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The cover shows the engraving of the first Czech print on the New World
Spis o nových zemích a o novém světě published around 1506.
(Courtesy of the Library of the Premonstratensians in Strahov, Prague)

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BETWEEN "CHAOS" AND "ORDER": THE CZECH ANTHROPOLOGIST AND HIS EXPERIENCE IN THE CHANGES OF TIME[1]

by MAREK HALBICH
(Charles University, Prague)

Abstract
The main purpose of this text is to show how complex and long the disciplination or disciplinary practice of an anthropologist conducting his fieldwork in non-European areas can be. In the first part, the text is very much retrospective. I focus on my long formative period, during which my ideas about becoming a full-time ethnologist[2] were born in a kind of unconscious vacuum. I revisit my first field entry among the Tarahumara (Rarámuri) people of northwestern Mexico and attempt to bring the reader up to speed on my determined efforts to reach out to native communities and my *chaotic* actions during this first field experience in a non-European setting as a then third-year ethnology student. This will be followed by a reflection on my next two field researches among the Tarahumara in 1996 and 2001, the first of which resulted in an M. A. thesis and the second in a dissertation. In this section, I try to show a certain shift in the approach to fieldwork, which was no longer mere chaos, but led to a more systematic organization of fieldwork findings and their elaboration into a more extensive

[1] This text is an expanded and significantly revised version of the paper entitled *Field Research on Two Continents: The Anthropologist and the Changing Roles in the Field*, presented at the workshop *Research in Non-European Areas: Methods, Techniques, Problems, Challenges* on 18 October 2018 at the Centre for Ibero-American Studies (SIAS), Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague. The paper was based on my fieldwork in northwestern Mexico and on the east coast of Madagascar. For the purposes of this text, I have chosen to reflect only my research among the Tarahumara, as I have since returned to them in September–October 2021 in order to prepare the ground for a future new anthropological project, which I briefly summarize in the final section of this article. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank both anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and recommendations that helped improve the entire manuscript. However, I alone am responsible for all errors and inaccuracies.

[2] If I use the terms anthropologist, ethnologist, anthropology, ethnology in this text, I will use them as synonyms, although I am of course aware of the epistemological differences between these terms, which have been and are the subject of professional debates. For the purposes of this article, which is more methodologically oriented, I do not consider it expedient to explain these differences. However, if the reader is interested in this debate, I refer to, for example, the following articles: Zdeněk R. NEŠPOR – Marek JAKOUBEK, "Co je a co není kulturní/sociální antropologie? Námět k diskusi" ["What is and what is not cultural/social anthropology? A Framework for Discussion"], *Český lid* 91/1, Praha 2004, pp. 53–79; idem, "Co je a co není kulturní/sociální antropologie? Závěr diskuse" ["What is and what is not cultural/social anthropology after two years. Conclusion of the discussion"], *Český lid* 93/1, Praha 2006, pp. 71–85; Nikola BALAŠ, "Čím vším může být sociokulturní antropologie" ["What can sociocultural anthropology be"], *Český lid* 103/3, Praha 2016, pp. 473–490.

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qualifying thesis and several technical studies. While in the first part I go back into the deep past in order to show the complexities that a budding ethnologist can or must deal with if he wants to penetrate a completely different environment from his own, in the second part I discuss some of the methods of field research that I have not been familiar with in the past, or have used unconsciously or without better understanding of them. These I find useful in current and forthcoming return research among the Tarahumara. They resonate strongly in contemporary anthropology, and are constantly being refined. In this section I will also outline, with respect to methodological horizons, my current planned research project focusing on the human relationship to biodiversity in the context of environmental and climate change, which is increasingly impacting (not only) Tarahumara communities.
Keywords: Mexico; Sierra Tarahumara; Tarahumara; methodology; ethnography; field research; global ethnography; extended case method; glocal ethnography; multi-sited ethnography; reflexivity.

1. Dreams, ideals, excitement

Dreams, ideals, excitement: these words are perhaps the best description of the period preceding my first purposeful research trip to the Tarahumara people in the state of Chihuahua in northwestern Mexico. I had long dreamed of one day going to places that I had only read about for so many years, known about from adventure and travel films, or from sporadic lectures by those who had the good fortune and courage to visit the various Indian groups. My first "guides" to the remote regions of Central and South America and sub-Saharan Africa were writers, led by Karl May, James Fenimore Cooper and Jules Verne, later travelers Jiří Hanzelka and Miroslav Zikmund, and ethnographers specializing in indigenous cultures: Miloslav Stingl, Václav Šolc and Mnislav Zelený. The last mentioned author even lectured to my classmates and me in our first year about the native groups of all the Americas, and I remember that we most appreciated Zelený's account of his many trips, especially to the various ethnic groups of the Amazon, on which he is undoubtedly the greatest expert in our conditions.

My childhood ideal, like that of many of my peers, was the fictional character of the Apache chief Vinnetou rather than the real-life chiefs and warriors fighting against the United States Army, such as Tecumseh, Osceola, or Sitting Bull, about whom I learned in nonfiction or adventure films. Although I also dreamed of other lands I would like to visit to learn about native life, my clear goal was to travel to the places where my real and fictional native heroes lived. In particular, indigenous territories in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas became the target of my dreams and idealistic plans for future ethnographic travel. Unlike most of my friends, who lost their childhood ideals over time and turned to more pragmatic pursuits, my desire and dreams of exploring the life of remote societies intensified in early adulthood. However, through a confluence of circumstances, I abandoned the idea of exploring the Apache, Navajo, or other native groups of the American Southwest and moved a few hundred miles south to where Mexico, or more precisely the state of Chihuahua, lay. Deviating from the original long-standing intention to conduct research in a dream field is nothing new in anthropology. The famous anthropologist of Czech origin, Leopold Pospíšil, once found himself in a similar situation when he

commented on the choice of his first field: "If I could have chosen my field of study, I would probably have gone to the Tarim Basin in Central Asia or the Ruwenzori Mountains in Central Africa."[3] We all probably know that Professor Pospíšil became a world-renowned anthropologist primarily because of his long-term research on the Kapauku in New Guinea, a far cry from his former ideas about the optimal choice of destination for such research.

As we can see, it was easier for me. I did not have to make such a radical change in the choice of terrain, I even stayed in the same area, because the native groups of northwestern Mexico belong, like the Apache, Navajo or Hopi, to the so-called Southwest or Great Southwest.[4] Thinking back on what sparked my interest in the Tarahumara as "my" Indians, I recall three key moments. Probably the very first impulse was reading Miloslav Stingl's slim book *Indiánský běžec*.[5] In it, this legendary traveller and expert on the native cultures of America, Australia and Oceania reflected, among other things, on the incredible running abilities of the Tarahumara people lost somewhere in the canyons, ravines, and plateau mesas of southwestern Chihuahua. As a lifelong athlete who was an avid middle and long distance runner at the time of reading this book, I was absolutely fascinated by much of the information about the feats of these native runners. The second moment was a chance visit to the Votive Church on Roosevelt Square in downtown Vienna in August 1989. It was my first time in the West, and I tried to absorb as much as I could of the history and culture of the places I visited in Austria and Italy during my trip of several weeks. Although I was more interested in older sacred architecture, perhaps out of curiosity or to relax, I entered the Neo-Gothic church. Its interior did not particularly captivate me, yet the dozen or so minutes I spent inside were enough to give me a clear idea of my until then completely hypothetical terrain. In the sacristy of that church there was an exhibition of beautiful colour photographs by the Jesuit missionary Luis Guillermo Verplancken (1926–2003). The main subjects of the Jesuit's pictures were Tarahumara men and women of all ages and situations and their mystical homeland of the Sierra Tarahumara in northwestern Mexico. My visit to the church included a brief encounter, which was however quite crucial for

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[3] Leopold POSPÍŠIL, "Tyrolští rolníci z Obernbergu a otázka dlouhodobého výzkumu" ["The Tyrolean peasants of Obernberg and the question of long-term research"], *Český lid* 84/1, Praha 1997, p. 15.

[4] For example, the North American cultural anthropologist Kroeber situated the Tarahumara in the southwestern range and pointed to their ambiguous position between the Sonora-Gila-Yuman and Mexican cultures see Alfred Louis KROEBER, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America*, Berkeley 1939, p. 40. Hypotheses about the ethnogenesis of the Tarahumara and some other northern Mexican Indian groups are discussed at length in another work see Marek HALBICH, *Ztraceni v kaňonech a na rančích. Sociální a ekologická adaptace Tarahumarů v severním Mexiku* [Lost in the Canyons and on the Ranches. Social and Ecological Adaptation of the Tarahumara in Northern Mexico], Praha 2019. On the inclusion of Sonoran and Chihuahuan ethnic groups in the Greater Southwest, see, for example, Ralph L. BEALS, "Relaciones culturales entre el Norte de México y el Suroeste de Estados Unidos. Etnológica y Arqueológicamente", *Tercera Reunión de Mesa Redonda sobre Problemas Antropológicos de México y Centro América,* Ciudad de México 1943, pp. 191–199; Clark WISSLER, *The American Indian, an Introduction to the Anthropology of the New World*, New York 1917.

[5] Miloslav STINGL, *Indiánský běžec* [Indian Runner], Praha 1969.

my future, with the American musician Romayne Wheeler. I soon understood that the exhibition of photographs and the presence of an American pianist in the Votive Church were related. At that time Romayne had been living in Chihuahua for several years and, through his concerts in Austria and other countries, contributed one-third of his earnings to the Misión Tarahumara run by Father Verplancken. When I emerged from the dark church environment into the heat of Vienna in August. I had a clear idea: if the social situation in Czechoslovakia permitted, I would go to northern Mexico and try to get among the Tarahumara. My dreams and aspirations took on clear outlines, and the very thought of a possible journey to the Indians in the inaccessible regions of northern Mexico provoked and excited my mind.

As is evident from this brief reminiscence of more than thirty years ago, I had no idea that I would find a topic or an interesting issue in particular that I wanted to investigate scientifically. I confess that I was primarily interested in the excitement of the journey and the tantalizing possibility of traveling in pursuit of my dream. *Where* was more important to me than *why*, *how* or *what*. Everything else was secondary, but basically understandable, since I am returning to the time when I was still studying at the Faculty of Education in Ústí nad Labem, majoring in the Czech language and civics, and my immediate future was heading towards a career as a secondary school teacher in my native Liberec, or Ústí nad Labem. With this approach I was, somewhat incidentally, placed among the Ibero-American and even Mexicanist areal specialists. In short, I was not aware of what was obvious to Pospíšil and many other anthropologists, namely, that ethnographic research does not consist of the researcher's selection of a particular geographical area, country or ethnic group, but that it depends much more "on the requirements of the theoretical work itself and not on an ethnographic interest in a particular area".[6]

2. Fear of amoebas, but mostly just *being there*

Although eventually I completed the Faculty of Education course successfully,[7] I did not become a primary or secondary school teacher. My admission to study ethnology at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University became a decisive official step on the road to becoming a full-time anthropologist. Although I threw myself into my studies with great enthusiasm, many lectures and seminars directed me to narrow down my future research plan, I was nevertheless disappointed by the lack of methodological preparation for independent field research.[8] When I first flew

[6] POSPÍŠIL, "Tyrolští rolníci", p. 15.

[7] I expressed my desire for a professional interest in Latin America in my first master's thesis, in which I focused on the figure of the naturalist Tadeáš Haenke (1761–1816) in the context of late colonial history see Marek HALBICH, *Tadeáš Haenke a počátky národně-osvobozeneckého hnutí v Jižní Americe* [Tadeáš Haenke and the beginnings of the national liberation movement in South America], Ústí nad Labem 1990. This work, however, was based solely on research and analysis of the literature and archival material available at the time.

[8] For a detailed discussion of the development and characteristics of Czechoslovak social and cultural anthropology, or ethnology, see Nikola BALAŠ, *The late socialist Czechoslovak ethnography and folklore studies and its influence on the Czech tradition of sociocultural anthropology after 1989*, (PhD Theses), Prague 2020.

to Mexico in early October 1992, I had completed ten days of fieldwork in the Strakonice region where we would always go out in pairs for a full day to predetermined locations to seek out people with whom we would then conduct impromptu interviews. We then discussed these interviews and partial observations in the field each evening in a campsite on the banks of the Otava River on the outskirts of Strakonice with the two educators who accompanied us at the time. After returning to the department, I summarized the results of this study visit in a fifteen-page essay, for which I received credit at the end of the semester. If I add to this the professional lectures and the valuable advice from an excellent teacher and outstanding expert on Mexico, Oldřich Kašpar, on how to behave in a completely different environment. This was about all I could have before my first research trip.

Somehow, with this qualification, I found myself one day in October alone and without any pre-arranged contact in a small train station in Creel, northern Mexico.[9] My previous visits to Mexican libraries and archives and the trip to Teotihuacán had helped me to acclimatise solidly to the high altitude and the generally different climate, but had not helped me to get a clear idea of what I would be *doing there*. Nor did the extremely long train ride of more than forty hours from Mexico City to Creel, with a change in Chihuahua, do much to help me sort out my thoughts. My mind was filled with differently coloured emotions and feelings, ranging from great fear of the unknown to the excitement associated with the belief that I would finally visit the places where the Indians live. I was hardly aware at the time that this chaotic mixing of feelings was one of the manifestations or phases of *culture shock*, roughly along the lines that the Canadian anthropologist with Finnish roots, Kalervo Oberg, expressed at the beginning of his instructional text on this initial encounter with an unfamiliar environment: "Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse […]."[10] Of course, I knew nothing about the scientific concept of culture shock at the time, and many years later, as I reflect back on those first weeks of my Mexican trip, I look back with a wary smile at how I fulfilled the various other symptoms of culture shock that Oberg discussed in his short study. One of these symptoms is excessive hand washing and a great fear of drinking unfamiliar water. Before we left, we were warned many times about the dangerous amoebae found in soil and water that can infest, for example, the intestines or the liver and other internal organs.

If there was one thing I was truly afraid of in the early stages of this first research trip, it was the invisible amoebae,[11] which I knew could harm my body long after

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[9] On this trip, which was part of the 500th anniversary of the (re)discovery of the Americas, I was accompanied by two of my classmates, Miloslav Pokorný and Jan Menšík, who, after two weeks of acclimatisation in the capital Mexico City, went to the mountainous areas near Lake Pátzcuaro in the state of Michoacán to study some aspects of the culture of the Purépecha/Tarasco Indians.

[10] Kalervo OBERG, "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments", *Practical Anthropology* 7, New York 1960, p. 177.

[11] In Czech nomenclature, they are known as *měňavky*. With hindsight, and taking into account the nature of the terrain I was in for a few months, I believe that the greatest danger to me was the *Pelomyxa palustris*, found in rotting stagnant waters, and the *Entamoeba histolytica*, which can cause unpleasant dysentery after infecting intestinal tissue. A few days before leaving for Mexico, I contacted

I returned home. But as I approached my first destination, the original logging settlement of Creel, named after the early twentieth-century governor of Chihuahua, I had forgotten about the amoebae and similar animals, but the psychological symptoms of culture shock became more apparent. The euphoria of being enchanted by the landscape of the northern fringes of the Sierra Tarahumara was quickly replaced by a gripping anxiety and heaviness stemming simply from the knowledge that I had no idea what was going to happen in the coming minutes, hours and days. But as soon as I descended to the narrow concrete platform of the Creel train station, I suddenly felt a certain relief, perhaps because I did not have to go anywhere else for the time being, but probably because only now, after more than two weeks of somewhat dull and static preparation in university classrooms and several Mexican institutions, I was standing on the very doorstep of a campus inhabited by members of the ethnic group I had come to represent: Tarahumara or Rarámuri, as they are nowadays referred to in the literature and as they call themselves. Although thirty years ago there were several hundred of them living in the city of Chihuahua and other major cities in northern Mexico, it was only in a small square in Creel that I saw the first Tarahumara families and individuals standing or sitting alone, mostly clustered around two small Jesuit churches and a large shop selling the artwork (*artesanía*) of these Indians. Admittedly, I had to fend for myself first, find a place to sleep, and buy some food, but by constantly peeking in on these people, I more or less unknowingly began my first field research.

3. Moving between *here* and *there*[12]

That was not, however, how I approached it at the time; according to my ideas about field research at the time, I still was not *there*. Thus, for me, there was only

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Mnislav Zelený by phone because of my concerns about amoebae, and he was incredulous at my inquiry about overheating water from untested sources. Of course, I could not realise at the time that Zelený's slightly ironic answer implicitly indicated the necessity, or at least a certain readiness, for the inevitability of symbiotic coexistence of a field anthropologist not only with the humans he is supposedly "studying", but with the entire environment that surrounds him, which includes numerous organisms, including amoebae, that are hidden to the naked eye of the researcher. On symbiosis from an evolutionary biology perspective, see Lynn MARGULIS, *The Symbiotic Planet. A New Look at Evolution*, Phoenix 1999; or from the perspective of multispecies ethnography, e.g., S. Eben KIRKSEY – Stefan HELMREICH, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography", *Cultural Anthropology* 25/4, Arlington 2010, pp. 545–576.

[12] The title of this section alludes to Evans-Pritchard's assertion that the anthropologist experiences a double marginality in the field, consisting essentially of a double alienation. The moment the ethnographer enters the field, he becomes a stranger twice over: he ceases to be a member of his community, but he is also not a member of the society he has come to study: "One enters into another culture and withdraws from it at the same time. One cannot really become a Zande or a Nuer ora Bedouin Arab, and the best compliment one can pay them is to remain apart from them in essentials. In any case one always remains oneself, inwardly a member of one's own society and a sojourner in a strange land. Perhaps it would be better to say that one lives in two different worlds ofthought at the same time, in categories and concepts and values which often cannot easily be reconciled. One becomes, at least temporarily, a sort of double marginal man, alienated from both worlds […]" see Edward Evan EVANS-PRITCHARD, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford 1976, p. 243.

a settlement with an exclusively or majority native population. While I was not naive in the sense that I was looking for a pristine native community, I did not want to be "disturbed" by outside influences, by which I meant tourists, independent travellers, missionaries of all kinds, traders, aid workers, and other actors who would be more prevalent in such a community. With this relatively clear idea in mind, I began my first stay of approximately two months in the Sierra Tarahumara, the southern tip of Mexico's largest state, Chihuahua, and the northernmost tip of the vast Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range that stretched from Central Mexico through Zacatecas and Durango into southern Chihuahua and southeastern Sonora. The Sierra Tarahumara, with its territory of approximately 50,000 km^2, thus became my broader and largely imaginary terrain, as I had no idea what, if any, indigenous communities I would eventually reach.

I spent the first few weeks in Creel and the surrounding area in the company of a Czech emigrant, Jiří (George) Lev, and his girlfriend at that time, the Canadian, Cynthia Brown, whom I met almost immediately after my arrival. The couple had just been on a trip of several months to the United States and especially to Mexico, and they settled in Creel for a while after Cynthia had been volunteering for a local hotel. For a while we became a group that explored together, especially the canyons and mountain valleys. Thus, at this early stage of my stay, I was nothing more than an ordinary tourist, driving around places of interest with my camera, taking pictures and returning to base. Both of my companions, however, were aware of my ethnographic ambitions, and in retrospect, I must note that they indirectly helped me to reach key people who opened the way to Tarahumara communities. Thanks to them, I was able to meet several local people during this phase, or those who had settled here some time ago. One of these people was none other than the American composer Romayne Wheeler, whom I had met three years earlier in the Votive Church in Vienna. Our first meeting took place shortly before his concert at the "House of Culture" (*Casa de la cultura*) in Creel, where I was invited together with George and Cynthia. Of course, he did not remember our meeting in Vienna, but he invited me to a friendly meeting the very next day at his apartment, which was part of the house to which the audience from the wider area of the region flocked. Among them were often Tarahumara Indians in their typical costumes. One was a young Tarahumara man, Patricio Gutiérrez Luna, from the Mesa Yerba Buena community, the second key figure on the path to my rite of passage, as I would now professionally refer to my own process of *becoming an anthropologist*.[13]

Romayne and Patricio were not the only ones, but in the context of a few weeks of chaotic movement in an area that was reserved more for settled mestizos, tourists, missionaries or various people coming to the sierra for business than for the native Tarahumara, these two were key gatekeepers for me, making it possible for me to go there for the first time. This was the Tarahumara community of Yerba Buena, where

[13] I mention this episode also because Cynthia Brown later stayed in northern Mexico for a longer period of time, winning the hearts of the people of a Tarahumara family with whom she lived for some time and whom she still cares for to some extent in her role as godmother to one of the daughters of this family, in which I myself lived briefly in 1992 and 1996.

I arrived to do "real" field research in mid-November 1992. If I used the analogy of a rite of passage, I probably initiated its *liminal phase*, since I became for a time part of several Tarahumara *communitas*,[14] in which that power asymmetry between the researcher, who is usually described as a white man from the middle social class, and the indigenous man, who is considered to be from the lower rungs of the social ladder, was lost or even overturned.[15] This asymmetry may be due, for example, to the fact that the ethnographer is aware of his or her economic superiority and comes to the field knowing that he or she is financially able to do so, but psychologically it may be the other way around. This is how I felt during my first practice in ethnography in Tarahumara communities. I was aware that I could help my host family out a little, for example, by buying food to stock up, but at the same time I could not be sure that it would not be hinted, or directly said, that I should leave their company for some reason. These doubts were justified on my part, since a frequent question I heard was: *"How long are you staying?"* or *"When are you leaving?"*[16]

So who was I, or who did I feel I was during this first, "initiatory" field research? I probably did not think of it that way at the time, I was happy to be among the Indians without any visible outside element and I probably did not care about who the locals probably thought I was. Perhaps I thought I was at least on the verge of becoming an anthropologist with a focus on non-European areas, but in fact I was getting into rather different roles. Thomas Eriksen, in his textbook on social and cultural anthropology, in the chapter on methodology and field research, says it fully:

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[14] By the metaphor of *rite of passage* and *liminality*, I am of course referring to the well-known concepts of Arnold van Gennep see idem, *Les rites de passage: étude systématique des rites*, Paris 1909 (first edition in Czech under the title of *Přechodové rituály: systematické studium rituálů*, Praha 1996) and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure*, Rochester – New York – Chicago 1969, in Czech under the title of *Průběh rituálu*, Brno 2004. Since both books are now considered classics in social anthropology, I will not explain them further in this text.

[15] Of course, this is far from being the case today, as anthropology has rapidly spread to former colonial countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. However, in some fields and situations this simplistic and overdone dichotomy may still be present.

