanish colonial times.⁷⁰ In Wixárika communities in la Sierra, most families have community, government, church, and temple obligations. In Y+rata, the familu follows the temple cargo. In this cargo selective members of the family have special obligations during the festivities. Since the *mara'akame* (“medicine man/woman”) of the family is also the head of the family, the Rivera family organizes ceremonies and communal events through consensus and having *Tamatsika* (“Elder brother”) approve all festivities. In most of the pilgrimages, the Rivera family trespasses private properties and communal lands to access ceremonial places. When celebrating all festivities, the family organizes inside the main ranch at Y+rata.

Indigenous peoples move across settler colonial spaces in the pilgrimage to geographic locations to deliver offerings as well as to maintain connections with ancestors. The Rivera family walk through properties to encounter Elder Ancestors and establish relationships through ceremonies, offerings and *mandas* (deeds). For instance, in the pilgrimage to Huaynamota in La Sierra, the Rivera family walk and spend the night in the open air, praying, chanting, dancing, and playing music with the ancestors in the land. In the patio of the Catholic, church the family creates the space to make connections to the land. Even though the Catholic Church and settler colonization prevail, Wixárika families and other Indigenous communities make the pilgrimage to connect with the land and the entities in the place. Although Huaynamota is not part of the main ceremonial places in *Wixárika's Ts+kuli* (“Wixárika’s map of the territory”), the location

⁷⁰ Stacy Schaefer, *Huichol Women, Weavers, and Shamans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015), 63.

emerges as a powerful site to make ontological connections with ancestors due to the unique history of the place.

History of Huaynamota

The town of Huaynamota was an important site of Indigenous resistance during the conquest. Not until 1722 did Indigenous communities allow the Catholic church to establish itself in the area. Prior to Catholic occupation, the Huanamotanos (“Huaynamota Natives”) resisted the evangelical missions of Franciscans and Jesuits (Flores). The town of Huaynamota marks the land as one of the first towns deep in La Sierra del Gran Nayar with missions. This region inhabited predominantly by Naáyeri communities was ruled by El Rey del Gran Nayar *Tlatoani* (“Naáyeri King”). The oral tradition regarding the Saint dates prior Jesuit occupation in Huaynamota. People speak about the Saint as a living person, walking and inhabiting the caves in the mountain. According to Mamachali, Tamatsika (“Our Elder Brother”) was a human person once. Many people saw him in the river or in a cave in the mountains where he lived. When he passed away, the people in Huaynamota built him a *ramada* (“Roof made out palm”) in the town but the ramada would always fall down, and the body of the Saint would be found in the river. My Naáyeri friend Edisa agrees with Mamachali on every single aspect. Edisa’s devotion to the Saint, as she remembers, came from her parents and her grandparents. She remembers walking from her ranch to the church as a child fasting.⁷¹ Even two Indigenous women from different ethnic groups and a big generation gap agree in their recounting of the details on the Saint.

In the article “Los Coras en la época de la expulsión Jesuita” Marie-Areti Hers, uses historical data, including the writings of father Franciscan Arias y Saavedra, to examine

⁷¹ Personal conversation Fall 2018.

Indigenous practices in El Gran Nayar.⁷² With the intentions of prohibiting “idolatries”, Franciscan missionaries documented the practices, the sanctuaries, and the use of oracles for divination.⁷³ Hers analyzes Arias and Saavedra’s writings about the Tlatoani’ sanctuaries in which the community kept their bodies. The community relied on the expertise of the *curanderos* (“healers”) for their health. In the discussion of syncretism of Indigenous practices with Catholic faith in la Mesa del Gran Nayar, the author uses confessions to conclude that Indigenous families between 1722 and 1767 found ways to merge together ancestors and religious figures, stating that “all the Indigenous people insisted that the recognized idols in 1768 were only representations of the older ones.”⁷⁴ In votive arrows, beads, and clothing they showed devotion to the newer versions of their ancestors. In the first public devotion to newer Saints, the principal Naáyeri ancestors were Tallao (Our father Sun), and Our elder Brother, and Our Mother.⁷⁵ Although Hers’s article does not discuss how the Saint in Huaynamota emerged from Indigenous practices, the oral tradition in many contemporary Indigenous families informs us of how the Saint became part of the Catholic Church. According to Alejandro Ponce Piña’s master’s thesis “*Lophophora Williamsii: Política, Derecho, Costumbre y Usos*” the pilgrimage to Huaynamota is part of a series of pilgrimages that Wixárika families attend to different geographies. In such pilgrimages, people participate to fulfill *mandas* (“deeds”) and gain from the Saint and other

⁷² Marie-Areti Hers, “Los Coras en la época de la expulsión Jesuita,” *Historia Mexicana* 27, no. 1 (Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 1977): 17–48.

⁷³ Hers, “Los Coras en la época de la expulsión Jesuita,” 19.

⁷⁴ Hers, “Los Coras en la época de la expulsión Jesuita,” 24.

⁷⁵ Hers, “Los Coras en la época de la expulsión Jesuita,” 25.

ancestors healing properties.⁷⁶ Many families, even from multiple communities, gather in the church to pay respect to the ancestors who inhabit the land.

We'eme metá Tatéi Yurienaka (“Living Geographies”)

In other living geographies, the difficulty to access the land increases when people trespass properties. In *Tatéi Haramaratsie* (“Our Mother Pacific Ocean” “West”) the family enters without permission in places under the control of private ownership. In 2011, after a battle to access land, the Mexican government gave Wixaritari (pl.) only thirty-five percent of the land in San Blas and allowed them to perform their ceremonies. In the case of Wirikuta, the community drives on the Mexican highway to Real del Catorce and later enters the desert by walking. The elders of the community present a permit (INPI process the permit every year by the request of the community elders) to enter the reserve. With this permit, the community enters land owned by ejidatarios or Mexican ranchers.

In all pilgrimages to Wixárika homelands, Wixárika families perform several bodily practices such as walking across spaces, not sleeping, fasting or dietary restrictions, specifically in limiting the use of salt and water to cleanse the body and allow the mind/heart to concentrate on specific deeds. Each person places their intentionality to open up the space for prayer, we place the body of each of us as an offering to the land to make connections while we meditate in ceremony. When approaching Elder Ancestors in all living geographies, we give our offerings, which have been cleansed by rubbing them against our body. We leave the offerings on the altar. Later, if we are in the opening, we create physical space by placing blankets inside the patio of the church and in front of the Saint or around the Fire in our camp. We set candles for our

⁷⁶ Alejandro Ponce Piña, “Lophophora Williamsii: Política, Derecho, Costumbre y Usos,” MA thesis (Morelia, Michoacan: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales, 2018).

prayers and in silence we meditate. We remain awake all night, in silence, while we offer our bodily practices and experience the environment in our body. Sometimes the rain, the cold air in your face, the heat of the Fire, and the uncomfortable position of your body sitting on the ground are the only sensations. Once you get past those feelings of being vulnerable you can experience the presence of the other beings (not as a metaphor). Santos, an 18-year-old Wixárika, told me: “Fuerza, strength! You must be strong for this . . . here the forces of all ancestors are very strong.”⁷⁷

In *Tatéi Haramaratsie* (“Our Grand Mother Pacific Ocean”) and Wirikuta, *mara’akate* (“medicine men/women”) in training attend pilgrimages to retrace ancestors’ steps, as well as interact with and learn from them. The route from the ocean to the desert was once walked by all ancestors when they migrated. Other people attend pilgrimages to establish relations and communication and learn from the places. The communication between *Kaka+yarite/Kakam+a* (“Elder Ancestors”) and people comes in dreams, prayer, mediation, and acquired knowledge from the places (principles of coexistence, visions, endurance, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, use of medicinal plants, and treatments). Thus, land is the core of many branches of localized spaces and places where *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* and human persons make kinship, exchange, collect, reproduce, and transmit knowledge. Wixárika families actively trace places and spaces by moving across properties. Many of these properties, now private territory, formed part of *Wixárika’s Ts+kuli* (Wixárika’s map of territory).

By attending pilgrimages in Wixárika’s homelands, families actively participate in tracing ancestral places to reaffirm relations with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). In most of the pilgrimages, families walk and spend the night in the open praying, chanting,

⁷⁷ Fieldwork San Blas, 2018.

dancing and playing music to the ancestors in the land. In specific places the community built the space to make connections to the land. Wixárika families make the pilgrimage to connect with Kaka+irite/Kaka+ma following bodily practices such as fasting, praying, walking, dancing, and chanting. During all the pilgrimages such bodily practices are methods to prepare the body and enter in communication with Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma. Specifically, fasting for many Wixárika who follow the ceremonial cycle is an act of preparation to receive the blessings of all ancestors when ingesting food offerings or medicinal plants. For medical purposes, fasting is a technique to detox the body. Corn offerings such as tamales, tortillas, and Corn drinks provide the family good health benefits while ingested.

Tatéi Neixa and Corn-based Offerings

My first time participating in the *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz,” “Harvesting Ceremony” or “Drum Ceremony”), I have witnessed the ingestion of Corn-based offerings more closely while fasting. In ceremony, Corn-based foods and drinks are essential components of the offerings. Most Wixárika families in the city travel to their ceremonial centers, usually in their main ranch, to participate in ceremonies. Along with tamales and tortillas, *Nawá* (“Corn-based fermented drink” or “tejüino” in Spanish) is an essential component in the set of offerings to deliver Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma. In the Fall 2018, I intended to prepare my own *Nawá* for our ceremonial exchange of offerings. My *comadre* (“co-parent”) Yuawima guided me through the preparation of the drink. Although I ended up not being able to fulfill all the dietary restrictions due to health problems, she prepared my drink for offerings and explained the procedure. Women prepared *Nawá* three or four days in advance by following traditional ways of preparing the drink and following a series of restrictions, such as diet, sexual abstinence, and sleep deprivation. The main

ingredients for the drink are dried and germinated Corn kernels and water. The following is a recipe for Nawá offered by my comadre Yuawima:

Ingredients:

- Yuri'iku
- Agua
- Fuego
- Arena
- Nailon

Modo de preparar:

Primero tiendes el nailón y le echas arena. Después le echas el maíz encima. Ya que esté todo puesto le vas a poner agua. Cubres con arena y agua. Tapas y dejas reposar cuatro días. Cuando el maíz gilotee (germine) se le pone agua. Tapas de nuevo un día entero. Al siguiente día se saca y se tiende de nuevo en la tierra bajo el sol. Después de un día secando, se tapa de nuevo con una cobija un día en el sol. Al siguiente día se abre y se tiende. Repite el tapado y secado bajo el sol tres veces. Después de los tres días se limpia el maíz tallando para quitar el germen. Cuando este limpio se muele en el molino. Cuando este polvarizado se guarda en una cubeta y se tapa. Al siguiente día, en la mañana lavas las ollas. Ponen el fuego y una olla a calentar. Aparte, se mezcla el polvo de maíz con agua y se vierte en la olla del fuego. Se corta *Tuxú* (flores) y las mujeres lavan sus manos con el tuxú. Después, se hace *hak+eri* (mezcla de polvo con agua aparte) y se deja reposar. Cuando el nawá se hace espeso se le mezcla y se menea. Cuando le salga nata se limpia con el *ocote*. Se deja hervir tres días. Mezclando y virtiendo *hak+eri*. Al final del tercer día se deja reposar a un lado del fuego toda la noche. Al amanecer del cuarto día se cuele con sedaso. Al nawá colado se le pone *hak+eri* y si está muy espeso se le pone más *hak+eri*. Al terminar se deja reposar. En el quinto día empieza a hervir y se puede server mezclando muy bien el contenido/First, you place the plastic and put sand on it. Then, you put the Corn on top. Once all this is there you will put water. You cover with sand and water. You cover and let rest for four days. When the Corn germinates, add water and cover again a whole day. The next day, take out and laid again on the ground under the sun. After a day drying, cover it again with a blanket for one day in the sun. The next day, open it and stretch the plastic. Repeat the cover and dry in the sun three days. After several days, clean the Corn kernels by hand to remove the germs. When the kernels are clean grind in the mill. When the kernels become a powder, store in a bucket and cover it. The next day in the morning, you wash the pots. They put the fire and a pot to heat. Apart, mix the Corn powder with water and pour it into the fire pot. *Tuxu* (Flower) is cut and the women wash their hands with the tuxu. Then, *hak + eri* (mixture of powder with separate water) and let it rest. When the Nawá becomes thick, it mixes, then stir. When the mixture comes out creamy, clean it with *ocote*. Boil for three days, mixing and pouring *hak + eri*. At the end of the third day, let it rest on one side of the fire all night. At the dawn of the fourth day, drain it with a *sedaso*. To the Nawá drained, add *hak+eri* and if it is too thick, add more *hak + eri*. When finished, let it rest. On the fifth day, it begins to boil and can be served by mixing the contents very well

From an ontological perspective, Corn, in the preparation of Nawá the drink, has the power to cure families while ingested. The drink is placed in the altar and through the ceremonies absorbs the blessings of each one in the family. Families *titi meiya* (“sangrear” “to

mark with animal blood”) ceremonial objects and all food offerings to offer it on the altar. Ingesting Nawá while fasting provides you with a sense of fullness and a bloated stomach but offers you a natural detox for your body. Nawá and other food offerings are essential in pilgrimages and in many cases are the only source of nutrition during ceremony. Women serve Corn-based food and drinks as offerings in ceremony to provide some health benefits while ingested. These offerings are prepared with *Yuri'iku* (“True Corn”) and comes from the genealogy of *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”). Usually, Wixárika families will obtain different Corn kernels for cultivation from generation to generation. Families engaged in a series of ceremonies through the cycle of Corn to assure the presence of Nawetsika in cultivation. Families prepare offerings with Ancestral Corn to maximize the blessings. Additionally, families use Yuri'iku names and metaphors related to *Tatéi Niwetsika* to denote the inter-species connection between Our Mother Corn and people, thus assuring with this offering (name devotion) well-being.

Cultivation of *Waxata* (“Cornfield”)

In the summer, usually at the end of June beginning of July, the families prepare the seeds and the *Waxata* (“Cornfield”) for the cultivation and for the ceremonies involving the cycle of Corn. Similar to the roles of *Tatéi Niwetsika*'s daughters and *Watakame*, women, and men work in the field. Women handle the seeds and men work the soil and prepare the *Waxata* for cultivation.⁷⁸ As an active participant, I observed families with ceremonial responsibilities in the *Tatéi Niwetsika 'Etsixa* (“Cultivation Ceremony”). In the ceremony, while children embodied all Corn maids, they danced to the sound of the violin, presented the offerings to *Tatéi Takutsi*

⁷⁸ Personal interview with Felipa Rivera Lemus; Robert Zing, *Huichol Mythology*, edited by Jay C. Fikes, Phil C. Weigand, and Celia Garcia de Weigand (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

Nakawé and Tatéi Niwitsika, and exchanged Corn-based offering among themselves. When the ceremony ended, everyone who came from afar left the community. In *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) everybody resumed their daily activities. However, women, continued the labor of husking, selecting the best Our Mother Corn seeds, and planning the next trip to the *Yeturita* (“Field for cultivation”) to begin the season.

In Wixárika ways of knowing, Corn is central to the life of families because *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) gifted her daughters, all five Corn maids, to the first farmer to begin planting. *Yuawima* (Blue Corn) became a human person to live with Watakame and began Wixárika genealogy. Many Wixárika families see Corn as kin and thus, throughout their life they exchange offerings and devote their labor to straighten kinship. In the *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz,” “Harvesting Ceremony” or “Drum Ceremony”), I learned about the importance of Corn in the life of people and how mothers foster kinship through Corn-based meals and offerings to Corn relatives. In *Teukarita* ceremonies (“Naming Ceremonies”) usually in the fall during the harvesting of Corn, newborns receive names connecting them to their ancestors. According to Saul Santos García and Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, *Teukari* (“Grandparent with dream interpretation abilities”) names the newborn from the interaction between elder and Elder Ancestor in a dream.⁷⁹ Later, the grandparent interprets the name, thus creating a bond between the newborn and its ancestors.⁸⁰ Guidance and well-being of the infant depend upon the relationship with ancestors. In Mamachali’s family, Mamachali possess the ability to assign

⁷⁹ Saul Santos García and Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz, “Teukarita: Designación de nombres de personas entre los wixáritari y sus significados,” *La Documentación lingüística del huichol*, edited by Carmen Conti, Lilian Guerrero, and Saul Santos (2012): 149–165.

⁸⁰ García and Carrillo, “Teukarita,” 151.

names to newborn children. The names, she explains, appear in dreams when entities speak to her.

One common name in the family for boys is *Y+ra* (“Male name that refers to grow as the Corn stalks”) and relate to *Tatéi Takutsi Nakawe* (“Our Mother Growth”) and *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our mother Corn”). In Yuawima’s household, Julia’s household, Felipa’s household, and Dolores’ household at least one boy’s name belongs to Corn ancestor.⁸¹ As the translations suggest, these names provide the children with the strength of Corn to grow and fulfill their role in society. Names such as *Y+ra* relate to Corn growth and express the importance of growing up healthy. Their names are a constant reminder of their responsibilities to the ancestors. Usually both grandparents name the children and as a result, children can have more than one name. In the 2015 *Tatéi Neixa* (“Maize Dance,” “Harvesting Ceremony,” or “Drum Ceremony”), Mamachali gave to the new members of the family the following names: *Tura*, *Zit+ama*, *Yuawima*, *Haulima*, and *Sutulima*.⁸²

Combined, the names *Zit+ama* (“Tender Corn”), and *Yuawima* (“Blue Corn”) translate as “Tender Blue Corn,” referring to one of the five maids of Corn. Stacy Schaefer, who worked with communities in La Sierra, describes how Wixárika families assign female names from the stages and growth of Corn relatives. Stacy Schafer documented names such as *Hakarima*, *Turama*, *Tsaulima*, and *Xitaima* which represent “female principles” of Corn growth.⁸³ Personal names, serve as linguistic resources that people use to maintain cultural identity by indicating

⁸¹ *Y+ra*, Fieldwork 2017.

⁸² Fieldwork Fall 2015.

⁸³ Schaefer, *Huichol Women, Weavers, and Shamans*, 299–300.

social relations between kin.⁸⁴ In the case of Wixárika personal names, Corn related names demonstrate kinship and the relationship between individuals and Corn entities. Wixárika families employ names to negotiate not only social relations, but also to negotiate ontological connections with Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma. Uttering names, similar to chants in Corn cultivation, denote the social and ontological status of people and ancestors. In J. L. Austin's speech-act theory, speech has the power to generate actions as opposed to just representing them.⁸⁵ Using Austin's speech-act theory, when Wixárika-speakers utter personal names related to Corn, the performativity of the names is not only in naming ceremonies but in the daily life of the community, acting and impacting the life of people by embodying the properties of Corn.

Ne nana Mamachali

Mamachali, as the name giver in the family, dreams of personal names related to Corn and assigns names to express how she wishes her grandchildren to grow. In the lexicon of the Wixárika language related to Corn, children's names become indices of the first stage of Corn *Y+ra* or *Y+rama* ("to grow greener"); colors of Corn *Yuawima* ("Blue Corn"), *Tuxame* ("White Corn"); and roles of people in the cultivation *Watakame* ("Male farmer," "first farmer"), *Etsima* ("Woman farmer").⁸⁶ By uttering personal names related to Corn, members of the community reconnect to Corn and remember their responsibilities as part of the family. Ceremonial language as a very particular form of communication initiates this communication among ancestors. Though not completely understood by many members of the community, the chants are performed in ceremonial spaces to evoke the presence of the ancestors. Corn names and Corn

⁸⁴ Gabriele Vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn, "'Entangled in Histories: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Names and Naming,'" in *An Anthropology of Names ad naming*, edited by Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

⁸⁵ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Word* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

⁸⁶ Audio interview, July 2014.

vocabulary are generally indexical of the associations with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Grandmother Corn”). When children get their name after *Tatéi Niwetsika* the name is an active reminder and indexical of the importance of offerings and tributes of devotion to Corn in exchange for health. Maintaining traditional names related to Corn assures families’ well-being. Names act as mnemonic devices, reminding individuals about their responsibilities to their ancestors. In their linguistic formation, personal names are derived from conceptual metaphors from the interaction between Corn and people. *Wixárika* perceive Corn as kin and transmit their cognitive orientation to others.

Workshops about the Science of Mother Corn

In the summer of 2018, along with the *Programa de Revitalización de la Lengua Wixárika en Zitakua* and the *Unión Indigenista de Profesionistas de Nayarit*, we organized workshops with children in the *Wixárika* neighborhood.⁸⁷ In the workshops “Interspecies Ethnography: The Science of Our Mother Corn” we collected names related to Corn, Corn-based remedies, identified Corn growths, and cultivated Corn in La Labor. In our activities, we followed principles and protocols of co-existence created by all the participants (*Wixárika* children from four to sixteen years of age) to work and treat Our Mother Corn in an ethical and respectful way. After all children wrote the principles and protocols in the board of the classroom, the following were the most important: 1) Respect to all Beings (Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma), 2) Honesty, 3) Responsibility, 4) Thankfulness, 5) Wait for turns, 5) Throw trash in the trash can, 6) Share, 7) Take turns volunteering, 8) Take care of other and among ourselves, 9) Give credit to others, and 10) Use positive language. In order to continue

⁸⁷ For the Workshops, the children participated voluntarily with the permission of parents. Some of the children who participated and continue as part of the workshops are Isabel, Linsey, Grecia, Saily, Eduar, Leo, Paola, Nicole, and Fanny. At the end of the summer, we presented our findings in the “Festival de Los Pueblos Originarios.”

the genealogy of Our Mother Corn, all participants used only ancestral seeds to cultivate Corn. For this practice, my godmother Mamachali gifted us seeds and allow us to cultivate *Yuawima*'s seeds ("Blue Ancestral Corn") in her plot. Using, traditional tools (hoe), ceremonial protocols (cleansing ceremonies and offering ceremonies), and Wixárika cultural values (using four or five kernels in each of the holes) the students in the summer workshops cultivated Corn.

Some of the names collected by all the participants at Zitakua relate to metaphors about, growth, fertility, and life. The following table exemplifies some of the most common names related to Corn including translation and linguistic analysis:

Table 1: Common Names Related to Corn

Name	Translation	Morphological Analysis⁸⁸
Y+ra	"To grow" (male)	Y+ra (nominal root) + 0
Y+rama	"To grow" (female)	Y+ra (nominal root) + Gender (ma)
Wenima	"To receive offering from Corn" (female)	Wen (nominal root) + i (connector) + gender (ma)
Xitakame	"To grow the spike" (male)	Xita (nominal root) + ka (connector) + me (gender)
Xitaima	"To sprout" (female)	Xita (nominal root) + i (connector) + ma (gender)
Yuawi	"Full of Blue" (male)	Yuawi (nominal root)

⁸⁸ Benito de la Cruz and Dagoberto Robles, two native speaker and linguistic students at the Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit conducted the morphological analysis with the help of Professor Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz.

Yuawima	“Full of blue” (female)	Yuawi (nominal root) + ma (gender)
Xaurima	Dried corn plant (female)	Xauri (nominal root) + i (conector) + ma (gender)
Xaureme	“Dried Corn plant” (male)	Xaur (nominal root) + e (conector) + me (gender)

For Wixárika, the human body relates to the body of Our Mother Corn. The metaphorical language in many Wixárika names denotes the relationship between people and Corn. In Wixárika ways of knowing, conceptual metaphors related to Corn offer Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) regarding good health and growth. In the same workshops (“Interspecies Ethnography: The Science of Our Mother Corn”) as part of learning tools, we documented the grow of Corn and printed some pictures of stages of Corn with the intention of showing members of the community the pictures, so they could identify the stages (See Appendix B: Figures 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9). All the stages correlated to personal names in many Wixárika families.

In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s *Metaphors We live By*, the authors examine figurative language to understand human thought. Conceptual metaphors or concepts that emerge from figurative language shape human perception and, ultimately, worldview.⁸⁹ Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that people conceptualize the world through the use of metaphors by “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.”⁹⁰ Lakoff and Johnson

⁸⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁹⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5.

suggest that because concepts are understood in terms of other concepts, the experience of people shapes their understanding of the world. In this “conceptual system,” experiences shape our view about phenomena in the world. Lakoff and Johnson’s theories on “conceptual metaphor” provide resources to analyze Wixárika names in relationship to Our Mother Corn and the Traditional Ecological Knowledge offered through the embodiment of cultivation practices. When children, usually boys, who received the name Y+ra, they receive the proprieties of the roots in this case “To grow” as a concept of growth and health like the stages of Our Mother Corn. Although the root word Y+ra is in multiple stages of Corn, as shown in the Figures 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7 (Appendix B), the root words also signify concepts of growth and thus concepts and principles of life that become part of a figurative language. In the case of Wixárika, the concepts become personal names derived from principles of growth of Our Mother Corn.

Our Mother Corn is central to the life of contemporary urban Wixárika due to the constant and daily interaction of Corn ancestors and people. During the cycle of Corn, people maintain close ties and dietary restrictions from the time of cultivation to the harvesting of Corn. In the harvesting ceremony, families devote the entire celebration to Our Mother Corn. Through chants, storytelling, and dances members of the family maintain inter-species relations between Corn and people. Later, families use the offerings presented in ceremony to deliver to key geographical locations. In this exchange families make kinship, learn from inter-species interactions, and strengthen relationships with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”) inside the Wixárika’s *Ts+kuli* (“Wixárika’s map of territory”).

During my fieldwork, the idea of making kinship with land by offering my body in sacrifice did not make much sense until I actually walked in the pilgrimage and embodied the land. In one of the nights, in the 2018 pilgrimage after Huaynamota, we camped on the hill and

spent the night in the San Luis Potosí Desert. After we delivered offerings (candles, Corn-based drink, woven clothes, and votive arrows) inside the shrine, we walked to the camp. On my way to the camp, in a matter of minutes, the rain began pouring down allowing me only to pick up my stuff and to run to the blue tarp set up to protect the children. As the women and some men surrounded the children, we all sat under the blue tarp unable to move because of the rain. The temperature dropped quickly and between the water flowing down the hill and the cold wind, my body began shivering. That night, I learned one of the greatest lessons about the power of nature, endurance, and collaboration. Half of my body was outside the blue tarp and my legs were in between the current of water flowing downhill. I could not avoid getting wet.

That night, I heard people crying, screaming, and complaining about the Elders's decision to stay in the hill camping. I was very cold. My back was against someone's knees and my legs were hanging out between a small ditch on the ground and water. I was hugging my stuff to protect it from the rain as if I were embracing Ixchel and for some moments I would close my eyes and snooze. I was angry, and I harnessed that energy to keep my body warm. I remember when some women complained—I told them, “We can't do anything about it, stop complaining,” and they stopped. I also remember being concerned about the kids and asked them if they were getting wet. At one point, everyone stopped and submitted to the power of nature. I also gave in, I wanted to leave or remove people around me to be fully inside the tarp, but I did not. My feet were all wet. My sandals were all wet and I was unable to remove them due to the pilgrimage's restrictions.⁹¹ My skirt was wet, and I felt the water with mud running through the

⁹¹ Before the pilgrimage, the mara'kame binds together the group by first tying the group with ribbon and then “fixing” everyone's left footwear with his *muwiari*. We are not allowed to remove our footwear until the end of the pilgrimage.

fabric. I did not care to think the skirt would be ruined, but I was concerned about having to wear wet and cold clothes.

The rain intensified at midnight, and I felt and heard the heavy drops on my head when they hit the blue tarp. I felt the thunder hitting the ground and sometimes saw the lightening. And as always in these harsh moments of fieldwork, I asked myself: “Why am I doing this?” I did not have to go to a pilgrimage. I did not have to camp nor sleep on the ground with the family on top of the hill. I did not have to be cold all night with half of my body getting wet. I did not have to risk my body for my fieldwork. But I knew that I could not have experienced the power of the land on my body in any other way. I could not have read about this in the library and talk about the connection between land and body. I was very scared, intimidated, frustrated, and sometimes angry but mostly cold, very cold. Later, when I came back from the field, I read the following passage in the book *Native Science* by Gregory Cajete and found this quote as an opening of Chapter Six “A Sense of Place” and clearly understood:

Land, then is not merely soil; it is the foundation of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals... An ethic to supplement and guides economic relation to land presuppose the existence of some mental image of land as a biotic mechanism. We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.⁹²

On that night on top of the hill, I saw, felt, understood, loved, and had faith in the land I was walking on. Mainly faith, that the intensity of the storm that night would allow us to continue our pilgrimage or even survive. But we did, and this happened because we respected the desire of the rain to keep us in one place, we made kinship, and we were community. I was surrounded by people letting me lean my body against theirs. I was grateful.

Poema III

⁹² Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*.

Coamil de los pueblos Originarios del Gran Nayar.

Zitakua

Xitaima del coamil

Que crece con la milpa del Maíz

Pueblo que nutre con su cultura de raíz.

Zitakua

K+p+ri o K+paima del maíz

Que conecta manos creadoras

Como Yuri'ikú en el coamil.

Xitakwa ta'iyari

Mana teputa y+y+ra

Waxa hepa+

H+ritsie kawet+

Zitakua de nuestro corazón

Donde seguiremos creciendo

Como las milpas en su coamil.

-Summer 2019

Written by *Proyecto Taniuki*

CHAPTER THREE: TATÉI NIWETSIKA METÁ 'IKWARIKA

In 2018, I moved to Tepic to conduct ethnographic fieldwork with urban Wixárika with my daughter Ixchel. When the Rivera family announced the dates for one of the major ceremonies within the *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) in April 2019, I decided to take Ixchel back to the United States, so she could stay with relatives. I had made that decision so I would feel more confident knowing she was on vacation and not in ceremony. Since everyone in the community undergoes long periods of fasting, praying overnight, and “working” for the safe return of the pilgrims.⁹³ I had sought to protect Ixchel in case she could not last the two weeks of offering “ourselves.” So, I traveled to the United States, specifically to Phoenix to visit relatives and ask my sister to host Ixchel for a couple of weeks. I left my five-year-old daughter with her aunty and returned to Tepic; for two weeks, I participated in intense pilgrimages across Wixárika cosmogeography to conduct ethnographic fieldwork and experience the meaning of offerings. I remember a vivid scene in the airport: I was walking away, and I was looking at Ixchel when she said goodbye with happiness in her face. On the other side of the airport, though, I was heartbroken. I had told her before I walked away to be brave, but deep inside I was actually telling myself to be brave.

During the trip, I constantly remembered my words, as my own way to remember the great sacrifice that we were all making to be in ceremony. I spent two weeks fasting, in sleep deprivation, praying, and thinking about my loved ones. Ixchel was always in my mind—sometimes, I wondered why I was far away, and I questioned my decision of doing fieldwork alone. In the first week, when some children came along with the adults, I felt a little sadness in

⁹³ “Working” refers to the action of using one’s abilities and power to make something happen, in this case the work is directed toward a safe return. In contrast to “prayers,” people have to work for a specific event or cause to take place or action safe. The word in Wixárika translates as *Xeneyu nenewiet+* (We pray).

not seeing my own child. However, I found solace in seeing them play and knowing my daughter was at home visiting her aunty. In that moment of joy and relief, I hoped that in the future Ixchel could come with me.

We left the community early in the morning and proceeded to drive about eight hours. When we arrived at the town of Huaynamota, in El Gran Nayar we went to a relative's house to rest. Later, we all slept and woke up early to visit the *Tamatsika* ("Elder Brother," "Cristo de Huaynamota," or "Jesuscristo"). In the morning, when we finally decided to enter the church, everyone in the Rivera family lined up to approach Tamatsika; I stood in line with everyone else. However, I knew I had to approach Him on my knees like I had made the promise the previous year. Almost one hour passed and we moved very slowly. I was still in line on my feet. I felt uncomfortable and desperate, not for waiting to stand up, but for not coming to visit the Saint as I promised the year before. Suddenly, I told my *comadre* ("co-parent") Felipa that I wanted to kneel and walk on my knees to approach the Saint, and she followed me to reenter the church.

We returned to the entrance of the church and I was carrying my backpack with all my belongings, including my laptop and some documents I had brought Tamatsika. My *comadre* Felipa held my left arm and helped me walk on my knees to the stairs. Before I approached the stairway, a woman with a child came with a blanket. While the kid laid the blanket on the floor, the lady grabbed my right arm and helped me walk on my knees to the altar with Felipa. Tamatsika was inside the church close to the main altar. This year, I did not feel much pain because the women helped me crawl faster by placing blankets on the hot burning floor. When I saw Him, he looked me in the eye—immediately, I felt a sense of relief. I felt very emotional. I could not help but cry and feel excitement, relief, and euphoria. When I finally made it to his feet, I thanked Him for a great year, for the health of my loved ones, for the strength and the

ability to do my work, and for allowing me to come back to visit Him. As a small offering, I placed my laptop and my documents on his feet, and I asked him to continue helping me in my path. Later, I stood up and walk out the church. Outside, Audencio waited for us and I embraced him in celebration. Audencio told me: “When you come with the intentions of offering something to Tamatsika, you do it regardless of other things, if you feel like you had to walk on your knees to greet him, that’s what you needed to do.”

Later, we left to the ceremonial circle we had created in the patio of the church and we began the vigil. Papá Costo, the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”), had brought a calf to offer as a form of exchange. We gathered around the Fire, outside the Catholic Church and we all listened to the *mara’akame*’s chants. Later, after midnight, we all walked to say goodbye to *Tamatsika* (“Elder Brother,” “Cristo de Huaynamota” or “Jesus Cristo”), now he was outside the church in the patio. We held a rope, which was tied to the calf, and the *mara’akame* gave us his blessings. All this happened while someone sacrificed the calf by killing it and the rest of us stood in front of the Saint: Papá Costo held his *muwieri* (“feather”) and he cleansed our body, leaving our energy and taking the Saint’s energy. After we made offerings, we left the church. A man from the community of Huaynamota came and he slaughtered the calf; they later shared with everyone in the community. Finally, we drove eight hours from la Sierra del Nayar to Aguapán, and later to the ranch in El Ejido Aguacate to find the rest of the family waiting at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”).

Toward the middle of the trip, on our way to the next pilgrimage in May 2019, I reminisced about my participation in this year’s pilgrimage. In addition to being present for research, sometime in 2012 I had made a commitment to *Tatewari* (“Our Grandfather Fire”) to follow this exact path. I promised to bring my children to Him when I had the blessing of

conceiving. Yet my body was resisting—a medical condition prevented me from conceiving. My body registered high levels of prolactin.⁹⁴ The doctor’s diagnosis: Micro adenoma in the pituitary gland, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), and insulin resistance, and pre-diabetic. I had two MRIs within a year to monitor the growth of the adenoma, and I began taking prescribed medications to 1) stop the growth of the adenoma, and 2) reduce the production of insulin in my body. At the same time, I began part of my research and my visits to Wixárika families. I began ceremony and using traditional medicine to cure my illnesses. First, these approaches helped address my emotional illnesses that had caused my physical body to be sick, and later, they relieved the illnesses of my body. In June 2013, when I was in the field, I discovered I was pregnant. I returned to the United States uncertain about everything except for the fact that I would become a mother—I would devote my studies to understanding motherhood and how migrant Indigenous women make kinship with ancestors. Since then, my fieldwork and personal endeavors have been interconnected with how I 1) rebuild relationships with my own family, 2) learn from my Wixárika family key aspects of motherhood and kinship, and 3) exercise this kinship through my relations with ancestors.

Women’s Health in the Rivera Family

When I talk about my experiences with women in the community, some can relate to their own experiences and see fertility matters as relevant and important topics to discuss in only women’s spaces. Women’s health in the Rivera Family was always discussed in private spaces and when someone else outside the family brought up the topic. In conversations, I usually heard women discussing how some women in the Rivera family cannot conceive because they have left

⁹⁴ The prolactin is a hormone that regulates the production of milk during pregnancy. In elevated amounts in the human body, it can cause hypogonadism, anovulatory infertility, and amenorrhea, among other symptoms.

their ceremonial life and their responsibilities with the ancestors. I have seen many women come to Papá Costo and tell him about their desires to become mothers. Many of the women know that infertility in women comes from levels of interaction in ceremonial spaces, specifically with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”). Angelica, twenty-five years old and mother of Evelyn (three years old) told me in one conversation over the Spring in 2019 that she could not conceive because she left the community to marry Noe, a non-Wixárika man from Morelos, Mexico. They tried conceiving for years and when they came back from Morelos, Papá Costo helped them. Now they have a beautiful daughter and come to ceremony every year. Carla, another 25-year-old and mother of Cristóbal (four years old) was in a similar situation. She began seeing Papá Costo for fertility reasons. Although she is married to a Wixárika man, they did not participate in ceremony. After three sessions with Papá Costo, she got pregnant within a year. Now Carla and her son participate in most of the ceremonies. Last year, a non-Wixárika couple from the US came to the ranch to ask Papá Costo for help. A year later, through the social networks we found out that the couple had a baby. Papá Costo’s knowledge on matters of fertility are due to his connections to a place *Kaka+yarita* (“Place of an Elder Ancestor”), a spring in the desert where Papá Costo’s mother had petitioned the ancestors for the gift of fertility.⁹⁵ After Papá Costo was born, he learned how to hold kinship relations with the *Kaka+yarita* and he continues to the present day.

In my own quest for a healthy body and understanding of sickness within Wixárika frameworks, in this chapter I discuss urban Wixárika notions of a healthy body. I exemplify how people maintain wellness, and I introduce Wixárika concepts of the body in relation with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn” or “Native Corn”). Then, I discuss how Wixárika speakers

⁹⁵ Personal conversation with Mamachalia and Felipa, May 2019.

understand health and sickness, as well as how Traditional Knowledge relates to the science of growing Native seeds. Finally, I theorize how metaphors in Wixárika speech connect the human body with the body of Corn in Wixárika ways of knowing. I conclude this chapter with a self-reflection on my own experience on the meaning of “making kinships” with the land to maintain a healthy body.

To maintain balance in many Mesoamerican societies, healing involved the purification of both the physical body and the metaphysical body. In Friar Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún explores early colonial medical practices including conceptions of health and disease. Using European medical notions, the friar explains the different ideas regarding epidemics and the cause of illness during colonial times.⁹⁶ In Nahua worldview, cleansing included the purification of the physical body with water and herb brooms. In Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex Book 2*, Nahuatl writers described the importance of cleansing the body with brooms made of herbs to clear the body of negative energies. Nahuatl-speaking communities purified the corporeal and the ethereal body of the individual using water in healing ceremonies.⁹⁷ Additionally, in the “Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España,” an ethnographic account from 1629, Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón describes early people and corn practices related to healing. The six treatises offer detailed reports from various Native perspectives on cosmology, including spells related to cultivation, divinity practices, and healing practices.

Wixárika Notions of Health

⁹⁶ Bernardino De Sahagun, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things in New Spain*, Translated from Aztec into English, within notes and Illustrations by Arthur J. De Anderson, Charles E. Dibble (1950).

⁹⁷ Rebecca Dufendach, “Nahua and Spanish Concepts of Health and Disease in Colonial Mexico, 1519–1615,” PhD diss., UCLA, (2017).

In Wixárika notions of health, a healthy body results from the balance of all the components of the body and interaction with ancestors. Wixárika conceive health as the balance of the *'iyari* (“cognitive/emotional”), *nierika* (“rational/consciousness”), *k+p+ri* (“soul” or “spirit”), *namá* (“desires/passions”), and *tukari* (“Our life”).⁹⁸ When a person is well, a Wixárika speaker advises them to be “*Aix+ ne p+reu 'erie,*” or “*estar sano* (“to be healthy”)” and signifies that the body is in a state of balance in which the *'iyari*, *nierika*, *k+p+ri*, *namá*, and *tukari* are all in balance. Felipa Rivera explained that when she is healthy she feels “happy, with energy to work and freedom, without preoccupations.”⁹⁹ In her explanation of health, Felipa mentions the ability to work and perform all daily responsibilities by using all the faculties of her body and the emotional states of the mind. In Felipa envisions a healthy body by interconnecting the physical and emotional aspects of her corporal. Most often, Wixárika in the state of wellness balance follow the *Tayeiyari* (“Wixárika path”). In many of my conversations regarding health, many women in the Rivera family speak about the levels of family interaction in ceremony. Women who do not attend ceremonies throughout the year get sick more often. For instance, Rosaria, one of Mamachali’s daughters, does not participate in any ceremony. Felipa, Lola, and Julia (the other daughters) see all of Rosaria’s illness related to the lack of interaction with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”).

A person gets sick once the corporeal body loses the balance of one of its components (*'iyari*, *nierika*, *k+p+ri*, *namá*, and *tukari*) or when outside forces enter the body. Wixárika speakers say: “*Nep+reu kuye* (“feeling sick”)”. In her doctoral dissertation, *Males “normales” y*

⁹⁸ José Luis Vásquez Castellanos, “Práctica Médica Tradicional entre Indígenas de la Sierra Madre Occidental: Los Huicholes,” in *Prácticas antropológicas en México*, ed. Menéndez L. Eduardo and García de Alba Javier (Guadalajara, Jal, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara-CIESAS, 1992), 89–104.

⁹⁹ Recorded interview May 30, 2019.

males “puestos” del pueblo Wixárika: un análisis cognoscitivo, author Karina Ivett Verdín Amaro discusses Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor to understand Wixárika’s words related to diseases. The author divides the study into two types of diseases: the first set classifies diseases for Wixárika and non-Wixárika; additionally, the second set of diseases occur only among Wixárika families. In general terms, names of diseases are composed of two nouns—one designates the body part and the other indicates the type of pain.¹⁰⁰ In the realm of Wixárika illness, the words “*mal puesto*” (“a disease placed”) are derived from the linguistic particles of a noun plus a suffix.¹⁰¹ However, the name of illnesses in the Wixárika language pertain to metonymies. Speakers associate one concept in terms of another concept.¹⁰² In the illnesses related to Our Mother Corn, *ikúxiya*, or “*Mal del Maíz* (“Corn Diseases”),” *Ikú* translates as “Corn” and *-xiya* is the suffix for “sacred” which includes ancestors, old persons, or denotes an honorific, respectful person.¹⁰³ *Iku-xiya* literally means the “disease placed by Ancestor Corn,” but people understand that this type of diseases as “Corn diseases.” This disease is a “*mal puesto* (“a disease placed”).” Wixárika people get this type of diseases because their lack of participation in ceremonies or pilgrimages. Verdín Amaro analyzes the linguistic formation of the meaning “Corn Disease,” based solely on the analysis of the word. *Ikúxiya*, or “*Mal del Maíz* (“Corn Diseases”),” results from the imbalance in the body of the different components and improperly following protocols of interaction with Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma (“Elder Ancestors”).

¹⁰⁰ Karina Ivett Verdín Amaro, “Males ‘normales’ y males ‘puestos’ del pueblo Wixárika: un análisis cognoscitivo,” PhD diss. (2012), 171.

¹⁰¹ Verdín Amaro, “Males ‘normales’ y males ‘puestos’ del pueblo Wixárika,” 173.

¹⁰² Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*; Verdín Amaro, “Males ‘normales’ y males ‘puestos’ del pueblo Wixárika.”

¹⁰³ Verdín Amaro, “Males ‘normales’ y males ‘puestos’ del pueblo Wixárika,” 117.

When Felipa Rivera explained ideas of sickness in relation to Our Mother Corn, she explained: “Kwiniya metsiukaxei/*Que el Maíz llegó a ti* (“That Corn comes to you”)” and “Ikuxiya metsikuwiya metá ‘ayuriepa metseyekwine/*Maíz llega a ti y pega dolor en la panza* (“Corn comes to you and you get pain in the belly”).” She identifies two names for diseases related to Corn: 1) “*Ikúxieni* and 2) *matsi tawait+ani*. Felipa asserts that during ceremonies, the energy of Our Mother Corn resides inside the *Xiriki* (“Shrine for ‘Our Mother Corn’”). When the family placed the seeds for blessings before the ceremony of cultivation, they placed the energy of all the seeds with the *mara’kame* chants. Members of the Rivera family received their own *Teiyari* (“Center of the field’s seeds,” “Native seeds for cultivation,” or “Heart of Our Mother Corn”) and they are responsible for cultivating each year using the seeds. In the Spring of 2019, during the *Hiwatsixa* (“Doll’s Ceremony”), in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), first the adults placed all the seeds in the *Xiriki* inside bandanas and made a doll with the dried *Ikú* (“Corn cobs”). The women placed all the food offerings and *xukuri* (“Ceremonial gourd”). The rest of the family entered the shrine to place candles, cookies, *pilonzillo*, and chocolate in all of the *xukuri*.

The following day, in the morning, the children wake up early to place the offerings to *Tatéi Yurienaka* (“Our Mother Earth”) on the ground of the patio. The men in the Rivera family cut sticks of wood—each piece signals the five cardinal points in *Wixárika* cosmogeography. The offerings include fruit, deer stew, chicken stew, tamales, and *Nawá* (“fermented Corn drink”). Each of us placed a plate and a cup with the food and drinks. Later, we bring the *xukuri* with the candles inside and began securing candles with yarn from the sticks. Finally, one by one, the men in the Rivera family selected participants to eat and drink from a plate of food and *nawá* on the ground. At night, the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) chants five long songs

and everyone dances with the doll. Felipa explained that during the ceremony, when someone in the family is not present to make the offerings, Our Mother Corn enters the body. Felipa asserts that only the ones who received *Yuri'Ikú* (“True Corn”) in the past and did not plant the *Teiyari* (“Center of the field, “Seeds for cultivation,” or “Heart of Our Mother Corn”) become ill with this disease. For instance, I was present in the ceremony, and *even* when I participate in the cultivation, my godparents had not given me any *Teiyari* to cultivate Our Mother Corn. Mamachali grants the *Teiyari* once she dreams about certain members of the family receiving the seeds. Although Felipa has her own *Teyairi* and she cultivates Corn with her family, for the past two years, she has not been able to maintain her field.

For the Rivera family, Our Mother Corn’s role extends beyond the culinary arts or agricultural practices; Our Mother Corn takes the role of an agent of health with the power to keep people well. To maintain a healthy relationship with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”), the Rivera family follows relational protocols—to provide offering or participate in ceremony—to maintain the health of the family. As Felipa describes, families attend ceremony to first make offerings, and later to ask permission to cultivate the land and participate in the agricultural exchange. When a family member does not follow relational protocols properly, however, *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* possess the ability to enter the body of human persons and make them sick.

Wixárika Healing Traditions

The performance of a communal healing session taught us that as a collective, we have the power and responsibility to help someone recover the balance of their body. For example, in one of the pilgrimages to a *Kaka+yarita* (“Place of Elder Ancestor”), a member of the pilgrimage drank too much water from the ancestral well. He was sick for the following five

days. When he finally could not continue the pilgrimage, he decided to share the news of his illness with the group, and everyone in the group performed a healing session. Additionally, I prepared rice water with cinnamon for his diarrhea and vomit.¹⁰⁴ After the healing session, he drank the rice and cinnamon infusion and rested, and eventually the person became better. Usually when someone comes to the ranch in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) for a healing session, the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) will bring a chair out to the patio and treat the patient in front of the *Tatewari* (“Grand Father Fire”) or stay inside the *Xiriki* (“Shrine for ‘Our Mother Corn’”) in front of the altar. Moreover, the incident taught me the danger of taking anything more than absolutely necessary during pilgrimages. Taking someone, as discussed by Maestro Tutupika Carrillo de la Cruz in an interview, can result in dangerous events because one takes the energies without proper exchange protocols. Wixárika families understand the effectiveness of following the protocols of relationality and principles of reciprocity because engaging and encountering ancestors has an impact on the body of people. In short, the land has an effect on people’s bodies. Moreover, Our Mother Corn affects each of us in a positive or negative way.

In healing traditions, the performances of a healing session involves the work of a healer and a patient. Usually, the patient makes an exchange for the services. In *Sanapia: Comanche Medicine Woman*, David E. Jones explains how Sanapia trained to become a healer. Sanapia uses her knowledge to cure illnesses in people. Many medicine men and women such as Senapia use the knowledge they acquired in training, ceremony, dreams, and other mediums to take the illness out of the body of the sick person. The medicine man/woman effectively cure the illness

¹⁰⁴ Rice water with cinnamon is a very common recipe in my family to cure diarrhea and vomit my aunt Guillermina taught me how to prepare this when I was young and later when I got married I began using it in my family when Ixchel and Josh became sick of the stomach.

in people because they use techniques that treat the body in a holistic approach. In Wixárika healing practices, healers or *mara'akate* (pl.) (“medicine man/woman”) undergo a training that takes several years. In this training, *mara'akate* visit places to gain the knowledge from *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestor”). For instance, Papá Costo trained as a teenager and over time, he gained some gifts to cure people. One of his major gifts is the ability to chant during ceremonies to begin communication with ancestors. Also, he has the ability to cure diseases pertaining to Corn and other entities. To cure an illness pertaining to Our Mother Corn, the *mara'akame* usually prescribes the immediate interaction between Corn persons and human persons in the Cornfield. When Mamachali got sick from not leaving offerings after the harvesting ceremony in 2018, Papá Costo performed a healing session.¹⁰⁵ However, he was unable to find a treatment and they both left to see another *mara'akame*. The other *mara'akame* advised to visit some places to deliver offerings. They both went to deliver offerings and Mamachali did not feel sick anymore.

In March 5, 2019 Mamachali and Papá Costo asked me to give them a ride to the ceremonial center in *Tatéi Haramaratsie* (“Our Grand Mother Pacific Ocean”). I immediately agreed and the following morning my family (husband and daughter), the two elders, and myself left *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) to visit Haramaratsie and deliver offerings. These offerings would help Mamachali in her recovery. We first drove about forty-five minutes to San Blas and later took a boat to the island. Then, we walked about fifteen minutes to the ceremonial shrine. While we all walked in silence and in single-file line, Papá Costo was in the front performing some rituals. We approached the ceremonial place and Mamachali left the offerings including

¹⁰⁵ She was experiencing pain in the abdomen, blurry vision, and dizziness. The Doctor at the local pharmacy prescribed multivitamins and protein shake to boost her immune system. However, the treatment failed to bring her health back.

Nawá (“Corn-fermented drink”), tamales, candles, and water with chocolate. We all used our feathers to exchange our bodily energy. Mamachali told me to cleanse my family and left some of the offerings. Afterward, we all walked to the beach and only the elders bathed in the Ocean water. This performance of a ritual that involve the presence of *Haramara* benefited Mamachali’s health. As Mamachali, many other members at Y+rata benefit from the *mara’akame*’s ability to cure the body and the ability to enter in communication with Elder ancestor by delivering offerings and following relational protocols. Thus, many Wixárika families follow relational protocols in agriculture and ceremonies to maintain wellness.