[16] *"Cuánto tiempo te quedas aquí?"* or *"Cuándo te vas?"* The communication between Tarahumara and me was in Spanish, as I had not managed to learn the Rarámuri language at a communicative level. I only began to learn the native language in Creel from a Jesuit missionary's textbook see José A. LLAGUNO, S. J., *Tarahumar (Adaptación del Método "ASSIMIL")*, México, D. F. 1984, but it was written on the basis of the ethnolect in Norogachi, Upper Tarahumara, and moreover, it was not very useful for daily contact with the natives in the other areas. I can simply state that I was using basic communicative phrases corresponding to so-called phatic or social communication. See Bronislaw MALINOWSKI, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages", in: Charles Kay Ogden – Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, New York 1923, pp. 296–336; or Ernest GELLNER, *Language and Solitude. Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Habsburg Dilemma*, Brno 2003, pp. 178–184. I quickly learned these phrases after arriving in Yerba Buena and Coyachique, but after using them I spontaneously switched to Spanish, which especially the men of the younger and middle generations already knew very well. At the same time, in this text I do not discuss the results of my three ethnographic researches among the Tarahumara. These are described, interpreted and analysed in detail in my book HALBICH, *Ztraceni v kaňonech*.

> Many anthropologists unintentionally take on the role of buffoons while in the field: they speak with strange accents and make grammatical errors, ask surprising and sometimes tactless questions, break many rules of conduct […]. Each of us is perceived as more or less a buffoon in a foreign environment […].[17]

I did not find this self-reflection in my old field diary, I was probably very self-centred, perhaps in an attempt to be "objective", i.e., to keep a certain distance from the field I was studying and the people I was observing, interviewing and, at least according to my criteria and ideas at the time, scientifically researching.

4. Returns, epistemological progress, but methodological dilletantism

After returning from my first study trip to the Tarahumara, I realized that if I wanted to write a thesis on these North Mexican Indians, I would have to go back to them. At the time, I came away with many observations and notes, but they were so vague that I could hardly write a serious qualifying thesis based on them.[18] Returning to Oberg's concept of culture shock, I would in retrospect describe my entire first research visit to the Sierra Tarahumara as a *honeymoon phase* consisting of a somewhat distorted and simplified view of the foreign environment and especially of the local people. The fact that I did not get to the next phase, described by Oberg as a *crisis phase*,[19] was probably due to the fact that my stay was relatively short.[20] Briefly, in two months I did not leave the initial euphoria and excitement of my first steps in the field, which was not at all easy. The Tarahumara family of Patricio Gutiérrez Luna and Patrocinio López welcomed me very warmly, I became part of their community for a few weeks and as far as I know the only serious crisis was my stomach problems.[21]

I returned to the Tarahumara after almost four years, having previously travelled for about three months in all the Central American countries except Honduras.[22]

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[17] Thomas Hylland ERIKSEN, *Sociální a kulturní antropologie. Příbuzenství, národnostní příslušnost, rituál* [Social and cultural anthropology. Kinship, nationality, ritual], Praha 2008, p. 39.

[18] From my first trip I at least extracted a few articles in popular magazines and one shorter, more technical text see Marek HALBICH, "Los tarahumares: un fenómeno etnológico del norte de México", *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* 27, Praga 1993, pp. 203–205.

[19] OBERG, "Cultural shock", p. 178.

[20] Some anthropologists report that the honeymoon phase lasts from a few days to several months, which coincides exactly with my first field research. In general, tourists, traders, or seasonal workers seem to return home while still in this culture shock phase, whereas anthropologists, aid workers, or gastarbeiters go through multiple phases during their stay in a foreign environment see Rachel IRWIN, "Negotiating feelings in the field: Analyzing the cultural shock", *Revista Brasileira de Sociologia da Emoção* 8/3, João Pessoa 2009, p. 348.

[21] During my first trip to Mexico, I suffered from traveller's diarrhoea several times, known locally as Montezuma's revenge or Aztec two-step. If I can believe various global statistics, I was among the 30–80% of travellers to tropical and subtropical areas who suffered from travel diarrhoea see Vladimír ŠERÝ – Ondřej BÁLINT, *Tropická a cestovní medicína* [Tropical and Travel Medicine], Praha 1998, p. 227. I remember that I was helped by a small medicine called Lomotil, similar to the well-known Imodium.

[22] At that time, Honduras did not like to issue tourist visas to independent travellers from the former Czechoslovakia, as it was still considered a Communist country in the eyes of politicians at that time.

I therefore arrived in the field with a certain confidence and the knowledge that I had managed to overcome the various pitfalls and dangers arising from, for example, armed conflicts, the existence of guerrilla groups, narcotraffickers hiding in the forests and jungles of the cities, etc.[23] However, I was still studying ethnology, in the meantime travelling extensively as a guide, especially to southern Europe, where I was strengthening my symbolic capital as a "connoisseur" of the Hispanophone environment and continuously preparing for this first return to the Tarahumara. While I undoubtedly made significant progress on the epistemological plane during that four-year period, methodologically I returned to the field again almost untouched. In retrospect I blame myself for this unpreparedness, despite the fact that my second research was relatively successful, in that two years later I was able to write and defend my master's thesis.[24] This, from my present perspective, was somewhat uncritically praised by my teacher Oldřich Kašpar.[25] Kašpar, in a paper which dealt with the theses of students of ethnology at the Charles University Faculty of Arts based on research in non-European areas, highlighted my efforts to take a comparative approach in which I tried to cover, even if only very selectively, some social and cultural aspects of other contemporary ethnic groups of northwestern Mexico.

Leopold Pospíšil, in his previously-mentioned research, also applied the comparative perspective, although on a much broader scale. While his aim was to arrive at a universal theory of law that was not Eurocentric,[26] my own achievement was far more modest. Pospíšil included in his comparative analysis of law some sixty other ethnic groups from all continents, in addition to the Kapauku, Nunamiut Eskimos, Tyrolean peasants and Hopi-Tewa among whom he conducted long-term and shorter fieldwork, whereas my comparisons focused exclusively on the Yutonahuas of Chihuahua and Sonora, and partially on the Hokas Serie (Konka'ak) living in Sonora. I would rather describe my approach as a micro-comparison; I have tried to

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[23] Travel in Central American countries and Mexico was not very safe in the spring and summer of 1996. In many places I encountered the remnants of the long civil wars, and in El Salvador in particular I felt at times as if the conflict was continuing. In southern Mexico (Chiapas) and in Guatemala, again, the Mexican army checked trains, buses and other means of transport at every turn, since at that time various paramilitary groups were hiding in the area, the most famous of which were the Zapatistas of the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional), whose activities resonated even in the two thousand kilometres of Mexico's north-west. In all countries I visited at that time I conducted ethnographic microprobes focused on *ad hoc* selected aspects of a particular ethnic groups (e.g. Emberá and Wounaan in Darién, Panama, Bribri in Talamanca, Costa Rica, Subtiava in Nicaragua, etc.).

[24] Marek HALBICH, *Charakteristika vybraných fenoménů tarahumarské kultury se stručnou komparací s ostatními nativními skupinami severozápadního Mexika* [Characteristics of selected phenomena of the Tarahumara culture with a brief comparison with other native ethnic groups of northwestern Mexico], Praha 1998.

[25] Oldřich KAŠPAR, "Diplomové práce z oboru mimoevropské etnografie v Ústavu etnologie Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze v letech 1989–1999" ["Diploma Theses in Non-European Ethnography at the Institute of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, 1989–1999"], *Český lid* 87/1, Praha 2000, pp. 61–66.

[26] Leopold POSPÍŠIL, *Etnologie práva* [Ethnology of Law], Praha 1997, pp. 111–113.

reveal, at least superficially, the relationship of each group to modernity and their degree of acculturation and assimilation into mainstream Mexican society.

But in fact, even during my second stay, I did not cross the shadow of stationary field research, as for two months I again stayed mostly in the Tarahumara communities of Coyachique and Retosachi in the Ejido Munerachi area and made comparisons only on the basis of a thorough study of the available anthropological and other literature on the northern Tepehuan (Ódami), the two Pima (O'odham) groups, the Varojío (Macurawe), the Yaqui (Yoeme) and others. My mobility was limited to the two settlements mentioned above, which did not allow me to analyse, for example, the social relations between some Tarahumara and mestizos from the district centre in Batopilas, but at least I could register major differences in social, cultural, economic, religious or ecological terms within the same ejido.[27] This second stay, which I spent mainly in the family home of Patrocinio López in Coyachique and in the home of Romayne Wheeler in Retosachi, was important for my future direction in that I realized the necessity of stepping out of one relatively limited research field, which for me was mainly the several communities within the ejido, or the ejido as a whole.[28] I had set my sights on more modern research methods that transcend the long-term staying in one community (e.g. Yerba Buena) or one area (e.g. Ejido Munerachi or Batopilas district). Although, despite a certain methodological dilettantism, I did not equate stationary research with mere data collection, as was and perhaps still is common in certain circles in the Czech academic environment.[29]

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[27] It is a very complicated form of small or mini-fund ownership, a specific non-capitalist type of relations of production that is a product of the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1917 see Roger BARTRA, *Estructura agraria y clases sociales en México*, Ciudad de México 1974, pp. 129–130.

[28] In this case, I borrow the term *field* from Pierre Bourdieu: "I describe the global social space as a field: by this I mean a field of forces whose pressure is necessarily subjected to the actors involved in that field, and at the same time a field of struggle in which the actors clash by various means and for various ends – depending on their position in the structure of the force field – and thus contribute to its preservation or change […]" see Pierre BOURDIEU, *Teorie jednání* [Theory of Action], Praha 1998, p. 38. Like Bourdieu, I understand by the term field the social space within which individual social actors create, maintain or expand their social position. Bourdieu meant, for example, the scientific, or academic, political, artistic, or sports field. In the context of my field research, I believe I am expanding or modifying this original concept a little. Thus, the social space under investigation for me was not only the ejido, i.e., the bounded political, economic and ecological entity, but all the space in which the social, political, religious and other interactions of all actors whose mobility goes beyond the boundaries of the ejido take place. An example of such a wider social field of the Munerachi's Tarahumara may be the *ritual compadrazgo*, which in some cases may, among other things, reinforce the power field of some persons socially related to the momentary political leaders of the district centre see Marek HALBICH, "Ritual compadrazgo as an Instrument of Interethnic and Social Adaptation among the Rarámuri in Northwestern Mexico and its Possible Correlations to Local Political Events", *Urban People* 8/1, Prague 2010, pp. 331–384; HALBICH, *Lost in the Canyons*, pp. 246–280. This field of power is, or can be, highly unstable and changeable for various reasons, as I was able to see during a short probing (pre-research) trip to Ejido Munerachi carried out in 2021, exactly twenty years after my last field research among the Tarahumara so far see: Marek HALBICH, "Report from a Preliminary Research Trip to North-Western Mexico", *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* 49/1, Praha 2023, pp. 103–109.

[29] Tereza STÖCKELOVÁ – Yasar ABU GHOSH (eds.), *Etnografie: improvizace v teorii a terénní praxi* [Ethnography: improvisation in theory and field practice], Praha 2013, p. 8.

Prolonged presence in one place was in several ways of considerable importance to me. I was obviously convinced that, above all, in this way I would obtain the most accurate data for the analysis of sociocultural configurations. Subconsciously, I accepted what was taking place before my eyes as an "objective" fact with which I could subsequently work. I was hardly thinking in the way that Stöckelová and Abu Ghosh so aptly state:

> […] the very question of the ethnographer's stay in the field, on which the notion of stationary research places a one-sided emphasis, is only one position of a process of inquiry, moving constantly in a diverse field of theoretical and epistemological, as well as biographical and historical powerlines […].[30]

I had not yet understood ethnography as a constant negotiation and reflexivity not only in the context of participant (or even non-participant) observation and conversation in the field, but also in the social space that often remains hidden to the discerning eye and judgment of the ethnographer. It was precisely this uncovering of hidden, or at first sight difficult to see and understand, phenomena and patterns that was to be the focus of my further pivotal research.

If I were to enter the native communities of northern Mexico today, I would of course be more instructive in many ways, since even in the Czech (and Slovak) environment we already have several anthropological or sociological studies that reflect the position of the researcher in the field, emphasizing the intersubjectivity of research, i.e. the interconnectedness and influence of the ethnographer and research partners, and pointing out that the field evolves and changes with each ethnographer's stay. For example, Milan Kováč, an ethnologist and founder of Maya studies in Slovakia who conducted several months of research among the Lacandon Indians in Chiapas, southern Mexico, argues that:

> Simply as soon as we start a stream of light so that the phenomena we intend to investigate emerge from the darkness, they are already somewhat different from what they were before. They are different because their vehicles are living people, and they respond to our presence just as we respond to them. It would be an illusion to suppose that our imaginary nature is a kind of scientific translucence, the ability to be invisible, or at least as invisible as one can be. We are pretty much physical objects, full of mysteries and surprises, that become objects of intense interest and study to our potential hosts. The subjects of our explorations usually watch us with as much, if not more, interest than we watch them […].[31]

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[30] Ibidem, p. 8.

[31] "Jednoducho ako náhle spustíme prúd svetla, aby sa javy, ktoré hodláme skúmať, vynorili z tmy, už sú trochu iné ako boli predtím. Sú iné, pretože ich nositelmi sú živí ľudia a ti reagujú na našu prítomnosť práve tak ako my reagujeme na nich. Bolo by ilúziou domnievať sa, že našou imaginárnou prirodzenosťou je akási vedecká priesvitnosť, schopnosť byť neviditelným alebo aspoň najneviditelnejším ako sa len dá. Sme vcelku dost velké fyzické objekty, plné záhad a prekvapení, ktoré sa stávajú predmetom intenzívneho záujmu a štúdia našich potenciálnych hostitelov. Subjekty našich vyskumov nás zvyčajne sledujú s rovnakym záujmom, ak nie vetším, ako my ich […]." (Translation from Slovak by the author). Milan KOVÁČ, "Antropológ ako sociálny inžinier: Prípad Lacandóncov"

In his text, Kováč primarily reflects on the dynamics of change in Lacandon communities brought about by his distinguished predecessors, especially Gertrude (Trudi) Blom, Robert Bruce, and the recently deceased German anthropologist Christian Rätsch, and points out that with each successive anthropologist, the phenomena he examines are already slightly different. I agree, but at the same time it is important to note that this is especially true in communities with smaller populations, such as those of the Lacandon, which have a population of approximately 1,000 people. Moreover, the Lacandon Indians differ from virtually all other Mexican Indian groups in that they have resisted Christianization, which has understandably attracted anthropologists to stay among them for longer periods of time. However, this probably created a paradoxical situation. While the Lacandons rejected missionaries of all kinds, they did allow people like the aforementioned Trudi Blom or, later, her protégé Robert Bruce into their world. The former, in her good faith to clothe the Lacandons in clothing made of more durable material, set in motion a process of irreversible cultural and social change consisting today, for example, of the strong involvement of many Lacandon individuals in local and regional tourism. The linguistic anthropologist Robert Bruce, despite being one of the few to learn the Lacandon language perfectly, and succeeding his mentor Trudi Blom, was apparently the first to introduce hard liquor into Lacandon households, which he drank at length with them, leading to many deaths, and eventually his own. Religious resistance notwithstanding, today's Lacandons, unlike several isolated Amazonian groups, are thus part of a global world that, especially through tourists heading to Palenque, Bonampak, Yaxchilan, and other archaeological sites in whose vicinity they live, continues to transform their lifestyle and increasingly integrate them into Mexican society.

The social engineering among the Lacandons, which is very suggestively described by Kováč, also shows a certain form of dominance with which the anthropologist claims the terrain he manages to enter first and establish friendly ties with the natives. Some anthropologists then regard such terrain as their "privileged waters" and keep any other research aspirant at a distance, as Trudi Blom did with the Lacandons for several decades. However, this approach is virtually impossible among those ethnic groups that are much more numerous or live scattered in tens or hundreds of villages, as is the case with "my" Tarahumara. Of course, many well-known anthropologists have worked among them, even in places where I have done my own research, but I have not come across a scenario similar to the one described by Milan Kováč. This is not to say that the anthropologist had no influence on the transformation of the Tarahumara lifestyle in, say, Munerachi, but the effectiveness of social engineering (and anthropologists may may be far from being the only ones responsible) is, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, weaker here than in the Lacandon communities, which were not contaminated by other religious systems or other external factors.

["The anthropologist as social engineer: the case of the Lacandons"], *Cargo: Journal for Cultural/Social Anthropology* 4/1–2, Praha 2001, p. 24.

Reflexivity, political correctness and indigenous peoples in the glocal perspective of the Czech Republic and Slovakia have recently been addressed in some texts, especially by the Czech social anthropologist Lívia Šavelková. This author, through a visual representation of the encounter of people during a lacrosse tournament in the Czech Republic, analysed the mutual construction of "exotic others", on the one hand by Indian players, on the other by Czech actors who tried to capture this process on film camera. Šavelková acknowledges her insider status as a lacrosse player and her co-authorship of this ethnographic film, which aimed to be honest and transparent in an effort both to show participation and (self-)reflexivity in the whole process, and to open up questions such as: "Who is the 'exotic other' and from whose perspective?" etc. Thus, one of the purposes of this collective visual representation was to bring in a Saidian Orientalist discourse concerning the production of knowledge by "non-Western" authors about marginalised peoples in the West. Šavelková is, however, well aware of the ambiguity or ambivalence of such exoticizing or orientalizing of the "others" and also points out that Said's notion of orientalization can be applied not only to the exoticization and stereotyping of "indigenous peoples" by members of the Euro-American space, but also, for various reasons, to the exoticization of people from "Eastern Europe" by members of the indigenous population.[32] This observation is apt, and in retrospect I am clearly aware that I have been in similar situations where I have been viewed by local people in Amerindian or later Madagascan communities as an "exotic other" having strange customs, or I have been stereotyped as someone who comes from the "other side", as is often said in Mexico about newcomers from the United States, considered without any doubt to be anyone with fair skin, light hair and blue eyes. I have gradually learned to live with this reverse exoticization and stereotyping in my field research, and in some cases it has even helped me to coexist more easily with the indigenous people.

5. From chaos to method and order

In this section, I will attempt to briefly summarize and reflect on my dissertation research among the Tarahumara in 2001 and outline my own epistemological transformation towards returnable fieldwork in the intended methodological context. This, as is evident from what has been presented so far, I have neglected, or approached with dilettantish ignorance in the past. I will focus in particular on so-called, global and glocal ethnography and the method of the extended case and multi-sited ethnography, especially in the context of environmental anthropology, and in conclusion I will reflect on the ethical issues involved in doing fieldwork in post-colonial countries and in areas sometimes referred to with some inertia as the *Fourth World* or more technically as *regiones de refugio*.[33]

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[32] Lívia ŠAVELKOVÁ, "Cross-Cultural Filmmaking as a Process of Self-Reflection: Filming Native Americans within Central European Space's Prevailing Imagery of the 'Noble Savage'", *Ethnologia Actualis* 17/1, Trnava 2017, pp. 133–154; idem, "Úvod [The Introduction]", in: Lívia Šavelková – Jana Jetmarová – Tomáš Boukal (eds.), *Původní obyvatelé a globalizace* [Indigenous peoples and globalisation], Praha 2021, pp. 46–47.

[33] The concept of the *Fourth World* is somewhat vague. It usually refers to areas where groups that have not yet been contacted live, or groups that are considered marginal even within a single country.

In 2001, I came to Tarahumara as a graduate student in ethnology and a post-graduate student in this field, in order to work on my dissertation. Although another five years had passed since my last stay, I was arriving in a relatively familiar environment and therefore without much concern about whether I would be able to live and work in ejido communities again for some time. This time I was no longer experiencing culture shock, but I do recall experiencing a sudden change in climate during my acclimatization stay in Batopilas, when sometime in early April it warmed up considerably from one day to the next, which delayed my departure for the ejido Munerachi communities. So the culture shock suddenly became more of an *environmental stress*,[34] which I could have expected, but certainly was not fully prepared for.[35]

In Latin America, this may include, for example, some Amazonian groups in Brazil, Peru, Ecuador or Bolivia, but also the more numerous Amerindian ethnic groups that are still largely marginal to the majority population in their countries. This is still the case for the majority of the Tarahumara population, although thousands of individuals now live in larger cities where they are more easily integrated into the state structure. Despite this marginality, the notion of the Fourth World is rather abandoned in anthropology and probably in other social sciences as well, as marginal groups are now often part of a wider regional, national or even global network. On the other hand, to a large extent, the characterization of these groups that George Manuel, one of the leaders of Canadian indigenous groups, and Michael Posluns, a Canadian journalist and activist, came up with almost fifty years ago is still valid: "We are the fourth world, a forgotten world, the world of aboriginal peoples locked into independent states but without an adequate voice or say in the decisions which affect our lives […]. The 'Fourth World' is thus a collective 'host' world that much of the states of the First, Second, and even Third Worlds have come to claim legally as their own […]." See Glen Sean COULTHARD, "Introduction: A Fourth World Resurgent", in: George Manuel – Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*, Minneapolis – London 1974, p. xii. This characteristic is still valid in different areas, only some of the actors have changed. It is no longer only the state that enters the living space of these groups, but increasingly various multinational corporations seeking and then plundering natural wealth. The concept of *regiones de refugio* coined by the Mexican ethnohistorian Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán can be seen as an analytical refinement of the notion of the fourth world: "these are mainly underdeveloped areas that have largely inherited their structure from the colonial period and in which archaic (pre-industrial) cultures found shelter from the onslaught of modern civilization"; see Gonzalo AGUIRRE BELTRÁN, *Regiones de refugio. El desarrollo de la comunidad y el proceso dominical en Mestizoamérica (Obra anthropológica IX)*, Ciudad de México 1991, p. 31; in more detail HALBICH, *Lost in the Canyons*, pp. 314–352.

[34] In this case, I am at least partly referring to the thoroughly elaborated concept of environmental stress used in environmental psychology, in which "can be defined as the emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses to an environmental stimulus (or stressor) […]"; see Birgitta GATERSLEBEN – Isabelle GRIFFIN, "Environmental Stress", in: Ghozlane Fleury-Bahi – Enric Pol-Oscar Navarro (eds.), *Handbook of Environmental Psychology and Quality of Life Research*, Berlin – Heidelberg 2017, p. 469. The dramatic rise in temperature affected me so much that I preferred to continue my work in Batopilas and postpone the 20-kilometer transfer to Munerachi, which I had chosen as my primary terrain, for a few days.

[35] I had a good memory of an incident that happened during my field research in 1996. During the trek from Coyachique to Retosachi (about 20 km in very rugged terrain and with daytime temperatures well over 40ºC in the shade at the time of my stay), I got lost several times while climbing in the mountainous terrain, quickly ran out of physical strength, and of fluid supplies, and only thanks to a Tarahumara young man returning home with a few lemons and mangoes to share with me was I able to continue my journey. This incident, caused by my misjudgement of my physical strength, and during which my life was actually at stake, is deeply etched in my memory and has probably

This time, I chose as my base for several months of research the central community of the ejido of the same name, Munerachi, where key situations, interactions and encounters took place not only with its native inhabitants, but also with mestizos from Batopilas and other centres outside the ejido. Looking again at this, my most extensive fieldwork to date, from a retrospective perspective, I see this period as to some extent the first step towards the completion of my process of becoming an anthropologist. The formative period was long over, but I still felt as though I was in a kind of *liminal phase* of my professional anthropologizing in the field. In fact, I remained in that state for several years after I returned to academia at the Faculty of Humanities, where I began to lecture professionally on anthropology. Perhaps I would not be far from the truth if I now state that it was only the complicated process of writing my dissertation that established me as an anthropologist. One of the biggest complications was that several years passed between this last research and the writing of the dissertation, later adapted into book form, and my field diary proved to be rather "leaky". As I wrote, I realised that the notes I had taken during my field research were only partially usable. In an environment such as the communities in Ejido Munerachi, it is virtually impossible to conduct observations and interviews in the "classical" way, i.e., writing down in a notebook what was happening in front of my eyes, or simply arranging an interview and meeting at an agreed location with a tape recorder. To carry out ethnography in this setting is a much more complex process; it cannot be purely mechanical in the sense that the researcher follows the methodological and ethical principles outlined in the best handbooks. Implicitly, I have come to believe that the demands of the work of the field ethnographer are more complex, and necessarily require, in addition to the ability to intuit, the art of improvisation and experimentation in the sense of Burawoyan *robust ethnography* combining "classical" anthropological methods with research in archival documents, the study of minutes of indigenous council meetings, documents of various associations, interest groups, or petitions of environmental activists obtained directly from native communities, etc. With regard to my own field experience, I also include here various types of conversations on the *move*, by which I mean in particular the numerous dialogues carried out on the move while accompanying locals to, for example, urban centres, during movements between communities, during leisure activities, etc. complementing concentrated participant observation.[36] This is not to say that the field diary is not important or even meaningless, quite the contrary. The field diary, or field note-taking, certainly remains a symbol of the anthropologist's professional identity.[37] What is being modified in the context of changing and evolving anthropological paradigms is the mode and

become an environmental psychological stressor that kicks in as soon as I am threatened with finding myself in a similar situation again. I am thus aware of the possible limits of my ethnography in such challenging geographical conditions.

[36] STÖCKELOVÁ – ABU GHOSH (eds.), *Ethnography*, pp. 22–23; Michael BURAWOY, *The Extended Case Method. Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations, and One Theoretical Tradition*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2009, p. 76.

[37] Jean E. JACKSON, "I Am a Fieldnote: Fieldnotes as a Symbol of Professional Identity", in: Roger Sanjek (ed.), *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*, Ithaca – London 1990, p. 3.

content of note-taking. Not only should this be aimed at separating soft (e.g., statements, attitudes, opinions of our research partners) and hard (mostly statistical, "objective", countable) data, or different types of observations, but the researcher should also strive to capture as many fluid events as possible, including short episodes that at first glance do not seem relevant to the ethnographer's analysis, or whose significance becomes apparent only after these micro-events are brought together. Such an approach, however, requires a virtually permanent capacity for improvisation and experimentation, and an awareness that new and novel situations are created in the interaction between the ethnographer and the research partners – as I would probably best name all the actors who are part of our research network today, who constantly transform the articulation of the rules and expectations with which we enter the field. However, this fluid situatedness need not be a hindrance in research, but on the contrary, it can be an opportunity to continuously fine-tune research questions and thus ultimately improve the quality of the researcher's conclusions.[38]

6. Walking out of the stationary field research

By briefly indicating the gradual transformation from adherence to a more classical approach to field research to a more robust anthropological research, I do not want categorically to claim that stationary research (single-site oriented) is completely outdated or irrelevant. Indeed, the complete abandonment of this type of field research among the Tarahumara would probably be a methodological error, as the greater part of the total number of about 100,000 Tarahumara still remain in their native communities, particularly in the Lower Tarahumara (Tarahumara Baja) in the districts of Batopilas, Urique and Guachochi.[39] At the same time, however, it is quite evident that more and more of these Indians are for various reasons moving outside their native habitat to large cities, where more and more of them are settling permanently. Another and probably more important reason for the change in research scale is the increasing involvement of the Tarahumara in regional, national and even global social, political, economic or environmental networks. Thus, internal and external migration and the stronger penetration of globalisation effects into the heart of Tarahumara territory are, in my view, the two most important impulses for methodological and epistemological change.

This transformation has led to the necessity in many anthropological departments to overcome the long-standing idea of an ethnographic trilogy consisting of *one researcher, one (limited) time and one place*,[40] exactly along the lines of my past research. *Global transformations* have rapidly directed anthropological research towards a *methodological turn* in which this classical trilogy, going back in its purest form at least to Malinowski and his long-standing research on Trobriand society, has ceased to be sufficient for the effectiveness of such research. Today's field research is therefore much more a matter of a research team, often international and

[38] STÖCKELOVÁ – ABU-GHOSH (eds.), *Ethnography*, p. 24.

[39] HALBICH, *Lost in the Canyons*, p. 196.

[40] Michel-Rolph TROUILLOT, *Global Transformations. Anthropology and the Modern World*, New York 2003, p. 104.

interdisciplinary, consisting of perhaps five or six or more researchers from different social and natural science disciplines. Although teamwork is quite common in the natural sciences and much more widespread than in the social sciences and humanities, this current apparent trend is not entirely new even in social anthropological research. In the second half of the 1940s, Julian Haynes Steward led a research team of budding social anthropologists. Such later renowned anthropologists as Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz were among the group of these young scholars sent by Steward to various regions of Puerto Rico. Even before this team research, which was essentially the birth of community studies, at least a few researchers had worked in the same area, such as Wendell Clark Bennett and Robert Mowry Zingg in the Samachique region on the border of the Upper and Lower Tarahumara in the early 1930s, the former a specialist in material culture and archaeology, the latter in spiritual culture and social organization. Their nine-month research resulted in the most complete ethnographic monograph of the Tarahumara to date. Although it was mostly descriptive, it is still extremely valuable for contemporary anthropologists conducting their research in the region nearly a hundred years after its first publication (1935).[41]

While Bennett's and Zingg's monographs were more or less based on classical stationary research, and their conclusions could not be generalized and applied to other Tarahumara regions, the collective monograph published under Steward's direction already went beyond this background. The fact that the ambitions of this research to some extent went beyond one community, one region, or in the case of Puerto Rico, the entire island, was clearly indicated by Steward at the beginning of the extensive Introduction:

> The substantive results of the study are seen as exemplifications of processes which are now occurring also in other world areas, and this volume concludes with some hypothetical regularities of change which appear to operate in different cultures elsewhere.[42]

This Puerto Rican anthropological monograph is, it seems to me, somewhat forgotten and, in my opinion, perhaps somewhat unduly underappreciated. Indeed, Steward, and by implication his younger colleagues, probably anticipated what, many decades later, came to be called *globalisation* in the sociological and political science lexicon, and what anthropology moved towards in its research. Thus, in the 1990s, new research methods emerged in response to the change in scale. The roots of global and glocal ethnography, the extended case method, multi-sited ethnography, or transnational approaches to the study of migration processes, etc., thus reach back at least to this collective Puerto Rican ethnography methodologically linking and containing what Michael Burawoy characterized half a century later as the *extended case method*:

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[41] Wendell Clark BENNETT – Robert Mowry ZINGG, *The Tarahumara: An Indian Tribe of Northern Mexico*, Chicago 1935; HALBICH, *Lost in the Canyons*, pp. 67–73.

[42] Julian H. STEWARD, *The People of Puerto Rico*, Champaign (Illinois) 1956, p. 1.

> The extended case method applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro" to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory […].[43]

Although Gluckman et al. still introduced *situational analysis* into their research, these anthropologists did not go beyond the shadow of what was then the majority approach based on the aforementioned Trouillot trilogy. One of those in social anthropology who responded to the rapid transformation of the world by radically shifting their research from seeing the terrain as a *micro-environment* in the sense of *small is beautiful* (e.g., a village, a football stadium, an urban neighborhood, a luxury hotel, a small nomadic tribe, etc.) to a global or *"extended"* field as a *macro-environment* linking at least two but usually more separate spatial and material entities, it was Michael Burawoy who, using ethnographic participant observation, studied everyday life in its extra-local and historical context. In doing so, he started from a reflexive model of science based on the assumption of the *intersubjectivity* of the scientist and the object of study. Burawoy, however, did not arrive at this transformation and subject-object shift until forty years later, as his original fieldwork in the Copperbelt of Zambia was not yet very intersubjective and reflexive. But he was fortunate to be able to *restudy* his original conclusions and, on a methodological level, to shift his research back towards a global ethnography that places local settings and their actors on the global stage as pointed out by Gille and Ó Riain, who, together with Burawoy, helped to formulate the concept:

> By locating themselves firmly within the time and space of social actors living the global, ethnographers can reveal the socioscapes that people collectively construct of global processes, thus demonstrating how globalization is grounded in the local.[44]

This new challenge for the anthropologist reflecting the *global situation*,[45] however, also presents a complication in that the uneven separation of the spatial and

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[43] Michael BURAWOY, "The Extended Case Method", *Sociological Theory* 16/1, Thousand Oaks, California 1998, p. 5; BURAWOY, *The Extended Case*, p. 21. Their aim was to develop a method for practical ethnography that would lead, according to Max Gluckman, to the study of colonial and colonized society as one social system with two racial groups nevertheless forming the basis of its structural unity see Max GLUCKMAN, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, Glencoe 1955.

[44] Zsuzsa GILLE – Seán Ó RIAIN, "Global Ethnography", *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, 2002, p. 271; Michael BURAWOY – Joseph A. BLUM – Sheba GEORGE et al., *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2000; Martin ALBROW, "Travelling beyond local cultures. Socioscapes in a global city", in: John Eade (ed.), *Living the global city. Globalization as a local process*, London – New York 1997, pp. 35–52.

[45] As far as I know, virtually no anthropologist thinks that the global future will lead to cultural homogeneity. Rather, the opposite is the case: much ethnographic research on the impact of globalization on the local environment concludes that this impact tends more towards an increasingly "local" cultural diversity see Anna TSING, "The Global Situation", *Cultural Anthropology* 15/3, Arlington 2000, p. 339. However, the reality of the resistance of native societies to globalization has been pointed out

the social undermines or potentially severely weakens the claim that ethnographic research has always made, namely, to understand the social relations studied *in situ* and *in vivo*.

I see global ethnography more as a macro-sociological method in which the main emphasis is on *global (extra-local) actorhood*, on wider networks of relations based on a more general concept of globalization,[46] while local actors are to some extent neglected. Thus, *global ethnography* places more emphasis on the study and analysis of *ex situ* phenomena, focusing more on societies, institutions, corporations, NGOs, etc., rather than where these entities are headquartered.[47] As a kind of reaction to the somewhat "stretched" method of global ethnography, the social anthropologist Noël Salazar introduced in 2006 the methodological concept of *glocal ethnography*, drawing on several theoretical sources. The term *glocal* itself is a borrowing from the sociological concept of *glocalization* first introduced by Roland Robertson in his research on Japanese society. The term was therefore first applied to the Japanese word *dochakuka*, which originally described a situation in which farming techniques were adapted to local conditions. The idea of applying the term to "global localisation" was adopted especially in the business world.[48]

This shift of attention from the global to the local was initially much studied, especially in the context of travel and tourism. James Clifford speaks of a *rerouting* of field research from relatively bounded terrains to spatially unbounded places:

> Generally speaking, the localization of "natives" meant that intensive interactive research was done in spatially delimited fields and not, for example, in hotels or capital cities, on ships, in mission schools or universities, in kitchens and factories, in

before by Marshall Sahlins in particular with his concept of the *indigenization of modernity* see Marshall SAHLINS, "Goodby to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History", *The Journal of Modern History* 65/1, Chicago 1993, pp. 3–5.

[46] There is no room in this text for a detailed interpretation of globalisation in an anthropological context. The very concept of globalisation, global flows and their impact on specific local environments is dealt with in more detail in another article see Marek HALBICH, "Local Reactions of Village Communities of the East Coast of Madagascar to Globalisation", in: Lívia Šavelková – Jana Jetmarová – Tomáš Boukal (eds.), *Indigenous Peoples and Globalisation*, Prague 2021, pp. 283–314.

[47] An example of a somewhat opposite approach is one of the most cited books in the field of transnationalism and migration studies today, which focuses on people at their place of origin in sub-Saharan Africa and their complex migration trajectory to their final destinations in the European Union. Research by global institutions, in this case for example Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency) based in Warsaw, is also analytically rigorous, but the primary focus is on "following people", their actions, their reactions to various bureaucratic and other obstacles in situ and *in vivo*. From a methodological point of view, such research can be considered a combination of global ethnography, the extended case method, glocal ethnography and multi-sited ethnography see Ruben ANDERSON, *Illegality, Inc. Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe*, Oakland, California 2014.

[48] Roland ROBERTSON, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London – Thousand Oaks – New Delhi 1992, pp. 173–174; Habibul KHONDKER, "Glocalization as Globalization: Evolution of a Sociological Concept", *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology* 1/2, Dhaka 2004, pp. 3–4.

refugee camps, in diasporic neighbourhoods, on pilgrimage buses, or at a variety of cross-cultural sites of encounter […].[49]

Salazar later applied this rather theoretical (meta-anthropological) assumption by Clifford in the context of glocal ethnography to his research on tourist sites in Indonesia and elsewhere on the planet, and set out its rather precise methodological framework, which included a clear statement of objectives, key research questions, data collection and analysis, and most importantly, an outline of the final product, which was to be an understanding of the complex interconnections, disconnections and reconnections between local and global phenomena and processes.[50]

On a more theoretical level, this spatial methodological reorientation of field research was elaborated by George Marcus in the so-called *multi-sited ethnography*, which consists not only of an attempt to step out of one limited research site, but above all of a thorough observation of people, things, metaphors, stories, conflicts, etc. Probably the most common multi-sited observation is the tracking of human actors and things (objects) not only in their home sites, but especially in their "excursions" beyond those localities.[51] Malinowski's tracking of people and sacred objects on kula ring cruises consisting of the ritual exchange of gifts, however, was still effectively taking place within one relatively circumscribed area of the Trobriand archipelago. Yet we might see hints of the later extended case method in his approach, both in the original Gluckmanian and in the later Burawoyian sense. We might see parallels between Gluckman and Malinowski, for example, in the attempt to arrive at the general through careful observation of the dynamically changing peculiarities of the case. Gluckman, for example, sought to understand and explain the colonial system as a single system by studying social conflict in South African Zululand,[52] while Malinowski, by studying the meaning of the *kula* ritual, explained the social

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[49] James CLIFFORD, "Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and Disciplining of Anthropology", in: Akhil Gupta – James Ferguson (eds.), *Anthropological Locations. Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1997, p. 207.

[50] Noël SALAZAR, "Experimenting with 'glocal ethnography' as a methodology to study tourism in Asia and beyond", (conference paper), *Asia Research Graduate Workshop, Questions of Methodology; Researching Tourism in Asia*, (International conference organized by Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore & Department of Tourism, University of Otago, New Zealand on 5–6 September 2006). Thus, for example, a typical research question emerging from glocal ethnography may be an attempt to understand how people's thinking and behavior are shaped by local and global influences.

[51] The ethnographer's participation in extralocal mobilities is not new in social anthropology. An archetypal example of a similar technique, according to Marcus, is the book *Argonauts of Western Pacific* of Bronislaw Malinowski, who participated in the circumnavigational trade routes and ritual cycles of specific groups of people in the Trobriand Islands see George MARCUS, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, San Mateo (California) 1995, p. 106.

[52] Max GLUCKMAN, "Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand", *Bantu Studies* 14/1, Thames, Oxfordshire United Kingdom 1940, pp. 147–174; Richard WERBNER, *Anthropology after Gluckman: The Manchester School, Colonial and Postcolonial Transformations*, Manchester 2020, p. 1; Terrence M. S. EVENS – Don HANDELMAN (eds.), *The Manchester School: Practice and Ethnographic Praxis in Anthropology*, New York – Oxford 2006.

cohesion of the inhabitants of the scattered islands. Some parallels between Burawoy and Malinowski can be seen, for example, in the geographical spread of the case from one focal point or centre to a larger area. Although Burawoy's elaboration of the extended case method is much more complex, one of his main premises is the observation of everyday life not only in a local but also increasingly in an extra-local context.[53] Malinowski's research, however, was still conducted in a reasonably clearly bounded space, so I would rather describe his approach as a regionally constrained extended case method, which took him from a central location (such as the islands of Toulon or Kiriwina) to a wider archipelagic space, but virtually not to other places in the Pacific area. His approach thus more closely resembled a limited, extended case method that took him from a central location (such as the islands of Toulon or Kiriwina) to a wider archipelagic space, but virtually not to other parts of the Pacific area.[54]

Nevertheless, this "classical" research and a number of later anthropological investigations foreshadowed a future methodological turn along the lines I have outlined above. Perhaps the most important work in this regard was Wolf's book on *nations without history* and their European conquerors,[55] often compared to the work of major world systems theorists, notably Immanuel Wallerstein or Andre Gunder Frank. Wolf's book, however, differs qualitatively from the approach of these two great theorists in that, unlike them, his focus is on research into the interrelationship of the global environment and local worlds, which represent a sometimes latent, sometimes evident symbiosis, and is thus irreducibly "glocal". These "glocal" worlds are sometimes dominated by transnational economic processes, but flexibly adapt by either maintaining, adopting or transforming cultural traits. In principle, I agree with some contemporary social anthropologists who regard Wolf's book as an unrivalled study of *comparative global anthropology*. Wolf has analyzed not only the dynamics of culture and identity, but also the relations between power and economic processes, pointing out how anthropologists can learn from world history and, conversely, why historians should be interested in the methods and perspectives of anthropological research. Long before it became commonplace, Wolf thus pointed to the necessity of *multi-sited* anthropological fieldwork and argued persuasively that global processes must be studied in local contexts.[56] In contrast to world systems theory, which does not concern itself much with peripheries, Wolf focused specifically on the inhabitants of marginal areas on a global scale and how these peoples were active participants in shaping the new cultural and social forms

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53 Michael BURAWOY, *The Extended*, p. 90.

54 As far as I know, the kula exchange system, which has been the main subject of research in the *Argonauts*, has been recorded, apart from the Trobriand Islands, in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, for example, but has not extended significantly into that part of Melanesia see Bronislaw MALINOWSKI, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London 1922.

55 Eric WOLF, *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1982.

56 Thomas Hylland ERIKSEN, "Forward to the 2010 Edition", in: Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1982, pp. ix–xviii.

that emerged in the context of trading empires.[57] Wolf advocates a type of history written on a global scale that acknowledges the major structural transformations of world history tracing the connections between specific communities, regions, ethnic groups, and peoples that anthropologists often separate and examine and reify as separate entities.[58]

7. *Being there* after twenty years: a new beginning, new challenges

Last year (2021), I began the process of returning to Tarahumara communities to conduct new, larger-scale anthropological research focused primarily on *glocalizing local knowledge of biodiversity conservation* in broader environmental, social, political, and other contexts. Such a project necessarily requires a change of approach reflecting the transcendence of the "sacred ethnographic trilogy" suggested by Trouillot. I went on a lightning pre-research sounding trip in late September/early October last year with the freasonably clear aim of preparing the best possible conditions for overcoming this classic research triad. Although officially I will probably be the only researcher in charge of the new project, I will overcome the horizon of one researcher by having as co-authors not only local and other experts in, for example, biodiversity and environmental protection in general,[59] but also some individuals from the native population[60] who, thanks to their erudition, knowledge and partnership during the research, have a great deal to contribute to its final form. Among the Tarahumara, North American evolutionary biologist Daniel Lieberman has recently conducted interdisciplinary research with significant native participation, seeking to explain as fully as possible the often superhuman endurance

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[57] William ROSEBERRY, "European History and the Construction of Anthropological Subjects", in idem, *Anthropologies and Histories. Essays in Culture, History, and Political Economy*, New Brunswick – London 1989, p. 130.

[58] Ibidem, p. 125.

[59] Here I am thinking, for example, of the Mexican biologist and environmentalist Manuel Chávez Díaz, who led the development project *Tarahumara Sustentable* (*Sustainable Tarahumara*) from 2014–2019, which inspired my new research in the Sierra Tarahumara. Chávez Díaz now works for the state organization CONAFOR (*Comisión Nacional Forestal*) with the main objective of mapping and protecting the biodiversity of Chihuahua's diverse ecosystems. I can have the archival documentation and results of the already completed Tarahumara Sustentable project, which will later allow me to study the history of processes and conflicts related to local and regional biodiversity conservation.

[60] This development is also not entirely new in anthropological research and goes back at least to Maurice Leenhardt and his key informant, the grand chef (chiefman) of the New Caledonian tribe Houailou Mindia Néja, or to Franz Boas and his lifelong native (Kwakiutl) collaborator George Hunt see James CLIFFORD, "Fieldwork, Reciprocity, and the Making of Ethnographic Texts: The Example of Maurice Leenhardt", *Man* 15/3, London 1980, p. 525. Although neither acknowledged co-authorship of the ethnographic texts produced in their titles, without the ability of the two natives to translate the text from their native languages into French and English respectively, the final product would have been far more inaccurate. Probably the first anthropologist to explicitly call for a *reversed anthropology* based on reciprocal ethnography, during which both the ethnographer and the native observe and interpret, was Roy Wagner, who saw field research as, among other things, a cumulative or parallel culture shock expressing the changing feelings and reciprocal gradual adaptation of the researcher to the local people and vice versa see Roy WAGNER, *The Invention of Culture*, Chicago – London 1981, pp. 22–33.

capabilities of some Tarahumara individuals. Lieberman has powerfully involved in his research one of the most famous contemporary Tarahumara runners, Silvino Cubesare Quimare, from the Huisuchi mountain community. The result of their collaboration was, among other things, a particular deconstruction of the stereotypical view of Tarahumara runners as "mythical Stone Age super-athletes" suggested and globally disseminated by the famous book *Born to Run*.[61]

Research focused on local responses to climate and environmental change also necessarily requires a change in the temporal orientation of such research. A kind of immobile long durée (however long the stay in the field), is replaced by an exploration of the *processuality* of such problems. Through robustly focused research, the researcher must go back in time and try to identify and explain the causes of the current state of the environment and, in interdisciplinary collaboration and interaction with indigenous governments, at least outline ways to protect biodiversity not only from external influences but also from progressivists among local people.[62] Finally, the third and perhaps most important shift is the approach to research location. As I indicated in the previous section the new research project in the Sierra Tarahumara will be a combination of multiple methods or research techniques and strategies, alternating a global ethnographic approach with glocal ethnography and multi-sited observation tracking people's movements over a larger area, the circulation of things, tracking local, regional and larger conflicts,[63] events etc. with a stay at the main research base, depending on the current situation.[64]

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[61] See Christopher MCDOUGALL, *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*, New York 2009. In this book, for example, he incorrectly explains the running abilities of the Tarahumara by saying, among other things, that heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, carbon dioxide emissions, etc. did not exist among them see Daniel E. LIEBERMAN – Mickey MAHAFFEY – Silvino CUBESARE QUIMARE et al., "Running in Tarahumara (Rarámuri) Culture. Persistence Hunting, Footracing, Dancing, and the Fallacy of the Athletic Savage", *Current Anthropology* 8/3, Chicago 2020, p. 358. However, this worldwide bestselling book has caused many people, including those interested in endurance running, to have very skewed information about the Tarahumara.