The practitioners of traditional medicine not only use their knowledge of the body to cure the illness, but their knowledge to access information from other realms to treat the patient. Additionally, many medicine men and women use the knowledge of the ancestors and the realm of dreams to diagnose, treat, and cure the illnesses in the body. In Wixárika practices, the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) sees the diseases and finds treatment in dreams or by using the *muwieri* (“feather”). In the *Wonderous Healing: Shamanism, Human Evolution and the Origin of Religion*, James McClenon shows how “spiritual healing” involves a holistic approach to the body. Healers use supernatural forces to access information and perform healing sessions. McClenon claims that some people benefit from “spiritual healing” more than others (4). Within the Rivera family, however, unless family members decide not to follow the Wixárika path, healing through the use of shamanistic practices becomes the most effective treatment when family members suffer from diseases, especially those diseases known to be caused by ancestors due to the lack of interaction in ceremonial spaces.

Many Wixárika speakers explain wellness and sickness through the use of metaphoric language. For instance, Juan Aurelio, Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit’s Instructor, opened a

presentation by describing how people interconnect with the environment through the constant exchange of offerings. Later in his talk, Juan used the metaphor of growth of the *Waxa* (“Corn stalk”) to compare with the growth of children through the ceremonial path of five years: “*Como crecen las Milpas* (“how the Cornstalks grow”).”¹⁰⁶ In his comparison to the Cornstalks, Juan expresses a metaphor that relates Corn persons with human persons in relation to development. Many Wixárika families conceive of the body of Corn as analogous to the human body. When a Wixárika person describes the growth of Our Mother Corn, they compare her to the growth of humans. Mara’akame (“medicine man/woman”) Chabelo, from Santa María del Oro, once explained to me that we know we are human because we have ten fingers and ten toes, for a total of twenty. In turn, *xetewiyari* (in Wixárika) makes a whole person (*xe* = One + *tewayari* = person). He said that for *xetewiyari*, twenty is the maximum number of ear shoots in a Corn stalk. In this logic, humans have twenty fingers and toes, just as the *milpa* has twenty ear shoots. Because Corn has ontological status in the community, metaphors that convey images of the body of Corn persons link to the development of the human body.

Epistemologically, Wixárika children grow up knowing that *Yuri’Ikú* (“True Corn”) is a plant person. When they interact with Yuri’Ikú in multiple spaces such as in ceremony, the field, or the kitchen, they treat Corn as a person by feeding the seeds of Corn with foods. Corn as a metaphor of life provides a myriad of lexicon that become personal names to safeguard Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Many personal names in Wixárika emerged from the interaction between Corn and people in the present, the past, or in the dreams of people. For instance, the emergence and growth, as two important stages of Corn become metaphors in personal names. Mamachali shared with me that when she dreams about the name of a newborn,

¹⁰⁶ Recorded talk June 4, 2019.

she is envisioning the interactions between herself and the plant. When she dreams with the name *Tura* (“sound”), she sees the Cornfield and the clouds in the sky. Then she hears the sound “Turararara” that the clouds make when the rain is about to come. Finally, she assigns the name to the newborn when she wakes up. Although the name *Tura* is not directly related to Corn or any growth of the plants, the word is an onomatopoeia in the Wixárika language and denotes the interaction between natural forces: the rainy season and the effects of the rain in the Cornfield.¹⁰⁷

In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson propose that humans constructed thought through the use of metaphors. Conceptual metaphors, or words that stem from concepts in the English language, shape perception and ultimately worldview. Through linguistic analysis, Lakoff and Johnson show how our “conceptual system is metaphorical in nature.” We understand the world around us through the use of metaphors when we associate experiences using other terms. Lakoff and Johnson suggest that because concepts are understood in terms of other concepts in this “conceptual system,” the experiences of people significantly shape their understanding of the world.¹⁰⁸

As Lakoff and Johnson posit, metaphors are rooted in individual’s physical and cultural experiences. Wixárika and their interaction with Corn relatives demonstrate how laborers in the fields and their cultural experiences have incorporated many metaphors into the Wixárika lexicon in Traditional Ecological Knowledge. In particular, some of the TEK has encapsulated personal names. When a *Teukari* (“Grandparent with the ability of dreaming”) names a baby with a Corn name, they are transmitting a concept into the world view of the grandchildren, in this case the concept of personhood of Corn and how Corn and the specific Corn stage become

¹⁰⁷ Recorded interview May 30, 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4–5.

important into the life of the children. Thus, scientific knowledge of the growth of Corn is encapsulated in the metaphorical language in personal names.

From the perspective of science, the growth of Corn undergoes different stages. Each stage has a proper name in Wixárika. In the Webpage “Corn Growth & Development” from the Department of Agronomy at Kansas State University, there are groups and their respective stages. I correlated the table from the website with the stages in Wixárika to show how the personal name relates with the scientific growth of the plant.

Table 2: Stages in Wixárika

Vegetative Stages	Reproductive Stages
Emergence (Neika)	Silking (<i>K+paima</i>)
Fist Leaf (<i>Y+ra</i>)	Blister (<i>Xitaima, Zitaima</i>)
Second leaf (Weleme)	Milk (<i>Saulima, Sutuli</i>)
*	Dough (<i>Sawima</i>)
Sixth Leaf (Samuama)	Dent (<i>Xaureme, Saweleme</i>)
Tenth Leaf (<i>Y+ra</i>)	Black layer (Physiological Maturity) (<i>Xaureme, Mulame, Kulame</i>)
*	
V (n) nth Leaf	
VT Tassel (Tsakuluma, M+ayama, Tukima)	

Some of the corn stages above correspond to Wixárika personal names and the properties of the plant. When the plant is in the Emergence Stage, Wixárika refer to *Neika* (“To be born”). In the leaf stage *Y+ra* (“To grow”), *Teukari* (“Grandparent with the ability to dream”) Mamachali explains that those stages show the development of the body. These names demonstrate the mothers’ wishes for their children to be born and grow like the *Waxa* (“Cornstalk”). When Mama Chali, as the Teukari of the family, dreams about this name, she dreams the *Waxa* and sees the *Waxata* (“Place of the Corn,” “Cornfield”) with green *Waxa* growing. She knows that this stage of the growth of *Waxa* is one of the most important because the seed will germinate and then grow and develop. When she sees in her dream a *Waxa* with ear shoots, she names the baby *Weleme* (“When the ear shoots grow”), and when she sees the *Waxa* with four ear shoots, she then names the baby “Samuama.”¹⁰⁹ The ear shoots refer to the body as many mothers think about the growth of Corn and the growth of their children in size.

Weriya K+paima

When the silk of the Corn is visible as *K+paima* (“Silking”), each of the silks will correspond to a grain in the Corn cob. This is a female principle of fertility and the name contains ontological connotations. The silk relates to the *K+p+ri* (“soul” or “energy”) in the human body. The *K+p+ri* connects the human body to the ancestors in each direction of the Wixárika Tsik+li. My comadre Felipa, Mama Chali, and Maestro Dagoberto noted the table does not show a picture of when the tassel grows in the *Waxa* (“Cornstalk”). They noted that while the website shows pictures of the silking stage, the pictures do not show the tassel fully grown. In a personal conversation, agriculturist of Native Seeds Gilberto González Rodríguez explained how the tassel grows at the same time as the silk. The tassel is the male part of the plant (“pistil”), and

¹⁰⁹ Interview May 30, 2019.

the silk is the female (“stamen”). When the tassel creates the pollen, the pollen falls from the tassel or wind and insects carry the pollen to the silk or the neighbor’s silk Cornstalks. Auto-pollination and cross-pollination occurs. Although the plants can auto-pollinate, the cross-pollination occurs more commonly, confirming the fact that corn stalks need to grow around other plants to have more chances of producing corn.

The stage that Gilberto González Rodríguez describes as pollination is what Mamachali describes as the stage of *Tukima* (“when the yellow pollen comes out”). The text next to the picture explains the process and how this stage in the vegetative process occurs—when the tassel extends from the Cornstalk:

This stage occurs when the tassel is completely extended, and silks are not yet visible. This stage also signifies the amount of vegetative growth that will occur on this plant, as all leaves that will be grown on the plant are now visible. The tassel will usually be visible for 2–3 days prior to the silk emergence, depending on the hybrid and environmental conditions. Pollen shed will now occur from 2–3 week. The plant is most vulnerable to hail damage at this period due to the tassel being completely exposed and possibly destroyed if hail were to occur.¹¹⁰

The tassel in the corn stalk is an important part of the body of corn since this stage changes the plant from the vegetative stage to the reproductive stage. The tassel contains the pollen that eventually will shed from the plant to the silk. The silk will receive the pollen for the pollination process. In Wixárika, this stage emerges as the name *Tsakuluma* (“To spike”) and *Tukima* (“Pollen is now visible”). In the cycle of Our Mother Corn, families take their *xukuri* (“ceremonial gourd”) and place them under the *Teiyari* (“Center of the field,” “Seeds for cultivation,” or “Heart of Our Mother Corn”) to receive pollen from the plants. Later, the *mara’ama* uses the pollen to mark each participant of the family during ceremonies.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/extension/crop-production/corn/corn-growth-and-development.html>

When the plant is in the Blister Reproductive Stage, the name assigned to girls are *Xitaima* or *Zitaima* (“Sprout”). Later, when the Corn cob grows and has a soft consistency or in the Milk Stage, Mamachali assigns the names of *Saulima* or *Sutuli* (“Dried Corn”). At a later stage, when the Corn is dried and ready to become seeds, the plant moves to the Dough stage and Mamachali assigns the Wixárika names *Sawima* (“When the Corn silk is dried”). Finally, when the Our Mother Corn is in the last stage and it reaches the Physiological Maturity or “Dent” the names are *Xaureme*, *Saweleme* (“Corn is hard”). In Wixárika, the cycle of Our Mother Corn ends as the community, usually men, harvest the field and cut down the dried Cornstalks. In this case, when a *Teukari* (“Grandfather with dreaming abilities”) dreams about a male harvesting Corn, she or he assigns the names *Mulame*, or *Kulame* (“pizacar el cañajote/harvest the dried Cornstalks”).

The data presented above shows how Wixárika names closely relate to stages of growth of Corn from a scientific point of view. The interaction between human persons and Corn persons since their first encounter (domestication of the plant or genealogy of Corn) led many Wixárika speakers to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into a system that maintains information in personal names. Specifically, the names relate to principles of growth, health, fertility, and body development (maturity) that each describe the human body and the conception of the body in Wixárika epistemology. The names appear in the Wixárika language as metaphors that remind families about interactional protocols, stages of Corn, responsibilities with Our Mother Corn, science of Our Mother Corn, and more.

Metaphorical language in Wixárika is more than poetic language or figurative language that brings beauty to the lexicon of Wixárika speakers. Metaphors in Wixárika are scientific information encoded in personal names that provide speakers with the linguistic resources to

remember ontological connections with ancestors, agricultural principles, and human conditions related to Corn persons and human persons. Additionally, people use metaphors to find meaning and make sense of experiences in a concrete and effective way. In the book *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*, Fernandez's theory of tropes posits that multilingual communities transmit knowledge without being fluent in one language alone. In multilingual communities, metaphors serve the purpose of translating and transplanting worldviews in a selective vocabulary in a pragmatic way. Urban Wixárika speakers utilize names related to Our Mother Corn ("Native Corn") to maintain Traditional Ecological Knowledge with younger generations. These names provide information that denote ontological relations with *Kaka+yarirte/Kaka+ma* ("Elder Ancestors") and concepts of the body such as fertility or human development. Most importantly, personal names within Wixárika multilingual families are resources to maintain language and worldview in conceptual system. As Fernandez (1991) posits, metaphors serve the purpose in filling in the "lexical gaps" to make sense of personal experience (6). Wixárika metaphoric language stems from the experiences and interaction of people and the environment. Specifically, this centers the experiences from Our Mother Corn through the cycle and development of human-plant interactions.

The Use of Metaphors in Personal Names

Wixárika speakers retain information to pass down to future generations through the use of metaphors in personal names. While Wixárika speakers use metaphors to adapt, reinforce, and proliferate cultural models, Wixárika multilingual communities use metaphors to maintain their heritage language. Due to the metaphorical nature of Wixárika personal names, names retain selective linguistic information. In the case of multilingual communities, metaphors pack information. Wixárika speakers, personal names are linguistic resources that encode and

encapsulate Traditional Ecological Knowledge, relationality protocols, ontological information. Similarly, to metaphors in Western Apache, metaphors provide meaning to speakers for moral functions. In Western Apache, place-names are iconically descriptive and encapsulate special-temporal meaning related to moral behavior. When a community member acts improperly in Apache view, other speakers use metaphors in the Indigenous language by naming the place to convey a cultural critique about the behavior.¹¹¹ In contrast, Wixárika metaphors in personal names remind speakers of the connection and relatedness with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). The cultural understanding of Corn and the ontological status of Corn within Wixárika-speaking families make the use of metaphors in fulfilling the goals of transmitting particular cultural, ecological, and epistemological knowledge. Therefore, metaphors in Wixárika names are tools that help preserve knowledge among multilingual communities in which two or more languages are necessary to communicate. In both communities, Apache speakers and Wixárika speakers need to know the cultural system to understand the metaphors and its meaning. Specifically, in Wixárika, speakers need to know metaphors and cultivation processes to fully understand its meaning in relation to Our Mother Corn. Thus, Wixárika multilingual families participate in the cultivation and ceremonial life of the community to learn metaphors related to Our Mother Corn.

Personal names related to Our Mother Corn serve as linguistic resources to maintain and preserve Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The purpose of Corn metaphors is to give meaning to inter-species interactions and to convert concepts into practical words. Personal names in the form of two-syllable words reveal much information about the environment. For example, names relating to Our Mother Corn’s cycle contain information about each stage of development. This

¹¹¹ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 127.

valuable insight reminds community members about the importance of knowing how to grow Our Mother Corn within the family. In the metaphors of personal names, Wixárika speakers find a way to maintain Traditional Ecological Knowledge and principles of health. The use of metaphors in bilingual or multilingual communities serves the purpose of retaining and maintaining specific cultural knowledge in key words that give speakers images or concepts to associate with other aspects of life, such as wellness.

In the Rivera family, many members of the community talk about wellness and sickness in relation to Our Mother Corn. Many families rely on the cultivation of Corn to strengthen their connection with the Corn entities who will provide the blessings to continue performing their everyday activities in wellness. Families often talk about members of their community getting sick when they stop harvesting Corn. During the cultivation of Corn, the labor of men and women contributes to the overall reproduction of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. In each ceremony, the family learns about their responsibilities to the cultivation of Corn for consumption. Corn also provides individuals with the vitality to maintain the physical and metaphysical balance of the entire body. Additionally, Our Mother Corn during cultivation gives many Wixárika the Traditional Ecological Knowledge for their metaphorical naming system. Our Mother Corn is central to keeping a healthy body and maintaining wellness within the Rivera family.

Alongside Traditional Ecological knowledge, Our Mother Corn offers a way to connect with all other ancestors through the cultivation of the land and elaborate ceremonies devoted *Tatéi Yuriénaka* (“Mother Earth”). The Rivera family cultivates Native seeds to maintain a cycle of ceremonies. In the cycle of ceremonies, families reconnect with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”) to avoid sickness. In Wixárika’s perspective, wellness and sickness arrive

from unbalances of the body and energies from *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma*. In other words, the lack of ceremony and interaction with ancestors causes unbalance in the body. During ceremony, though, the interaction between Corn persons and human persons restore balance to the body.

When *Teukari* (“grandparent with the ability of dreaming”) assigns names related to Corn, they attach ontological connections between ancestors and the children. The names denote growth of the body, fertility, and human development stages. In multilingual communities of Wixárika speakers in Tepic, the names encode Traditional Ecological Knowledge that children inherit. Wixárika personal names are more than a metaphoric language; they are a linguistic resource to maintain ancestral knowledge. Additionally, in the Wixárika naming system, personal names become indexical of the relationship between *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”) and people. Placing Our Mother Corn at the center of Wixárika health offers a framework to conceive wellness and sickness from a holistic perspective, in which plants such as Our Mother Corn are crucial for the health of Native communities. Additionally, Indigenous health practitioners conceive of ancestors such as *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and other *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* as important for the health of people. Envisioning this perspective in a contemporary context challenges the paradigms of medicine and opens possibilities to new ways of treating the body and co-existing with the land and our environment.

For the Rivera Family, the devotion of Our Mother Corn is a major component of everyone’s life. Interacting with the family during the cultivation season gave me the opportunity to uncover how many people in the outskirts of a city maintain ancestral practices despite their close proximity to mestizo populations. Although the family extends their kinship relations to not only Wixárika ancestors, as is the case of *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”), their devotion to such ancestors lies in the importance of maintaining their health and well-being. Our Mother

Corn provides the opportunity to make kinship with all other ancestors through the structure of a system of reciprocity and exchanging offerings, especially Corn-based.

For me, my devotion to *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”), especially *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”), provided a framework to understand how vulnerable our children can be when they are *not* exposed to ceremonial life. Furthermore, as I reflect on my decision of not taking Ixchel with me to the field, I realized that even before exposing her to ceremonial life, I had to make sense of the sacrifice myself. During all of our ceremonies for Corn in this last year, Ixchel was present in the final year of Drum Ceremony. I travelled with Ixchel and my husband, Josh, to participate for the last time in the harvesting. This year was very exhausting since we visited several Corn fields selecting the Corn cobs for the altar and we confronted three obstacles: a car accident, fatigue, and heavy rain. Our first obstacle occurred when we (my *comadre* “co-parent” Felipa, Josh, Ixchel, Gabriel, Rosita, and myself) had come to deliver offerings and pray a night before the ceremony. When we arrived at our field at night, we could not see a big ditch in the road and the back tire of the truck fell inside. We were mortified to see the truck stuck in the ditch. Ixchel and Rosita stood on the side of the field playing while we adults brought rocks and wood to uplift the truck. Later, we called our *compadres* Angelica and Noe, who brought more help. Before leaving the field, Felipa and I went to the center of the field and made offerings. We brought a candle and a bottle of *Nawá* (“Corn-fermented drink”). We lit the candle, opened the bottle, and left it there. Finally, we extricated the truck from the ditch and drove back to the ranch. That night, I slept outside with most of the community guarding the ceremonial altars. The *mara’akame* chanted for a couple of hours to receive the Our Mother Corn.

The second obstacle occurred when I was sitting from six in the morning to about three in the afternoon, shaking my ceremonial rattle for intervals of approximately two hours. As I shook our ceremonial rattle, I began paying attention to the actions of everyone. Some families had brought their kids from far way to sit down in the altars to receive the blessings of Our Mother Corn. The *mara'kame* (“medicine man/woman”) chanted as another person played the drum for about two hours. When the drum stopped playing, all the kids ran to their relatives to get snacks. When the drum began playing, we each hurried to our spots and continued shaking our rattles to the sound of the drum. In the final run, all the graduates (those who completed five years of ceremony) stood up and said goodbye to all the other kids by shaking their hands. We grabbed our *k+tsiuri* (“woven bag”) full of cobs of Corn and walked around the altar. Before we walked to the other side, we stopped by the *Tepu* (“Ceremonial Drum”) and hit the drum to say goodbye. When Ixchel touched the drum, she began crying and ran away from the altar. I had to continue the round to sit again on my spot. Josh carried Ixchel and brought her back. The *mara'akate* asked to do the round again with Ixchel. Josh and I carried Ixchel, walked around the altar, and helped her hit the drum to say goodbye. We all went back to our site and continued with the ceremony. By then, we were exhausted, and I knew Ixchel was tired. She had not eaten food nor drank water, except for *hibiscus* water we had made the previous night.

The third obstacle we encountered in this trip was non-stop rain on the second day of the ceremony. The rain made it almost impossible to move around the community. The second night, we danced all night with mud in our shoes. By then, Ixchel and Josh were sleeping, and I had to dance with our doll by myself. I was very fortunate to have Juanito, my godson, helping me for most of the night. However, before the end of the dance I decided to rest and left my Corn doll inside the shrine for the following day.

Reflecting back on the work in the field and my ceremonial participation, I knew that doing the work in the harvesting, managing my dietary restrictions during the season, and sharing my family in the ceremony provided the opportunity for us to restore our relationships not only with people but with Elder Ancestors. My research has always been guided by the idea that I want to make sure my daughter understands the labor, sacrifices, and efforts to re-connect with kin—human or not—from a non-capitalistic point of view. Together, we build a new future. Our relationships were once disrupted by our family’s history of migration. Yet by coming back to Mexico to make sense of how to rebuild those relationships with the land through my research, I have been able to foresee the future health of my family in both physical and metaphysical ways. The most important and valuable lesson from the field was learning about some Wixárika families’ health, which depends on coexistence with all beings on Earth. Additionally, Our Mother Corn’s survival depends on the ethical and responsible way that families interact with the land through the labor in agricultural practices.

Poema IV

Está es mi ofrenda: /This is my offering:
Regalo de Intercambio/Exchange Gift
Para mi Madre Tierra y mi Abuela Mar/For my Mother Earth and my Grandmother Ocean
Ofrenda de flores rojas para el amor y la compasión/Offering of red flowers for love and
compassion
Ofrenda de flores blancas para mi hija y las hijas de les demás/Offering of white flowers for my
daughter and the daughters of the others
Ofrenda de flores amarillas para ensender la luz interior/Offering of yellow flowers to turn on
my inner light
Ofrenda de flores moradas para la protección/Offering of purple flowers for protection
Heme aqui entre la cama de estela y las cama de nubes en el cielo/Here I am in between the bed
of wake and the cloud bed in the sky
Entre la arena y las flores flotando/Between the sand and the floating flowers
Entrego mi cuerpo semi desnudo para recibir tu enseñanza/I deliver my semi-naked body to
receive your teaching
Entrego mis miedos/I deliver my fears

Que contigo quede todo lo negativo/Let everything negative be with you
Que aunque escucho mi nombre, no me distraigo de tu latido/That even though I hear my name, I
am not distracted from your heartbeat
Que mi Arcoiris se fortalezca! /May my Rainbow be strengthened!
Que mi piramide de fuego intense siga su furdor! / May my Pyramid of intense fire follows its
fury!
Que el jaguar me da su Fortaleza! /May the Jaguar give me his strength!
Que abuela mar dame la fuerza para continuar este peregrinar! / May Grandmother Ocean gives
me the strength to continue this pilgrimage!
Oh, sangrada vela y pintura ancestral! /Oh, bleeding candle and ancestral paint!
Demen la sabiduria para me limpiar! /Give me the wisdom for cleansing myself!
Esta es mi ofrenda: /This is my offering:
Mi cuerpo herido, ya casi sano, semi desnudo con corazón fuerte y alma segura/My wounded
body, almost healed, semi-naked with a strong heart and a secure soul
Me entrego a ti abuela mar a tu cama de estela para me limpiar/I give myself to you
Grandmother Ocean to your wake bed for cleansing
Me entrego a ti antes de seguir mi caminar/I give myself to you before continuing my walk
Por que de ti he de sanar! / Because of you I will heal!

-Spring 2019

CHAPTER FOUR: KAKA+YARITE METÁ KAKA+MA WAMAWARIKA: STABILIZING RELATIONS AND RE-CENTRALIZING PRACTICES

Growing up, I spent most of my time playing alone and asking questions of my relatives.

I remember one time singing with my aunt Susana a song in Spanish about counting:

Un Elefante se columpiaba sobre la tela de una araña, como veía que resistía fue a buscar a otro elefante. Dos elefantes se columpiaban sobre la tela de una araña como veían que resistía fueron a buscar a un elefante.../One elephant was swinging from a spider web, as he saw the web was resisting, the elephant went to get another elephant. Two elephants swinging from the spider web as they saw the spider web was resisting, they went to look for another elephant....

I remember stopping at maybe twenty and asking my aunt: “When does this song end” and “What follows after the last number.” Little did I know the song was infinite and if we were to sing all the numbers, we would not reach the end. I was about four years of age and I already knew how to count, read, and write. I knew that one of my purposes in life was to seek knowledge. I grew up in a home with the values and traditions from my Oaxacan/Mexico City father which included the cult of the Virgin Mary and Our Lady of Guadalupe and the matriarchal organization of Mexican families in which women take a central role in family matters. My Great-Aunt Rosario was a good example of a devoted woman in the family. She raised my father and for many years guided my mother. In time, she would also teach my sister and me about her knowledge of cooking, traditional medicine, plants, and religion. We would wake up early in the morning and follow her to the *mercado* in La Moctezuma to buy food and come home to make her traditional *romeritos*. She taught me how to pray. I would always follow her teachings when I faced many major events that revealed to me how my life was always “in-between.” On occasions, I experienced pain due to the intergenerational trauma of major life events, at the border of life and death. Those moments of thinking and praying, as my great-aunt taught me, helped my state of mind. I also created art as a way to separate myself from reality.