[62] In this case, I mean by progressivists, for example, those of the local people who agree to clear forests faster for logging companies in order to generate immediate income for such a community.

[63] In this text, I do not explain in detail what I mean by local or global, the relationship between local vs. global, etc., although I am aware that both terms are often treated in a very light and vague way, and especially that they do not include the notions of regional and national as important spatial intermediaries that link the local and global environments, at least to some extent. In this context, as early as the 1980s, some social geographers pioneered the thesis that environmental relations at the local level cannot be understood without research and clarification of relations at the regional level úrovni see Yancey ORR – J. Stephen LANSING – Michael R. DOVE, "Environmental Anthropology: Systemic Perspectives", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, San Mateo (California) 2015, p. 160.

[64] An example of a global ethnographic research can be the analysis of the documents of the global organization *Conservation International* and their impact and resonance in indigenous communities. An example of glocal ethnography might be the analysis of a document (or verbal agreement) issued by local authorities towards extra-local actors. In September 2021, I witnessed an indigenous local government meeting in the community of Retosachi (Ejido Munerachi) regarding the protection of pine forests and how to protect them from the increasing pressures of timber corporations, but also from climate change or weather fluctuations. In many ways, pine is an integral part (kin unit) of Tarahumara families in many places in the Sierra Tarahumara see Alejandro FUJIGAKI LARES,

I thus see glocal ethnography and similar methodological innovations as a new research challenge and ask whether detailed research conducted in specific places and combining single- and multi-sited observations can shed light on wider (global) networks. Is there indeed a complex process leading to the interconnectedness or even convergence of local and global environmental space, or is it merely a manifestation of cultural imperialism in which certain cultural forms and social institutions spread unidirectionally? One of the questions I would like to pose as a provisional answer is, how have people living in a recently colonized world adapted to new social conditions? In other words, how did they develop the mechanisms of resistance and adaptation by which natives control their environment, which are said to be (perhaps necessarily) glocal?[65] If I am referring specifically to the new ways of doing ethnography among the Tarahumara and in spaces associated with them, then I will try to answer questions such as the following: can a better understanding of local biodiversity, the knowledge of which indigenous peoples have accumulated over many millennia, help build a sustainable and appropriate future? Can the Tarahumara relationship to the environment lead to some more general ontological or existential turn that acknowledges or even questions the relatedness of human and non-human actors and contributes its part to the global discourse on saving the planet? These and many other questions, however, will be more precisely and purposefully generated only by my return field research to the Sierra Tarahumara and other places reflecting some of the methodological inspirations I have outlined.

(Written in English by the author)

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[65] ERIKSEN, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p. 362.

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CLOSING THE WATER: ETHNOGRAPHY OF A NAHUA RITUAL

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Abstract
"Closing the water"[1] is a ritual connected to the agrarian cycle and belongs to a set of rituals which are performed for the purpose of securing an abundant harvest of maize and other crops. This case study is based on fieldwork conducted by the author in Hueyapan, a Nahua community situated in the Highlands of Morelos on the southern slopes of the Popocatepetl volcano in Central Mexico. It consists of two parts: the first provides a description of the ritual; that is, it presents the ritual itself and the sequence of its parts. The second represents an analysis and explanation of the ritual from an anthropological point of view. Since the ritual of "Closing the water" belongs to a millennial tradition of Mesoamerica related to a ritual landscape, sacred mountains and agrarian cycle, the paper shows how this tradition and this ritual were incorporated into Catholicism in a process of religious syncretism.
Keywords: Nahuas; Central Mexico; Hueyapan; Popocatepetl; agrarian cycle; ritualism; rainmaking.

Introduction

Hueyapan, which means 1) In a place with plenty of water, 2) A place with plenty of water[2], is a Nahua community located in the northeastern corner of the state of Morelos where it borders the state of Puebla. It belonged to the municipality (*municipio libre*) of Tetela del Volcán until 2023 when the process of creating Hueyapan as an independent and indigenous municipality (*municipio indígena*) was finished (it began in 2017).[3] Its position on the slopes of the Popocatepetl volcano in the Highlands of Morelos (*Los Altos de Morelos*) is why the territory of this community is a vertical world. Speaking only of the community itself, the difference between the lowest and the highest parts is about 350 m (between approximatelly 2150 and 2500 m above sea level). However, its territory reaches the higher altitudes and is dominated by the Popocatepetl volcano (5465 m), that the inhabitants of the community consider the centre or navel of the world. This zone belongs to what is called the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt (*Eje Volcánico Transversal Mexicano*), a very volcanic and seismic mountainous region which, following the 19th parallel from the

[1] Literal translation of its Spanish original name *"Cerrar el agua"*.
[2] *Huey* (in Nahuatl, big, large, also in the meaning of abundance), *atl* (water), *pan* (in, in a place).
[3] The election of *presidente municipal* took place in October 2022 and the winner acceded to her office in January 2023. However, the territory demarcation with the neighboring municipalities (Tetela del Volcán in Morelos and Tochimilco in Puebla) has still not been finished.

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north, extends from west (Nayarit) to east (Veracruz) for a length of about 1200 km and width of 20–150 km. So earthquakes are not exceptional, nor is volcanic activity, since Popocatepetl is still an active volcano.[4] Hueyapan has approximately 8000 inhabitants, and a good part of it is dedicated to agriculture to this day. It is like that because, being a volcanic area, the land there is very fertile and the risk of volcanic activity is compensated for by the fertile land and abundant water which has attracted Mesoamerican farmers since at least the Preclassic era. Popocatepetl as a personified being considered alive and animated became the protector of the people and without any exaggeration it can be said that living under this volcano also means living with it. There are several sacred precincts[5] on its slopes. The most important for the people of Hueyapan is a cave called The Divine Face of Popocatepetl (*El Divino Rostro de Popocatepetl*) located at an elevation of approximately 4000 m above sea level, already above the so called "mountain" (*monte* in Spanish, in this sense meaning the forest; this means that the cave is located above the tree line) in the volcanic cone. This sacred precinct is full of crosses today, but it has been visited since pre-Hispanic times with the purpose of carrying out the rainmaking rituals. The people of Hueyapan visit other places as well, but for the purpose of this article I have omitted these, since the ritual in which I participated actually took place in the Divine Face of Popocatepetl.[6]

Description of ritual

I am going to start my paper with a description of the ritual of Closing the Water, which means that in this part I am not going to explain or analyse it. I only mention that this ritual is performed after the rainy season. In Central Mexico this usually ends at the end of September or the beginning of October. When the rains end, maize and other crops have to be harvested, and only after that is the Closing the Water performed, which in other words is nothing more and nothing less than a thanksgiving for an abundant harvest and for another year. As far as timing is concerned, this ritual corresponds to the turn of October and November, which means to the feast of the Day of the Dead (*Día de los muertos* in Spanish) which since colonial times has represented the end of the agrarian cycle, which I will analyse later. As for the specific case, that is, the ritual in which I took part as a researcher (in 2014), it was delayed one month due to prolonged rains and was not carried out until Novem-

[4] Especially since 1994, when its activity caused climbing to the summit to be prohibited. This prohibition also influenced the performance of rituals up in the volcano, because several of the sacred precincts are located in the cone itself of the volcano. However, the authorities tolerate and allow the indigenous people to carry out their rituals in these places as part of their tradition and culture.

[5] Another name for these sacred places is altar/altars of petition (of rain).

[6] To the reader interested in the orography of Hueyapan and the ritual landscape of this community, I recommend another article of mine: Radoslav HLÚŠEK, "Hueyapan – Life Under/With the Volcano. Ritual Landscape of a Nahua Community", *Axis Mundi* 12/1, 2017, Bratislava 2017, pp. 16–26. I also took the basic information about Hueyapan in the Introduction to this case study from that article.

ber 25 since, due to the rains and the harvest, it could not be performed any earlier. According to the people who participated, the prolonged rains that caused this delay were something rare and unwanted and the participants attributed this situation to the gradual extinction of faith in the sacred mountains among the inhabitants of the community, and to the gradual abandonment of the tradition and culture of their ancestors.

Participants and course of day

The total number of participants in the ritual is not important because it can be variable (this time there were ten of us). What is important is the participation of the *tiempero/tiempera* (in Spanish, ritual specialist; the one who works with weather) who is in charge of the whole ritual and without whom it could not be performed, plus the help of the *orador/oradora* (in Spanish, speaker, orator, in this meaning a person who is in charge of prayers and songs) who says the prayers and sings the songs aloud. These two can be either men or women. In our case it was a woman named doña Vicenta who was the *tiempera* and a man named don José who was the *orador*. In Hueyapan the *tiemperos* are also called *pedidores de lluvia* (rainmakers in Spanish) or in Nahuatl *quiotlazque*, which means those who take a shortcut of the rain.[7] The others are ordinary participants who help with everything – they carry the offering, place it in the sacred precinct and accompany the *orador/oradora* and the *tiempero/tiempera* in prayers and songs.

The activities related to the ritual start very early in the morning. We woke up at three o'clock so that we would be at doña Vicenta's house at four o'clock. Waiting for the others and loading all the offerings on the four-by-four truck took about two hours, so we left around six o'clock. Going up in the truck towards Popocatepetl through the forest we drove about ten kilometres to the place where we parked at approximately eight in the morning. At about half past eight we left the place and, walking up, we arrived at the Divine Face of Popocatepetl at two in the afternoon, so we were walking for more than five hours. The ritual itself took more or less two hours (it started at three, and finished a little after five). Then we ate a little and started the descent after six, so with very little time before it got dark. We walked for more than four hours through the night forest (fortunately some of us had flashlights) and arrived at the truck at eleven o'clock at night. We lit a campfire to prepare dinner, and when we had finished we left (after midnight) in the truck to Hueyapan. We arrived in the house at two o'clock in the morning the next day. We were also stopped by the Morelos state police looking for drugs, which for a Slovak colleague of mine who accompanied us and me was an extraordinary experience and we both know very well that without our indigenous friends from Hueyapan who explained everything to the police, this encounter could have ended very differently and not

[7] *Quiahuitl* (in Nahuatl, rain), *otlaza* (to take a shortcut), *queh/que'* (plural of agentive deverbal suffix meaning the persons who do the verb, in this case who take a shortcut).

with a happy ending.[8] So the whole day was very hard-going, especially for doña Vicenta and her husband who at that time were 87 and 86 years old respectively.[9]

Process of ritual

The ritual itself lasted, as I already mentioned, approximately two hours and took place only in the cave of the Divine Face of Popocatepetl. The cave is full of crosses which were brought to this sacred precinct not only by people from Hueyapan but also by people from other communities (e.g. from Tetela del Volcán, Xochicalco or Metepec, all in Morelos), whose inhabitants also venerate Popocatepetl and like those of Hueyapan consider the cave as the most important sacred precinct where they perform their own rainmaking rituals. The ritual consists of songs (especially hymns), prayers, thanksgiving and, of course, the offering is also placed. It was led by doña Vicenta as the *tiempera* and she was helped especially by don José who as the *orador* was the leader of the prayers and songs. The rest of us placed the offering, lit candles, let off rockets, sang, prayed and did what the *tiempera* told us to do. In spite of all the participants being very tired and the solemnity of the ritual, the atmosphere was relaxed and joyful, which is very typical for Mexican indigenous people, and the solemnity of any religious event does not mean the absence of joy. They represent two sides of the same coin; complementarity represents one of the characteristic features of the culture and religion[10] of native Mexicans.

When doña Vicenta arrived in the cave, she shouted the welcome: "We are here, don Goyo[11], we are here. Open the doors so we can enter the throne" (in Spanish: *"Ya llegamos, don Goyo, ya llegamos. Abra las puertas para que entremos al trono."*). Then she lit the copal in the censer that was burning throughout the ritual and was not allowed to go out until it was all over. Throughout the ritual, a quince stick was used for cleansing and to ward off evil. In the meantime, in honor of don Goyo, some of the participants also let off rockets without which it is impossible to imagine any celebration, be it religious or profane. The welcome was followed by three songs led, like the others, by don José and by prayers he said himself. He read them from his notebook of Catholic songs and prayers called Religious Songs (*Cantos religiosos* in Spanish). The first was dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Fairest Dove, Most Lovely Maiden – *Buenos días, paloma blanca* in Spanish), the second to the Holy Cross and Christ (Let Us Praise and Exalt – *Alabemos y ensalcemos* in

[8] The armed policemen were only interested in us, the two foreigners. They checked our documents and asked us many questions about the purpose of our presence there, in such a remote place and at midnight. Doña Vicenta and the others as native residents explained everything to them in a very cordial way and the meeting ended without problems.

[9] Among other things I will never forget how on the descent through the forest at night I had to go back about three hours so that I could support doña Vicenta and prevent her from falling by this way. Although she did everything she could, sometimes she fell. Fortunately, nothing happened to her.

[10] Since I do not want to complicate the matter, I use the singular to speak in general terms in this article. But we must keep in mind that Mesoamerica as a cultural area, to which Central Mexico belongs, has been such a varied region that we cannot speak of Mesoamerican culture and religion but of Mesoamerican cultures and religions.

[11] Don Goyo or don Gregorio are the names commonly attributed to Popocatepetl not only in Hueyapan but in all communities around the volcano.

Spanish), the third again to the Virgin (Oh Mary, My Mother – *Ó María, madre mía* in Spanish). During these three hymns the participants tied bouquets of the white flower called little stars (*estrellitas* in Spanish)[12] to the crosses in the cave and then placed the offering. This consisted of food (tortillas, tamales, bread, mole, chocolate and fruits such as oranges, bananas, chayotes and watermelons), alcoholic beverage (Anís, Rancho de Jerez), cigars that were lit and placed in the shape of a cross on a stone (don Goyo likes not only to eat and drink but also to smoke), holy water and cotton. Once the offering was placed, doña Vicenta gave two thanksgivings, one in Spanish, the other in Nahuatl.[13] The first was dedicated to all those who worked with the weather above, it means to *tiemperos* who worked for the whole world so that there would be abundant rain and harvest. The thanksgiving in Nahuatl[14] was accompanied by the crying of the *tiempera* who feared she would never return because of her advanced age.[15] After these thanksgivings the ritual continued with the prayer of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. Among the particular mysteries the following songs were sung Come, Sinners (*Venid pecadores* in Spanish); Hail Blessed Cross Sacred Wood (*Salve Cruz bendita madero sagrado* in Spanish); Praises to the Holy Cross (*Alabanzas a la Santa Cruz* in Spanish); O Lord, Forgive Me (*Perdón, oh Dios mío* in Spanish) and Farewell, Queen of Heaven (*Adiós, Reina del cielo* in Spanish). Then the ritual continued with the hymn Holy God (*Santo Dios* in Spanish) followed by the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Letanías de la Santísima Virgen* in Spanish) known also as the Litany of Loreto (*Letanías lauretanas* in Spanish). After the litanies were finished, don José closed the prayers and songs with: "Let us go in peace in the name of Christ. Amen" (in Spanish: *"Vayamos en paz en nombre de Cristo. Amen"*). The whole ritual was concluded by doña Vicenta invoking God with the following words: "May God give us the strength to come again, to leave you your delicacies, heavenly Father" (in Spanish*:"Dios que nos de la fuerza para venir otra vez, a dejarles sus manjares, Padre celestial"*).

Once the ritual was over, we packed up all the things and the offering (only the flowers were left behind) and started our way down to the place where we had left our truck. It is important that during the whole day, from the early morning until the end of the ritual, a fast should have been kept. Usually the participants can eat when the ritual is over and the offering is eaten (first don Goyo, then the people). In our case we had to make an exception because everything took a longer time than usual.

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[12] Egyptian starcluster, in Latin *Pentas lanceolata*.

[13] If I do not specify the language, it is always Spanish.

[14] The translation of thanksgiving in Nahuatl is as follows: *"Thank you, thank you, masters, eat all that we bring,* we could not com*e earlier but here we are, I could not come because I got sick. Give me a little of your greatness for me and so I will come again to greet you"* (*"Tlesojkamati, tlasojkamati anmejuatsitsitsin ximo tlakualtikan non tlonon oti kuakika akuel otik kualakjke kualkan manauasinko nan tikate akuel niuis ono kogo xi nech magilikan se grandeza para ne ma non nemi ulis oksepa amech tlalpaljuitin")*. I would here like to thank my friend Isela Vidal Saavedra from Alpanocan, Puebla, for translating this thanksgiving for me.

[15] Doña Vicenta and I saw each other for the last time in December 2023, when she was already 96 years old. She told me that since then (November 2014) she had not been to the cave. Because of her age she can no longer go there. The truth is that I had the privilege to accompany her on her last visit to the Divine Face of Popocatepetl.

People were very tired and so we had to eat something before the ritual. Nor did we eat after the ritual in the cave itself (only a very little), which is unusual. But we did not have time; it was late already, it was cold and a strong wind was blowing. That is why we went down immediately after the ritual, which does usually not happen. We walked back through the forest at night and ate only when we were at the place where we parked our truck.

After our return I did not visit doña Vicenta all day. We were all very tired. None of us left the house, we had to rest. I went to visit her only the next day. She and her husband were already well rested (so was I) and she told me that she had not dreamed of anything while sleeping after our return, but the next night she saw in her dream a big fat man, dressed in a white shirt, trousers and hat, and only his tie was black. It was don Goyo himself and he told doña Vicenta that he was happy with the offering (it means he accepted the thanksgiving by means of ritual), he had eaten well and that was why he was fat. Dreams are very important for the *tiempe-ros*, as I will explain in the next part of this case study.

Analysis and explanation of the ritual

The ritual of Closing the Water is the regional expression of a more general Meso-american worldview that is linked to the ritual landscape, agrarian cycle and rain-making. It is a millenary tradition incorporated in the process of Christianization during the colonial era into the Catholicism brought to what is today Mexico by the Spaniards. It is true that the missionaries made a huge effort to create a church according to the example of the first Christians, untouched neither by the medieval heresies nor by the Protestant Reformation in the New World. However, due to the universal requirements of Catholicism (and Christianity in general) and most of all due to the completely different worldview, tradition and religion of indigenous Mesoamericans, they failed. With regard to this situation the neophytes could not be expected to accept the new faith in its official and normative form and content. The syncretism that naturally occurred was thus the logical result of missionary activity in such a different environment in terms of cultural and spiritual tradition.[16] A process in which people pick and choose elements of their indigenous culture and mix them with elements of the invasive culture to create a new combination, as we could define religious syncretism,[17] then emerged from native (Mesoamerican) and from Spanish (Christian) roots and from these two sources something new was created that reflected the two original sources. It was not, however, identified in its totality with either of the two.[18] It was a mutual, not a unilateral process (the Mesoameri-canization or Indigenization of Catholicism ⟷ Christianization of Mesoamerican

[16] Radoslav HLÚŠEK, "Duchovná conquista rituálnej krajiny mexických Nahuov", in: Peter Vyšný (ed.), *Európa a mimoeurópsky svet: kontakty, konfrontácie a konflikty. Zborník príspevevkov z me-dzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie konanej na počesť a pamiatku docentky Gertrudy Železkovovej*, Trnava 2019, p. 98.

[17] Davíd CARRASCO, *Religions of Mesoamerica,* Long Grove (Illinois) 2013, pp. 155–156.

[18] HLÚŠEK, "Duchovná conquista", p. 99.

religion and tradition) and it could be said that Catholicism did not replace the original religion but was incorporated into it in a transformed form.[19]

I have already mentioned complementarity as one of the fundamental traits of Mesoamerican religion. Another is territoriality, which means that the territory inhabited by an ethnic group or community has been reflected in its worldview and conceptualization of space, mythology and ritualism. As far as our topic is concerned, the ritual of Closing the Water is closely related to the ritual landscape of Hueyapan. Paraphrasing the Mexican ethnohistorian of Austrian origin, Johanna Broda, one of the most prominent specialists on this topic, the ritual landscape is made up of the places of worship (both artificial and natural). It is a landscape culturally transformed through history. It connects the political centres (with their temples – pyramids, later replaced by churches) with places in the countryside where shrines of lesser importance are situated; these shrines (later chapels or crosses) highlight natural phenomena and are linked to the cult of hills, caves and water.[20] It is a humanized space. Popocatepetl and its sacred precincts, among them the Divine Face of Popocatepetl, represent a part of the ritual landscape of Hueyapan. It is also the most important mountain and sacred place. Popocatepetl dominates the ritual landscape not only of Hueyapan but also of all the communities located on the southern slopes of the volcano.[21] It is perceived as the navel of the world and the centre of the universe and is also considered the protector of these communities. Personified as don Gregorio/Goyo, he is the benefactor who takes care of the communities and provides them with water and abundant harvest. All of it has a close relationship with the agrarian cycle. In Central Mexico, as mentioned before, the rainy season lasts more or less from June to the end of September. The indigenous people had to adapt to this natural cycle from pre-Hispanic times in order to survive in the semi-desert environment.[22] So the agrarian cycle is closely related to this natural cycle and to the alternation of drought and rains. From pre-Hispanic times, which we have well documented from Central Mexico by colonial chroniclers,[23] rituals associated with the mountains have been practiced with the purpose of ensuring abundant water and harvest. This ritualism was incorporated into Catholicism and its liturgical calendar. That is why nowadays the rainmaking rituals begin as in the pre-Hispanic past about a month before the arrival of the rains (preparation of the fields for planting) and end about a month after their end (after the harvest). In

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[19] Radoslav HLÚŠEK, *Nican mopohua. Domorodý príbeh o zjavení Panny Márie Guadalupskej*, Bratislava 2014, p. 51.

[20] Johanna BRODA, "Ritos mexicas en los cerros de la Cuenca: los sacrificios de niños", in: Johanna Broda – Stanislaw Iwaniszewski – Arturo Montero (eds.), *La Montaña en el paisaje ritual*, Ciudad de México 2001, p. 296.

[21] The eastern and the western slopes are dominated by both Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl. Iztaccihuatl is not seen on the south side of Popocatepetl, so it does not figure in the ritual landscape of communities located south of this volcano.

[22] Although it is true that mountainous areas, such as Hueyapan, are not semi-desert, in general Central Mexico is. In any case, the rainy season takes the same length of time in the mountains as in the lowlands of Central Mexico.

[23] See Johanna BRODA, "Tenochtitlan: procesiones y peregrinaciones mexicas en la Cuenca de México", *Arqueología mexicana* 131, Ciudad de México 2015, pp. 72–79.

the Catholic liturgical calendar these dates correspond to the feasts of the Day of the Cross[24] (*Día de la Cruz* in Spanish, May 3, requests for rains, in Hueyapan Opening the water[25]) and Day of the Dead[26] (November 1 and 2, thanksgiving for the harvest, in Hueyapan Closing the water).[27] Thus the agrarian cycle is defined in time. The *tiemperos* have known very well that it does not make sense to perform these rituals earlier (or later). The essence of these rituals is not to provoke the rains, since they have known very well that the rains do not come faster. The essence is to ensure that the rains come on time, that they are not delayed and that there is neither too little nor too much of them, and that hail that could destroy the harvest is avoided. Regarding the space, the agrarian cycle links the ritual landscape and the sacred mountains with the communities and the fields.

In Mesoamerica, the conceptualization of space by means of the ritual landscape, sacred mountains and ritualism represents something that Mexican anthropologist Alfredo Lopez Austin calls the core part (*núcleo duro* in Spanish) of the indigenous worldview.[28] This has always had as its central point the environment and the constant interaction of humans with it. From this point of view the hills and mountains have had a central role as structural axes of this worldview and as sacred spaces in which agricultural rituals are performed.[29] The mountains did not lose their importance in the indigenous worldview, and faith in the process of Christianisation and as part of the core part have preserved their meaning and position in the indigenous religion to this day. The hills and mountains, among which the volcanoes stand out, are still considered to be full of water which must be released to the fields. This has always been done through appropriate rituals. To this day it is also believed that their interior is filled with the grains of all crop plants, which takes us back

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[24] That is why there are so many crosses not only in the Divine Face of Popocatepetl but in all the sacred precincts located in the mountains (another reason is that the missionaries baptized the sacred places of the natives by means of the crosses). The crosses are oriented to where the people want the water to flow. That is to the fields, which in the case of the Divine Face of Popocatepetl means to the south. That is why for the people of Hueyapan the north (followed by the east) is the most important cardinal direction, because the rains normally come from the north (and the east), meaning from the volcano. On the Feast of the Holy Cross in the monastic architecture and art of 16th century New Spain, see Monika Brenišínová, *Del convento al hombre. El significado de la arquitectura conventual y su arte en la Nueva España del siglo XVI*, (Tesid de Doctorado), Praga 2017, pp. 96, 100, 135–137.

[25] Literal translation of its Spanish original name *"Abrir el agua"*.

[26] In this way the agrarian cycle is related to the dead ancestors, which was already common in pre-Hispanic times. That is why the feast of the Day of the Dead complied with the pre-Hispanic tradition.

[27] See Johanna BRODA, "Ritos y deidades del siclo agrícola", *Arqueología mexicana* 120, Ciudad de México 2013, p. 60.

[28] The core part is an essential part of the worldview, the organiser of the components of the system, the part that adjusts innovations, repairs the system after its weakening, dissolution or loss of its elements. Its hardness does not imply immobility; there are transformations, but of long duration. Alfredo LÓPEZ AUSTIN, "La cosmovisión de la tradición mesoamericana. Primera parte", *Arqueología mexicana*, edición especial 68, Ciudad de México 2016, p. 23.

[29] Alejandra GÁMEZ ESPINOSA, "El cerro-troje: Cosmovisión, ritualidad, saberes y usos en una comunidad *ngiwá* del sur de Puebla", in: Johanna Broda – Alejandra Gámez (eds.), *Cosmovisión mesoamericana y ritualidad agrícola. Estudios interdisciplinarios y regionales*, Ciudad de México 2009, pp. 80–81.

to pre-Hispanic times when the concept of the Sacred Mountain (*Monte sagrado* in Spanish) as the source of all life and place of abundance was developed.[30] The Nahua god of rain and fertility Tlaloc had his dwelling inside the mountains, the aquatic paradise called Tlalocan which, among other examples is demonstrated to us in a very illustrative way by means of beautiful mural paintings in the Tepantitla Palace in Teotihuacan, the metropolis of the Mesoamerican Classic era.[31] Doña Vicenta, as well as other people from Hueyapan told me the same thing about the Divine Face of Popocatepetl several times. Apart from the fact that they see the cave as the throne of don Goyo, which means as the centre of the world, they also call it Tlaloc or Tlalocan and do not forget to add that it is full of the grains and seeds of all the plants. It is the source of the abundance given to the indigenous peasants when they perform the appropriate rituals. We must not forget that the caves and hollows in pre-Hispanic times were considered to be the places of origin not only of crop plants but also of mankind.[32] I was also told that Popocatepetl is connected with the sea, which means with the symbol of fertility par excellence. This view is also documented in pre-Hispanic times; the Aztecs, for example, believed that Ajusco, a mountain located in the south of the Valley of Mexico, was connected to the sea.[33]

Popocatepetl means don Goyo, but other mountains and hills along with all the nature and the whole Earth are also considered to be alive. The personification of Popocatepetl as don Goyo is also demonstrated by the faith that he can appear in person. He usually has the appearance of an old man who can be seen walking in the volcanic cone or anywhere on the volcano. He is dressed in very ragged clothes and his feet do not leave footprints in the volcanic sand.[34] The belief mentioned by the Mexican anthropologist Julio Glockner in the works cited in note 33 about several indigenous communities located on the slopes of both Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl was mentioned to me several times in Hueyapan. Don Goyo appears to people in person from time to time, which usually happens when the volcanic activity of Popocatepetl increases. In this way, by his appearance, don Goyo sends his message. Usually, it is the message that the volcanic activity does not represent any danger for the people, so they do not have to be afraid (as has happened several times since 1994 when the volcano awoke to an intensified activity). But this message is almost always accompanied by a call for mankind to behave in a better way towards the

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30 Alfredo LÓPEZ AUSTIN, "La cosmovisión de la tradición mesoamericana. Segunda parte", *Arqueología mexicana*, edición especial 69, Ciudad de México 2016, pp. 52, 72. On the importance of the Sacred Mountain in the monastic architecture and art of 16th century New Spain, see Brenišínová, *Del convento al hombre*, pp. 100–101, 124.

31 For a more recent interpretation of the paintings in Tepantitla and further literature see Monika Brenišínová and Markéta Křížová, *Dějiny umění Latinské Ameriky* [History of Latin American Art], Praha 2018, pp. 38, 336n7.

32 Raúl Carlos ARANDA MONROY, "Cosmovisión y reinterpretación del paisaje en el sureste de la Cuenca de México", in: Broda – Gámez (eds.), *Cosmovisión*, pp. 106–107.

33 Johanna BRODA, "Simbolismo de los volcanes. Los volcanes en la cosmovisión mesoamericana", *Arqueología mexicana* 95, Ciudad de México 2009, p. 47.

34 E.g. see Julio GLOCKNER, "Mitos y sueños de los volcanes", *Arqueología mexicana* 95, Ciudad de México 2009, pp. 67–69; idem, *Los Volcanes Sagrados. Mitos y rituales en el Popocatépetl y en la Iztaccíhuatl*, Ciudad de México 2012, pp. 272–273.

Earth. So don Goyo calls the attention of humans to the fact that their behaviour is not good, that it does not suit him and that it can provoke catastrophes. The indigenous people as holders of millenary knowledge are those whom don Goyo chose as his messengers. Such are the explanations of doña Vicenta and many more people, not only from Hueyapan.

The most important part of the whole ritual is probably the offering that is placed in the cave and dedicated to don Goyo. What it contains has already been mentioned. The placing of the offering has represented a substantial part of Mesoamerican ritualism and religion since pre-Hispanic times and has been preserved to this day. This practice reflects another feature typical for Mesoamerican religion which was incorporated into Catholicism in the process of Christianisation. It is the principle of reciprocity. The indigenous people have not venerated supernatural beings (neither the pre-Hispanic gods nor the Christian God and saints) for pure love; the reasons for their devotion have always been pragmatic. Because their religion and spirituality have been oriented more to life here on Earth and less to the afterlife, it has always been necessary to win over the supernatural beings who dominate the forces of nature over in order to have a good life. However, their help is not free. Simply said: "If I want something from you, I must give you something so that you will give me what I need."[35] This is done by means of rituals, and the offering represents a substantial and inseparable part of them. The offering that we placed in the Divine Face of Popocatepetl was complemented, as I have already said, by cotton and flowers called little stars. Both, by their whiteness, associated with water and clouds, have their symbolic meaning.[36] As doña Vicenta and the others explained to me, the colour white is important because of its relation to water and rain. That is why they always bring little stars and not other flowers. To get a broader explanation, I mention the flower of the dead called in Nahuatl *cempoalxóchitl*[37], which is used during the Day of the Dead celebration all over the country and is not only very popular but also inseparable from this celebration. The reason for my question about this flower was very simple – the agrarian cycle usually ends at the time of the Day of the Dead, so this flower is found everywhere. However, the reaction of the *tiempera* was that it could not be used in the set of rainmaking rituals (and therefore not in the ritual Closing the Water), because it is orange, like the lightning. So the flower of the dead placed in the offering of the rainmaking ritual can provoke storms, which are not desired.

Although the content of the offering is more or less always the same, sometimes it can happen that the owner of the mountain (in our case don Goyo) asks for something else (e.g. clothes or shoes). This does not mean in such a case that the usual things are not included, but that something extra is added to them. The question is how the *tiempero*/*tiempera* finds out about such a wish. The answer, as I read in

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[35] HLÚŠEK, "Hueyapan – Life", p. 22.

[36] E.g. Yucatec Mayas of Quintana Roo link the cotton also with the deceased see: Arturo GÓMEZ MARTÍNEZ, "Tramas, colores y texturas, elementos gráficos para el estudio de la cosmovisión en textiles indígenas mexicanos", in: Broda – Gámez (eds.), *Cosmovisión*, p. 72. As we already know, the dead are also related to the agrarian cycle.

[37] Aztec marigold or Mexican marigold, in Latin *Tagetes erecta*.

many books and articles and as it was given to me in Hueyapan and other communities, is that everything related to the ritual comes to the *tiempero/tiempera* in dreams.[38] That is why it is very necessary and important for the *tiempero/tiempera* to learn to remember his/her dreams, because when he/she is dreaming messages will come to him/her from don Goyo or from the owners of the other mountains. What the *tiempero/tiempera* finds out in his/her dreams must be done in reality. That is why it can happen that at the last moment something is changed in the offering or even the sacred precinct in which the ritual is going to be carried out is changed for a different one. So the dream world and everything that happens in it is the real world in which everything that has to be done is revealed to the *tiempero/tiempera*.

The *tiemperos*, and doña Vicenta is no exception, obviously emphasise the concept of strength as well. They say that it is as much about the strength of the Earth as it is about the strength of the people and these two must be in balance. The Earth and the natural elements (the sun, air, water, animals, plants, etc.) provide their strength to people so that they can survive. On the other hand, the Earth as such is alive and must be nourished, which is done by means of rituals and offerings. In this way the collective strength of the people nourishes and strengthens the Earth so that it can sustain the people. It is an infinite cycle which allows the natural order to continue and function. The strength also comes from the songs and prayers that represent an inevitable part of the rituals. And the rituals themselves take place in special places (altars of petition) which are full of strength and are considered navels of the world. It can be said that in these sacred precincts people acquire strength, vital energy and life itself by means of rituals and at the same time they provide their strength to the Earth. Once again we return to the principle of reciprocity that has been present in Mesoamerican religion since pre-Hispanic times.

I conclude this case study by pointing out the fact that the rainmaking rituals, including Closing the Water, represent a procession or pilgrimage, another feature obviously present in Mesoamerican religion since time immemorial. There is no space here to develop this complex and specific topic; there are in any case numerous articles and books dedicated to this issue.[39] I just want to mention here that the procession serves as a means of connection between the cave of the Divine Face of Popocatepetl (or the sacred precincts located in the mountains in general) and Hueyapan in the centre of which the Church of Saint Dominic, the saint patron of the community, is located. So the pilgrimage of the people to the cave and back represents the intertwining of centre and periphery and in general of the whole ritual landscape of the people of Hueyapan.

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[38] On the meaning of dreams in the rainmaking rituals, see more in Yleana ACEVEDO WHITEHOUSE, *El camino del héroe. Soñador de la lluvia y granizo*, Bloomington 2014, pp. 308–364.

[39] Among many others see Patricia FOURNIER – Carlos MONDRAGÓN – Walburga WIESHEU (eds.), *Peregrinaciones ayer y hoy. Arqueología y antropología de las religions*, Ciudad de México 2012, pp. 53–151; Susan TOBY EVANS, "Las procesiones en Mesoamérica", *Arqueología mexicana* 131, Ciudad de México 2015, pp. 34–39; o Victor TURNER – Edith TURNER, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives*, New York 1978, pp. 1–103.

Conclusion

The ritual of Closing the Water which has been carried out in Hueyapan since pre-Hispanic times, and in which I had the opportunity to participate, reflects a millenary Mesoamerican tradition that has survived to this day thanks to its incorporation into Catholicism in the process of religious syncretism. It is part of a set of rituals linked to the agrarian cycle and the ritual landscape in which the high mountains stand out, especially the volcanoes, in our case Popocatepetl. The belief that this and other mountains are full of water and considered places of abundance is still alive not only in Hueyapan but in all the indigenous communities located in its surroundings. And in general we can say the same about all Mesoamerican mountains and hills and about almost all indigenous communities (at least about those located in the mountainous areas). Historical and archaeological sources (both indigenous and Spanish) confirm the presence of rituals related to rainmaking in ancient times. The long tradition has not yet been interrupted and therefore ritual specialists of today, that is, the *tiemperos*, who are in charge of performing these rituals and responsible for the welfare of their communities are followers of their pre-Hispanic predecessors and represent evidence of the vitality of Mesoamerican culture and religion adapted to changing conditions and circumstances.

So far I have not said how someone can become a *tiempero/tiempera*. In general there are three ways or three possibilities. The first is that he/she learns everything necessary from an older *tiempero/tiempera* who serves him/her as a teacher. This was the case with doña Vicenta. The second is by means of dreams when it is announced to a person that he/she was chosen to become *tiempero/tiempera* just in dreams. However, most of my informants (and not only in Hueyapan) and almost all works dedicated to this subject reveal another way – strike of lightning (which represents the association with the storm, it means with rain and water). It is true that the strike of lightning is considered to be the most common sign that one has been chosen by the personified mountains (for example by don Goyo) and should become a *tiempero/tiempera*. Of course, that is if that person survives the strike. If not, his/her soul goes "to the heights" (*"a lo alto"*), as the indigenous peasants say, to work with weather, which means that he/she becomes a *tiempero/tiempera* although already in another world. If he/she survives, his/her mission is to work with the weather here on Earth. However, there are several cases when one did not accept his/her mission and refused to become a *tiempero/tiempera* because he/she did not want to change his/her life or considered the work of a *tiempero* too difficult. All my informants agreed that in this case the chosen person did not do well, he/she became ill, which means that he/she did not have a good life until he/she accepted his/her mission. When he/she stopped rejecting it and accepted the will of the supernatural beings, his/her life became good again and he/she joined the crowd of the *tiemperos* who have maintained the weather and ensured abundant harvest by means of millenary rituals carried out on the mountains considered full of water and abundance. They are precisely the ancient rituals adapted and incorporated into Catholicism that represent the central point in the preservation of this ancient tradition. As Johanna Broda, already mentioned several times, says: "ritualisation in the process of Christianisation was a fundamental factor which enabled cultural reproduction

of native ethnic groups in Mexico."[40] And although the modern era threatens this ancient tradition more than the era of Christianisation, it still continues and it can be assumed that, in a transformed form it will also adapt to the new times.[41]

(Written in English by the author)

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[40] Johanna BRODA, "La ritualidad mesoamericana y los procesos de sincretismo y reelaboración simbólica después de la conquista", *Graffylia. Revista de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* 2, Ciudad de México 2003, p. 23.

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MAYA CROSSES DRESSED, FED, ALIVE. A CASE STUDY ON MAYA ANIMISM[1]

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Abstract
Maya crosses have always inspired a sense of wonder in the modern observer, because they have been considered animate persons with whom people establish and maintain intersubjective relationships and whom they cherish and nurture. In this study, drawing on my ethnography of "dressing the cross", an Easter ceremony, I suggest that what separates Maya traditionalism from globalizing modern Maya Spirituality is a particular form of "hierarchical animism".
Keywords: cross; popular religiosity; spirituality; animism; ethnography; the Maya; Guatemala.

If you visit Guatemala today, it is by no means difficult to chance upon a Maya ritual, a burnt offering in which the symbol of the cross plays a key role. Especially in central Guatemala, where the K'iche' Maya dominate, an abundant sacrificial practice has developed in recent decades, combining traditional elements with trends of contemporary religious revitalization. Maya spiritual guides prepare large "altars" or "tables" with candles of various colours, and resin products of different kinds, as well as fragrant plants and sweets, such as sugar, chocolate and honey. They pour sugar to form a circle, inside which they mark a "Maya cross/cosmic tree", representing the world and its four cardinal points: the red, east; the black, west; the white, north; and the yellow, south. The centre is blue/green in colour. The greatest among the purists, who strive to purge Maya culture altogether of colonial impositions, reject candles and sugar as European imports.

I agree with those anthropologists who, in the context of contemporary Maya religion, find it necessary to distinguish between Maya traditionalism and Maya Spirituality.[2] Maya traditionalism, which the Maya themselves call *costumbre* ("custom"),[3] is a hybrid religiosity with pre-Columbian as well as Roman Catholic elements. Maya ritualists thus worship God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints, as well as sky and earth, mountains and stones. Maya Spirituality

[1] Work on this study was supported by the Czech Science Foundation grant 23-06394S.

[2] Garrett W. COOK – Thomas A. OFFIT – Rhonda TAUBE, *Indigenous Religion and Cultural Performance in the New Maya World*, Albuquerque 2013; C. James MACKENZIE, *Indigenous Bodies, Maya Minds. Religion and Modernity in a Transnational K'iche' Community*, Boulder 2016.

[3] If I do not specify the language, it is always Spanish.

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(*espiritualidad maya*) is also a hybrid religiosity, drawing for its part on current Maya traditionalism, academic and popular Maya studies, and Western alternative spirituality (formerly known as New Age).[4] *Guías espirituales* ("spiritual guides") seek to go back to original Maya cosmovision, primarily by reinterpreting pre-Columbian calendars and the early colonial text *Popol Vuh*. While the origins of Maya traditionalism, now virtually defunct, date back to the sixteenth century, Maya Spirituality has been developing in the last thirty years and is on the rise.[5]

This relatively successful religious revitalization took place against the backdrop of Maya cultural and political activism, with the gradual construction and constitution of a shared (neo)Maya identity.[6] Maya spiritual guides began to claim that they were purifying *costumbre* from Spanish impositions and building on the "original", "pristine", "authentic" pre-Columbian spirituality.[7] As is often the case with such modern cultural revivals and religious revitalizations, however, their fruits bear more of the features of the present than of the past, and the ancient is reformulated and redefined according to the needs and challenges of today. The practices of Maya spiritual guides are increasingly present in public places, in the media, and on the Internet. Maya Spirituality is beginning to attract appreciation and interest – domestically (and not only from indigenous people but also from some Ladinos) as well as internationally: many Europeans and Americans come to Guatemala for stays both short (participating in individual and collective ceremonies) and long (living in Maya communities or becoming spiritual guides themselves).[8]

Moreover, some Maya spiritual guides began to cross community and regional boundaries, meeting with other indigenous groups as well as Western spiritual seekers, travellers and tourists. They also began to travel abroad and participate in various events, including in Europe. As I am an ethnographer who spent over six months among traditional Maya ritualists in Guatemala, the experience of Maya spiritual guides performing their ceremonies in the Czech Republic stirs special emotions in me. It is strange to observe the act of marking a Maya cross in the grounds of the ruins of a Czech castle and to hear a prayer in a Maya language in

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4 For a discussion on Western alternative spirituality as the New Age in a general sense, see Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden 1996; Jan KAPUSTA – Zuzana Marie KOSTIĆOVÁ, "From the Trees to the Wood. Alternative Spirituality as an Emergent 'Official Religion'?", *Journal of Religion in Europe* 13, 2020, pp. 187–213.

5 Jan KAPUSTA, *Oběť pro život. Tradice a spiritualita dnešních Mayů*, Praha 2020, pp. 41–50.

6 See Manéli FARAHMAND, "Current Faces of Maya Shamanic Renewals in Mexico", *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 4, 2020, pp. 48–74; Andrea FREDDI, "'Ahora también pedimos por nuestra gente en el Norte.' Las chimanes de Todos Santos (Guatemala) entre migración, desarrollo y mayanización", *Itinerarios* 33, 2021, pp. 167–187.

7 See Jean MOLESKY-POZ, *Contemporary Maya Spirituality. The Ancient Ways are Not Lost*, Austin 2006.

8 For more detailed comparisons of Maya Spirituality and Maya traditionalism in our globalizing world, see C. James MACKENZIE, "Politics and Pluralism in the Círculo Sagrado. The Scope and Limits of Pan-Indigenous Spirituality in Guatemala and Beyond", *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 1, 2017, pp. 353–375; Jan KAPUSTA, "Indigenizace globálního spirituálního diskursu. O jednom setkání západní a mayské spirituality", *Český lid* 110, 2023, pp. 303–321.

which some Czech topographical names are heard along with the Heart of Sky and the Heart of Earth. The Europeans came among the Maya with the cross; with the cross the Maya are now coming among the Europeans. A reverse mission? Religion for the third millennium?[9] A specific Latin American New Age?[10] What is actually indigenous and what is exogenous? What is indigenization and what is appropriation? Whether these phenomena are regarded as manifestations of successful religious revitalization with missionary potential or as bizarre products of a long history of Western colonialism and exploitation, they are undoubtedly the next chapter in the process of the globalization of religion.[11]

With all this in mind, it becomes increasingly relevant and important to ask how key elements of globalizing Maya religiosity, such as the cross, are used, reused and reinterpreted. In what follows, I twant to focus on the cross in Maya traditionalism, which occupies the space between pre-Columbian Maya religion and contemporary Maya Spirituality. I want to illustrate my point with one particular Easter event, the ceremony of "dressing of the cross" in Pacumal, a settlement of the municipality San Mateo Ixtatán, Guatemala. The cross is "dressed up" and "fed" to the sound of the marimba in order to fulfil human obligations to powerful nonhuman beings and to ensure rainfall, abundant harvest and renewal of the world. The evident animacy and agency of traditional Maya crosses will then bring me to a discussion of animism in anthropology and Maya studies in particular and I will conclude by suggesting that what separates Maya traditionalism from globalizing modern Maya Spirituality might be a particular form of "hierarchical animism".

Changing the shirt

Although in my ethnographic work in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, located along the Guatemalan border with Mexico, I have mostly focused on a specific site, I have occasionally visited other communities for comparative reasons, with Pacumal being one of them.

The settlement of Pacumal is located about twenty kilometres from the centre of its parent municipality, San Mateo Ixtatán, and although most of the distance can be covered by a pick-up truck, the last stretch of rugged mountainous terrain must be travelled on foot. After two hours of hiking, I found myself in a small village in a deep valley dominated by a prominent rock massif, a sacred mountain with a cave that is the space where the prophecy associated with the coming of the Maya New Year is revealed.[12] I unfortunately missed the annual pilgrimage to this cave that takes several days and starts from the adjacent municipality of San

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[9] Jacques GALINIER – Antoinette MOLINIÉ, *The Neo-Indians. A Religion for the Third Millenium*, Boulder 2013.

[10] Renée DE LA TORRE – Cristina GUTIÉRREZ ZÚÑIGA – Nahayeilli B. JUÁREZ HUET (eds.), *New Age in Latin America. Popular Variations and Ethnic Appropriations*, Leiden 2016.