I began doing things to keep busy and I asked many questions about life (maybe my parents had me doing many things to avoid the questions). I began doing arts and crafts such as hand stitching and sewing with a toy sewing machine. I made clothes for my dolls and stuffed animals. I liked to be alone to think and reflect on things. Sometimes, I would climb alone to the “*Piedra del Sapo*” in the ranch to see the surroundings. I looked at the rock formations, I paid attention to the rock holes, holes almost perfect in formation, and I wondered how and why those holes were there. I remember climbing to the roof of my house to see the sunset. I looked at the sky at dusk. When I looked at the horizon and saw the last bit of sun light, I knew that in another place of the world that light was the first ray of sunshine. I knew many things and when I did not, I asked. I was very curious and almost nobody in my family could offer any answers. My curiosity consisted not only in asking. I read many books, I usually went to the neighbor’s field to climb an old tree, a tree that looked like a stairway. The tree was bent and grew almost parallel to the ground before reaching upward. My father would always buy books for me and I would read them all alone in my room inventing new endings and new beginnings. I began collecting stones, rocks, shells, and any curious organic material (leaves, flowers, wood) that I found outdoors. When I needed them, I used those “pieces” to visualize my goals. Rarely did I share these practices or thoughts with other people. I was in the fourth grade when I knew that I was capable of doing things with the help of certain “devices” in my life such as river rocks shells or crystals.

Writing and Journaling

Later, I began writing in my diary poetry and songs for my classmates. By the age of sixteen, I wrote and published my first poem. This poem was a love poem, about a breakup, of course. Reading my work now, I have the feeling that this piece was not about a significant

person. This poem was about my land and how lost I felt lost for wanting to fulfill my purpose in life. But I was unable to do so due to social, economic, and political barriers as a recent immigrant to the United States. I was already living in Pico Rivera, California as an undocumented teenager with the desire to attend college and become an “anthropologist.” I knew I wanted to write about people and write different stories. I continued doing my homemade “rituals” to maintain my emotional and mental balance, but I stopped. I stopped when people at my high school called me names because I had candles and incense and weird things I collected in my room. I stopped when people my age did not understand my practices. And I never learned anything else. I kept some practices, mainly related to beauty, because I knew that was socially acceptable; but other practices, such as meditating or praying using candles and plants, were not a part of my life anymore. For my last ritual, I did envision myself walking and running from mountain to mountain, sometimes rolling up and down and up in the Sierras.

For a more objective visualization exercise, I began setting goals from short, medium, and long term to keep my dreams alive in a logical and pragmatic sense. For almost ten years my life became logical and practical. In 2010, I began embracing ritual as part of my life again. By first understanding what ritual was, the purpose of ritual, and the effectiveness of ritual practices. When I experienced childbirth, one of the most painful experiences in my existence, I began to see ritual and the purpose of following a life full of ritualistic practices relevant again. Three months before my daughter was born, I made a “Birthing Stick” to have the strength during labor. When my daughter was born, my mother was beside me whispering in my ear while holding “*Con fuerza Margarita*” and I could see my birthing stick in the distance next to my fake candle. In the last seconds, before my daughter was born, I used all my strength to give birth to my Ixchel with the same courage that I continue to have in my most vulnerable moments.

Motherhood was by far the single event in my life that shifted back my paradigm from logical-practical back to embodied knowledge-experiential. How could I as a new mother not follow my “instincts” to raise my child? My instincts woke up and I began writing poetry again, becoming more aligned with my emotions, sensations, and listening to my inner voice and intuition. I began visualizing my life with and for a new human being.

This chapter emerges as I grapple with ideas of healing, some theoretical frameworks, and my own self-reflection on healing practices in my life. I cannot conceive this chapter without thinking about how I engage in ethical healing practices among Wixárika families. As part of a diverse family and as a multiethnic mother (part-Indigenous and part-mestizo), with origins in Oaxaca and a migrant to the United States, my Catholic background informs many of my practices. When I previously drafted my chapter in 2019, my guiding questions were: 1) are Indigenous traditional healing practices only for Indigenous peoples? And 2) How can I benefit from the knowledge of Indigenous communities without culturally appropriating healing practices? After reflecting on my own practices a year later, my desire to understand how to maintain an emotional and physical balance, and experiencing first-hand the effectiveness of healing traditions, I can begin envisioning how a cross-cultural approach to healing modalities benefits communities, especially communities of color trying to recover from intergenerational trauma. In my experiences, participating in pilgrimages and rituals inside the Rivera family allowed me to grow and expand my understanding of pain and how my body and mind deals with pain. Being welcomed to participate with Wixárika communities has enabled me to overcome the sorrow and loneliness of my childhood. However, since I was a child, I was devoted to *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and *Tamatsika* (“Our Elder Brother”) and I rely on their teachings to guide my well-being. My family history and our ritualistic life has

reinforced my commitment to both. I chose to cultivate the land like my ancestors did and I choose to be in relations with the land in a reciprocal way to maintain a balanced body.

In this chapter, I discuss the healing modalities in urban communities by providing a glimpse of how *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) and many other Wixárika communities approach healing in the city. I focus on the insider and outsider dynamic within the Wixárika community to provide insights on the Indigenous/non-Indigenous dynamics that are inseparable from conversations about cultural appropriation and identity politics. I provide *testimonios* from community members and their participation in healing practices for outsiders of the community with the intentions of understanding from their perspective how healing in the urban context restores and validates Wixárika’s knowledge of the human body to effectively cure. First, I discuss the role of the *mara’akame* (“medicine woman or man”) inside Wixárika communities, offering the case studies of *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) and Zitakua. I examine the literature of shamanism and neo-shamanism to discuss how healing practices shifted historically from Indigenous perspectives to the outside world. I problematize the displacement of Indigenous bodies in traditional healing and provide evidence to show how healing traditions have become the target of commodification of Indigenous bodies. I present the testimony of Indigenous women about how they approach healing from an emic perspective. Additionally, I present their views on the practice of healing traditions by outsiders.

The Significance of Healing with Corn in Other Contexts

Finally, to re-center the conversation to Our Mother Corn, through a historical analysis, I discuss the significance of healing with Corn in other contexts (Nahua communities) to place emphasis on the importance of plant and inter-species relations. I highlight the significance of reimagining healing practices in Tepic to see the future of Wixárika traditional medicine.

Incorporating and placing Our Mother Corn as a major agent in the health of community members to improve Mexican health programs. I will conclude this chapter with reflections on my own experiences in the struggles for the use of medicinal plants, specifically Corn, outside Native communities and the significance my responsibility to restore and continue kinship with Our Mother Corn to extend the genealogy for the health of members of the family inside *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”).

Healing modalities in Wixárika urban communities complement Western medicine. As previously discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two respectively, women play a crucial role in healing practices in quotidian spaces by maintaining a relationship with Our Mother Corn and the consumption of other *Yuri'Íkú*-based (“True Corn”) foods through ritual. The idea of health in Wixárika epistemology arises from the premise that a healthy body results from the balance of all the components of the body physical or metaphysical (*iyari* cognitive/emotional, *nierika* rational/consciousness, *k+p+ri* “soul” “spirit,” *namá* desires/passions, and *tukari*). In *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), children and youth attend Western doctors when *mara'akame* (“medicine man/woman”) is unable to see the cause of their diseases or when disease is not related to ceremonial duties (e.g. Males puestos/Diseases placed).

The traditional Wixárika healer or *mara'akame* (“medicine man/woman”) serves multiple roles inside the community. For Dr. Jose Luis Vazquez Catellanos, the *mara'akame* “cura las enfermedades y efectúa acciones de tipo mágico. También es una especie de sacerdote encargado de narrar los mitos de la tribu a la vez que preside las ceremonias religiosas” (He cures diseases and performs magical actions. He is also a kind of priest in charge of narrating the myths of the tribe while presiding over religious ceremonies).¹¹² Dr. Vazquez Castellanos distinguishes four

¹¹² José Luis Vazquez Castellanos, “Prácticas Médicas Tradicionales entre Indígenas de la Sierra Madre Occidental: Los Huicholes,” in *Prácticas populares, ideología médica y participación social, aportes sobre*

types of mara'akate (pl.): "zaururricu (singer trained who obtained shamanistic powers through pilgrimage), avierruki (singer), titeucome (hechicero, brujo, "sorcerer"), and tiyu'iayemave (curandero)." Grimes and McIntosh translated the word mara'akame in 1954 as "singer."¹¹³ In his original notes, Grimes uses the word "shaman (or doctor or native priest)" as mara'akame, tunúwame, cí+qíz^ka in entry 339.¹¹⁴ According to Spanish Ethnographer Eugeni Porras Carrillo, the mara'akame serves as "spiritual guidance," and "depository of the historical and mythical memory."¹¹⁵ Although Porras Carrillos asserts that mara'akame serve many roles, the main role of the mara'akame is to mediate relations among beings, help members of the community with diseases, and guide them through their ceremonial path.

For Wixárika that follow *yeiyári* "el *costumbre*" ("Wixárika path" or tradition), the figure of *mará'akate* (pl.) ("medicine men/women") emerges as an essential figure in performing the necessary rituals to initiate inter-species, and beyond human interactions, specifically Corn relatives.¹¹⁶ The mara'akame is the intermediary person between *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* ("Elder Ancestors") and the community. Through their chants, the mara'akame initiates relations during ceremony, cultivation, harvesting, and curing consultations. In my experience with the Rivera family, the mara'akame is an elder, man or woman, with many abilities to cure the body through the use of ancestral medicinal knowledge, connections to ancestors, and ceremony. The

antropología médica en México, ed. Eduardo L. Menéndez and Javier E. García de Alba (Jalisco, Guadalajara-México: Universidad de Guadalajara-CIESAS).

¹¹³ Vazquez Castellanos, "Prácticas Médicas Tradicionales," 13.

¹¹⁴ Vazquez Castellanos, "Prácticas Médicas Tradicionales," 17.

¹¹⁵ Porras Carrillo RITUAL Y PEREGRINACION ENTRE LOS HUICHOLES Ensayos mínimos. 2009.

¹¹⁶ I make the distinction between "devoted Wixárika" and non-devoted to emphasize how many members are ethnically Wixárika, speak the Indigenous language, and cultivate Corn, however, do not follow the *yeiyári* ("custom" or "tradition"). Some have different faiths or simply do not attend the ceremony. "Devoted Wixárika" for the purpose of my work describes the members of the community who wish to follow the yearly ceremonial life that includes most of the ceremonies devote to Our Mother Corn.

mara'kame gains such ancestral knowledge with sacrifice, entering in relations with Elder Ancestors, visionary quests, inheritance, and dreams. In many cases, the mara'akate (pl.) are feared due to their ability to take away gifts or the ability to see histories and fears in people. Personally, I have been afraid to consult with certain mara'akate due to their strong presence and known abilities to take power and qualities from people. Mara'akate use extraction and aspiration with the mouth to absorb the illness and extract from the body of germinated Corn, candles, flowers, leavers, or other objects. Using feathers to remove the illness, the mara'akame first moves the diseases from the top to bottom of the body. The mara'akame then removes the disease by mouth and spits it out. According to Eugeni Porras Carrillo, some mara'akate use *Makutsi* ("Wild tobacco") or commercial (cigarettes) for diagnosis. Depending on the patient, some mara'akate need more than one day to cure the body of a patient.

In *Y+rata* ("Place to grow greener") community, Don Eustolio Rivera de la Cruz is the main *mara'akame* ("medicine man/woman"). Although many are training to become mara'akate (pl.), Don Estulio is the main leader in each of the ceremonies and pilgrimages. From Santa Catarina, Jalisco, he is head of the family, a ceremonial guide, artist, musician, and healer. His has featured his work on many venues such as short clips, videos online, documentaries, and SoundCloud audios.¹¹⁷ Don Eustolio, or "Papá Costo" as everyone in the family refers to him out of *cariño* is a well-known medicine man in Nayarit and the world and a registered practitioners in the *Organización de Médicos Indígenas Tradicionales del Estado de Nayarit A.C.* The first time I had a *limpia* (cleansing) performed by Papá Costco was in the summer of 2014, when he had his small shack in the Plaza del Músico or Plaza Mololoa in Tepic. Although

¹¹⁷ Video: Wixarika de Yurata a Wirikuta (documental) <https://youtu.be/oiWqLRLpVoY>, Ollin Tlazaltiani y Fuegos Rojos Producciones, Video: Eustolio de Yurata, Nayarit, <https://youtu.be/eVloxbodJ8>, Érase una voz en México, Capítulo VI. Directed by Dora Juárez, and TECARI Ramona Calabona*Manu Chao 2013, <https://youtu.be/H222snt7RA8>.

Papá Costo attends yearly pilgrimages and performs ceremonies on the ranch, his abilities as a mara'akame are limited. He is what Vazquez Castellanos describes as *zaururricu* (“singer trained and obtained shamanistic powers through pilgrimage”) or by Grimes as “tunúwame, cíi+qíz^ka.”

During the construction of Mamachali's kitchen at *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) in January 2019, Mamachali became ill. She explained how she had pain in the stomach, could not see well, and felt dizzy. She described her illness as a feeling of drunkenness. When Papá Costo performed a *limpia*, he decided to take Mamachali with another *curandera* in Pochotitlán, a ranch about twenty kilometers from *Y+rata*. My compadre José took her early in the morning. When the group came back, José said they had to return the next day. The following day José, Papá Costo, and Mamachali left early in the morning. The *mará'akame* (“medicine man/woman”) in Pochotitlán, Sylvia Ortega de la Cruz, removed from inside Mamachali's head a *Kieri* leaf (“Psychotropic plant *Solandra brewvicalyx*”), a black maggot from her neck, and a germinated Corn plant from her stomach. Sylvia told her to make offering to *Tatéi Haramaratsie* (“Our Grand Mother Pacific Ocean”) and La Mesa and continue ceremonies and offerings. Additionally, the mara'akame said that the reason for Mamachali's illness was due to the lack of offerings after the past ceremony of harvesting. Usually, the family completes the ceremony, delivers offerings to specific locations, and finally consumes Corn. However, last year the elders in *Y+rata* traveled to Mexico City to consult people outside the community. In consequence, the family did not deliver any offerings after the ceremony and *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* demanded their offerings, thus causing Mamachali's sickness.

To cure Mamachali, the family had to deliver offerings to continue with chants, and begin the ceremony, so that the *mará'akame* (“medicine man/woman”), *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma*

(“Elder Ancestors”) could heal the body of Mamachali.¹¹⁸ Mamchali’s lack of reciprocity after a good season of Corn, caused her illness and created an unbalance relationship between her and all ancestors. Being in good relation and in reciprocity with Wixárika ancestors, especially with Our Mother Corn, grants families good health. After the construction work in the ranch was over, Mamachali had the chance to deliver offering. She waited until the family had their ceremony to transfer the *cargos* because she wanted to take candles, chocolate, cookies, animal’s blood (Deer and calf), *Nawá* (“Corn-based drink”), and Corn-based offerings such as *pinole* (“Corn powder”). Elders seek the guidance of mara’akame to find the ways to cure their bodily illnesses. With help from other members, everyone prepares offerings to deliver and assure that Elder Ancestors receive their offerings. In this reciprocal interaction members of the family encounter Elder Ancestors and receive from them health in exchange for food. Although Papá Costo is a well-known and powerful mara’akame he did not possess the ability to cure Mamachali and took her to see another mara’akame with other abilities. Some mara’akate (pl.) are known for their specific abilities to cure. As previously mentioned, Papá Costo specializes in fertility and common Wixarika illnesses. For *males puestos* (“Diseases placed”) the family seeks the expertise of other mara’akate (pl.).

Healing Consultations

Many Indigenous communities have opened their practices to share with outsiders some traditional ways of healing. Inside Tepic, some healing practitioners adjust to the demands of outsiders seeking healing consultations. In November 2018, I asked my *comadre* (“co-parent”) Felipa to help me with some personal matters. I asked her to help me translate to my *padrino*

¹¹⁸ In the Drum Ceremony of 2018 (Julia’s ceremony) a woman and her family came during the ceremony to seek help from the mara’akame (“Elder Ancestors”). They sat down for the ceremony and Papá Costo while chanting and singing he presented the woman to the altar and gave her a candle for later. (Porrás Carrillo, 2009; Fieldwork 2018)

(“godfather”) some information regarding my family. After Yuawima’s *Tatéi Neixa* (“Danza Maíz,” “Harvesting Ceremony” or “Drum Ceremony”), I received news from my family about some difficulties they were facing. I was concerned, and I wanted help from Tepic. I told Felipa to ask my *padrino* (“Godfather”) for spiritual guidance for my family. I asked Felipa, if I could do the work when my family was far away, and she said that we could create a device for healing in the distance. She gave me instructions to print the picture of each members of my family and bring a candle for each of them. When I had all the materials, we came to the ceremony and at the end we asked Papá Costo for help. Felipa translated and my padrino ordered her to help me put each picture with each candle. We taped the pictures and wrote the names on each candle.

After I told Felipa all my concerns about my family, she translated and Papá Costo asked me if my family asked for *trabajo* (“work”) and I said “no.” I asked Felipa why he was asking, and she said because he wanted to know whose intentions were placed on the work. He also wanted to know about payment. I asked Felipa, how much should I pay, and she said, “well, because it’s for you and it’s your padrino, whatever your heart desires.” I knew the payment was a sensitive matter, so I did not know how much as the mandatory payment and I asked Felipa. She answered that for a *limpia* (“Cleansing”), the *mara’akame* charges \$300 pesos and since I was doing multiple works then I should estimate. She ended the conversation saying that I had until the end of the work to make the payment. We placed the pictures with each of the candles inside Papá Costo’s *Xiriqui* (“shrine”) and walked to my padrino by the Fire. When I asked my padrino about the payment, he said to wait, and he would pray for my family.

Later, I asked Felipa about the steps for the ritual and she gave me the following instructions for “our healing/ blessing technology.” First, the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) will pray for the person in the picture with the candles. If the *mara’akame* is in

ceremony she/he will point the candles to each of the directions and ask all the guardians for the blessings. Then, after the mara'akame finishes with the prayer she/he will bless the candles and give the candles back. Finally, the person doing the work will light the candles five consecutive days and pray on each of the days. Each day the person doing the work will light the candle and turn off the candle after the prayers. After the fifth day the person doing the work will light the candles for the last time, pray, and let the candle burn until the end. This exchange of practices (healing consultation and monetary compensation) demonstrates how some healing practices can accommodate outsiders needs. When Indigenous healers make the decision to exchange and open up their practices to outsiders often the healers know about the ontological responsibilities with their ancestors. Many mara'akate (pl.) consult outside the community. However, as Mariana Fresán discusses in her book *Susurros de la Montaña: antropología de la experiencia*, mara'akame Rafael Carrillo Pizano specifically trains to consult outsiders and consult Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma for these gifts (2016: 217). Thus, some Papá have the consent of Elder Ancestors to heal outsiders.

After a year of my personal consultation with Papá Costo, Felipa and I talked about my concerns for sharing the traditional healing practices with people outside the community. When I asked her why *Teiwarixi* (pl.) (“White people” “Non-Indigenous people”) wanted to learn from them. She talked to me about different ideas:

A los *teiwarixi* les interesa aprender mas cosas que no pueden aprender en otro lugar. Ellos quieren aprender el conocimiento de los Wixárika para... bueno en primer lugar van al desierto y ahí aprenden muchos conocimientos por el *peyotito*. Dependiendo de tu visión que lleves. Entonces yo digo como no hay muchos lugares a donde aprender se refugian en los Wixárika para tener conocimiento, sabiduría, visiones. Y como ellos saben que las tradiciones de los Wixárika son natural y es antiguamente, entonces digo yo que por so se acercan a esas tradiciones que nosotros hacemos los Wixárika para tener mas conocimientos. Yo opino que como ellos, como ellos le piden al mayor, sobre el conocimiento de ser chaman y como ya tienen tiempo yendo entonces ellos, ellos piensan que es fácil

puede ser entonces piden ayudan y conforme ellos van aprendiendo ya piensan que pues si pueden. Y bueno como cuando ellos sienten que ya van bien avanzados como de mara'akame, pero ser mara'akame tu sabes que no es fácil y ya mi papá que es el mayor el líder les explica mas o menos como es y ya ellos se avanzan y ya sienten que saben pero la verdad no es así, por que el que es chaman es chaman y así ya nace con ese don. Cuando los teiwarixi aprenden ya piensan que saben como es la tradición y lo poquito que han aprendido pues ya se retiran de la comunidad ya ni siquiera paran a saludar, así como el [Hombre #1] y [Hombre #2] así como andan ahorita así. Como andan hacienda ceremonias como si son chamanes, pero aun no todavía no. Y no se pueden convertir, bueno no se pueden ser mara'akame como los Wixárika por que como te digo el Wixárika ya tienen ese don y así es su... ya tienen ya lo traen en la sangre se podría decir y los teiwarixi no mas entran y lo poquito que aprenden ya lo quieren practicar en otros lados, y realmente ellos mismos se engañan y están engañando a la gente. Pues como te digo ellos ya lo hacen ver a en otros estados en otros lugares, pero eso lo hacen ya por economía no mas para juntar gente ya dan un poquito de la medicina ya cobran bueno yo de mi parte digo que esos se le van mas al dinero ósea juntan gente y hacen ceremonia como los Wixárika, pero realmente no lo son. Entonces yo diría que nada es por la economía lo que pueden hacer. Pues yo digo que como ahí este a lo mejor no nos quitan nada, pero si el conocimiento que se les da a conocer este lo único que es de que ahí es que ellos se están ganando ceremonias hacer ceremonias y recibir economías y pues los Wixárika en casa y ellos ya haciendo dinero por lo poquito que aprendieron y entonces ahí se podría decir que pueden quitar trabajo bueno para mi eso es trabajo. Es lo único que pueden hacer los teiwarixi por que así a ser chaman como un Wixárika pues no. Simplemente ellos así lo demuestran, pero pues sabes que no lo son. Pero ya los teiwarixi engañados pues caen en su jueguito le siguen la corriente y pues ellos piensan que están hacienda las cosas siguen engañados. Son engañados por que el conocimiento de un Wixárika es mucho muy diferente al de un teiwari. Lo poquito que aprenden lo dan a conocer en otros lados y así los otros caen redonditos. Y lo único que digo es que el teiwari le esta quitando el trabajo a los Wixárika de presentarse como chaman y como Wixárika. Pues ahí también esta mal por que cada cultura o cada persona tiene su tradición entonces pues ahí pues no deben de hacer esas cosas hacer ceremonia como los Wixárika por que pues no lo son. Mejor dejarle el trabajo de los Wixárika que lo hagan ellos cuando, cuando ellos realmente si saben. Saben la visión de la medicina por ejemplo lo de la ida al desierto este entender a los guardianes pues son muchas cosas que los teiwarixi no saben, pero así lo demuestran ellos. Pues yo digo que si [sirve la medicina] por que por que lo andan este, como se dice... lo andan practicando, no es aplicando en otros lugares por que a lo mejor a ellos les ha pasado, o han visto, o han sentido que la medicina Wixárika si sirve

Teiwarixi [White men] are interested in learning more things that they cannot learn elsewhere. They want to learn the knowledge of the Wixárika so... well first of all they go to the desert and there they learn a lot of knowledge from the little peyote. Depending on your vision you take. So, I say there are not many places to

learn and they take refuge on the Wixárika to have knowledge, wisdom, visions. And since they know that the traditions of the Wixárika are natural and it is ancient, then I say that they only approach those traditions that we the Wixárika do to have more knowledge. I think that as they, as they ask the eldest, about the knowledge of being a shaman and since they already have time going then they, they think that it is easy, it can be, so they ask for help and as they learn they already think that they can. And well as when they feel that they are already well advanced as a mara'akame but being mara'akame you know that it is not easy and already my dad who is the eldest the leader explains more or less how it is and they already advance and They [white men] already feel that they know but the truth is not like that, because the one who is a shaman is a shaman and thus he is born with that gift. When the Teiwarixi [White men] learn they already think that they know what the tradition is and what little they have learned because they are already left the community and they don't even stop to say hello, like [Man # 1] and [Man # 2] as well as they are now So. How they are doing ceremonies as if they are shamans, but not yet. And they cannot be converted, well they cannot be mara'akame like the Wixárika because as I tell you, the Wixárika already have that gift and so is their ... they already have it, they bring it in their blood, you could say and the Teiwarixi [white men] do not but they go in and the little they learn they already want to practice elsewhere, and they really deceive themselves and they are deceiving people. Well, as I tell you, they already see it in other states in other places, but they do it for the sake of economy, just to get people together, they already give a little bit of medicine and they charge well, for my part I say that they are going more They join people with bone money and perform ceremonies like the Wixárika, but they really are not. So, I would say that nothing is for the economy what they can do. Well, I say that as there it is, perhaps they will not take anything away from us, but if the knowledge that is made known to them is the only thing that is that there they are earning ceremonies, ceremonies and receiving savings and then the Wixárika in home and they are already making money for the little they learned and then there you could say that they can take away good work for me that is work. It is the only thing that the teiwarixi can do because in order to be a shaman like a Wixárika, no. They simply demonstrate it, but well you know they are not. But already the teiwarixi deceived because they fall into their game they play along and because they think they are doing things they are still deceived. They are deceived that the knowledge of a Wixárika is much different from that of a teiwari. What little they learn they make themselves known elsewhere and so the others fall round. And all I'm saying is that the teiwari [white man] is taking away the job of the Wixárika to present themselves as shaman and as Wixárika. Well there it is also bad because each culture or each person has its tradition so then there, they should not do those things to do a ceremony like the Wixárika because they are not. Better to leave the work of the Wixárika to them when they do, when they really do know. They know the vision of medicine, for example that of going to the desert to understand the guardians because there are many things that the Teiwarixi do not know, but they demonstrate it. Well, I say that if [medicine is useful], why is this being practiced, as they say... they are practicing it, it is not applying in other

places because perhaps it has happened to them, or they have seen, or felt Wixárika medicine if it works.¹¹⁹

Seeking traditional healing practices as an outsider has the same ontological responsibilities and consequences. In many instances when non-Indigenous people seek ancestral guidance, the action of knowing about other ways of healing shows how culturally aware and culturally sensitive a non-Indigenous person can become over time. In my experiences as a woman of color with Indigenous appearance, however, finding alternative medicine in multiple spaces gives me the sensation that people look down upon my practices and choices for health, specially, in terms of pregnancy, woman's health, and treatments. For instance, after my consultation with the *mara'akame* ("medicine man/woman") at Y+arata, I came back home with my parents full of "our new technology" and ready to complete the healing session with my relatives back in Phoenix, Arizona. When I arrived home for the holidays, I gifted each member of my family a candle and gave them instructions to use the candles. However, some relatives did not follow the directions. I had to call Isabel, my goddaughter and ask her for new instructions. She advised to get a candle and prepare the candle myself. Using some prayers and setting my intention for the candle, I offered my relatives a new candle to finalize the ritual.