[11] See Thomas J. CSORDAS (ed.), *Transnational Transcendence. Essays on Religion and Globalization*, Berkeley 2009.

[12] On the Maya New Year, see Gabrielle VAIL – Matthew G. LOOPER, "World Renewal Rituals among the Postclassic Yucatec Maya and Contemporary Ch'orti' Maya", *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 45, 2015, pp. 121–140.

Sebastián Coatán. However, I knew from the literature that a bearer (*portador*) from San Sebastián would bring a young turkey here, which he and a local ritualist would sacrifice to the mountain to allow them to enter the cave and make it talk to them. Around midnight, the bearer enters the cave and returns with a sign (*señal*) concerning the weather, the harvest and the nature of the coming year. The prophecy is eagerly awaited by Maya traditionalists and immediately disseminated throughout the region.[13]

When I arrived in the village, I asked the first man I came across where the *casa de costumbre* (ritual dwelling) was. Pascual, as he introduced himself to me, pointed to a nearby house made of unfired bricks and said that the *señor* (ritualist)[14] was not at home, that he was praying to the cross, but that I could wait with him until he returned. When old Gaspar arrived, he received me at once. After the obligatory exchange of introductions and pleasantries, I said that I was interested in *costumbre* and that I had heard about the importance of the local tradition. When asked about the New Year prophecy, I was told that the omens for this year were good; there should be plenty of rain and a good harvest of maize, pumpkins and potatoes. However, in the same breath Gaspar added, "there will be yield, if there is *costumbre*; there will be no yield if there is no *costumbre*". This is why, Gaspar and Pascual explained, they have a *comité de costumbre* (group of ritualists) in the settlement, consisting of five offices (*el primero, el segundo, tesorero, secretario* and *vocal*).[15]

I expressed regret for my absence from the prophecy pilgrimage and asked about local rituals in connection with the approaching Easter. To my delight, I learned that there would be a "dressing of the cross" on Holy Thursday and that I could attend. However, I would have to arrive the day before, as the ceremony takes place from the early hours of the morning. Pascual promised me that I would be able to stay overnight at his house.

It all happened as we had agreed. Pascual and his family were indeed expecting me on Wednesday afternoon. I gave the sweets I had brought to the children and Pascual told me that there was a meeting (*reunión*) with the mayor of the village (*alcalde auxiliar*) at six o'clock, which I was expected to attend.

The organizational meeting of the mayor and his associates (*consejo*) was to work out the details of tomorrow's celebration and the financial contributions involved. I was brought in towards the end of the meeting. I had to explain again who I was and why I was there, and most importantly, to confirm that I did not belong to

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[13] Krystyna DEUSS, *Shamans, Witches, and Maya Priests. Native Religion and Ritual in Highland Guatemala*, London 2007, pp. 263–265; Ruth PIEDRASANTA HERRERA, *Los Chuj. Unidad y rupturas en su espacio*, Ciudad de Guatemala 2009, pp. 83–85.

[14] In the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, where I conducted my fieldwork, Maya traditionalists do not have a specific designation for their religious specialists and thus use words such as *señor/mamin*, which can be rendered as "gentleman" in English. Despite the widespread use of the term "prayersayers" in the ethnological literature, I refer to them as "ritualists" in my texts.

[15] This is one of the forms of the hierarchically organized group of Maya ritualists typical of the region, who, through their "offices" (*cargos*), devote themselves to the religious service for their community. The role of the *comité de costumbre* is to assist Gaspar, "the pure ritualist" (*el mero rezador*), who clocks and performs the *costumbre*.

any political, economic or environmental organization.[16] I also promised a financial contribution, which was expected of me.

We returned to Pascual's house after dark. The traditional Maya dwelling had a single room lit only by the flames from the stove on which dinner was being prepared. After the meal, Pascual pointed to a corner of the room where there was a plank bed with a wool blanket reserved for me. Soon the flickering light was extinguished, the voices of the children died away and the house and the settlement plunged into the silence of the night.

On 28 March 2013 at six o'clock in the morning, the bang of a firecracker (*bomba*) was an unmistakable sign that the celebration was about to begin. When I arrived at the crosses in the centre of the settlement at around seven o'clock, the marimba had already been playing and several *ancianos* (i.e. older men of repute known to perform and support the *costumbre*) had been standing around. Gaspar sat on a bench in front of the crosses, burning candles and praying half aloud. A group of ritualists started dressing the crosses. Previously, the crosses would have been dressed with pine branches and flowers, now the times had changed and the plants had been replaced with modern materials, in this case with coloured (blue and red) nylon sheets.

While the ritualists were "changing the shirts" (*cambiaron las camisas*) of the crosses, as the *ancianos* observed them, sipping liquor (*aguardiente*), an essential component of traditional Maya ceremonies, the area filled with people, including children, who were running around. Juan, the mayor, approached me and proposed we should toast as namesakes. I then joined Gaspar, the *señor,* and the other ritualists on a bench in front of the crosses for a moment. He turned to me and expressed his satisfaction that "everything was going as it should be" and that the atmosphere was "cheerful" (*alegre*). I knew well that this amounted to saying the feast was going well in the Maya traditionalist fashion that emphasizes the propriety of ritual activities and collective joy. Gaspar explained to me that he was "talking" to the crosses and "feeding" them through prayers and candles. I asked if there were other crosses in the settlement that needed to be talked to and fed; he replied that there were four more, but they were located in the surrounding hills and would be visited on New Year's days.

I spent almost the entire day in Pacumal. When I started my return trip in the afternoon, I had a two-hour climb to the village of Patalcal, where I planned to hitch a ride with a passing pick-up truck to San Mateo. However, the road was already empty this late afternoon and I had to walk a bit further. When I arrived in San Mateo it was already in deep darkness. Tomorrow would be Good Friday.

The meaning of the Maya cross

The cross is the main symbol of Christianity: it represents the suffering of Jesus Christ and refers to the theological concept of salvation. However, Maya

[16] I only understood their initial mistrust later, when I had learned about the disruption and conflict caused by the introduction of hydroelectric projects by international companies in the municipality.

traditionalists do not associate the crosses they venerate, scattered throughout their villages and mountains, with the suffering of Christ and Christian symbolism.

When I talked to people in Pacumal about Easter and the processions,[17] Passion stories and performances currently underway, they referred me to the church in San Mateo. And indeed, the Good Friday events in the centre of San Mateo Ixtatán, culminating in the impressive spectacle of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and two criminals on the ruins of pre-Columbian Maya temples, resembled nothing I had witnessed during the dressing of the cross in Pacumal. The obvious differences and discontinuities of religious life in the two places were also borne out by my later interview with the Catholic priest of San Mateo. Although he was himself of Maya descent and had a sincere interest in and understanding for Maya traditionalism, he had no idea of the pilgrimage for prophecy, the dressing of the cross and the local group of ritualists.

The ritual treatment of crosses in Pacumal is not part of Catholic religious practice. Maya traditionalism sees the cross as an autonomous living being, a person who is talked to, dressed and fed like other Maya saints and deities.[18] For the cooperating religious (the *señor* and members of the *comité de costumbre*) and political (*alcalde auxiliar* and *consejo*) leaders of the community, it is an obligation and a commitment. Properly and joyfully performed, the replacement of the old "shirt" with a new one, this annual renewal just before the onset of the rainy season and the planting of maize, is perceived as essential for a good agricultural year and the proper functioning of the community.

The motif of "dressing the cross" is, of course, not unknown in Catholic Spain and Latin America. It is mainly linked to 3 May, the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, celebrated by the Church to consolidate and strengthen respect for this key Christian symbol. The celebration of the Cross of May (*la Cruz de Mayo*),[19] as the feast is sometimes popularly known,[20] was spread by Spanish missionaries as a Christianizing tool in many areas of Latin America, where crosses are still decorated and dressed, just like statues of the Virgin Mary and Catholic saints.[21] Naturally, this practice has not escaped the Maya region, as evidenced, for example, by the description of the Feast of the Seven Crosses (*la fiesta de las Siete Cruces*) in

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[17] On Holy Week, the symbolism of the cross and the processions in the 16th century New Spain, see Monika BRENIŠÍNOVÁ, *Del convento al hombre. El significado de la arquitectura conventual y su arte en la Nueva España del siglo XVI*, (Tesis de Doctorado), Praga 2017, pp. 94–96, 136, 159–160; idem, "Picturing Monasteries. 16th Century New Spain Monastic Architecture as Site of Religious Processions", in: idem ed., *(Trans)missions: Monasteries as Sites of Cultural Transfers*, Oxford 2022, pp. 60–77.

[18] See Jan KAPUSTA, "Saint on the Run. The Dynamics of Homemaking and Creating a Sacred Place", *Traditiones* 47, 2018, pp. 27–49.

[19] On the Feast of the Holy Cross in the monastic architecture and art of the 16th century New Spain, see BRENIŠÍNOVÁ, *Del convento al hombre*, pp. 96, 100, 135–137.

[20] See Julio CARO BAROJA, *La estación del amor. Fiestas populares de mayo a San Juan*, Madrid 1979.

[21] See Isidro MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA, "Los Mayos y las fiestas de primavera", *Zenizate* 1, 2001, pp. 31–53.

a Yucatan community, where the crosses are "dressed up in *huipil*" and "fed".[22] The Spanish worship and decoration of the cross has clearly become intertwined with the native concept of deities that need to be cared for and nourished.

It is worth noting here that the decoration of crosses at Easter, typically on Easter Sunday, can of course be found in many areas of the Christian world. The Easter fusion of the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ with the celebration of the end of winter and the coming of spring certainly needs no lengthy elaboration, and it is the same case with its logical extension in the decoration of Christian crosses with spring flowers.[23] However, noting that fact is not to downplay the impact of Spanish colonialism on Maya culture, but rather to point out that the concept of the cross in Maya traditionalism is the result of many centuries of coexistence of both the indigenous Maya and the imported Catholic experience and imagination.

The cross, as a key religious and cosmological symbol, was not something that was new to the Maya, and that they only learned about from Spanish missionaries. In pre-Columbian Maya culture, the cross had a fundamental, if multifaceted and ambiguous, meaning, whose most typical aspects included delineation of geographic space and association with the tree and with maize. First, the cross treats space both horizontally, in the sense of the four cardinal directions, and vertically, in the sense of a connection between sky and earth. Crosses therefore serve both as the "guardians" of the community, positioned in the four corners of its geographic space, and as the "centre" or "heart" of the world at its core.[24] Second, as Pugh notes, "the Maya do not appear to have strongly differentiated between trees and crosses".[25] The cross has always been associated, and even confused, with trees, especially with the *ceiba* (which, as a world tree, reaches underground with its roots and into the sky with its crown), with flowers and maize, and thus with the creation and renewal of vegetation and life in general.[26]

The green Maya cross (*ya'ax che'*, literally the "first/green tree") is probably most famously documented in the scene depicted on the lid of Pacal's 7th-century sarcophagus at Palenque. Its most spectacular contemporary examples are certainly the large crosses at Zinacantán and San Juan Chamula, decorated with pine branches or semicircles of flowers, in both cases evoking tree crowns. As Christenson writes, "In most instances the Maya probably adopted the Christian symbol of the cross willingly as a symbol of regeneration that fit well with their own indigenous

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[22] María Jesús CEN MONTUY, "La fiesta de las Siete Cruces de Tixméhuac", *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 34, 2009, pp. 129 and 136.

[23] Readers familiar with Central European culture will have thought of the possible connection between Maundy Thursday (literally called "Green Thursday" in German, Czech and Slovak) with plants, vegetation and renewal. Spanish Catholicism, however, refers to the day as "Holy Thursday" (*Jueves Santo*).

[24] Zuzana Marie KOSTIĆOVÁ, *Náboženství Mayů*, Praha 2018, pp. 293–296.

[25] Timothy W. PUGH, "Maya Sacred Landscapes at Contact", in: Leslie G. CECIL – Timothy W. PUGH (eds.), *Maya Worldviews at Conquest*, Boulder 2009, p. 321.

[26] Karl A. TAUBE, "Flower Mountain. Concepts of Life, Beauty, and Paradise among the Classic Maya", *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 45, 2004, pp. 69–98.

beliefs."[27] "With the introduction of Roman Catholicism after the Spanish Conquest, the Maya of Yucatan soon conflated the Christian cross with their ancient World Tree and the Wayeb' period with Easter",[28] that is, with the five-day delicate period that precedes the arrival of the Maya New Year and around which the most serious ritual and sacrificial activity is concentrated. Christenson describes how crosses in present-day Santiago Atitlán are decorated with palm leaves and flowers during Holy Week[29] and how Maya traditionalists dress up and raise the cross as a world tree on Holy Friday.[30]

These meanings can also be observed in Pacumal. The cross organizes the world spatially and makes the tree and the maize present. The "dressing of the cross" is timed for Easter to foreshadow the arrival of the rainy season and the sowing of agricultural crops. The colours chosen for the "shirt", blue/green (Maya languages do not distinguish between the two colours)[31] and red, are strikingly reminiscent of Vogt's Zinacantán ethnography, where wooden crosses were "dressed up" in green pine branches and red geraniums[32] and then "fed" by candles, copal incense and liquor.[33] From my research in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, I know that the old traditionalists prefer wooden crosses and say they "plant" them just like plants and decorate them to look like trees. Crosses are seen as living beings, inviting interpersonal relationships and respect. An old wooden cross cannot be thrown away or destroyed, I was told by Maya traditionalists, it remains in place with the new one, or is given a different location.[34] La Farge and Byers, who were some of the first ethnographers of the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, provide the following description: "These crosses see, think, hear, and also speak to those shamans who know how to put themselves in touch with them."[35]

Redefining animism

I remember a Maya traditionalist, who, during the feast described above, pointed to the crosses, explaining to me that "these are idols". He did not mean to show disapproval, but rather his knowledge of how to bring this subject home to a foreigner. What came through in his words was above all what his ancestors had heard for many centuries from Catholic missionaries and what the current generation is now hearing again from Protestant missionaries: namely, that they had made pagan idols of Christian crosses, to which they wrongly attributed life and power. I could

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27 Allan J. CHRISTENSON, *The Burden of the Ancients. Maya Ceremonies of World Renewal from the Pre-Columbian Period to the Present*, Austin 2016, p. 127.

28 Ibidem, p. 60.

29 Allen J. CHRISTENSON, *Art and Society in a Highland Maya Community. The Altarpiece of Santiago Atitlan*, Austin 2001, p. 191.

30 CHRISTENSON, *The Burden*, pp. 309 and 332.

31 Many such crosses, painted blue-green, can be seen in the Chiapas mountains, for example in the aformentioned Maya communities of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantán.

32 Evon Z. VOGT, *Tortillas for the Gods. A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacanteco Rituals*, Cambridge 1976, p. 11.

33 Ibidem, pp. 49–50.

34 KAPUSTA, *Oběť*, p. 135.

35 Oliver LA FARGE – Douglas BYERS, *The Year Bearer's People*, New Orleans 1931, p. 186.

not help remembering E. B. Tylor's old concept of animism, the fundamental misunderstanding of the matter by evolutionist anthropologists and the just reasons for abandoning and re-evaluating this concept. I realized again how *little* use the basic assumptions and terminology that emerged in modern Europe are for research into such a remote religious practice.

Tylor conceived of animism as the oldest and most primitive form of religion: like children, who sometimes attribute life and personality to their toys and other objects, so too whole societies at the childhood stage of their development. In both cases, however, this is a fallacy, a *false epistemology*, refuted by Western modern science, the pinnacle of evolution of human knowledge.[36] It is likely that Tylor formulated his theory of animism primarily based on his experience with London spiritualists and simply projected the way modern European spiritualists conceptualized a person onto other societies.[37]

Tylor's animism in the sense of "belief in supernatural spirits" or "spiritualization of inanimate objects", i.e., the insertion of some active, spiritual quality into passive, physical objects, was eventually rightly dismissed as ethnocentric by most anthropologists. It presupposes not only the idea of a rupture between the natural and supernatural, the physical and spiritual, body and soul, but also the idea of persons as *separate human entities*. In contemporary theories of animism, however, something quite different is at stake. The person is treated not as an individual but as a "dividual", to use Strathern's now classic term.[38] In conceptualizing the person, we thus start not from individuals as clearly defined and separate entities, but from the *relations* between them. The person is first and foremost a bundle of relations with others. But these others are not subjects that only secondarily relate to surrounding objects, but from the very beginning ones-in-relation-to-others, positioned outside the subject/object difference. What is more, as our Maya example makes clear, in some cultures there is no sharp distinction between the human and the nonhuman, and they refuse to attribute the notion of person only to humans. As Graham Harvey aptly sums up, "animists are people who recognize that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and life is always lived in relationship with others".[39]

Although the redefinition of animism is a relatively recent affair, it was foreshadowed by A. Irving Hallowell in his text "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View" (1960). In it, Hallowell shows that the Ojibwa category of person is not limited to humans but includes *other-than-human persons*. Moreover, the Ojibwa also use the animate grammatical category for entities such as the sun, thunder and stone. These Canadian hunter-gatherers, however, do not dogmatically attribute living souls to all objects. Simply, they do not, like us, reject *a priori* the possibility that

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[36] Edward B. TYLOR, *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, London 1903 (1871).

[37] George W. STOCKING, "Animism in Theory and Practice. E. B. Tylor's Unpublished 'Notes on Spiritualism'", *Man* 6, 1971, p. 90.

[38] Marilyn STRATHERN, *The Gender of the Gift. Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley 1988.

[39] Graham HARVEY, *Animism. Respecting the Living World*, New York 2006, p. xi.

certain things can be alive under certain circumstances. The key test is experience, personal testimony that the entities in question *acted*, moved, were encountered in an unusual context, appeared during a ceremony, were seen in a dream, etc.[40]

Hallowell stresses that this is not about "supernatural" beings, because there is no natural/supernatural distinction in Ojibwa ontology;[41] nor is it about the "personification" of natural objects, because these things have never been purely natural, material, impersonal;[42] nor is it about their "anthropomorphization", because this concept is not of particular significance in this context: for example, the Thunder Bird can shapeshift and assume a bird form as well as a human form.[43] What is common to different other-than-human persons is their ability to communicate, to maintain social relations and to play a vital role in interactions with others. They are often more powerful than humans, can be unpredictable and deceptive in appearance. However, a good and happy human life cannot be achieved without their help and cooperation; so the Ojibwa emphasize the moral value of reciprocity and mutual obligations.[44]

The text "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology" (1999) can be seen as a symbolic beginning of the comeback of animism in contemporary anthropology. In it, the author Nurit Bird-David aims to break away from the Tylorian heritage and define animism in a new way as a *relational epistemology*, i.e. as a way of getting to know the world in terms of relationality with other beings and aspects of the environment. Her example is the native concept of *devaru*, which the hunter-gatherer Nayaka of South India use to refer to powerful nonhuman super-persons. These "supernatural spirits", as modernist anthropology would classify them, have, however, nothing to do with either "the supernatural" or "spirits", but are a way to cognitively orient the interrelationships with beings that the Nayaka encounter in their lifeworld and that prompt them to ask questions and look for answers.[45]

In her text, Bird-David draws on Strathern's concept of "dividual" and takes *devaru* as emergent objectified relationships: a hill *devaru* objectifies and makes known the relationships between Nayaka and the hill, an elephant *devaru* objectifies and makes known the relationships between man and elephant.[46] These super-persons exist so long as there is a reciprocal relationship with them. This epistemology is not flawed, but simply different from the one developed by European modernity. "Against 'I think, therefore I am' stand 'I relate, therefore I am' and 'I know as I relate'."[47] Thus, knowledge proceeding from the "I" is replaced by knowledge

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40 A. Irving HALLOWELL, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View", in: Graham HARVEY (ed.), *Readings in Indigenous Religions*, London 2002 (1960), pp. 24–25 and 39–40.

41 Ibidem, p. 28.

42 Ibidem, p. 29.

43 Ibidem, p. 30.

44 Ibidem, pp. 44–46.

45 Nurit BIRD-DAVID, "'Animism' Revisited. Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology", *Current Anthropology* 40 (= Supplement 1), 1999, pp. 72–73.

46 Ibidem, p. 73.

47 Ibidem, p. 78.

proceeding from the "we": "one we-ness" emerges, contrasting with the emphasis on "otherness".[48]

One of the most prominent contemporary proponents of animism is Tim Ingold. Against the backdrop of the cosmologies of native peoples of the circumpolar North, he presents animistic thinking as an *ontology* that can be relevant and inspiring for our Western knowledge, science and religion. In his influential text "Rethinking The Animate, Re-Animating Thought" (2006), he describes animism as a way of being that is open to a world in constant emergence, grounded in the permanent encountering and mixing of many different lifelines, in a web of relationality, reciprocity and coexistence. According to him, animacy is "the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence. The animacy of the lifeworld, in short, is not the result of an infusion of spirit into substance, or of agency into materiality, but is rather ontologically prior to their differentiation".[49]

In other words, life is not something ascribed to inanimate objects, but is already present in the very process of the *emergence* of things. Things are alive precisely because they *are not* objects animated by some active agent.[50] Ingold thus seeks life not in the interiority of objects but in the encounters between things, which together form a meshwork of relationships and commitments. Animistic being-in-the-world requires a cultivation of attentiveness to others, an active participation in the world of which we are a part and on which we depend. In this context, Ingold speaks of *correspondence* – the reciprocal relating of individual lifelines with the world in a constant state of becoming.[51]

Maya hierarchical animism

I believe that Maya cosmology can be characterized as animistic, but only if we avoid modern ethnocentric projections of Western ideas about persons and society. In fact, in the last decade Maya studies have begun to explore a distinctive animistic ontology, both in the context of the pre-Columbian Maya[52] and contemporary Maya traditionalism.[53] The insights and reflections accumulated by anthropologists such as Hallowell, Bird-David and Ingold can serve as a good stepping stone in this regard.

In this text I have argued that the Maya cross involves the delineation of landscapes, the connection of sky and earth, tree and maize, and that it is a Maya microcosm. And like the Maya cosmos, it is alive. It requires the respect, care and work of people who participate in the generation and regeneration of the world as

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48 Ibidem, pp. 73, 78.

49 Tim INGOLD, "Rethinking the Animate, Re-Animating Thought", *Ethnos* 71, 2006, p. 10.

50 Idem, "Being Alive to a World without Objects", in: Graham HARVEY (ed.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, London 2014, p. 219.

51 Tim INGOLD, "On Human Correspondence", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23, 2016, pp. 9–27.

52 See, e.g., Eleanor HARRISON-BUCK – Julia A. HENDON (eds.), *Relational Identities and Other-Than-Human Agency in Archaeology*, Louisville 2018.

53 See, e.g., MACKENZIE, *Indigenous Bodies*.

a whole. The relationships that the cross constantly objectifies and makes known (to use Bird-David's words) are thus relationships not only with the cross itself, but also with the tree, maize and landscapes. Crosses are embodiments of the Maya lifeworld and are therefore planted in the centre of the community, in its corners, and at the foot and on the peaks of mountains. Crosses are regarded as autonomous living and acting other-than-human persons (as Hallowell would say), they relate to what people experience, interact with them and have the power to influence their lives. Crosses, like saints and mountains, are seen as full partners in the ongoing formation and constitution of a single common world, as part of a meshwork of reciprocal engagement and correspondence (as Ingold would add).

The animacy and agency of Maya crosses are manifest, above all, in the existential-phenomenological reality of mutual relationship and correspondence as lived and felt by Maya ritualists themselves. They see their crosses as concrete, visible and tangible beings that inhabit a lifeworld similar to that of humans: they are born and die, they grow and shrink, they eat and starve. Here the human and the nonhuman are intertwined and brought together through mutual feeding, sacrificial giving and continual becoming. This binding reciprocity lies at the heart of participation in the course of a world that is fundamentally tricky, fragile and precarious.

An empirical and theoretical problem that arises in the context of postulating the existence of Maya animism is that the anthropologists mentioned above base their conceptions of animism on hunter-gatherer, highly egalitarian societies, while the pre-Columbian and contemporary Maya live in agricultural communities that are hierarchically organized. A key factor in the redefinition of animism has also been the study of Amazonian perspectivism, which is regarded as a fundamentally egalitarian or horizontal ontology.[54] From this perspective, Maya cosmology naturally appears to be distinctly hierarchical or vertical, and, as Descola would say, analogist.[55]

However, this concept of animism has also been challenged by the ethnography of north-western South America. As Halbmayer argues, "In contrast to standard Amazonian animism, in the Isthmo-Colombian area more hierarchical forms of animism prevail",[56] making this form of animism resemble more that of Southeast Asia.[57] This may support Sahlins's intuition that analogism and animism may share some common ground and that, in fact, something like "hierarchical animism" might actually exist.[58] Finally, we should not forget his argument that "Amerindian

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[54] See especially Eduardo VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, 1998, pp. 469–488; idem, "Exchanging Perspectives. The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies", *Common Knowledge* 10, 2004, pp. 463–484.

[55] Philippe DESCOLA, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Chicago 2013.

[56] Ernst HALBMAYER, "Amerindian Sociocosmologies of Northwestern South America. Some Reflections on the Dead, Metamorphosis, and Religious Specialists", *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24, 2019, p. 28.

[57] Kaj ÅRHEM – Guido SPRENGER (eds.), *Animism in Southeast Asia*, New York 2016.

[58] Marshall SAHLINS, "On the Ontological Scheme of 'Beyond Nature and Culture'", *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, 2014, p. 282.

communal animism also knows a hierarchical aspect insofar as the spirit masters of game animals rule the individuals of their species".[59] It seems, then, that what we are looking at is a continuum of more and less symmetrical and asymmetrical animist forms. Be that as it may, what is a fact is that a growing number of anthropologists are finding the re-defined concept of animism useful for understanding Maya cosmology.[60]

Another issue debated in this context is the nature of Maya crosses' animacy. Miguel Astor-Aguilera has advanced the idea that the Maya regard crosses as "communicating objects", as material vessels by means of which people communicate with invisible and intangible beings, especially ancestors.[61] I, on the other hand, have argued that the Maya understand crosses as living and acting on their own, i.e., as bodily-souled and immanent-transcendent beings, which, of course, can be – and indeed are – associated with ancestors or mountain and earth deities.[62] It seems, however, that this is largely an empirical discussion and that both might be true in some ethnographic cases, sometimes even at the same time.

Conclusion

Finally, I would suggest that perhaps it is the Maya hierarchical animism that is the key variable in distinguishing Maya traditionalism from modern Maya Spirituality. After all, Maya crosses have always inspired a sense of wonder in the modern observer, because they have been considered animate persons with whom people establish and maintain intersubjective relationships and whom they cherish and nurture. In Maya Spirituality, by contrast, they are relegated to mere symbols of the cosmos. They refer to the ordering of the universe and ultimately to harmony with the Creator and Former, often merged with the New Age notion of Energy.

In fact, this is just another historical reinterpretation of the Maya cross, which remains a prime example of the dynamic and creative encounter between Maya and European cosmologies, first in the context of Spanish Catholicism, and now again in the context of Western alternative spirituality. As such, it deserves further study.

(Written in English by the author)

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[59] Ibidem.

[60] See, e.g., C. James MACKENZIE, "Judas Off the Noose. Sacerdotes Mayas, Costumbristas, and the Politics of Purity in the Tradition of San Simón in Guatemala", *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 14, 2009, pp. 355–381; Pedro PITARCH RAMÓN, "The Two Maya Bodies. An Elementary Model of Tzeltal Personhood", *Ethnos* 77, 2012, pp. 93–114; Milan KOVÁČ, "The Worshipers of Stones. Lacandon Sacred Stone Landscape", *Ethnologia Actualis* 20, 2020, pp. 1–27; Alonso ZAMORA CORONA, "Coyote Drums and Jaguar Altars. Ontologies of the Living and the Artificial among the K'iche' Maya", *Journal of Material Culture* 25, 2020, pp. 324–347; Jan KAPUSTA, "The Pilgrimage to the Living Mountains. Representationalism, Animism, and the Maya", *Religion, State & Society* 50, 2022, pp. 182–198.

[61] Miguel A. ASTOR-AGUILERA, *The Maya World of Communicating Objects. Quadripartite Crosses, Trees, and Stones*, Albuquerque 2010.

[62] KAPUSTA, "The Pilgrimage".

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ETHNOGRAPHER'S BIAS: CULTIVATING REFLEXIVITY

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It is easy to talk about reflexivity, perhaps more difficult to incorporate it into ongoing research practice.[1]

Abstract
Ethnographic researchers enter their field with already existing preconceptions which inevitably arise from their own personal and professional histories and training. This article focuses on the researcher's subjectivity, reflexivity, and possible sources of bias. After sharing her own experience with bias during field-research, the author invites the reader to think critically over their own research designs. This paper introduces three practical approaches towards reflexivity in social science: searching for the potential sources of our bias; questioning ourselves throughout the research process; and a collective approach.
Keywords: ethnography; research; bias; subjectivity; preconceptions; reflexivity.

Introduction

In this article I would like to discuss the researcher's subjectivity which inevitably arises from his/her own personal biography, and which influences the way he/she designs and analyses his/her research.

We can hardly question the fact that the ethnographic researcher enters the field pre-concerned, with certain values, judgements, and assumptions. These tendencies, often unconscious, are rooted in their personal histories and professional training, and may shape their research process and its outcome.

There is a vast literature on the importance of reflexivity and positionality in social research; however, I was surprised to learn that there are very limited resources offering actual practical activities which may help researchers (and their students) to develop critical reflective thinking.

Therefore, the main aim of this article is to offer the reader practical techniques of reflective thinking. For this reason, I underwent a literature search in various fields of social science, searching for specific reflective practices which may be useful in researcher introspection, and in uncovering the sources of our bias.

In order to demonstrate how preconceptions can influence our research I am also briefly going to share my own experience with overcoming bias in my ethnographic

[1] Jan FOOK, "Reflexivity as Method", *Annual Review of Health Social Science* 9/1, 1999, p. 11.

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field-research in Northeast India. The realisation that I had been biased helped me to change my approach and recognise important findings which I could have easily missed if I had not changed my way of thinking.

However, even though I do mention my experience with bias, my aim is not to analyse my research in this paper. My own experience serves here merely as an example of my first personal confrontation with bias, which ignited my interest in reflective practice in social science.

I am aware that my own research is not located in Ibero-America; however the nucleus of this article is reflexivity in ethnographic research, which I believe is relevant in any geopolitical region and to the overall theme of this issue. As Kusek and Smiley point out: "the issues confronting researchers are universal regardless of field site or national, personal, or professional position."[2]

Note on reflexivity and reflectivity

The terms reflexivity and reflectivity are often used as synonyms, or as terms with blurred boundaries;[3] yet some authors distinguish between them. For example, D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez suggest that while reflexivity is looking in the past ("reflection-on-action"), reflectivity, or critical reflection, is happening in the moment ("reflection-in-action").[4] J. Fook on the other hand explains that *reflectivity* can be seen as a *process* of critically researching our own (or someone else's) practice, while *reflexivity* can be understood as a *position*, or the ability to "locate ourselves in the picture"[5]. Therefore, to reach reflexivity, we need to practice critical reflection. I am referring to those terms in Fook's sense.

Subjectivity in research design

Subjectivity and the role of the researcher is an important topic in all the sciences. This is especially so in the social sciences, and particularly in ethnography, where the researcher is usually not shielded by instruments or machines (in contrast to laboratory research) and represents and offers a direct interaction and interpretation of the phenomenon studied.

From the early 1970s, anthropology as a science has developed an interest in the critical examination of the researcher's role and in the influence of subjectivity, following the 1960s critique of anthropologists' ignorance of contemporary reality and the colonial exploitation of the cultures studied.[6]

It became evident that the researcher cannot remain truly "invisible" in a research setting, as was previously thought desirable, and that their point of view

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2 Weronika KUSEK – Sarah SMILEY, "Navigating the city: gender and positionality in cultural geography research", *Journal of Cultural Geography* 31/2, 2014, p. 152.

3 Heather D'CRUZ – Philip GILLINGHAM – Sebastian MELENDEZ, "Reflexivity, its Meanings and Relevance for Social Work: A Critical Review of the Literature", *The British Journal of Social Work* 37/1, January 2007, p. 74.

4 Ibidem, p. 83.

5 FOOK 1999, "Reflexivity as Method", p. 12.

6 Charlotte Aull DAVIES, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, Routledge 2008, p. 11.

inevitably infiltrates the findings. Eurocentrism and the colonial gaze were harshly criticised, and it became clear that to understand the effect of colonisation, we need to study the colonisers as well.[7] Therefore, to understand anthropological statements about culture(s), we need to acknowledge that those statements are also statements about anthropology itself.[8]

Stories of "arrival" became a part of ethnographies in order to acknowledge the presence of the researcher – even though the arrival and the initial contact with the group researched may be the most artificial period, or even prone to misinterpretation.[9]

The need for further reflexivity in ethnography has continued to rise, together with a debate on how much reflexivity is enough to remain informative and to avoid only and completely spiralling inwards the researcher's biography.[10]

It is not merely a question of being an insider or outsider vis-à-vis a particular culture – those categories have become inevitably interwoven in the post-modern era. It is evident that it is not only ethnical identity that separates researchers from the researched, but often also different intellectual preoccupations and overall personal histories. Therefore, a native researcher to a researched group also needs to invite reflexivity in order to understand her/his own biases.[11]

Bias may influence every stage of our research. Therefore, it is important to engage in critical thinking towards our own concepts, from the planning of our research until publication itself.[12]

It is also important to mention that subjectivity is not always a bad thing. While bias may prevent us from seeing certain important patterns of the phenomenon studied, subjectivity is simply inevitable, generating space for variability and allowing voices to be heard.[13]

My experience with bias: encountering matrilineality

There was a particular moment during the ethnographic field research for my dissertation on childbearing practices in Northeast India when I realised that I was trying to adjust my interview setting in order to accommodate my preconceptions. Unknowingly, I kept blocking myself from understanding a broader spectrum of a phenomenon on which I wanted to focus.

The fieldwork took place in the state of Meghalaya, Northeast India, among the matrilineal society of the Khasis. The Khasis, numbering approx. 1,5 million

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7 DAVIES, *Reflexive ethnography*, p. 11.

8 Malcolm R. CRICK, "Anthropology of knowledge", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11/1, 1982, p. 307.

9 DAVIES, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 11.

10 Ibidem, p. 5.

11 Donna Jean YOUNG – Anne MENELEY, *Auto-Ethnographies: The Anthropology of Academic Practices*, Peterborough 2005, p. 7.

12 DAVIES, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 4.

13 FOOK 1999, "Reflexivity as Method", p. 15.

according to the latest Census,[14] are one of the few societies in the world who up to this day practice matrilineality and matrilocality.[15] For reference, in Ibero-America, matrilineality or matrilocality is represented e.g. by the Guna people (Kuna, Tule, Dule) of Panama and Colombia,[16] and by the Wayúu people (Guajiro, Wahiro) of Colombia and Venezuela.[17]

My bias stemmed out of the encounter with matrilineality, and with the overall gender dynamics of the Khasi society. Since I wanted to study practices related to childbirth, I wanted to focus on women. According to the literature on traditions related to childbirth across the globe, birth is usually a strictly women-only event. Men are very often completely excluded or even banned from witnessing the birth.[18]

Therefore, when I wanted to interview people to find out more about local birthing practices, I immediately thought of interviewing only women, and tried to create a safe environment secluded from men. I was worried women may feel shy to discuss their intimate experiences not only in front of me, but also in front of others, especially men.

However, during the research I began to observe that not only were women not shy talking about childbirth in front of men, but even the men themselves started to share stories of births they witnessed or where they even helped. I learned that in the Khasi traditional culture of childbirth, men are an integral part of the experience. Among the Khasis, there is even a tradition of male-midwives. In case of home-birth, men often play an active role during childbirth, if they are chosen to attend by the birthing woman herself, and in some regions, there are even indications of couvade.[19]

That was a crucial finding of my research, and I almost remained blind to it due to my initial preconception and my unconscious attempt to influence my research setting and to exclude men from the interviews. That was the point when I became interested in practical reflective activities, which could help us realise how our own background influences our research.

Reflecting gender, rethinking matrilineality

I became especially interested in reflecting on gender and encountering matrilineal societies. However, in my search of the literature, most texts related to reflexivity

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[14] CENSUS 2011, Meghalaya Population Census data 2011, [downloaded on 11 November 2020], accessible from: http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/meghalaya.html.

[15] I describe the character of the Khasi matrilineality in detail in the following article: Lenka ZAHRÁDKOVÁ, "Porozumění matrilinearitě u kmene Khásí v severovýchodní Indii", *Nový Orient* 73, Praha 2018, pp. 2–10.

[16] James HOWE, *Chiefs, Scribes, and Ethnographers: Kuna Culture from Inside and Out*, Austin 2010; Karin E. TICE, *Kuna Crafts, Gender, and the Global Economy*, Austin 1995.

[17] Lawrence Craig WATSON, "Guajiro social structure: a reexamination", *Antropológica/Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales La Salle* 20, 1967, pp. 3–36.

[18] Brigitte JORDAN, *Birth in Four Cultures: A Crosscultural Investigation of Childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States*, Long Grove 1992, p. 33.

[19] Information from my research, Meghalaya (India) 2016, unpublished.

and gender focused mainly on dealing with the patriarchal setting, and especially on the challenges of being a female researcher in the patriarchal field.[20]

As Guédon points out, even though the social sciences went through massive perspective development under the influence of postmodern, postcolonial, and feminist approaches, and despite the fact that kinship studies changed with the evolution of much more critical and reflective studies of gender, matrilineal cultures are still being described by terminologies and concepts from the mid-nineteen century.[21]

The trend is slowly changing, but studies of matrilineal societies have yet to be transferred to the up-to-date field. In 2020, Guédon herself established a platform for studies of matrilineal cultures, or as Guédon suggests – "matricultures", and is determined to engage in deep deconstruction and critique of terms and concepts used regarding societies that exist as an alternative to the patrilineal and patriarchal setting, and to be part of the change of perspective in the future.[22]

Practicing critical reflection

Even though I could not find any practical reflective activities directly related to rethinking matrilineality, I have gathered several potentially useful techniques for engaging in critical reflection in research in social sciences in general, and I hope we can utilise them either in our own research or within our teaching practice as a tool to develop our capacity for reflexivity.

Therefore, I am going to introduce three practical reflective activities: (1) looking into the potential sources of our bias; (2) questioning ourselves at every stage of the research; and (3) a collective approach. Before we proceed with the techniques, I would like to challenge you, the reader, to engage in them actively. Feel free to use a pen and paper, and use the following exercises to practice your own reflective thinking; and to revisit your answers some time later to see if some of your perceptions have changed.

Ethnography of the mind: Searching for the sources of bias

To realise and to acknowledge our bias, Margaret D. LeCompte[23] suggests that researchers should engage in active reflection, and to practice *disciplined subjectivity* – in other words, to practice, as she calls it, an *intellectual psychoanalysis* or *ethnography of the mind*.[24]

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[20] Sandra ACKER, "In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research", *Resources for feminist research* 28/1–2, 2000, pp. 189–210; Farah PURWANINGRUM – Anastasiya SHTALTOVNA, "Reflections on fieldwork: A comparative study of positionality in ethnographic research across Asia", *eSyposium for Sociology*, [downloaded on 31 January 2023], accessible from: file:///C:/Users/Lenka/Downloads/EBul-PurwaningrumShtalt-Jul2017.pdf, 2017; Farhana SULTANA, "Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research", *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 6/3, 2007, pp. 374–385.

[21] Marie-Francoise GUÉDON, "Introduction", *Matrix: a Journal for Matricultural Studies* 01/1, 2020, p. 4.

[22] Ibidem, p. 7.

[23] LECOMPTE, "Bias", pp. 43–52.

[24] Ibidem, p. 44.

Ethnography of the mind helps us uncover potential sources of our bias, so we can get to the roots of our own intellectual framework. LeCompte argues that there are two main sources, which can be further divided into subcategories.[25] Feel free to pause and brainstorm. What do you consider your own sources of bias? Try to compare it with the categories of LeCompte below.

LeCompte selects two main sources – professional training and personal experience; and she divides them further into following categories:[26]

Sources of bias rooted in our professional training:

- The History of the Discipline: The focus and common interest shift at different eras or stages of the discipline
- The Literary Tradition: Our writing style influences our ethnography; e.g. the tense we choose may give a certain impression, such as simple present tense may depict a freeze-frame effect and lead to false generalisation
- Technology and Intellectual Paradigms: Selection or avoidance of a certain technology may influence how we approach our research; our relationship to technology is also a product of our biography
- Mentors: Certain "schools" of particular mentors in anthropology/ethnology can be distinguished according to similar patterns
- Friends, Associates, and Colleagues: Influence of research centres, teams, cross-referencing those we are familiar with)
- Environments: Similarly, as "friends", professional environments and their systems may encourage certain ways of thinking
- Paths of Opportunity: Our opportunities and our decisions on whether to follow them may point us in a certain direction

Sources of bias rooted in our personal biographies:

- History: The historical era we grew up and live in and its specific topics
- Geography and Demography: Such as social background, upbringing in certain values, religious training, family background, cosmopolitan experience, birth order, geographical region etc.)

We can now compare our own notes with the categories suggested by LeCompte – Have you possibly realised that you omitted some sources partly or completely? Or have you written down an area that should be added into the list? If you missed some categories, try to question yourself – why? Could those omitted categories somehow influence your thinking process and your research? Take some time for self-inquiry and see if the categories suggested by LeCompte could open your eyes to new realisations about your own possible sources of bias.

LeCompte invites us, researchers in social sciences, to actively engage in reflection and examination of biases in our own biographies, professional and personal,

[25] Ibidem, p. 44.

[26] Author's summary of sources of bias according to: LECOMPTE, "Bias", p. 44.

to be able to consciously decide what mental patterns we need to re-consider, and to distinguish a clearer way forward in our research.

Thinking, doing, evaluating: Questioning ourselves

Another practical approach to help us with our retrospection is to ask ourselves meaningful questions at every stage of research. Building on Cunliffe[27] and Day[28] among others[29], Corlett and Mavin collect and suggest sets of questions for different stages of research,[30] using three (interconnected) categories: "thinking", "doing" and "evaluating" research.[31]

The *thinking* category relates to our epistemology, our understanding of reality, the nature of knowledge and our paradigms.[32] Among suggested questions to engage in reflection on this theme are: "What are my assumptions about the nature of reality? What do I see as the nature of knowledge? What are the different ways in which a phenomenon can be understood? How could the research question be investigated differently? What different insights may be made by taking a different epistemological perspective?"[33]

The *doing* category questions our methodology, the role of the researcher, the researcher's motivation, identity, power, and voice. Some suggested questions are: "What is the impact of the research method(s) on research? What data have I chosen to include and leave out in my presentation of findings/interpretations? What are my personal and political reasons to undertake this research? How am I connected to the research, theoretically, experientially, emotionally? And what effect will this have on my approach? What is my (expected) role as a researcher? What effects does my role have on how the research is conducted? What is my power relationship with the people I am researching? What impact did the researcher's race/gender/class have on the research relationship? How do I make sense of the lived experience of others? Whose voices does this sense making exclude?[34]

The evaluating category addresses questions of validity and quality, such as: "How can I engage in reflexive 'theorizing' and 'explanation'? What is useful knowledge and how can I produce it within a reflexive frame?"[35]

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27 Ann L. CUNLIFFE, "Why complicate a done deal? Bringing reflexivity into management research", in: Cassell, Catherine – Lee, Bill (eds.), *Challenges and Controversies in Management Research*, London 2011, pp. 404–418.

28 Suzanne DAY, "A reflexive lens: Exploring dilemmas of qualitative methodology through the concept of reflexivity", *Qualitative Sociology Review* 8/1, 2012, pp. 60–85.

29 Mostly in the field of management research, however, applicable in any other field of social science.

30 Sandra CORLETT – Sharon MAVIN, "Reflexivity and researcher positionality," in: Catherine Cassell – Ann L. Cunliffe – Gina Grandy (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods*, London 2018, pp. 377–399.

31 CORLETT – MAVIN, "Reflexivity", pp. 379–380.; and DAY, "A reflexive lens", pp. 61–62.

32 CORLETT – MAVIN 2018, "Reflexivity", p. 378.

33 Ibidem, pp. 379–382 (shortened).

34 Ibidem, pp. 383–390 (shortened).

35 Ibidem, p. 391 (shortened).

Feel free to take your time to engage with the suggested questions. The exercise of answering the questions above can be used to enhance our critical reflective practice, especially if used continuously in every stage of our research projects.

Exposing ourselves, hearing others: Collective approach to reflexivity

Corlett and Mavin also call for innovative reflexive techniques in the future, especially for a stronger focus on reflexivity as a collective practice.[36] As Dean et al. notice,[37] even though authors in the social sciences are aware that different researchers may interpret the same data differently, and despite the stress on reflexivity and positionality to address subjectivity in social research, the collective approach remains underexplored and overlooked.[38]

By the collective approach Dean et al. do not mean merely "team research", but a sharing and understanding of knowledge, discussing methodological approaches and world-views.[39]

In his experiment, Dean et al. employ six researchers from various fields of social science and offers them the same data set (interview transcripts) with a sole instruction to "analyse this data".[40] The analysis is followed up by a collective reflection, which yields eye-opening results.

Dean et al. point out that the collective approach helps us understand how we are shaped by our backgrounds, but also that there is a certain "mundaneness" to research (mundane elements like mood, the practicalities of everyday life, the resources available, wine, friends…) that does influence our research, but is usually ignored or omitted.[41]

Dean et al. conclude that exposing our ideas to others and openly hearing their insights is an important way of developing our own practice, and a tool to prevent our own repetitiveness.[42] Dean et al. believe that the collective approach (between academic professionals, but possibly also open to all spheres) can and should be used as a training exercise in teaching qualitative research methods.[43]

Conclusion

It is inevitable that we, ethnographic researchers, enter our field with our own preoccupations. Our personal and professional biographies shape the way we organise and arrange our research activities in the field at every stage of the research process.