When I was looking for all the materials in the local *botánicas*, people looked at me puzzled. They were surprised and even skeptical that I knew what to buy inside the store. I visited three different *botánicas* to find the essential herbs and paschal candles. In the last store, the vendors gave me everything and even joked about my knowledge on the things I was buying. Although I have little experience in healing matters (family remedies for certain diseases), I gained some understanding of healing practices with specific medicinal plants and their uses for

¹¹⁹ Recorded Conversation 11-03-2019

alternative medicine by speaking with women. My approach in using healing techniques within *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), rather than to displace the Indigenous healer, was to offer an alternative solution to problems in my family, in which I see Indigenous traditions a better fit than family therapy. I also take into consideration the ontological implications of utilizing healing practices and my own responsibility towards my ancestors to maintain balance in my world. I made the commitment to all my relations in order to help my family.

Descriptions of healing practices and the use of Indigenous ways of healing as shown in the previous section allows scholars and physicians to envision a different paradigm to cure diseases in the body. Historically, many studies related to healing opened the door for new ways of knowing. In Mexico although is not clear when the term “shamanism” was introduced to Mexican Anthropology and Mesoamerican Studies, the study of healing practices has brought much understanding to Indigenous lifestyles along with the mystification, exotification and commodification of Indigenous communities in Mexico.¹²⁰ In an article by Roberto Martínez González, the author discusses the history and genealogy of the two words “shaman” and “shamanism” in Mexico. In his historical overview of the terms, Martínez González examines the study of shamanistic practices in Mexico and Mesoamerica. Additionally, shows how multiple studies present many similarities within the roles of shamans that follow descriptions of healers across the world.

As a Siberian term, “shamanism” offers an umbrella to agglomerate many categories of healers and people with abilities to cure the physical and metaphysical body. However, the term “shamanism” ignores differences among healers within cultures and traditions. For instance,

¹²⁰ Robert Martínez González argues that during the ethnographic fieldwork of Lumholtz and Zingg they began using the term “shaman” to describe healers among Indigenous communities in Mexico.

within the Nahuatl speaking communities from Chicontepec, Veracruz Eduardo de la Cruz explains that healing practitioners constitute multiple classes who specialize in specific areas. For instance, in Chicontepec, I can seek the expertise of *tepahtihquetl* (“healer”), *tlamatquetl* (“wise man”), *tlachixquetl* (“seer”), *huhuetlacatl* (“Old man”), *tetlalanquetl* (“midwife”), *tetiochiuhquetl* (“Prayer”), and *texixitohquetl* (“Bone cracker” or “Masseur”). Inside the Huasteca, healers receive their gift through dreams, near-death-experiences, and revelations at birth.¹²¹ Similar to the Huasteca region, La Mesa del Nayar encompasses a region with many neighboring Indigenous communities that differ in language, culture, and traditions (O’dam, Naáyari, Mexican, and Wixárika). The names of healers and practitioners of traditional healing practices varies from region to region and community to community making it difficult to generalize the different types of healers in Mexican traditional medicine with one single term such as “shaman.”

Eugini Porras Carrillo discusses the difference between shamanism and neo-shamanism by defining that the two present similar characteristics. First, the shaman in both offers a *servicio* (“service”) that biomedicine fails to cure. However, as noted by Porras Carrillo the main difference between shamanism and neo-shamanism lies in the extractive nature of pseudo shamans that acquire “techniques” or “mechanism” to offer alternative ways of healing that only fulfill the desire of individuals from “Western societies” seeking wellness. In consequence, neo-shamans replace Indigenous healers by using the techniques or mechanisms learned through their interaction with Indigenous healers. Neo-shamans benefit from the use of ancestral knowledge and fail to cure the body because their limited knowledge only imitates and extracts information

¹²¹ Eduardo de la Cruz, “Curandero, sabio, vidente, hombre Viejo, partera y rezandero: oficios de especialistas rituales nahuas de Chicontepec” UCLA Panel presentation Thursday, November 8 2018. Los Angeles, California.

from experience and does not follow the healing frameworks. Neo-shamans fail to cure the body of patients due to the lack of interaction with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”).¹²² Thus, non-Indigenous *mara’akate* (pl.) (“medicine men/women”) with no deep connections with Wixárika ancestors fail to provide accurate healing sessions due to their detachment with the ancestral aspects of Wixárika cosmology.

During the 1960s and through the ’70s, many researchers at University of California Los Angeles carried out investigations on hallucinogenic or psychedelic plants, altered states of mind, and magico-religious studies.¹²³ In the Anthropology Department at “UCLA,” students were encouraged to take approaches of “experiential anthropology” to understand the perspective of the *Other*. Many academics embarked on different journeys trying to understand consciousness and what lies beyond the body and the mind. Many found within Indigenous communities some answers to the meaning to life. Carlos Castaneda wrote his dissertation on the altered states of mind based on his fieldwork among the “Yaqui man, Don Juan.”¹²⁴ For many, Castaneda’s books inspired work among Indigenous healers to understand deep states of consciousness and adopt an often-vague Indigenous identity to legitimize their practices. Larry Peters worked among shamans in the Tamang tradition in Nepal in topics related to neuropsychiatry. He describes this time in the anthropology department as follows: “Many of my fellow students were deployed to other corners of the world. We thought of ourselves as “gnostic intermediaries” attempting to bridge the gap between modern psychology and different

¹²² Eugini Porras Carrillo, 2009, 26.

¹²³ Currently, UCLA continues the research on the use of psychedelics and marijuana in the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) a non-profit research and educational organization that aims to develop ethical use of medicinal plants. <https://maps.org/about>

¹²⁴ Carlos Castaneda Sorcery: A description of the World of the World. Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles

spiritualities, their methods of induction, and of altered states of consciousness within the religious and cultural context.”¹²⁵ By attempting to “bridge the gap between modern psychology and different spiritualities” scholars in the field of shamanistic studies do the same as neo-shamans, violating the human rights of Indigenous communities as they take their ancestral knowledge and make claims of ownership by offering healing practices.

In 1964, Dr. Peter T. Furst and his student Barbara Myerhoff embarked on a journey to the Sonoran Desert, a trip to document first-hand the journey to Wirikuta, the center of the universe in Wixárika cosmology. They walked among *mara 'akame* (“medicine man/woman”) Ramón Medina Silva and his family to document for the first time the interaction between Wixárika and *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). From their ethnographic fieldwork, Furst produced the documentary *To Find Our Life: The Peyote Hunt of the Huichols of Mexico* and many other publications.¹²⁶ Their work demonstrated how traditional Wixárika families continue ancestral traditions and pilgrimages to Wirikuta. Although many of the participants lived inside the city and moved between settler colonial spaces and Native land, Furst and Myerhoff portrayed Wixárika as decolonized Natives from Mexico. Furst and Myerhoff’s work mystified Wixárika healing practices by emphasizing in their work the cultural use of peyote. In their documentation of Wixárika culture both scholars authenticate aspects of Wixárika cosmology.

During my visits to the archives at the University of Southern California, I sought to understand the work of anthropologist Barbara G. Myerhoff. During her graduate studies at UCLA she conducted ethnographic work among the Wixárika in Guadalajara, Mexico. She

¹²⁵ <http://niralapublications.com/tag/larry-peters/>

¹²⁶ Peter T. Furst 1969 documentary UCLA.

received her PhD in Anthropology in 1968 from the UCLA. In her dissertation *Deer-Maize-Peyote Symbol Complex among the Huichol Indians of Mexico*, Myerhoff ethnographic study was the first academic account of the pilgrimage to Wirikuta among Wixáritari (pl.). Myerhoff's work provided an analysis and interpretation of the nature and role of the "Deer-Maize-Peyote complex" in the life of the community.¹²⁷

Myerhoff represents the *mara'akame* ("medicine man/woman") as the "practitioner of balance" between two worlds. *Mara'kate* live in liminal stages between the sacred and the profane, like the "Jack and the Beanstalk" fairy tale. Such a concept of "equilibrium" and "liminal stages" comes from the work of Victor Turner, who did ethnographic field work in Africa. According to Myerhoff's interpretation of the equilibrium, the training of the *mara'kame* include training both body and mind to be in balance between two worlds. In the *Deer-Maize-Peyote Symbol Complex among the Huichol Indians of Mexico* manuscript, Myerhoff describes the event of *La Barranca*, a controversial event that some scholars believe never happened. In this event, Ramón, the *mara'kame* shows his ability to balance by leaping from rock to rock in a steep barranca. After describing the events, Myerhoff links them to Mercia Eliade's view of a "shaman's psychological equilibrium."

¹²⁷ In the special collections at the Doheny Library in USC, I found documents such as manuscripts, notes, printed material, publications, audiotapes, correspondences, and photographic material related to her teachings, field research, and publishing activities that gave an idea about Myerhoff's processes of interpretation. My main purpose in visiting the archive was to understand Myerhoff's analysis of five different topics that I found particularly interesting and relevant to my own research: equilibrium, reversals, dreams, visions and, of course, the Deer-Maize-Peyote complex. I found documents such as photos, drafts, letters, proposals for conferences and field notes that expressed Myerhoff's interest in understanding Wixárika's rituals using the lens of Victor Turner, Carl Jung, and Mircea Eliade. Barbara G. Myerhoff interpreted the equilibrium and shaman's balance during the pilgrimage to Wirikuta. In her archived documents, I found a letter from Mircea Eliade suggesting that Myerhoff read literature about fairytales to understand equilibrium. She uses the fairytale of *Jack and the Beanstalk* to illustrate a shaman's equilibrium. I found several drafts about equilibrium and balance in which demonstrated how Myerhoff seeks to relate Jack and the beanstalk with the ritualistic stages of childhood and adulthood as the unbalance in the life of Wixárika's *mara'kame*.

Through my archival research in the works of Barbara G. Myerhoff, I was able to see how Eurocentric theories permeated her thinking about Wixárika ways of being. She utilized Mircea Eliade, Victor Turner, and Carl Jung's theories as the lenses through which to understand *mara'akate* (pl.) ("medicine men or women") and their practices. As Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang state in their article titled "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," throughout history non-Indigenous communities have attempted to alliviate processes of colonization. Tuck and Yang referred to this tactic as "moves to innocence" to highlight the attempts of the non-Indigenous people to remove the damages of settler colonization and exploration among Indigenous communities. In ethnographic research, salvage ethnography, or the documentation of cultural practices for the sake of preserving Indigenous communities before they vanish, caused violence within Indigenous communities by exposing ways of living that only pertain to certain individuals inside those communities. In healing practices within Wixárika families, many scholars wrote about aspects of the lives of *mara'akate* and created stereotypes of mystification among the Wixaritari (pl.) to dismiss colonization processes.

Since Lumholtz (1900s) and Zingg, the work of ethnographers among Wixárika has had a great impact on the mystification of the community. Consequently, the work of many experts on healing practices opened the door for the New Age amateurism and neo-shamanism, including academics who ventured into the practice of documenting and understanding from experiential anthropology the lifestyle of many Native communities to the point of going "Native." In Brazil, anthropologist Michael Harner who founded the Shamanistic Foundation after his ethnographic fieldwork with the Shuar in the Amazon. In Mexico, Carlos Castaneda opened the door for neo-shamanism and his "encounters" with Don Juan in his many famous novels such as *Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), *A Separate Reality* (1971), *Viaje to Ixtlan* (1972), etc.

In the state of Nayarit, I have encountered many people who ask me about my studies at UCLA and talk about Carlos Castaneda as a source of consultation for their knowledge on healing practices. Many even decided to take the path of a healer after they read Castaneda's books by following the apprenticeship with mara'akate (pl.) ("medicine men/women"). Neo-shamans follow the path of a mara'akame but do not understand the colonization mentality and ontological implication of their "moves to innocence." As Tuck and Yang point out, "Settler Nativism" and "Fantasizing adoption" among non-Indigenous peoples perpetuates settler colonization and the displacement of Indigenous bodies within Native spaces. In neo-shamanism, settler nativism and fantasizing adoption creates a justification for non-Indigenous folks to appropriate healing spaces and retell the story of how a distant ancestor or an adopted family gave them permission to practice certain ancestral knowledge. In Tepic, many follow the path of Raymundo "Tigre" Pérez, P'urepecha, Chicano who is a medicine man from Texas and apprentice of Elder Lakota Henry Crow Dog. According to Leila Dregger, Tigre Pérez brought his teachings to Mexico and gave permission to others to perform ceremonies.¹²⁸ Thus, some of Pérez's learned practices were consolidated and disseminated in Mexico by neo-shamans as a way of making a pan-Indigenous tradition. The interest of neo-shamans in becoming a healer in Mexico is a common act of colonization by placing the body of white and non-Indigenous bodies in the hierarchy of healing practitioners. Many claim Indigenous ancestry and Indigenous ties to communities, however, their involvement with Native matters and Native lifestyles are minimal.

Wixárika healing traditions and the use of some medicinal plants during ceremony have become very popular around the world. The mara'akame ("medicine man/woman"), usually male, in the context of healing practices outside the Wixárika ceremonial center has become a

¹²⁸ <https://ecovillage.org/mexico-the-power-of-grandmothers/>.

popular agent in performing ceremonies for outsiders. Healing traditions become a target for neo-shamans or pseudo-shamans for the commodification of practices and Indigenous bodies. In many Facebook pages, I can easily find events that featured the work of Wixárika mara'akame outside traditional lands and non-Indigenous men offering healing practices. Neo-shamans advertise in the media as practitioners and apprentices of traditional healers. In this case, figure 3.0 shows how one individual takes a photo of Wixárika pilgrimages and comments on the experience of walking among Indigenous healers (See Appendix C). The second photo, figure 3.1 shows how another individual advertises the expertise of the first individual by mentioning their level of training and apprenticeship with Indigenous Wixárika healers.¹²⁹ Neo-shamans use the discourse of “adoption,” as a metaphor to legitimize their use of ancestral knowledge. Walking as a healer has many ontological consequences and responsibilities, alongside ties with community.

As a researcher inside an Indigenous community who is aware of the mystical and romanticized ideas about the community that outsiders might have, I struggled to shift away from the traditional literature that centered around medicinal plants and healing practices. Since the beginning of my research, I knew my main goal was to discuss from my perspective the struggles, resistance, and resilience of many in the community who were in a state of transition from their Native lands to a more urban setting. My involvement with the community on a deeper level became an actual move to decolonize my body and my mind through the active participation of what I have learned to be true: to respect how my ancestors made me without the shame of settler views on my brown and Indigenous looking body. As an active participant of the community, I examine at a deeper level the meaning of moving as a multi-ethnic woman with

¹²⁹ Pictures were capture from public profiles on Facebook and Instagram. Accessed 2018.

Indigenous characteristics. My body is not a metaphor for decolonization, my body is an instrument to move within and through settler colonial spaces. The true path of decolonization is not “going Native” or self-adoption to an Indigenous community or lifestyle; rather, a constant practice of relationality with all my ancestors by accepting that my research is carving out relations with the world. I am making sense of who my ancestors were, where do I stand in terms of colonization, and my work as a scholar committed to decolonizing the academy as decolonial scholar. I understand the borderlands of cultural appropriation and Wixárika alliance. However, I also understand the need of more inclusive health system in many communities that allows Indigenous families in different bodies to seek multiple treatments to cure. In this “inclusive health care system,” Indigenous voices become central in the conversation about the ethical use of ancestral knowledge and how the community wishes to share their knowledge of healing the body.

Today, many Wixárika communities have become active in the protection of the immaterial and intangible such as healing practices. In March 23, 2018 Maestro Guillermo Huicot Rivas Alvarez, former president of the *Comisión de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos para el Estado de Nayarit* (Human Rights Defense Commission in the State of Nayarit), wrote a formal complaint to the Tepic Town Hall regarding the violation to Wixárika cultural and collective rights, material and immaterial patrimony to all members of the community, specifically mara’akate (“medicine men/women”) during the fair. The demands were very clear:

1. To remove from the stands in la feria 2018 all people that present themselves as mara’akame
2. Do not authorize outsiders to conduct rituals, ceremonies, and traditions of the Wixárika nation
3. In the case that the Town Hall authorizes rituals and cleansings, the ceremonies, and other Wixárika traditions are to be conducted by a recognized mara’akame from the Wixárika Nation and recognized from an Indigenous community particularly from the state of Nayarit

4. To offer an apology from the president Town Hall of Tepic to the Wixárika Nation, specially to mara'akate (pl.)
5. To offer a training class in the Town Hall about Human Rights specifically towards Indigenous communities¹³⁰

The demands from Huicot Rivas show the need to act regarding the personification of mara'akame in public spaces and how the personification was an act against the human rights of all members of the Wixárika community. Maximo Muñoz de La Cruz, Wixárika lawyer and current president of the Comisión de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos para el Estado de Nayarit, defines the violation of human rights as the use or misappropriation of Indigenous identity and culture from non-Indigenous peoples to profit from immaterial and intangible ancestral knowledge.¹³¹ Appropriation of healing practices is an extractive form of colonization among Wixaritari (pl.). Neo-shamans appropriate and occupy Indigenous spaces by practicing Indigenous healing techniques.¹³² According to Wolfe, reinforcing the key insight that colonization was not a single event but an unfolding of a social order, the appropriation of healing traditions and the rise of neo-shamans promotes another form of colonization. Wolfe states that colonization was not a single event, and with the appropriation of healing traditions, neo-shamans promote a new form of colonization of the metaphysical. A clear example among the Wixaritari (pl.) is the misuse of healing objects among neo-shamans such as the *Muwieri* ("Feather Stick"). Healing practices of today are undergoing new processes of colonization. As

¹³⁰ See Appendix D (Figure 3.2 and 3.3) for the document in Spanish. I thank Wixárika lawyer Wens Carrillo de la Cruz for the document.

¹³¹ Public Talk UAN December 2018/ Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of genocide research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

¹³² David Delgado Shorter, "The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History"; Lisa Aldred, "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality," *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 329–352; Lisa Aldred, "'Money is Just Spiritual Energy': Incorporating the New Age," *Journal of Popular Culture* 35, no. 4 (2002): 61; Lisa Aldred, "'No More Cigar Store Indians': Ethnographic And Historical Representation by and of the Waccamaw-Siouan Peoples and their Socio-Economic, Legal, and Political Consequences," *Dialectical Anthropology* 18, no. 2 (1993): 207–244; Daniel Hart, *White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men*, Directed by Macy Terry and Hart Daniel (Native Voices, 1996).

Wixárika families in the city move away from traditional ways of curing the body, neo-shamans and plastic shaman appropriate ancestral techniques and methods of healing the body. Thus, traditional Mexican healing practices become a new form colonization and extraction of Indigenous knowledge, or as Maximo Muñoz de la Cruz eloquently describes, a violation of the human rights of many Indigenous groups by appropriation of the intangible and the immaterial.

Origins of Colonization of Healing Practices

The origins of colonization of healing practices in Mexico emerged from the imposition of Western health practices within Indigenous communities since colonial times. Western ideas of health and disease are derived from the influence of early Greek philosophers such as Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristoteles.¹³³ When Spanish colonizers arrived in the Americas, they brought their ideas about health, sickness, as well as new epidemics. In Friar Bernadino de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún explores Nahuatl-speaking medical practices including their conceptions of health and disease during colonial times. The friar explains the different ideas regarding epidemics and the cause of illness using European medical notions.¹³⁴ In Iberian practices, for instance, bathing was uncommon, and washing was only part of baptism rituals. In November 1566, Philip II prohibited bathhouses and public bathing in a royal decree. Public washing and washing in nudity were considered practices against the Christian faith.¹³⁵ In contrast, Nahuatl-speaking communities in ancient, colonial and in contemporary times have

¹³³ Hippocrates, *Epidemics* ed and trans Wesley D. Smith, Vol. VII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 315.

¹³⁴ Source Codex Florentine prologue on epidemics.

¹³⁵ *Pragmáticas y provisiones de su M. el Rey don Philippe nuestro señor, sobre la lengua y vestidos, y otras cosas que an de hazer los naturales deste Reyno de Granada* Granda: Hugo de Mena 1567; Albrecht Classen, "Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Europe" in *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* eds. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge, Vol. 19, 48; Sahagún 1979 [1565-70] vol. 1bk II f. 123 V.

used bathing in healing ceremonies. In the Nahuatl concept of illness, the cleansing of the physical and metaphysical body involves purification with water and herb brooms. Nahuatl-writers describe to Sahagún in the Book 2 of the *Florentine Codex* the importance of cleansing the body with brooms made of herbs. Nahuatl-speaking communities purified the corporeal and the moral body of the individual using water in healing ceremonies.¹³⁶

When the Spanish colonized Indigenous populations of Mesoamerica they introduced new diseases. In the documents regarding epidemics in New Spain, several chroniclers, including Fray Toribio de Benavente (1500–1569), Dominican Friar Bartolomé de las Casas, Francisco López de Gómara (1511–circa 1566) attributed the epidemics to sins, as well as cultural and religious beliefs. According to many friars, water for the used of bathing in healing practices among Native communities caused the epidemics, and thus colonizers prohibited the use of bath during their medical practices.¹³⁷ Despite colonial prohibitions in contemporary Indigenous communities, bathing and the use of water in healing ceremonies constitute an essential component of wellness.

In the current Mexican current health care system, the use of Western practices impedes Indigenous practices of healing to complement the health of families. Normalizing Western medicine in Mexico impedes Wixárika traditional ways of healing, thus discontinuing traditional methods to maintain wellness. Recently, Wixárika families are interacting more and more with Western doctors rather than the traditional *mara'akame* (“medicine man/woman”). While Western medicine offers cures to the physical manifestations of sickness, Wixárika healers’

¹³⁶ Rebecca Dufendach’s dissertation, Chapters 1–2.

¹³⁷ Fray Toribio de Benavente o Motolinia, *Memoriales o Libro de las cosas de la Nueva España y de los Naturales de Ella México*: UNAM, 1971, 21; *Colectión de documentos para la historia de México*. Joaquín García Icazbalceta. Mexico: Librería de J. M. Andrade, 1858. Tomo primero. “Carta de Fray Toribio de Motolinia al Emperador Carlos V,” enero 2 de 1555, 270; Francisco López de Gómara, *La Historia General de las Indias*, ed. Pedro Robredo (Mexico, 1943), 291.

holistic approach cures the corporeal and the metaphysical by employing traditional techniques. The imposition of Western knowledge of medicine on Indigenous communities contributes to settler colonization in the Americas. In Michel Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, the author discusses the creation of Western knowledge of medicine through the history of the clinical practices in France. Similar to the Spanish in America, Foucault concludes that the normalization of health in the 18th and 19th centuries dictated the type of healing practices in the profession of doctors. Since only licensed doctors were able to practice medicine, the profession of doctors became a very specialized form of knowledge only accessible to men, usually wealthy, and European. Thus, diagnoses and treatments came solely from the observations and the experiences of licensed doctors.

Patients became objects of study, and their symptoms became signs of illness. Such interactions (doctor/patients) created a model for health based on the knowledge gathered from the sick person. The ill person acts as the marker during a consultation with the doctor to compare the sick body to the healthy body; thus, creating a standard for health. The medical knowledge created in the interaction between doctor and patient in the clinics or the communal houses was based on the speech of only the trained and licensed physicians. Foucault theorizes that doctors in the eighteenth century became the authority in the diagnosis of illnesses, and "the test of knowledge" refers to the information one doctor reproduces during the interaction during a consultation. The diagnosis of one patient's illness relies on the knowledge of one person. The doctor solely understands the medical jargon utilized in the communication between doctor and patient. Later, the doctor translates into simple words at the end of the consultation. As the authority in the room, the doctor observes the sick body, asks questions, runs some test,

diagnoses the patient with the final cause and cure of the disease, and prescribes the necessary medication to alleviate the symptoms.

Within Indigenous communities in urban areas, the interaction of traditional doctors is becoming less common due to the imposition of federal laws. Such federal laws force members of Indigenous communities to seek Western medicine to access other resources in Mexico. For example, to receive benefits from the government such as scholarships for education, food stamps, or subsidized housing Indigenous families and other low-income families in Tepic are required to be enrolled in the *Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social* (IMSS).¹³⁸ Wixárika families receive from the IMSS basic health coverage to qualify for benefits such as scholarships for attending school. Every month, the family attends the local clinic for a consultation. In this consultation, the family receives medical attention from the doctor and a recommendation for their health (based on the standards of a healthy body in Western notions of health). For many families, attending this mandatory consultation provides the children funds to attend school. However, attending consultations with a Western doctor limits Wixárika families from seeking help from their traditional healers. The program PROSPERA requires families from low income to attend a doctor in a clinic in order to receive federal aid.¹³⁹ At *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”) every month the family attends the local clinic to get a check-up with a doctor. Some families rely only on the doctor’s consultation for diagnosis and treatment. For example, Judith, an eighteen-year-old girl, was diagnosed with gastritis and she never attempted to visit the *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”). During ceremony, she was unable to finish her task due to severe pain in the stomach. The *mara’akame* performed a cleansing to relieve the pain.

¹³⁸ https://www.seguro-social-mexicano.or/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI0-b92-7Q2QIVBlkCH3vHQ5sEAAAYASAAEgKdTPD_BwE.

¹³⁹ <https://www.gob.mx/prospera>.

However, she never followed up with the *mara'akame* for treatment. Judith opted to follow the directions of her allopathic doctor.

In the interaction between the *mara'akame* (“medicine man/woman”) and the patient, the *mara'akame* usually performs the *limpia* (cleansing) without much conversation. The presence of the family is inevitable since *limpias* happen in the middle of the patio of the *mara'akame*'s house. In the article “Intercultural Communication Issues During Medical Consultations: The Case of Huichol People in Mexico” by Saul Santos and Karina Verdín Amaro, the authors write about the interaction of Western doctors and members of the Wixárika community. In the interaction between doctors and Wixárika patients, Santos and Verdín Amaro argue that miscommunication usually occurs due to language barriers, the level of interaction of doctors and lack of accessibility to medical services. The authors provide two structures of consultations in which doctors ask patients questions regarding their health and other non-related questions to their health to create a comfortable environment for the patient. However, for Wixárika patients, due to different ways of interaction with traditional healers the levels of communication during consultation develop a hierarchy of powers in health practices. In contemporary medical practices within Wixárika families in the Mexican medical care system, the dynamics of communication vary from a traditional consultation between the *mara'akame* and the patient.

No Western medicinal practices account for the ontological status of plants or the importance of culturally specific knowledge for diseases. In an interaction between the patient-doctor Indigenous patients do not discuss their interactions with *Kaka+yarite/Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”). For instance, although *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) has ontological status in many Mesoamerican communities, the body of Our Mother Corn is not considered a medicinal plant due to the commodification of the plant in current times. Our Mother Corn is a

major agent in the health of Indigenous communities. Placing Our Mother Corn and other medicinal plants at the center of holistic medicine in the Mexican health programs would allow the inclusion of Indigenous traditional ways of curing the body. In many Indigenous communities, such as Nahuatl-speaking communities, Corn is a source of maintenance of the physical and the metaphysical body. According to Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón treatises of 1629, Indigenous communities of Guerrero practiced various rituals related to Corn and healing. However, Corn can also be used in divination as a “remedio general para cosas hurtadas, personas que se asustan, para enfermedades y sus causas, para sus curas y duraciones.”¹⁴⁰ During divination sessions, Corn diviners in Guerrero selected the best-looking Corn kernels to find stolen items, diagnose diseases, and find a cure for specific conditions. With this practice, experts in divination obtained the necessary information to treat patients and provide a solution to their physical concerns. Ruiz de Alarcón explains: “echada la suerte pronostican lo que se le antoja en cuanto a la enfermedad y su causa, y luego para su remedio vuelven a echar la suerte de nuevo, usando siempre en ellas de las invocaciones y conjuros dichos, y en su conformidad aplican el remedio/ once [the diviner] casts the lot they predict whatever comes to mind in terms of the disease and its causes, and then for its remedy [the diviner] casts the lot again, always using the said invocations and spells, and upon their consent they apply the remedy.”¹⁴¹

In divination, Corn was central to the diagnosis of diseases using verbal performances such as “invocaciones y conjuros” (invocations and spells) to predict diseases, the cause and the solution of the illness among children. Thus, the use of Corn in healing practices was a major

¹⁴⁰ Ruiz de Alarcón, “atado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España, intr.,” 167.

¹⁴¹ Translated by the author: “once [the diviner] throws the luck [diviner] predicts whatever wishes in terms of diseases and causes, and then for its remedy [diviner] throws the luck again, using always in the divination said invocations and conjures, and in conformity applies the remedy.” Ruiz de Alarcón, “atado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España, intr.,” 175.

component in first making a diagnosis of the patient and then finding a cure for the diseases. In contemporary Indigenous communities, Corn practices in divination prevail as a source of information. In the article “Divination by Means of Maize,” Yolotl González Torres discusses the use of *Zea mays* seeds (Corn) in divination techniques among multiple Mesoamerican communities. Among contemporary Nahuas from the Huastecan region in Veracruz, González Torres exemplifies the Tlaxchiquetl’s use of Corn kernels to bring messages from “supernatural beings” to people in the Huasteca region.¹⁴² González Torres echoes Ruiz de Alarcón’s description of Corn divination: how the diviners select the best kernels, cast the seeds and reads the fortune of the patient. To show how Corn becomes a tool for divination and thus a tool to diagnose, cure, and treat diseases among Indigenous communities in Mesoamerica, first, we must understand the role of Corn in the life of *macehuallmeh* (Indigenous peoples) in Nahuatl-speaking communities. In Nahua thought, the cultivation of land is part of the cycle of the transferability of energy and preservation of cultural identity.

The human body is part of the universe and within the human body, we find “divine energy.”¹⁴³ From the sun, humans gain *tona* or “heat.” The heat transforms in the body as *chicahualistli* (“energy”) that gives people the vigor and power to act. The energy that the sun transfers to the human body is later carried in the *estli* (“blood”) and continually gets renewed with the consumption of Corn-based meals. Sandstrom argues that with the consumption of Corn, people regenerate this energy. Nahuatl-speaking professor Eduardo de la Cruz echoes this idea by describing how Corn provides *chicahualistli* to accomplish daily activities.¹⁴⁴ In our

¹⁴² Alan R. Sandstrom, *Corn is our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village*, 253–237.

¹⁴³ Sandstrom, *Corn is our Blood*, 246.

¹⁴⁴ Personal interview, Spring 2017.

cultivation ceremony that took place in the Spring of 2017, UCLA students from all three levels (I was part of the second level class at the time) of Nahuatl performed the traditional cultivation ceremonies in which we prepared the *Xinachtli* (seeds for cultivation). During the ceremony, Tlamachtihquetl (“teacher”) Eduardo chanted words in Nahuatl and instructed us to gather four kernels of Corn and blow over them with our breath before putting the seeds in the field. Similar to Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón’s accounts, each student blew a breath of wind over and into the kernels before placing the seeds in the ground. The performance of chants in a cultivation ceremony is common practice among many Indigenous communities in Mexico. In this Nahuatl chant, the *curanderos* (“healers”) take kernels and speak the words before they place the seeds on the ground. At times, the spells, invocations, or chants use metaphorical language that expresses Corn’s true agency and Corn’s ability to act in the life of the people.

Addressing Corn as a whole person reestablishes the ontological relationship invigorating an individual’s intimacy with Corn. Verbal performances and the use of language tropes in chants offer the means to connect with Corn. In divination practices, Corn’s agency helps human persons in predicting, diagnosing, and curing diseases by providing the information necessary to treat the physical and metaphysical aspects of the body. Using ethnographic accounts, Jesús Ruvalcaba examines the use of Corn in Tancoco and Xiloxuchil, Veracruz in his work *Vida cotidiana y consumo de maíz en la huasteca veracruzana*. In his work, the author provides a detailed account of a household and the consumption of Corn among the members of the two communities. Specifically, the author explores the role of women in handling the seeds during preparation.

According to Ruvalcaba, the two communities in Veracruz consume Maize as the main staple and complement their diet with other crops such as beans, squash, herbs, and chile. The

author discusses the role of Corn and its nutritional value and concludes that Corn contains more nutrients than other cereals. However, the author states that Corn is the only source of food that does not contain enough nutrients to complete the diet of its consumers. In Tancoco and Xiloxuchil, Veracruz members continue the consumption of Corn for ceremonial purposes. In *Corn is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village*, by Alan Sandstrom, he writes an ethnographic account of the role of Corn in Amatlán, a Nahuatl-speaking village, in Veracruz, Mexico. His extensive research with the community shows how the consumption of Corn is central to the people in the village despite the low economic profits that the crop brings to families. He analyzes the economic and cultivation practices in Amatlán to find paradoxes in the production of Corn. Sandstrom comments that Nahuatl people “use Corn as a metaphor to distinguish themselves from non-Indians, as the phrase ‘Corn is our blood.’” More than a metaphor, Corn is the main component that provides the necessary food supply to live and the cultural components to assure longevity of an Indigenous identity. Indigenous communities grow Corn because the crop gives them cultural meaning in the process of relating to the land, thus a healing framework that centers the body of Our Mother Corn in healing practices.

Colonial Practices with Corn

Tracing practices of Corn from Colonial times, Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón in the “*Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España*,” an ethnographic account completed in 1629, Alarcón documented healing practices using Corn. Although the manuscript was designed to incriminate Natives and their ceremonial practices, today the text offers a way to analyze ancestral practices among Nahuatl-speaking people in Guerrero. The six treatises offer detailed accounts of the Native cosmology: especially spells related to the cultivation and hunting, divinitory practices, and healing practices.

Even though the document explores the practices of Indigenous practices in the early seventeenth century, more than a century after the conquest, text offers accounts of Nahuatl-language performances, including of chants and spells, during these ceremonial practices. The following passage exemplifies how Nahua communities of Guerrero in the 1620s conceptualized Corn:

Nomatca néhuatl nitlamacazqui; tla xihualhuia nohueltiuh tonacacihuatl: ye nimitzoncahuaz in nochalchiuhcontzinco; nauhcampa xitlaquitzi, ámo timopinauhtiz motech nihíyocuíz, motech niceyaz in niycnopiltzintli, in nicenteotl, in tinohueltiuh, titonacacihuatl.¹⁴⁵

The above passage describes the relation between *curanderos* (“healers”) and seeds. First the curandero “*Yo en persona, el espiritado y sacerdotal de ídolos y encantadores*” refers to the seed as *hermana* (“sister”) and he/she asks for *mantenimiento* (“maintenance”) because the seeds will provide *aliento* (“breath”) and *alivio*, (“relief” or “wellness”). The chants end with “*mi hermana que eres mi mantenimiento*” (“my sister you are my maintenance”). In this Nahua chant, the curanderos take kernels and say the words before they place the seeds in the ground. Using a metaphorical language, the healers place the seeds in the land in return for wellness.¹⁴⁶ From the perspective of a Zapotec-speaking community in the highlands of Oaxaca, Berg Jr. demonstrates how the community conceives land as an extension of their self. Because the labor of men and women in the Cornfield shows the commitment of community members who rely on their collective labor to obtain sustenance.¹⁴⁷ The *Waxata* (“Cornfield”) is conceptualized as a key place and space for the purpose of bringing to fruition their crops. Their commitment to the land

¹⁴⁵ Ruiz de Alarcón, “atado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España, intr.,” 136.

¹⁴⁶ Ruiz de Alarcón, “atado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España, intr.,” 131.

¹⁴⁷ Berg Jr., “Land: An Extension of the Peasant's Ego,” 1975.

exceeds the economic gains; people take care of the milpa because the milpa offers the connections with their ancestral beings and assures the survival of communities. Berg Jr.'s model accounts for people's attitudes towards land from a Native perspective, as a space to cultivate Corn and reiterates their attitudes toward the land as part a key component in the health of people.

In Wixárika ways of knowing, *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) is central to the life of families because *Tatéi Takutsi Nakawé* (“Our Mother Growth”) cultivated Corn. She gifted her daughters, all five Corn maids, to the first farmer to begin planting. *Yuawima* (Blue Corn) became a human person to stay with Watakame and began Wixárika genealogy (Chapter 1). Many Wixárika families conceive Corn as kin and thus, throughout their life exchange offerings and devote their labor to strengthen kinship. I participated in my first Corn ceremony in 2015. During this ceremony, I learned about the importance of Corn in the life of people and how mothers foster kinship through Corn-based meals and offerings to Corn relatives (Chapter 1). The *mara’akame* (“medicine man/woman”) in the Corn ceremony chants and uses specialized language to speak directly with the ancestors. In the first ceremony, the *mara’akame* chants during the night and uses ceremonial language to speak with entities to ask for their blessings in the cultivation of Corn.¹⁴⁸ In my own ethnographic fieldwork, I experienced how the family borrows land every year to cultivate their Native Corn. Wixárika’s views on health, closely relate to Corn. For a family, cultivating Corn provides the essence of health. Families describe how cultivation assures the health of family members. Sometimes their Cornfield is only big enough to cultivate and harvest the Corn for next year’s ceremonies.

¹⁴⁸ Personal communication with Felipa Rivera during fieldwork Fall 2016.

Sickness in Wixárika terms involves the interaction of *Kaka+yarite* and *Kaka+ma* (“Elder Ancestors”), especially *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) relatives. Because most of the sickness in Wixárika families come from the lack of interaction among people, *Kaka+yarite* and *Kaka+ma* cause families to become ill when their relations and kinship are strained. In modern times, many urban Wixárika choose to follow the Wixárika *yeiyarieya* (Wixárika path) and cultivate Corn in the traditional way. For an inclusion of Wixárika healing practices, Our Mother Corn must be centered as a relative and major agent in the health of community members and not only as thought of as a food staple. Additionally, Our Mother Corn and other medicinal plant should be centered in holistic medicine in Mexican health programs. Kinship ties between *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and many Wixárika families assures the health and well-being of all relatives.

My own experience with healing practices and healing devices through the interaction with *mara’akate* (pl.) (“medicine men/women”) and families who centered their existence on ritual, I began exploring more on how knowing and learning from cross-cultural healing practices benefit my communities, especially communities of color trying to overcome intergenerational trauma. I began my healing modalities with learning about rocks and crystals. Later, I learned from plants and began my relationship with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) through ceremonies and agricultural practices. On more than one occasion, I utilized medicinal plants to cure minor diseases. For instance, last year, a healer from Tijuana gave me recipe for cleansing the liver using parts of the body of Our Mother Corn as a medicine (e.g. the silk for urinary and track infections).¹⁴⁹ This recipe is a common treatment for kidney disease in

¹⁴⁹ The following is the recipe:

Ingredients:

-Corn silk

Mexico. I have seen in many botánicas little bags of the silk for sale. While using the recipe, I witnessed the effective ways this part of the plant cleanses the body.

The silk or *K+p+ri* among Wixárika ways of knowing connects the physical body of Our Mother Corn with the metaphysical. The silk is the first sign that pollination has occurred. Our Mother Corn communicates through the silk to alert people about the beginning and end of the cycle. The silk tells you about the color of the kernels and the stage of formation (younger or older stages depending on the texture and color of the silk). To clarify the power and importance of the silk of Our Mother Corn, the silk could be compared to the umbilical cord of a baby attached to the placenta. The healing properties to my knowledge relate to the cleansing of the urinary tracks and help pass kidney stones or when suffering from kidney infections. I do not know more properties of Our Mother Corn other than what many members of the community continue saying in our conversations: Our Mother Corn provides us with the health for our body to be in balance. During pollination in the cycle of Our Mother Corn, at night families collect pollen to use in ceremonies and “paint/write” the energies of Our Mother Corn in the body. Felipa explains that during ceremony the mara’akame (“medicine man/woman”) does the same with the energy of Our Mother Corn after the dance:

No se si sí te das cuenta comadre cuando se termina la ceremonia del Tambor al día siguiente cuando ya se termina la danza, queman el elote y antes de quemarse mi apá le quita todo con su *muwieri*, le quita todo lo de arriba y que viene siendo las energías y se lo pone en una jicarita....antes de retirar sus guardianes, antes de acomodarlos en sus lugares, es cuando mi papa ya nos llama ya para hacer fila por que nos comparte un poquito de su aprendizaje de su sabiduría, bueno que es el mismo, pero bueno él lo hace con buena voluntad o por que quiere que nos quede algo en nosotros pues y aprender algo de él....entonces le gusta compartir un

-Water

Procedure:

Boil the water and add the corn silk. Drink water for two days as a cold drink.

poquito de su *'uxa* para que nosotros también aprendamos algo por eso es cuando hacemos fila y ahí nos pinta con su muwiari

I do not know [comadre] if you noticed when the Tambor Ceremony ends the following day, when the dance is over, they burn the corn cobs and before burning it [the Corncobs] my dad takes away all with his feathers, he takes away the top that is the energies and he places the energies in the gourd... before he takes the guardians away, before putting them in their places, that is when my dad calls us to make a line because he shares a little bit of his knowledge and wisdom, that's the same, well he does that with good intentions/will or because he wants us to keep something in us to learn something from him.... So, he likes to share a little of his *'uxa* so that we also learn something that's why he makes a line and there is when he paints us with his feathers ¹⁵⁰

Looking at a cross-cultural approach to healing modalities benefited my own understanding of how I wish to treat my body. In many instances, healing modalities have become a way to restore my relations with my ancestors and my living relatives to recover from intergenerational trauma. In a healing framework using Our Mother Corn as the epicenter of health provides the physical well-being of my body through ritual from cultivation to harvesting. Additionally, the body of the plant offers an alternative treatment to cure diseases related to the kidney. Additionally, Our Mother Corn offers an alternative framework to gain the balance to maintain a healthy body when people conceive Corn more than just a plant.

In this chapter, my main goal was to reimagine a future in healing practices in Mexico. In this future, I envision Our Mother Corn and other medicinal plants as a major agent in the health of community members to improve Mexican health programs. My research demonstrated how kinship relations with Our Mother Corn adds much to our understanding of healing. In the history of Mexico, many Indigenous communities embraced the importance of Native Corn. Today, many families in rural Mexico continue cultivating Corn for ceremonial purposes. In Mexico some healing practices have become part of the commodification of healing. Indigenous

¹⁵⁰ Recorded conversation, November 3, 2019.

healers in many communities have opened up their knowledge to share their practices. For instance, the role of mara'akame (medicine woman or man) inside Wixárika communities has been shared with people outside those communities. In some communities, sharing knowledge has led many apprentices to replace non-Indigenous groups. As Wixárika become more vocal about the appropriation of their healing practices they see the efficacy of Wixárika's knowledge of the human body to effectively cure. In Y+arata, the Rivera family is becoming aware of the impact and power of healing outside the community.

I came in contact with Wixárika healing practices during my first research trips to Tepic. I have participated in many ceremonies and rituals; I came to understand the efficacy of healing traditions in my own experience with healers inside the community. My ethical ways to approach healing traditions inside the community emerged from 1) my ongoing relationship with Wixárika families and 2) my willingness to accept the place I can potentially have inside the community. I am the goddaughter of Papá Costo y Mamachali. When they invite me to ceremony I gladly participate in the *fiestas*. When they need my advice, support, or guidance I provide it without hesitation. When they want to keep secrecy on certain practices, I am willing to accept without questioning. They accepted me as part of the family, and I accepted my role inside their family. In this way we have made kinship in a reciprocal manner. I have been entrusted with the responsibility to provide the space and facilitate platforms for the family to continue their sovereignty and their rights to share their knowledge. This dissertation is a proof of my allegiance to Wixárika families, their philosophy, and land pedagogy.

As a Mexican citizen, I have seen through my family and their genealogy a long history of colonialism and mixed-race identities. Indigenous ideologies have been entangled with and disguised behind colonizer's beliefs. My background and personal experiences have been

instrumental in finding ways to heal and harness my power as a young woman of color. Without a doubt, my background and familial genealogy has made it easy for me to come into close contact with Wixárika families and to become active in Wixárika sovereignty with all of my capabilities. As a non-Wixárika person, I am always very clear to acknowledge the fact that even though I look like many in woman in *Y+rata* (“Place to grow greener”), my multi-ethnic identity is entangled with present and past migration histories. I am a product of a detribalized and migrant family from Oaxaca. Although while growing up, I did not think about Indigenous identity or commodification of Indigenous practices. I followed my grandmother’s teachings and what she taught my mother and my sister. My focus was to understand my place in my family as a guest in a new land. I understand why I looked and felt different from other people in Sinaloa. I isolated myself because I was different and by this, I mean that I looked ethnically different. I was surrounded by white European Mexicans many of them from French and German ancestry who came during the 1800s and inhabited the state. In *El Tablón*, I was able to experience the land around me, to feel how the landscape looks at us. I was in contact with fields of different crops and plants.

My understanding of relationality as a young girl came from those experiences with the land and mother’s desires to move to a rural area. I learned from the seasons how colors turned from greens to grays and how the flowers bloom every season. I felt the land speaking to me not in a metaphorical way but as an actual form of communication, like many botanists and scholars have been demonstrated in the literature on how plant’s communicate.¹⁵¹ When I went to the

¹⁵¹ Chamovitz, *What a Plant Knows*; Monica Gagliano, *This Spoke the Plant: A Remarkable Journey of Groundbreaking Scientific Discoveries and Personal Encounters with Plants* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2018); Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011); Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the teaching of Plants* (2013); Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How they Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World* (Greystone Books, 2016).

field for the first time, my research took a drastic route. I became involved in the communication of Our Mother Corn to learn about the knowledge system of one community, their survival in the Mexican state, to stabilize my relations with ancestors, and to re-center my practices with the land. This is when I felt that I was back in a familiar landscape and this place was not Oaxaca nor Mexico City, nor El Tablón nor Pico Rivera. The landscape was in Y+rata in the ever-last green of the city that changes seasons only to change crops for the *fiesta*.

Poema V

It took 100 years
Three generations
Three women displaced from their land
One broken family
Multiple brothers in jail
Some illegal bodies
One soldier in war
Two in war amongst themselves
One deportation
One marriage
Years of cries, some smiles
Many separations
Rivers of tears
Two type diabetes
Two pillars down
One standing
Tons of hate and regret
Just to understand that we open the path while opening the heart
I will be the last one, the last one being ashamed, afraid, in pain, restrained, in sickness,
in war, colonized!

I will be the last.
It only took 100 years
Three generations
Five women
one daughter!

-March 2018

CONCLUSION: 'ITSANAXA

In this dissertation, I discuss ideas on healing in urban Wixárika families and the future of healing practices in the city. I talk about the performance of healing practices among Wixárika families and *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”). I exemplify Wixárika body and land and the choreography of the pilgrimage to conceptualize Wixárika body as an extension of land. Finally, I grapple with ideas of Wixárika relatedness and being. Although this dissertation was in many ways a body of work to bring awareness of my own positionality and intersubjective position in the field of study, this dissertation was also a medium to think about moves of resistance. First, by examining Wixárika philosophy, especially in terms of axiology, epistemology, and ontology and how theory and knowledge validate Wixárika experiences in the natural world from an objective and scientific way. Wixárika families have been participating in the production of Traditional Ecological Knowledge since time immemorial. Their practices shed light to multiple ways to understand human and non-human interactions, especially with the plant world. The interactions between humans and plants affect the well-being of families, the health of their ecosystems, eating habits, survival of species, and ultimately food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture, relations, kinship, and more.

My collaboration with the Rivera family and members of the Zitakua community, developed and maintained through sustainable relations with the Wixárika community. My research will continue the path of repatriation of knowledge and Indigenous visibility in the academia by collaborating with Wixárika scholars and thinkers. In my role in future research, I will continue to advocate for human and non-human interactions. My research serves to bring back the autonomy and sovereignty of the community by allowing members of the community to show the importance and impact of their practices on a global and local scale. On the global

scale, this dissertation discusses issues of agriculture, language revitalization efforts, and repatriation of knowledge and sovereignty of Wixárika families. In Mexico in 2020, new laws currently dictate the future of Native seeds. Politicians passed a bill that granted agriculturists the right to cultivate *Maíz criollo* without the fear of cultivating near GMO fields. Corporations such as Monsanto have lost their power over the types of seeds to be cultivated in Mexico. This development represents a giant leap in Mexican food ways, sovereignty and sustainable agriculture. Many Mexican citizens realized the impact of GMO and the consumption of GMO in corn tortillas on the health of people and the ecosystems. Although corn was domesticated in Mesoamerica around 5,500 years ago, today more than ever, communities of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples advocate for the diversity of Native Corn in Mexico.¹⁵²

On local scale, the significance of this dissertation lies in the idea that Indigenous groups in Mexico continue to foster relationships with many beings, including plants. Wixárika view plants as sentient beings with the ability to make an impact on the life of people. Plants communicate with people using a unique language. Specifically, *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) communicates using the language of growth, acoustics, form, and body in the field. In the laboratory, corn “chirps” when tested using “sensitive laser instruments.”¹⁵³ The vibratory sounds of corn were captured in a laboratory in England by Monica Gagliano. Our Mother Corn vibrates and communicate through sound messages of life and maturity. Similar to corn, trees have the ability to transmit vibrations when, for example, they need water or sun.¹⁵⁴ According to Peter Wohlleben, trees are interconnected with other trees to form a network of connections

¹⁵² Staller, *Maize Cobs and Cultures*, 159–163.

¹⁵³ Gagliano, *This Spoke the Plant*; Monica Gagliano, “The Flowering of Plant Bioacoustics: How and Why,” *Behavioral Ecology* 24, no. 4 (2013): 800–801.

¹⁵⁴ Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees*.

through their roots. Scientists have recorded the vibrations of trees and plants to conclude that the vibrations correspond to language. In my research, I never utilized any special recorder to document the vibrations of the roots of Corn growing in my research. However, people inside the community know about the sound of Our Mother Corn growing, specifically in two scenarios 1) the germination of the seeds and 2) the sound of the wind moving the plants. In my audio and video recording, I captured the performance of Our Mother Corn dancing to the vibrations of the wind and the sound that the plants make when they were green and when they dried. I saw how happy people felt when the *Waxa* (“Cornstalk”) grew tall and green. Late, I saw them clear the field at the end of the season when the plants reach their final stages of maturity as the sounds of movement with the wind intensified. The feelings of people followed the season of Our Mother Corn.

Tatéi Niwetsika (“Our Mother Corn”) and her body contribute to the well-being of Wixárika families. In the consumption for medicinal purposes, the properties of Our Mother Corn provide myriad of culinary representations, especially *Nawá* (“Corn-based fermented drink”) for offerings. Many plants have the ability to transmit their healing properties through the ingestion of their bodies. For this reason, *Taté Niwetsika* is at the center of Wixárika healing practices, sustainable agriculture, and ceremonial life in many families within the community. In other countries such as in Peru, the scientific community continues looking for the healing properties of Native seeds. For instance, purple Corn contains antioxidants in their pigments with different healing properties.¹⁵⁵ The archeological record indicates that people in Mesoamerica

¹⁵⁵ https://peru21.pe/cultura/alicia-medina-ingeniera-investigadora-del-maiz-morado-el-maiz-morado-aparte-de-alimentarnos-nos-cura-noticia/?fbclid=IwAR1NqvCdNoCr-wktWgKFKYVn44RWHgoNSNKyxWHQSoTxr1hq_xEf8pkO69U.

consumed tortillas since 700 BC.¹⁵⁶ The moment Native Corn became a commodity in Mexico the production of corn in a large-scale agriculture changed the dynamics of people and plants interaction. Every day commodities takes away the agency of the plants and transform Our Mother Corn into a malleable products. While the malleable product or a simple tortilla does not provide any benefits, the simple act of consuming also makes profit through its commercialization. Native communities in Mesoamerica have been able to maintain the agency of Corn and the effects of consuming Corn as a source of vitality for hundreds of years. My research posits the idea to re-orient our cognitive orientation and to begin seeing Corn as a relative again. Furthermore, we see plants in general as species that form part of our network of connections because we exist in relation to plants—even though we do not see it, plants grow around us every day. In the dissertation *Dancing Breath: Ceremonial Performance Practice, Environment, and Personhood in a Muskogee Creek Community* by Ryan Koon, the author explains how plants communicate through “corporeal movements and enactions.” In Muskogee Creek cosmology, beings possess the ability to breathe and communicate using a plant communication mode.¹⁵⁷ Thus, actions such as chemical exchanges of gasses in the photosynthesis, foster inter-species connections and communication.

In the book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants* by botanist and Native thinker, Robin Wall Kimmerer, the author expresses the role of a scientific and Indigenous perspective. Kimmerer postulates that Indigenous knowledge does not contradict scientific research, but instead completes it in many different ways. From a Native’s perspective, the relationship between humans and plants emerges from

¹⁵⁶ Morton, 2014, 12.

¹⁵⁷ Koons, *Dancing Breath*, 309.

basic principles in ecology. These principles form part of the worldview of many Indigenous communities because of how they relate with non-humans, a relationship in which plants occupy a very important position. For instance, the very intricate process of photosynthesis teaches us much about reciprocity. In my research, I extend this idea by theorizing that when Wixárika center their practices to include other Our Mother Corn as part of their kin, their notions of kinship and reciprocity are extended as well. By doing this, many Wixárika depart from Anthropocentric and Zoocentric perspectives, placing plants as major agents in their lives.

Plants help generate oxygen inside our homes, and in turn, we support the life of a plant as we produce carbon dioxide. Additionally, we create an interspecies network of connections in which two species maintain communication. Finally, we learn the value of caring for a plant. In doing this labor, our daily performances in caring for a plant brings key benefits: 1) the feeling of supporting a non-human being's survival; and 2) our own increased health inside our home. This idea of a garden might not be far from our reach. Many people in California are opting for sustainable agriculture through gardening in community spaces. In times of pandemic, gardening is become a practice to keep the sanity in lockdown protocols. In communities such as Pomona, the current land where I am a guest, people have built many community gardens. These community gardens have helped to reduce crime by forty percent.¹⁵⁸ The benefits of cultivating the land on a small scale are immense. In my own gardening practices, I am preparing to cultivate some herbs and flowers in my planting beds. I am also collaborating with Felipa in her family's field by helping her fund the cultivation this year. Finally, I am pleased to report that I am now able to keep my Rosemary alive on my porch. I am attentive of the landscape of Pomona and the rich citrus trees that grow around us. I understand the movement of the sun and the

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.pomonahope.org/what-we-do/current-programs/community-garden/x>

position of my Rosemary that fosters a good environment for her development. I may not be fluent in the language of Rosemary, but I pay attention to all the growing cues. Devoting time to my Rosemary decentralizes my position as a human and raises my attention to non-human beings.

My research in Tepic among Wixárika provided the awareness of other important species around me. Alternative healing practices in Mexico using medicinal plants are becoming more common. Many families—Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike—recognize the benefits of Mexican herbs and plants. I envision a world in which the tortillas and other products can be made with Native seeds and Our Mother Corn is central in the health of people. Those two practices will bring food sovereignty, reciprocity, and access to land to family-based agriculture. My research will continue to advocate the repatriation of Native seeds to Indigenous communities. Additionally, I will continue my collaboration with the *Proyecto Taniuki* (“Our Language Project”) to promote Wixárika language in urban spaces. My research will continue addressing my intersubjective identity and my role inside the community of study. I am a product of colonization and colonization processes. My research within Wixárika families helped me frame my experiences in Mexico and in the United States. My family’s experiences through immigration and displacement are a product of liberal and neoliberal politics. My dissertation and this research in Mexico provided me a lens through which to understand my experiences and the experiences of my family. I embody many stories within my body and skin. My poetry and the art I created alongside my dissertation provided a framework in which I made sense of who I am and where I am going as a scholar.

My future plans as a scholar are to continue my collaboration with the *Proyecto Taniuki* (“Our Language Project”) and Wixárika families. For the years ahead, I hope to find funding

opportunities from project educators to maintain our weekly meetings. However, due to the global pandemic, the project is adjusting to new teaching styles and new forms of reaching the community. We are currently rethinking our curriculum to fit the new demands of online teaching. Additionally, I plan to turn my dissertation into a book in which I wish to highlight my methodology to encourage decolonial methodologies and the role of art in academic research.

Poema VI

I saw my mother again
And I felt her body
I felt her body, not like feeling her physicality, but like embodying
I embodied her for a second
From the tip of her toes to the top of her head
I felt her growth, her pain, her anguish, her happiness, and her content
She didn't have to speak to me
I felt her body and I knew how she felt
I felt her grow, I remembered how it felt to be in her womb
I felt her feet like her roots crawling up with pain from the ground
I felt her anguish, like growing from the inside to her extremities
I felt her happiness, dancing with acoustics of the wind
I felt her content, seeing me back, feeling me there
I felt her body
This time I felt her physicality and the pain was there
I felt her body and I held her for a second
We embraced and with the wind we danced together
Embracing!
We did not feel any more anger
We did not feel any more regret
We felt each other and our memory came back
We remembered we were once one!
I saw my mother and I felt her body
I knew it was all to her and all of for her to me
I felt her body and it was during the strawberry moon after that
I decided to change
Reconfigure my growth and spark the change
Grow a tassel, spike!
I saw her as me and she saw me as hers!

-June 2020

APPENDIX A

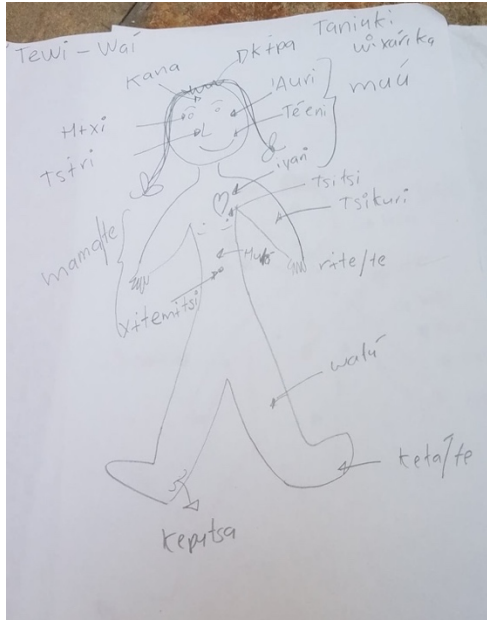


Figure 2.1

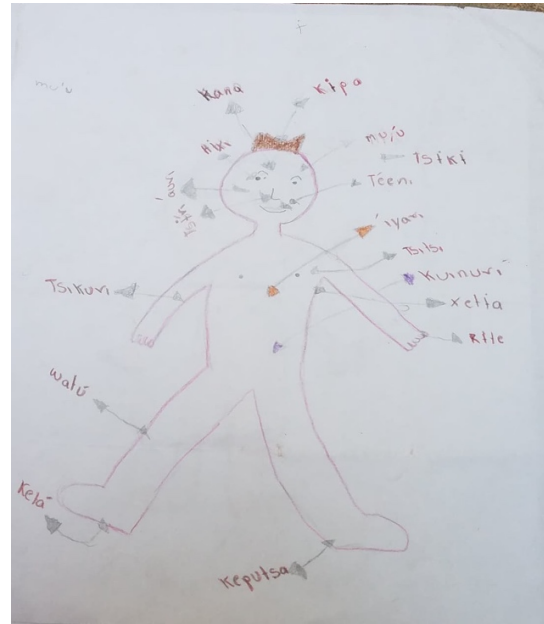


Figure 2.2

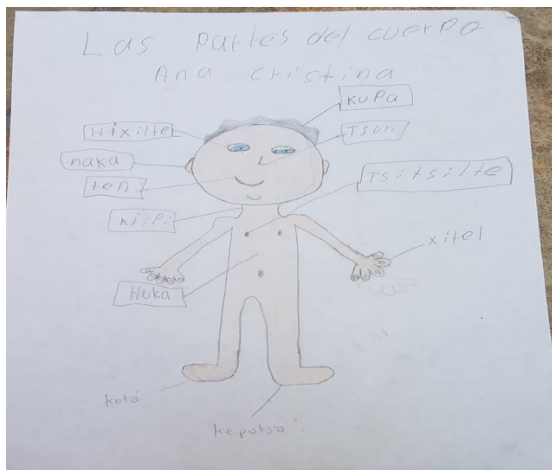


Figure 2.3

APPENDIX B



Figure 2.4



Figure 2.5



Figure 2.6



Figure 2.7



Figure 2.8



Figure 2.9

APPENDIX C



We are on day 5 of our 12 day sacred Wiricuta pilgrimage. Traveling with the huichol people through the desert we are 5 days in and not much sleep yet. First day was fasting from food and water for 24 hours. The Next two driving and walking, making offerings in their sacred sites and dancing all through the night to traditional music. Yesterday we arrived to Wiricuta , their most sacred mountain in the Sierra madre range. We are led by the marakames - spiritual

Figure 3.0

My plant man [redacted] fresh back from working with the Huichol will serve rape' and cool healing vibes tomorrow night! Come on by if you know what's good and POWERFUL! 😊💜🙏



FRI, JUN 1

Plants, Sound & Ancient Wisdom:
Friday Evenings w/ Manaòs

INTERESTED

Figure 3.1

APPENDIX D

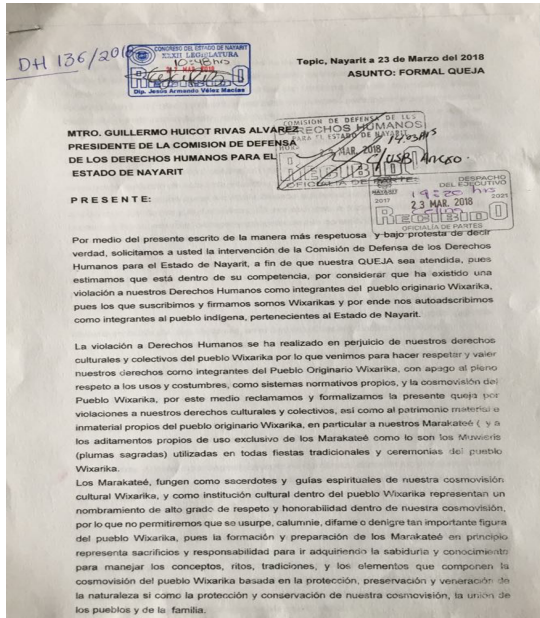


Figure 3.2

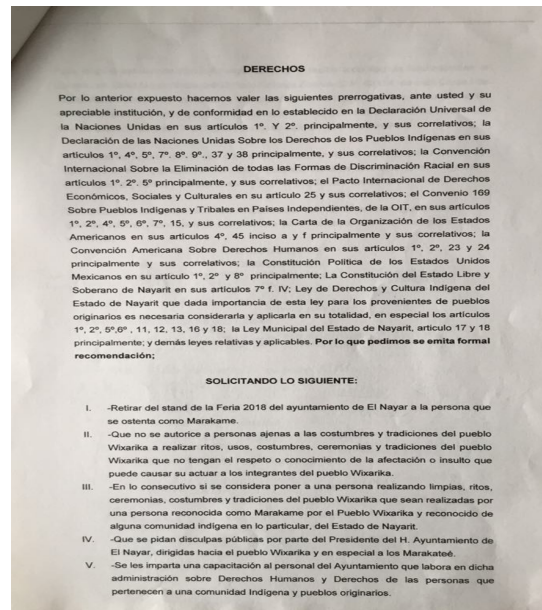


Figure 3.3

APPENDIX E

In the many of the dialogues with women in Y+rata, I learned about their relationship with *Tatéi Niwetsika* (“Our Mother Corn”) and sickness. In the following excerpts of interviews with Mama Chali and my *comadres* Julia and Felipa Rivera Lemus, they express some ideas.

Rosalía Lemus de la Rosa:

Mama Chali: El día que lo presenta anoche ya soñamos, en la noche

Cyndy: ¿Y cómo sueña cuando seña con el nombre Yula? ¿Cómo sueña? Ya ve cuando un niño le puso ese nombre ¿Cómo soñó?

Mama Chali: Pues uno sueña cuando ya está grande la milpita Yula cuando ya está creciendo

Cyndy: Pero es lo que sueña así

Mama Chali: Por eso vas a soñar la milpita chiquita que ya está creciendo Yula

Cyndy: Así

Felipa: Ya va para arriba ya creciendo ese se llama Yula

Cyndy: Y luego y el Tula me dijo que ese como soñaba

Mama Chali: ¿Tula?

Cyndy: Si se acuerda que me lo contó una vez que soñaba con el Tula como soñó

Mama Chali: Tula soñé la milpa llegaba el viento fuerte ese sonaba la milpa Tulalalala, con el viento, luego cuando viene la lluvia ahí viene también se dice mamamama eso significa, si sueñas así le pones nombre así

Cyndy: Entonces Tulalala es el sonido que hace y Yula es cuando ya ves la milpa creciendo

Mama Chali: Cuando está creciendo porque cuando la siembra lo vas a sembrar ese se llama hechuma ya cuando y si es mujer y ya cuando ya nace dice cuando ya nace tiene el nombre neika

Cyndy: Entonces a ese le llaman neika

Mama Chali: Neika cuando al primera está naciendo, la primera se mira nacido así se llama neika y ya después Yula cuando ya está grande, cuando ya más grande hueleme

Cyndy: Esa no me la había dicho hueleme, si me lo dijo, ah si aquí lo anote

(11:18-11:21 Minuto)

Cyndy: Wueleme es cuando esta

Mama Chali: Cuando está creciendo más tantito alta, con la hoja mira así

Cyndy: Creciendo, con hojas

Mama Chali: Ese se llama Hueleme

Cyndy: Entonces ya va a ver la milpa crecida así y luego cal sigue

Mama Chali: Cuando ya está más grande ya pues tiene muchos nombres

Cyndy: ¿Cuál?

Mama Chali: Cuando ya está más creciendo se llama sauhamoa

Cyndy: Sauhamoa cuando está más crecida

Mama Chali: Cuando está más crecida cuando ya las hojas hacen como que esta suelto ya

Felipa: Como el que esta allá arriba

Cyndy: Si, que tenía muchos, ¿Cuántas hojas tienen una milpa Machali?

Mama Chali: Son 4

Cyndy: Cuando tiene

Mama Chali: Uno acá, uno acá

Cyndy: Pero total

Mama Chali: Cuando ya quiere espigar es Samuama atrasito se llama chaculoma porque ya está espigando ya un solo sale para espigar así se llama chekuloma
Cyndy: Y después de ese
Mama Chali: Después ya se suelta muayama
Cyndy: Es cuando ya está espigando verdad
Mama Chali: Ya se espigo ya se soltó todo muayama
Cyndy: Ya completa la espiga salió
Mama Chali: De muayama sigue tukima
Cyndy: Esa no me lo sabía tukima
Mama Chali: T+kima en el cuándo ya está espigando ya no sale chiquitito, amarillito con la espiga
Felipa: Es polen
Cyndy: Es polen
Mama Chali: Ese llama
Cyndy: Nombre T+kima
Mama Chali: T+kima
Cyndy: Me está diciendo los nombres de la milpa
Cyndy: Esta chiquita la foto
Felipa: Esta chiquita
Mama Chali: Tekima cuando ya da tekima ya va a empezar saliendo el elotito
Cyndy: Pero primero le va a salir el pelito este y luego
Mama Chali: Ya salen los elotitos chiquititos
Cyndy: Estoy grabando y escribiendo, para que no se nos olvidó porque si no, para volverle a agarrar la marcha
Mama Chali: y ya cuando ya salen todos los tekima ya empiezan a salir todos los elotitos, primero sale el cabellito, ese se llama kupaima
Felipa: Ese si supe
Cyndy: Si supimos
Mama Chali: K+paima
Cyndy: Cuando le sale el cabello
Mama Chali: Cuando ya más está saliendo mucho se llama sitaima
Cyndy: Cuando ya sale más
Mama Chali: Si cuando ya sale
Cyndy: Y luego, nomás aquí en la ceremonia, yo no soy presumida, aquí nomas me conocen como sitaima, eso es ceremonial aquí entre nosotros
Mama Chali: Ese es nombre mujer fijate
Cyndy: Y de hombre es
Mama Chali: Zita+ma pues, es aparte, aparte hombre parte niña
Cyndy: y como sabe que es para la niña
Mama Chali: Eso es lo que estoy diciendo es de la niña
Cyndy: Ah bueno
Mama Chali: Entonces cuando ya está secándose bien ese significa Saulima
Cyndy: Cuando el elote ya está secándose
Mama Chali: Ya ahí murió nomas ya
Cyndy: Ya, hasta
Mama Chali: Luego cuando ya están se ponen los elotes todo se cae los pelitos se llama suwima

Felipa: Suwima yo me acordaba ese es el nombre pero no me acordaba que era
Mama Chali: Es Suwima, no es karipuwe
(19:02-19:06 Minuto) Suwima ese todo, suwima
Cyndy: Y no traigo mi la del desierto que traigo nomas para cuando voy aprender allá en Wirikuta, pues si le entiendo a la letra porque mire
Esta bien, esas también son letras pero deben de escribir bien
Cyndy: Bueno después de suwima y dijo que era puro mujer verdad mujer, ya se secó el elote, pelos secos
Mama Chali: Suwima, ya después sigue saulema ahí llega nomas
Cyndy: Saulema y ya muy bien, y ahora de hombre si verdad porque también hay de hombre
Mama Chali: Pues de hombre no hay muchos como 3 o 4 nomas
Cyndy: ¿Y porque hay más de mujer?
Felipa: Así de mujer te puede decir de muchas formas, de hombres es un poquito complicado nadamas hay dos nombres especiales para ellos
Mama Chali: Si, es mucho nombre para las niñas, pues el niño
Cyndy: El niño vamos a ver
Mama Chali: El niño es cuando uno sueña si sueña un águila ahí le busca se va a llamar huelika, yo soñé así el hijo de María se llama huelika tama, adentro del kaliwe estaba volando así estaba, así soñé, a veces sueña en que hacemos el papelito chino como flor a veces sueña ese se llama se va a llamar sutele
Cyndy: Ese es el que le ponen a al becerrito, así se llama la Ixchel
Felipa: Puede decir sutulima de mujer o sutulime de hombre
Mama Chali: También ahí va, (21:50-21:59 minuto), entonces también vas a soñar un niño igual vas a soñar la milpa ya tiene elotito pues se va a llamar sitakame, también cuando ya está matizando se va a llamar saulieme pues ahí va de todos modos todo parejo, saulieme y después cuando ya lo van a pizcar vas a soñar kulame
Cyndy: Y ahí sueña unas personas pizcando
Mama Chali: Eso significas kulame, porque lo va abrir y lo va copinar ese kulame, mucho frio
Cyndy: Por el calor
Mama Chali: Yo quiero mandar todo que se me quite
Cyndy: Le compramos un champo y se lo traemos
Mama Chali: Champo
Cyndy: No le sirve
Mama Chali: Ya me han comprado varias veces
Cyndy: Cual compra, el que yo compro le quita todo a la Ixchel
Mama Chali: Pues eso significa y luego si va a ser niño vas a soñar muiweme
Cyndy: Muiweme ¿Y ese que significa?
Mama Chali: Significa muiweme antes que va a la cacería con las flechas mataban a los venados con flechas, con arco eso se llama muiweme
Cyndy: Como cazador
Mama Chali: Ándale como cazador, eso significa y luego es otro modo tiene lo niño, luego significa mulame cuando lo vas a pizcar lo vas a quebrar, el caña jote
Cyndy: Cuando como
Mama Chali: Cuando vas a pizcar lo vas a quejar el caña jote, eso significa mulame
Cyndy: De la milpa verdad
Mama Chali: De la milpa

Cyndy: Mulame

Mama Chali: Si

Cyndy: Nos podría, si es que estoy grabando yo disculpa, gracias

Mama Chali: Eso significa y luego vas si es niño vas a soñar una pluma ojo de dios le pone muwiel, así vasa soñar, vas a ver junto con abuelito o junto con el maizal, es lo que vas a soñar y entonces muwetema y vasa a soñar ojo de dios chiculitema, esos son nombres de niño

Cyndy: y a todo esto usted sueña en la noche

Mama Chali: Si

Cyndy: Plumas que le llegan, los ojos de dios

Mama Chali: Ándale

Cyndy: O a las personas pizcando

Mama Chali: Si

Cyndy: O al cazador a la persona que está cazando y ya ahí de lo que se dice se hace el nombre verdad

Mama Chali: Si ahí lo vas buscar, así soñé así se va a llamar, así va a tener su nombre, si, le faltaba o ya lo voy a terminar

Cyndy: No, faltaban nombres, no pues nomas me faltaban del maiz que es lo que estábamos

Felipa: Nos faltó marijovita

Mama Chali: Chaculoma

Cyndy: Y esa que significa

Mama Chali: Esa me faltó

Cyndy: Chaculome

Felipa: Chaculoma

Mama Chali: Porque cuando va a espigar uno solo la milpa pero así siempre con 4 hojas así envuelto hasta que ya se suelta y ya se espiga

Cyndy: Esa es la chaculema, cuando ya está soltándose para espigar y mayuama y tukima te había faltado porque esa cuando sale lo amarillito

Mama Chali: Pues cuando vas a pizcar, pues tú vas a soñar cuando están pizcando el maíz azulito pues ahí le buscan, un día te voy a presentar a una niña con ese nombre, se lo ponen

Cyndy: Se acuerda en la mañana

Mama Chali: Ándale se acuerda en la mañana

Felipa: En cuando despiertes

Cyndy: Porque si no ya no se te olvida

Mama Chali: Si, así se llama y cuando

Cyndy: Y todas las partes de la milpa se las sabe cómo se llama las hojas o la raíz, hay que empezar con la raíz

Mama Chali: (28:07-28:12 minuto) Que está saliendo la hoja, sumacha y cuando está agarrando así la milpa eso se llama tubima porque está agarrando así su tulo

Cyndy: Cuál es su tulo la raíz

Mama Chali: La raíz de donde esta agarrado la milpa la tierra, en la yuyenaca, ese se llama tulima

Cyndy: Tulima es otro nombre

Mama Chali: Es otro nombre

(28:58-29:02 minuto)

Cyndy: y como sabes cuando ya cortas las mazorcas, los maíces cuales son las más bonitas como las escogen

Mama Chali: Buscan en todo, todas están bonitas
Cyndy: Para el teyari
Mama Chali: Para el teyari uno lo aparta el que este más bonito, que este más bien
Cyndy: Pero como sabe cuál está más bonito
Mama Chali: Pues lo vas a ver con lo que no tiene granito podrido que este bien sano, ese lo vas a buscar
Cyndy: Que este sano
Mama Chali: Y luego el maíz son 5
Cyndy: 5 colores
Mama Chali: Son 6 es que es el primero grande yaduema, enseguida mususule, enseguida mutatazawe, enseguida, mutatalawe, enseguida mutuza, enseguida muchichinawe el pintito
Cyndy: Muchichinawe el pintito, son 6 entonces
Mama Chali: Son seis, enseguida disque ya todo de color el pintito, se llama pitulich, todo así de color que tiene como abundancia ese se llama pitulich
Cyndy: y también de los colores son nombres personas verdad
Mama Chali: Si son nombres también, es nombre
Cyndy: Como por ejemplo sitaima yuabima es del elote azul tiernito verdad jiloteando
Mama Chali: Sitiyan
Cyndy: Muy bien, que otra cosa, nombres ya nos dijo muchos, machali la otra vez le pregunte quien era tatei utanaka quien es tatei utanaka
Mama Chali: Utanaka fue de por allá digo es que ahí sale utanaka aquí no vive
Felipa: Es un sagrado
Cyndy: En donde
Mama Chali: Por allá en santa Catarina, para abajo en el peñasco
Cyndy: Ahí sale
Mama Chali: Ahí vive
Cyndy: Pero quien es ella o el, pero por ejemplo haramara es del mar
Mama Chali: Utanaka es peñasco (32:22-32:30 minuto) Ahí está presentado pero no se ha aventado nadamas por el peñasco
Cyndy: Ya lo conocen ustedes
Mama Chali: Si, el padrino
Cyndy: Y todo a que van, van ahí ustedes
Mama Chali: Si, eso lo vamos a dar de comer todo con tejuino, con sangre
Cyndy: Y ahí para qué es porque no hay lugares por ejemplo cuando fuimos allá a la tatema tinieri lo otro era para que tuvieran mucho ganado en otro lugar
Mama Chali: Si
Cyndy: Como se llama, pero que es cuando vamos al tatema tinieri y pedimos
Mama Chali: (33:10-33-12 minuto) Porque ese disque es una madre de los pescados, utanaka, cuando te enfermas disque te pega utanaka te vas a hinchar aquí todo y por dentro vas a tener pescadito chiquitito, porque es madre de los pescados ese utanaka, entonces ya cuando te curan vas a rezar, vas a ir a dejar un pescado con utanaka y ya te alivias
Cyndy: Y cuando nos enfermamos del maíz como esta enfermedad
Mama Chali: Pues la enfermedad de maíz cuando te si te hace daño si comes tortilla, si no te cayo te vas a enfermar del maíz
Cyndy: Y cuando no sembramos como nos enfermamos, cuando no tenemos el teyari no lo sembramos

Mama Chali: Pues si porque no lo sembramos, no lo atiende bien, por eso vas a estar enfermo pero le tienes que dar comida, chocolate

Cyndy: Y cuando al señoras no pueden tener hijos es porque, como ya ve que hay muchas muchachas o señoras casadas que quieren tener hijos pero no pueden porque

Mama Chali: Ese si no se sabe porque sabrán tener, como al señora del Santo ella tiene

Cyndy: Y no puede ella

Mama Chali: Lo pidió a su padrino que lo tiene así pues a donde se va a nacer él bebe, donde más sé que lo tiene así apretados por dentro, por eso no puede tener

Cyndy: y ya le sobo para que pudiera tener

Mama Chali: Si le sobe más de una vez

Julia Rivera Lemus:

Cyndy: Le voy a empezar, estoy grabando entonces, estamos a Diciembre 9 del 2018 y pues si quiere empezar a decir cómo se llama y de donde es para más fácil, ¿De dónde es comadre?

¿Dónde nació? ¿No se acuerda?

Julia: Bueno ser del Tinil es municipio de San José

Cyndy: Y tu nombre completo es Julia

Julia: Julia Rivera Lemus

Cyndy: Bueno entonces le voy a preguntar, pues lo que más quería saber es preguntarle sobre lo primero Huaynamota ¿Por qué va a Huaynamota?

Julia: Porque nosotros bueno nosotros fuimos porque el niño se enfermo

Cyndy: ¿Cuál de todos?

Julia: (Minuto 1:09) Ya le rezamos la Huaynamota que es para que lo aliviara

Cyndy: ¿Cuál niño?

Julia: Que es Armando

Cyndy: Armandito, ¿Cuándo tuvo el accidente?

Julia: Si

Cyndy: Entonces le pidieron al padrecito

Julia: Si a Huaynamota le pedimos que se aliviara el niño y si se sano

Cyndy: ¿Y qué tiene que hacer ahora? ¿O tiene que hacer una amanda con él?

Julia: Si

Cyndy: ¿Qué manda tiene con él?

Julia: Ahora, bueno le dijimos a Huaynamota que lo sanara porque nosotros le íbamos a dejar su vela y le prometimos un becerro

Cyndy: Un becerro

Julia: Y a los cinco años le dijimos

Cyndy: Son cinco

Julia: Si, son cinco años

Cyndy: ¿Y qué sabe del Huaynamota? ¿Quién era el señor?

Julia: Bueno que ahí apareció el que saben el que oyen, como por ejemplo, los que hacen limpias como les dicen

Cyndy: Los mara'akame

Julia: Ándale, que ellos lo vieron allí, que aparecía y aparecía hasta que le hicieron una capilla y ya que el padre lo bendijo y que apareció ese Huaynamota

Cyndy: Pero ellos lo veían andando por ahí

Julia: Lo miraban cada que pasaba lo veían que ahí aparecía, se hacía una nube, se hacía como este

Cyndy: ¿Y antes de eso? El andaba ahí

Julia: Ahí aparecía, siempre ahí aparecía para que hubiera su templo o que le hicieran su capillita para que tuviera, así como vamos a visitar

Cyndy: ¿Y a Haramara? También va a dejar ofrenda

Julia: A Haramara porque nosotros vamos a dejar ofrenda, ponemos 5 velas y las vamos a dejar

Cyndy: Pero eso puede ser en cualquier momento o cuando va

Julia: En cuando hacemos la ceremonia porque ponemos (Minuto 3:43) Haramara y de Wirikuta y el Araguaney que ya son dos y el (Minuto 3:52) por eso nosotros ponemos esos

Cyndy: Cinco velas

Julia: Cinco velas

Cyndy: Y después ¿Cuál ceremonia va, la del tambor?

Julia: Cuando hacemos la del tambor, cuando hacemos la del desierto y cuando hacemos del maíz

Cyndy: Ósea siempre que se hace una ceremonia va y se deja ofrenda a Haramara

Julia: Cuando haces toda la ceremonia vas y dejas la ofrenda

Cyndy: ¿Y la ofrenda que es, las cinco velas? ¿Qué más lleva de ofrenda?

Julia: Pues chocolate, pinole, sangre de pescado y sangre de venado y sangre de toro y la vez el borrego

Cyndy: Y el tejuino

Julia: El tejuino también lleva y los tamalitos, chocolate, las galletas, todo se lleva

Cyndy: Y se las entrega

Julia: Se entrega en el pues ahí en el agua ya pues en el mar lo pones y prendes así vela o veladora

Cyndy: Y se avienta y luego uno se mete a bañar

Julia: Y ya pues te bañas y ya si llevas una pluma con ese te pintas y ya te pones el agua, es como agua bendita

Cyndy: ¿Y para que haces todo eso?

Julia: Para que estés bien, para que no te enfermes y a veces pones la vela para eso, para el viento que el huracán, todo eso, porque a nosotros así le rezamos a ellos

Cyndy: Y por ejemplo a Armandito cuando lo llevo después de la ceremonia del tambor ahí a él lo baña

Julia: Ahí a ese es otro, hicimos otra ofrenda para él solo, pues para que se alivie, para que este más mejor

Cyndy: ¿Qué le paso a Armando?

Julia: Pues tuvo un accidente y de ahí se puso, pues ahí se asusta y a veces se pone más malo y así

Cyndy: Entonces lo lleva para que lo curen

Julia: Si, cuando esta malo pues ya lo llevo a dar una limpia, a que le acomoden bien su mollera, porque a veces se desparama

Cyndy: ¿Y que tiene uno en la mollera? ¿Cómo se le llama?

Julia: Se le llama bueno yo le digo (Minuto 6:50) son los cinco que están aquí, que son las molleras

Cyndy: La mollera

Julia: De aquí en la frente y atrás tiene otros cinco y aquí otros cinco por aquí por los dos lados
Cyndy: Son cinco enfrente, cinco atrás, cinco de los lados y de arriba otros
Julia: También ahí
Cyndy: Como hilos
Julia: Ándale
Cyndy: Y es ahí a donde llegan esos hilos
Julia: Pues llegan hasta la madrecita que está en el cielo, cuando estas dormido el hilo ese está moviéndose porque tu estas acá dormido
Cyndy: ¿Y cuando uno se enferma que pasa con esos hilitos?
Julia: Pues cuando está enfermo, este está triste
Cyndy: Los hilitos
Julia: Poquito haz de cuenta que está a mitad de vivo
Cyndy: Y el cupuli ¿Qué es el cupuli?
Julia: Ese es el espíritu
Cyndy: Pero son cinco partes del cupuli
Julia: Aquí lo tenemos, este es el cupuli que le estoy diciendo
Cyndy: Y ese se llama (Minuto 8:05)
Julia: Ándale a ese se le llama (Minuto 8:07)
Cyndy: Entonces cupuli y niwemama
Julia: Es el espíritu que tienes si
Cyndy: Y cuando se enferma esos están débiles
Julia: Ándale están medios así tristes
Cyndy: Y para mejorarse, aliviarse uno
Julia: Ya, pues ya está más alegre así que
Cyndy: Y luego, bueno después de las ceremonias que se hacen, ¿Cuáles son las que se hacen aquí también? de las ceremonias
Julia: Pues mira aquí yo hago la ceremonia que son así la primera ceremonia que haces es la del pollo, que es en agosto que cae como el 15 de agosto según, compras pollo, compras maíz, lo enciendes para que se haga tejuino, lo secas y lo mueles ya cuando están secos pues compras los pollos, los chocolates, las velas, lo compras todo y ya pones el tejuino ya que todo compre ya pones el tejuino
Cyndy: ¿Y si uno no tiene maíz? ¿Tiene maíz? Lo pone del
Julia: Lo compras
Cyndy: Lo compra
Julia: Tiene que comprar uno para eso, tienes que ser posible de comprar
Cyndy: Para el pollo
Julia: Para el pollo
Cyndy: Y luego después del pollo
Julia: Ya compras los pollos y todas las velas que dije ahorita
Cyndy: Son cinco
Julia: son cinco
Cyndy: Que se pone por cada
Julia: Y pones el tejuino, si el tejuino está hirviendo vas a matar al pescado o un venado, porque ahí también se ocupa
Cyndy: Y bueno después del pollo ¿Cuál sigue?
Julia: Sigue del tambor

Cyndy: Como en octubre verdad

Julia: Como en octubre

Cyndy: Y ahí igual se ofrenda

Julia: Igual ahí se ofrenda pues, tienes que comprar igual el maíz, tienes que echarlo a nacer, ya que se seque lo muelas, haces lo mismo pues velas y chocolates, entonces vas a comprar, ahí si se ocupa un becerro, a veces un venado, pero si no puedes, compras un borrego

Cyndy: Y en esa fiesta ¿Qué se hace? En la del tambor

Julia: Pues solo lo hacen los niños, niñas y niños y ya cuando vas a empezar tienes que traer primero el elote y ya lo metes al templo como le dicen

Cyndy: Al tuqui

Julia: Si al tuqui

Cyndy: O al ririqui

Julia: Nosotros lo nombramos chiriqui

Cyndy: Pero aquí tiene que

Julia: Por parte de nosotros muchachos, señores le nombran tuqui, de San Andrés, a ese lo nombran tuqui y nosotros le de allá de

Cyndy: Santa Catarina

Julia: Le llamamos chiriqui

Cyndy: ¿Y cuál es el Kaliwe? Es el mismo

Julia: Es el mismo y allá en mestizo le llaman Kaliwe

Cyndy: Estaba diciéndome del Kaliwe, porque una gente le llama ririqui verdad y luego la otra gente le llama tuqui

Julia: Son los de San Andrés que le dicen tuqui, nosotros chiriqui

Cyndy: Chiriqui verdad, y ahí tienen todos los santos verdad a todos los dioses

Julia: Pero mi suegra también le dice diferente

Cyndy: ¿Cómo?

Julia: Porque bueno, te da visión, haz de cuenta te duermes y sueñas como se va a llamar él bebe, ahí se pone ahí en el altar, se pone, como te diré, se pone como un así como en el teléfono que le pones la apachurras y desaparece, así lo vas a mirar y ya se va a poner un elote, se va a poner una flechita, se pone las velas, listón, todo eso y se pone una milpa grande con su tellotito

Cyndy: ¿Y qué nombres son del maíz?

Julia: Y ya le pones por ejemplo lo vas a sembrar le echas como se va a llamar porque lo sembraste neikama queva pangean y de ahí se llama leweme que esta mas grandecito y ahí se va (Minuto 16:29-16:33)

Cyndy: ¿Y luego?

Julia: Y de ahí ya cuando está espigando himan payan y cuando ya nace un elotito hitaim, pues tiene sus requisitos, los sueños así tienes que mirar a un bebe

Cyndy: En el día de la ceremonia

Julia: No ves que cuando bautizan a un bebe así se hace

Julia: No pasa nada pero si nomas ya pues ya que se te pase y te enfermes y ya después te dicen pues no hiciste nada de la ceremonia

Felipa Rivera Lemus

Felipa: Me llamo Felipe Rivera Lemus, vivo en la comunidad de Y+rata y soy wixárika

Cyndy: ¿De qué parte? ¿De qué parte de la sierra?

Felipa: De que parte de la sierra de la mesa por allá arriba

Cyndy: ¿Qué comunidad? Pues si
Felipa: Bueno de la del Ruiz
Cyndy: La de Ruiz, muy bien, ya hemos platicado sobre esto antes comadre sale, entonces nomas para volver a hablar, ¿Ustedes siembran maíz?
Felipa: Si
Cyndy: ¿Qué maíz siembran?
Felipa: Sembramos el maíz, primero el que es la madre y luego sus hijos
Cyndy: ¿Y de que colores?
Felipa: Los colores son azul, amarillo, rojo, pintito y blanco
Cyndy: Muy bien y esas semillas ¿De dónde las consiguen ustedes?
Felipa: Esas semillas las traen mis papas de hace muchísimo tiempo
Cyndy: ¿Y a ellos quien se las dio?
Felipa: Sus abuelitos
Cyndy: Y siempre han seguido sembrando la misma
Felipa: Si siempre
Cyndy: Muy bien ¿Y porque siembran?
Felipa: Para que no se pierda la tradición, la cultura, igual el maíz se necesita para el tejuino, para ofrecerles a los guardianes
Cyndy: Entonces hacemos el maíz y después este se siembra y después ya con eso se van a preparar todas las ofrendas y los productos que se van a ofrendar
Felipa: Si
Cyndy: ¿Qué más se hace con el maíz?
Felipa: Pues las tortillas, tamales, tostadas pues que más el tejuino, las gorditas
Cyndy: Todo para ofrendar
Felipa: Si
Cyndy: Y el domingo que se hizo la ceremonia ¿De qué fue?
Felipa: El domingo la ceremonia que se hizo fue la de, bueno nosotros le decimos así, de la mona pero es para darle a ofrendar el maíz, para prepararlo para ofrendarlo
Cyndy: ¿Cómo se llama en wixárika la ceremonia?
Felipa: La ceremonia en wixárika se llama pues mi papa siempre dice tatei teutemini
Cyndy: teutemini
Felipa: Tatei teutemini tepumawatuani
Cyndy: Muy bien y ¿Esa se celebra una vez al año?
Felipa: Si, casi siempre es finales de mayo o a principios de junio
Cyndy: Antes de que empiece la lluvia
Felipa: Exactamente
Cyndy: Antes de sembrar, es la ceremonia de apertura de la siembra, si no se hace esa ceremonia ¿Se puede sembrar?
Felipa: Si se puede sembrar pero pues mi papa siempre así lo ha hecho de primero darle de comer y ofrendarle al maíz y ya
Cyndy: Entonces se hace una mona o un bulto con todo el teyari, son oukis envueltos y se baila con ellos, se va bailando al ritmo del tambor
Felipa: Del tambor, si
Cyndy: Toda la noche
Felipa: Toda la noche son cinco danzas, este conforme va cantando mi papa se va danzando

Cyndy: Son cinco danzas, todos bailan y el marakeme en este caso tu papa él está rezando y cantando ¿Verdad?

Felipa: Si

Cyndy: ¿Y qué es lo que dice en su rezo y canto?

Felipa: Pues en su canto en primer lugar decirles que

Cyndy: Pues en cada rezo, no se lo sabe todo pero más o menos una idea de que dice

Felipa: Si mi papa siempre, primero prepara a todos los guardianes con sus rezos y luego ya empieza con su cantos que es el canto del maíz, de la mona que vamos a danzar

Cyndy: Ósea que le está cantando a ella

Felipa: Y luego cuando ya se llega a medianoche es cuando prendemos las velas para ofrendarle a los guardianes, les tenemos ahí sus les podríamos decir su mawari que es su tejuino

Cyndy: Mawari

Felipa: y su yurari que es su chocolate

Cyndy: El tejuino, el chocolate

Felipa: Yuradi y pues su movierari que es el venado

Cyndy: ¿Todas esas son las ofrendas?

Felipa: Si con esas se les da de comer a los guardianes, al maíz, a las jikaritas que tenemos y las flechas que tenemos de eso viene desde hace muchísimos años, las flechas y así se van conservando hasta hoy

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. New York: Vintage, 1997.
- Basso, Keith H. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.
- Bauman, Richard. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1984.
- Berg, Richard L. Jr. "Land: An Extension of the Peasant's Ego." *Anthropological Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1975): 4–13.
- Bird-David, Nurit. "Tribal Metaphorization of Human-Nature Relatedness." In *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology*, edited by Kay Milton, 111–124. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Bodernhorn, Barbara. "Calling into Being: Naming and Speaking Names on Alaska's North Slope." In *An Anthropology of Names and Naming*, edited by Gabriele Vom Bruck and Barbara Bodernhorn, 140–156. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Borofsky, Rob. *Yanomami: The Fierce Controversy and What We Can Learn From It*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Broda, Johanna. *Cosmovisión Mesoamericana y ritualidad agrícola: estudios interdisciplinarios y regionales*. Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Vicerrectorado de Docencia, Dirección de Fomento Editorial, 2009.
- Chamovitz, Daniel. *What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses*. Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.
- Cruikshank, Julie. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters and Social Imagination*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007.

- de la Cruz, Eduardo. *Mocencuiltihualtoc mopatla tequitiloni, campeca huan tlaneltoquillo tlen quimanextia toquiztli pan macehualtlallamiccayotl*. Unidad Academica de Docencia Superior, 2016.
- Descola, Philippe. "Societies of Nature and the Nature of Society." In *Conceptualizing Society*, edited by Adam Kuper, 107–126. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Descola, Philippe. "Beyond Nature and Culture." In *Proceedings-British Academy*, Vol. 139, 137. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Descola, Philippe. *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Descola, Philippe. *The Ecology of Others*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2013.
- Ellis, Helen B. *Maize Imagery in the Codex Borgia: Ritual, Agriculture, and Society in Late Post-Classic Central Mexico (ca. 1250–1521)*. UCLA, C. Klein.
- Fernandez, James W. "Bwiti. An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa." (1982).
- Fernandez, James W., ed. *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Fernandez, James W. *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Fresán, Mariana. *Susurros de la Montaña: Antropología de la experiencia*. 2016.
- Furst, Peter T. *The Parching of the Maize: An Essay on the Survival of Huichol Ritual*. Vienna, Austria: E. Stiglmayr, 1968.
- Gagliano, Monica. "The Flowering of Plant Bioacoustics: How and Why." *Behavioral Ecology* 24, no. 4 (2013): 800–801.
- Gagliano, Monica. *This Spoke the Plant: A Remarkable Journey of Groundbreaking Scientific Discoveries and Personal Encounters with Plants*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2018.

- Geertz, Clifford. "'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding." *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28, no. 1 (1974): 26–45.
- Gossen, Gary. "To Speak With a Heated Heart: Chamula Canons of Style and Good Performance." In *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, edited by Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, 389–413. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Hall, Matthew. *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2011.
- Hallowell, A. Irving. "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View." In *Readings in Indigenous Religions*, edited by Graham Harvey, 17–49. New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Harvey, Gary. *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*. Durham, UK: Acumen, 2013.
- Hill, Jane H. "What is Lost When Names Are Forgotten?" In *Nature Knowledge: Ethnoscience, Cognition, and Utility*, edited by Glauco Sanga and Gherardo Ortalli, 161–84. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.
- Hugh-Jones, Christine. *From the Milk River: Spatial and Temporal Processes in Northwest Amazonia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Hugh-Jones, Stephen. *The Palm and the Pleiades; Initiation and Cosmology in Northwest Amazonia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Hymes, Dell. *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974.
- Ingold, Tim. "Rethinking the Animate, Re-animating Thought." *Ethnos* 71, no. 1 (2006): 9–20.
- Irwin, Lee. *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.

- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the teaching of Plants*. 2013.
- Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kohn, Eduardo. "Anthropology of Ontologies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (2015): 311–327.
- Koons, Ryan Abel. "Dancing Breath: Ceremonial Performance Practice, Environment, and Personhood in a Muskogee Creek Community." PhD diss., UCLA, 2016.
- Kroskrity, Paul V. "Language Ideologies—Evolving Perspectives." In *Society and Language Use*, edited by Jürgen Jaspers, Jan-Ola Östman, and Jef Verschueren, 192–211. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Science of the Concrete." *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Liffman, Paul. *Huichol territory and the Mexican Nation: Indigenous Ritual, Land Conflict, and Sovereignty Claims*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011.
- Loether, Christopher. "Language Revitalization and the Manipulation of Language Ideologies: A Shoshoni Case Study." In *Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Practices, and Struggles in Indian Country*, edited by Paul V. Kroskrity and Margaret C. Field, 238–254. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009.

- McCarty, Teresa L., Mary Eunice Romero-Little, Larisa Warhol, and Ofelia Zepeda. "Critical Ethnography and Indigenous Language Survival: Some New Directions in Language Policy Research and Praxis." In *Ethnography and Language Policy*, edited by Teresa McCarty, 31–51. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- McCarty, Teresa L., Ofelia Zepeda, and Mary Eunice Romero. "Reclaiming the Gift: Indigenous Youth Counter-Narratives on Native Language Loss and Revitalization." *The American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2006): 28–48.
- Meek, Barbra A. "Respecting the Language of Elders: Ideological Shift and Linguistic Discontinuity in a Northern Athapascan Community." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (2007): 23–43.
- Morrison, Kenneth M. "Animism and a Proposal for a Post-Cartesian Anthropology." In *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, edited by Graham Harvey, 38–52. New York: Acumen, 2013.
- Morton, Paula E. *Tortillas: A Cultural History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014.
- Needham, Rodney. *Belief, Language, and Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Nelson, Richard K. *Make Prayers to the Raven. A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Roberts, Allen F. *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

- Ruiz de Alarcón, Hernando. "Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España, intr." Ma. Elena de la Garza Sánchez, México, Secretaría de Educación Pública, Cien de México, 1988.
- Ruvalcaba, Jesús. *Vida cotidiana y consumo de maíz en la huasteca veracruzana*. México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1987.
- Sagastume, René C. *El costumbre y la soberanía alimentaria Wixárika*. Universidad de Guadalajara, 2010.
- Salmón, Enrique. *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food, Identity, and Resilience*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012.
- Sandstrom, Alan R. *Corn is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010.
- Shorter, David. "Binary Thinking and the Study of Yoeme Indian lutu'uria/truth." In *Anthropological Forum* 13, no. 2 (2003): 195-203.
- Staller, John. *Maize Cobs and Cultures: History of Zea mays L.* New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009.
- Staller, John E., and Michael D. Carrasco. "Pre-Columbian Food-ways in Mesoamerica." In *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, 2010 ed., 1–20. New York: Springer, 2010.
- Staller, John, Robert Tykot, and Bruce Benz. *Histories of Maize: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Prehistory, Linguistics, Biogeography, Domestication, and Evolution of Maize*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2006.
- Stoddard, Robert H., and E. Alan Morinis, eds. *Sacred Places, Sacred Spaces: The Geography of Pilgrimages*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997.

- Stross, Brian. "The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture." *Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 445 (1999): 254–267.
- Stross, Brian. "Maize in Word and Image in Southeastern Mesoamerica." In *Histories of Maize: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Prehistory, Linguistics, Biogeography, Domestication, and Evolution of Maize*, edited by John Staller, Robert Tykot, and Bruce Benz, 577–598. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Turner, Victor Witter. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.
- Vansina, Jan M. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. New York: Transaction Publishers, 1972.
- Vansina, Jan M. *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (1998): 469–488.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology*. Edited and translated by Peter Skatfish. Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2014.
- Vogt, Evon Zartman. *Tortillas for the Gods: A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacanteco Rituals*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Vom Bruck, Gabriele, and Barbara Bodenhorn. "'Entangled in Histories': An Introduction to the Anthropology of Names and Naming." In *An Anthropology of Names and Naming*, edited by Gabriele Vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn, 1–30. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Whiteley, Peter M. "'Unpacking Hopi' Clans: Another Vintage Model out of Africa?" *Journal of Anthropological Research* 41, no. 4 (1985): 359–374.

Whiteley, Peter M. "Hopitutungwni: Hopi Names as Literature." In *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, edited by Brian Swann, 208–227. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1992.

Whiteley, Peter M. "Hopi Place Value: Translating a Landscape." In *Born in the Blood: On Native American Translation*, edited by Brian Swann, 84–108. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

Wohlleben, Peter. *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How they Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World*. Greystone Books, 2016.