Therefore, it is necessary to reflect critically on our own biographies and possible sources of bias. This does not mean to the extent of being completely submerged in introspection without the ability to experience or to learn about the world outside

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[36] Ibidem, p. 392.

[37] Jon DEAN – Penny FURNESS – Diarmuid VERRIER et al., "Desert island data: an investigation into researcher positionality", *Qualitative Research* 18/3, 2018, pp. 273–289.

[38] Ibidem, p. 274.

[39] Ibidem, p. 275.

[40] Ibidem, p. 380.

[41] Ibidem, p. 285.

[42] Ibidem, p. 286.

[43] Ibidem, p. 274.

ourselves, but to acknowledge our preconceptions in order to become less ignorant of the impact of our personal experiences and intellectual development on our research processes and outcomes.

By sharing my own personal experience with bias while encountering a matrilineal society, I would like to stress the importance of reflexivity in enabling us to think critically about our own research.

I have conducted a literature search to look for practical ways whereby we as researchers and teachers can engage in active reflective thinking to develop our practice. Even though I could not find any practical activities focused directly on studying matrilineal cultures, I have identified three practical approaches useful in the broad spectrum of ethnography, and social science research in general; namely: (1) searching for the potential sources of our bias; (2) questioning ourselves throughout the research process; and (3) a collective approach to reflexivity.

(Written in English by the author)

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THE SPANISH COMMUNIST EXILE AND *CONSENTFUL CONTENTION* IN STATE SOCIALIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA[1]

by MAROŠ TIMKO
(Charles University and Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague)

Abstract
This study focuses on the issue of the Spanish Communist exile in state socialist Czechoslovakia. It analyses the everyday resistance of the heterodox Spanish political emigrant José Valledor, which was carried out in the form of *consentful contention* – a tactic, through which a subordinate actor contests the government's decisions whilst performing the role of a dutiful citizen. Valledor was able, with his petitions to the state organs while appealing to the regime's own legitimating value system, to threaten the Czechoslovak authorities with the loss of the regime's international prestige.
Keywords: Consentful contention; Resistance; Spain; Czechoslovakia; Exile.

Introduction

Václav Havel explains in his essay *The Power of the Powerless*, through the example of a manager of a fruit and vegetable shop who places in his window the slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!", the difference between "living within the truth" and "living within a lie" in a post-totalitarian system.[2] The manager, who neither cares about nor believes in the global unification of the proletariat, accepts the prescribed ritual and declares loyalty to the regime in order not to lose his tranquillity and security – by "living within a lie", he puts on the mask of an obedient citizen.[3] Nonetheless, once he "breaks the rules of the game" and opposes the regime, this mask is taken away and the manager starts "living within the truth"[4] – nevertheless, this truthful life and open revolt against the system was not the only possible form of resistance in state socialist countries. Recent research on this subject demonstrates

[1] This study forms a part of the dissertation defended at the Centre for Ibero-American Studies at Charles University in 2022, see Maroš TIMKO, *Czechoslovak-Spanish Relations (1918–1977)*, (PhD Thesis), Prague 2022. The case of Valledor, together with other examples of everyday resistance of Spanish exiles in Czechoslovakia, has already been mentioned in Maroš TIMKO, "'Všude na španělské soudruhy dívaly se jako na příživníky.' Španielsky komunistický exil v povojnovom Československu" ["Everywhere they looked at Spanish comrades as parasites." The Spanish communist exile in post-war Czechoslovakia], in: Monika Kabešová – Kateřina Hrušková (eds.), *České, slovenské a československé dějiny 20. století* XV, Hradec Králové 2022, pp. 173–196.

[2] Václav HAVEL – John KEANE, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central Eastern Europe*, New York 1985.

[3] Ibidem, pp. 31, 36

[4] Ibidem, p. 39.

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that (everyday) resistance in the people's democratic Czechoslovakia took various forms and was not as rare as could be expected in a state with an authoritarian regime.[5] Nevertheless, it was only seldom openly critical of the regime, as "in an effort to enforce one's worldview or pursue one's interests in work and everyday life, the resister does not a priori seek conflict with the regime."[6]

Therefore, an interesting and up till now under-researched way of resistance in state socialist countries – petitions or complaints directed towards Communist authorities – represented not only a rather frequent form of criticism but also one of the shifting borders of the dictatorship. On the one hand, these petitions opened a space for the negotiation of mutual positions between the petitioners and the recipients, as the Czechoslovak authorities made much account of these petitions, while on the other, in order to fulfil their aims, the petitioners managed in their criticism (which did not necessarily have to be anti-systemic) to utilize the official language of the regime ("speaking socialist").[7] And, as Vilímek and Rameš add, "the border between the 'constructive criticism' and the 'anti-state incitement' was not only permeable but above all variable and largely dependent on the sanctionary mood in which the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia was currently".[8] Furthermore, the practice of resistance through petitions, through which citizens in state socialism criticize specific decisions or policies of the state while evading the understanding of their resistance as anti-regime, could be interpreted as a *consentful contention*.[9]

Consentful contention is one of the forms of *everyday resistance* – covert resistance of subalterns, for whom an open confrontation with authority may be too risky and its consequences catastrophic, an insubordination characterized by its "pervasive use of disguise" and directed against various forms of domination, with the simple objective of persistence and survival.[10] These patterns of oppositional acts could be defined as constant pressure against the authority, while looking for its weaknesses, as well as for the limits of resistance. They are also characterized by the concealment of the agent who carries out the resistance or the concealment of the act of resistance itself – both in order to ensure the safety of resisters.[11] The analytical model of *consentful contention* was first presented by the North American

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[5] See e.g., Michael GEHLER – David SCHRIFFL (eds.), *Violent Resistance: From the Baltics to Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe 1944–1956*, Paderborn 2020; Tomáš VILÍMEK – Oldřich TŮMA – Jaroslav CUHRA et al., *Projevy a podoby protirežimní rezistence v komunistickém Československu 1948–1989* [Expressions and Forms of anti-regime Resistance in communist Czechoslovakia 1948–1989], Praha 2018.

[6] VILÍMEK – TŮMA – CUHRA et al., *Projevy*, p. 6.

[7] Tomáš VILÍMEK – Václav RAMEŠ, "Pohyblivé hranice diktatury ve světle stížností občanů" [The shifting boundaries of dictatorship in the light of citizen complaints], *Soudobé dějiny* 1, 2022, pp. 19–37.

[8] Ibidem, p. 38.

[9] Jeremy B. STRAUGHN, "Taking the State at Its Word": The Arts of Consentful Contention in the German Democratic Republic", *American Journal of Sociology* 6, 2005, p. 1601.

[10] James C. SCOTT, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven 1985, pp. 33–36, 301; Idem, "Everyday forms of resistance", *Copenhagen Papers in East and Southeast Asian Studies* 4, 1989, p. 54.

[11] Idem, "Everyday", pp. 54–59.

sociologist Jeremy B. Straughn in the context of state socialism in the GDR in the 1960s and 1970s. Straughn claims that in state socialist countries, the state's official claim to govern in the name of the proletariat gives potential resisters many possible ways to contest the seriousness of this public promise by "taking the state at its word"; nevertheless, "the ruling party's rigid intolerance of political opposition substantially magnifies the risk that any citizen petition […] will be construed as an act of defiance."[12] Hence, *consentful contention* is a tactic, through which, in order to fulfil their objectives, subordinate actors in state socialism use the regime's own logic and "contest a state of affairs or a government policy or decision by performing the role of a dutiful citizen […]", therefore leaving their loyalty (consent) to the regime and its values unquestioned.[13]

The present article is based on materials until now unpublished proceeding mainly from Czech archives (National Archives Prague, Security Services Archive, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) complemented by the relatively narrow secondary literature dedicated to the Spanish Communist exile in the former Eastern Bloc.[14] This microhistorical study attempts, through a diachronic approach and with a progressive research method, to shed light on the bitter experience of life in a state socialist country of a rather unknown Spanish exile and *Résistance* fighter, José A. Valledor. In the case of his everyday resistance, I examine the hypothesis that through *consentful contention* it was possible in state socialist Czechoslovakia to push authorities to make concessions in one's favour – by appealing to the regime's legitimating value system, a dutiful citizen could menace government officials with the loss of the regime's international prestige. Furthermore, I posit that it was Valledor's Ecuadorian contacts, as well as the complex relationship between the Communist Party of Spain (*Partido Comunista de España*, PCE) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ) that influenced the outcome of his resistance – in this sense, the global network of the PCE, interconnected also outside of Europe, entangled such a peripheral country as Francoist Spain with Latin America and the Eastern Bloc.

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[12] STRAUGHN, "Taking", pp. 1602–1603.

[13] Ibidem, pp. 1601–1604.

[14] However, in this aspect it should be noted that the research on the question of the Spanish Communist exile in the Eastern European countries has been broadened during the last two decades. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the most productive author dealing with this topic in a systematic and long-term manner is the Spanish historian Matilde Eiroa see: Matilde EIROA, *Españoles tras el Telón de Acero. El exilio republicano y comunista en la Europa socialista*, Madrid 2018; Idem, "Republicanos en el Centro-Este de Europa: los intentos de normalización institucional", in: Ángeles Egido León – Matilde Eiroa (eds.), *Los grandes olvidados: los republicanos de izquierda en el exilio*, Madrid 2004, pp. 301–322; Idem, "Sobrevivir en el socialismo. Organización y medios de comunicación de los exiliados comunistas en las democracias populares", *Historia Social* 69, 2011, pp. 71–90. Significant contributions have been also made by the Hungarian scholar Szilvia Pethő and the Czech historian Vladimír Nálevka, see Szilvia PETHŐ, *El exilio de comunistas españoles en los países socialistas de Europa centro-oriental (1946–1955)*, (PhD Thesis), Szeged 2008; Vladimír NÁLEVKA, "Španělé v poválečném Československu" [Spaniards in post-war Czechoslovakia], *Dvacáté století*, Praha 2005, pp. 77–95.

Prague, "the Communist Geneva" and the "*plaque tournante*" of Spanish exiles

During the late 1940s, Czechoslovakia and more specifically Prague became a prominent Eastern European hub of international socialism. This was possible not only thanks to the growing Communist influence in the country after the parliamentary elections in May 1946, culminating in the Communist coup d'état in February of 1948, but also because of the country's geographical location – being part of the Eastern Bloc, but still functioning as a forward base of the USSR in contact with the West.[15] Thus, with the outbreak of the Cold War and the subsequent division of Europe into two antagonistic blocs, Prague started to fulfil the function of a meeting point and refuge for various left-wing political exiles, workers, students and revolutionaries, usually members of fraternal communist parties. Apart from the Spanish exiles, there were also Greek, Yugoslav, Italian, Portuguese, French and English-speaking left-wing political emigrants, who found refuge in Czechoslovakia in the years after World War II.[16]

From Prague, contact was also ensured between various Communist parties of Eastern and Western Europe[17] – one of these parties was the PCE. During the 1950s, this party managed to create from the Czechoslovak metropolis an anchor and a transit point for Spanish Communists. For this reason, the General Secretary of the PCE, Santiago Carrillo, eloquently designated Prague their "*plaque tournante*"[18] (railway turntable – M. T.). Indeed, together with Moscow and Paris, the Czechoslovak capital – called "the Communist Geneva"[19] due to the number of leftist international organizations based in Prague[20] – from the turn of the 1940s and the 1950s played the role of the bureaucratic centre of the Spanish Communist exile. The number of Spaniards in Czechoslovakia rose to 193 in February 1952,[21] while from Prague the PCE controlled the Spanish Communist collectives functioning

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15 EIROA, "Republicanos", p. 313.

16 Milan BÁRTA, "Právo azylu. Vznik politické emigrace v Československu po roce 1948" [The right to asylum. The emergence of political emigration in Czechoslovakia after 1948], *Paměť a dějiny* 1, 2011, pp. 16–17; Kathleen B. GEANEY, *English-Speaking Communists, Communist Sympathizers and Fellow-Travellers and Czechoslovakia in the Early Cold War*, (PhD Thesis), Prague 2017.

17 NÁLEVKA, "Španělé", pp. 81–82.

18 Gregorio MORÁN, *Miseria, grandeza y agonía del PCE: 1939–1985*, Madrid 2017, p. 552.

19 Karel BARTOŠEK, *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech. Praha – Paříž (1948–1968)* [Report on wanderings in the communist archives. Prague – Paris (1948–1968)], Praha 2000, p. 103.

20 These included the International Union of Students, the World Peace Council, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the International Organisation of Journalists, the World Federation of Democratic Youth or the International Radio and Television Organisation, in: Marta E. HOLEČKOVÁ, *Příběh zapomenuté univerzity. Universita 17. listopadu (1961–1974) a její místo v československém vzdělávacím systému a společnosti* [The Story of a Forgotten University. The University of 17th November (1961–1974) and its Position in Czechoslovakian Educational System and Society], Praha 2019, pp. 34–35; GEANEY, *English-Speaking*, p. 11.

21 Národní archiv Praha (National Archives Prague, hereinafter NA), fund (f.) Mezinárodní oddělení ÚV KSČ (International Department of the CC CPCz, hereinafter MOÚV KSČ), volume (svazek, hereinafter sv.) 187, archive unit number (archivní jednotka, hereinafter a. j.) 652, page (list, hereinafter l.) 96. Rozmístění španělských polit. emigrantů v ČSR [Location of Spanish political emigrants in Czechoslovakia], 1. 2. 1952.

not only in Czechoslovakia but also in Poland, Hungary, GDR, Austria, China and even Bulgaria.[22]

Despite the fact that the members of the PCE started to migrate *en masse* to the countries of the Eastern Bloc only after World War II, the collaboration between the Spanish and the Eastern European Communists dates back to the Spanish Civil War and the formation of International Brigades.[23] In the case of Czechoslovakia, the first wave of PCE exiles, coming mostly from France where they operated during World War II in the French *Résistance,* settled in Prague between the years 1946–48.[24] This wave comprised in total 26 Spaniards, some of them leaders of the PCE; nevertheless, this group included also "regular" members of the party, who had been earning their living in Czechoslovakia by manual work.[25] The second wave of Spanish Communists, formed mainly by officers previously active in Tito's Army and a result of the Soviet-Yugoslav split, amounted to approximately 20 militants and intellectuals (apart from their family members), who arrived in Czechoslovakia in September 1948.[26] Subsequently, the bulk of these exiles were allocated in Prague; some of them, however, were sent to Paris, which maintained the position of the main centre of the PCE, at least until 1950 and the outlawing of this party in France.[27] Lastly, the third wave of Spanish political émigrés in Czechoslovakia was the result of the police operation "Boléro-Paprika", which took place in September 1950 in France, leading to the arrest or expulsion to North Africa and Corsica of almost 400 (mainly Spanish) Communists. This step was linked with the militarization of the Cold War and an intensifying anti-Communist campaign in Western Europe and considering the risk of the extradition of these arrested Spaniards to Francoist Spain, refuge was offered to them in 1951 by various Eastern European countries, including Czechoslovakia.[28]

Considering the above-stated, the Spanish Communist exile and its Prague centre have the appearance of an example of the multi-directionality and

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22 NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 188, a. j. 656, l. 5. Santiago Álvarez to the ÚV KSČ, 19. 2. 1960.

23 For more on the Eastern European communist participation within the International Brigades see e.g. Manuel REQUENA GALLEGO – Matilde EIROA (eds.), *Al lado del gobierno republicano: los brigadistas de Europa del Este en la guerra de España*, Cuenca 2009; Zdenko MARŠÁLEK – Emil VORÁČEK et al., *Interbrigadisté, Československo a španělská občanská válka. Neznámé kapitoly z historie československé účasti v občanské válce ve Španělsku 1936–1939* [Members of the International Brigades, Czechoslovakia and the Spanish Civil War. The Unknown Chapters from the History of Czechoslovak Participation in the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939], Praha 2017; Jiří NEDVĚD, "'Verbování' československých dobrovolníků do mezinárodních brigád a jejich cesty do Španělska" ['Recruitment' of the Czechoslovak volunteers into the International Brigades and their journeys to Spain], *Historie a vojenství* 3, 2016, pp. 4–18.

24 NÁLEVKA, "Španělé", p. 91.

25 NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 188, a. j. 657, l. 7–8. Španělská emigrace v ČSR [Spanish emigration in Czechoslovakia], 13. 9. 1949.

26 NÁLEVKA, "Španělé", pp. 88, 91; EIROA, *Españoles*, p. 107.

27 For example in 1947, the entire leadership of the PCE resided in France, in: PETHŐ, *El exilio*, pp. 39, 84–86.

28 Michele D'ANGELO, "El Partido Comunista Español en Francia, ¿Partido de la protesta u organización para emigrados? 1950–1975", *Aportes* 92, 2016, p. 180; EIROA, "Sobrevivir", p. 75.

multi-dimensionality of the Cold War's crossings through the Iron Curtain.[29] The transnational network created by the PCE, which included exile groups in the countries of the Soviet Bloc, underground cells in Spain and party centres in Paris, Moscow and Prague, not only enabled the mobility of the Communists between the capitalist West and the Communist East but also resulted in them confronting the reality of state socialism. On the one hand, it must be underlined that the Eastern European countries, ruled by fraternal Communist parties, offered asylum and material support for PCE members who came to the Eastern Bloc equipped with their Communist convictions, values and utopian expectations of life in a people's democracy.[30] On the other, the Spanish Communist exile was formed not only by the leadership of the party, living in Prague, but also by exiles, who came into conflict with the direction of the PCE and its decisions and who formed another Spanish collective in the industrial city of Ústí nad Labem, while these feuds were often directly linked with the confrontation of their Communist idea(l)s with everyday life in socialist Czechoslovakia.

Thus it could be argued that the life experiences of the Spanish Communist exiles living in Czechoslovakia from the late 1940s were heterogeneous. The Czech historian Milan Bárta argues that the leaderships of the respective political emigrations in Czechoslovakia (such as the PCE) wanted to maintain strict control over their members.[31] Therefore, the Spanish exiles, and especially those living in Ústí, were subjected to "the celebration of assemblies, where self-criticism functioned as a tool for the elimination of dissident militants", whereas resulting from these meetings were "expulsions and internal crises derived from accusations of opportunism, revanchism, disloyalty, liberalism or deviationism, only forgiven with continuous reiterations of submission to the all-powerful party".[32] Nevertheless, the rigorous control over the party members, linked with the partisan disciplining, could lead not only to (auto)criticism, ostracism or even expulsion from the PCE,[33] but in the Spanish case also to an imperative move to Ústí nad Labem, where the politically heterodox exiles, as well as Spaniards with manual labour jobs, lived.[34] These

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[29] For more on the Cold War mobilities see e.g., Sune BECHMANN PEDERSEN – Christian NOACK (eds.), *Tourism and Travel during the Cold War: Negotiating Tourist Experiences across the Iron Curtain*, London – New York 2019; Kathy BURRELL – Kathrin HÖRSCHELMANN, (eds.), *Mobilities in Socialist and Post-Socialist States: Societies on the Move,* Houndmills – New York 2014; Eric BURTON – Anne DIETRICH – Immanuel R. HARISCH et al., *Navigating Socialist Encounters. Moorings and (Dis)Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War*, Berlin – Boston 2021.

[30] In the Czechoslovak case, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia economically supported the Spanish exiles – the party leadership received a salary and their expenses were covered by the KSČ, which also financially contributed to the printing of PCE's newspaper and the organisation of their congresses in Czechoslovakia, in: NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 187, a. j. 652, l. 16–18. Souhrná zpráva o španělské politické emigraci [Overall report about the Spanish political emigration], n. d.; Idem, sv. 186, a. j. 638, l. 33. Přehled vydání v "Akci Š" [Overview of expenses in "Action Š"], 3. 2. 1955.

[31] BÁRTA, "Právo", p. 20.

[32] EIROA, "Republicanos", p. 315.

[33] Idem, *Españoles*, pp. 93–94.

[34] PETHŐ, *El exilio*, pp. 102–104.

"problematic" émigrés were sent to this North Bohemian city as a form of punishment with the aim of normalizing their conduct; however, as the archival materials prove, some of them decided to resist (more or less successfully) the decisions of the PCE and the Czechoslovak state bodies, while the forms of their resistance varied from case to case.[35] Due to the scarce archival materials and a limited scope, this study focuses exclusively on the case of the everyday resistance of José Valledor, which represents not only a specific and under-researched tactic of resistance by political emigrants in Czechoslovakia (through petitions) but also epitomizes internal conflicts within the PCE in exile. Moreover, the present research intends to offer a new insight into the subject of the everydayness and ingenuity of people living under state socialism, whose margins for manoeuvre within their resistance practice against the Communist Party and the state authorities remained relatively narrow.

"A concentration camp without barbed wire"

José Valledor, one of the members of the first wave of Spanish exiles in Czechoslovakia, in 1955 described his life experience in the North Bohemian city of Ústí nad Labem in these words.[36] Valledor (b. 1906, Oviedo) was one of the few Spanish Communist exiles with a university degree – in Spain he studied philosophy, worked as a teacher and joined the PCE as early as in 1925.[37] During the Civil War, he fought in the Republican Army and reached the rank of lieutenant colonel and commander of the 15th International Brigade.[38] In 1939, he crossed the Spanish-French border, only to be imprisoned in the French concentration camps of Saint-Cyprien, Argelès-sur-Mer and Septfonds. Once he escaped in September 1939, Valledor fought in the French *Résistance* with the rank of colonel, while being a part of the leadership of

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[35] This is evidenced not only by José Valledor but also by the case of Pilar Gómez, a Spanish exile living in Czechoslovakia, expelled from the PCE due to her homosexual relationship. Gómez decided to resist the leadership of the PCE and its directives by collaborating with the Czechoslovak State Security and submitted critical agency reports on the members of the Spanish party. Another example of resistance against the decisions of the PCE and the Czechoslovak authorities through petitions while criticizing inadequate medical care and bad living conditions in the country, was the Spanish Communist exile Ramón Rubio Miranda. His case is also an example of disappointment with Czechoslovak socialism, due to his exaggerated expectations (he asked to be allowed to study at a Czech university, even though he had only completed primary education and had no knowledge of Czech), see Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive, hereinafter ABS), f. Objektové svazky – centrála a Praha (Subject Files Group – Headquarters and Prague, hereinafter OB/MV), a. č. OB – 1718 MV "Španělská emigrace" ["Spanish emigration"], sv. 1/3, l. 119–120. Issue: General Antonio Cordón – report, n. d. (December 1954); NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 188, a. j. 653, l. 57. Španělská polit. emigrace [Spanish political emigration], 7.2.1953; Idem, sv. 191, a. j. 666, l. 105–106. Ramón Rubio to the MOÚV KSČ, 27. 1. 1956. See also TIMKO, "Všude", pp. 173–196.

[36] NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file: V. Resoluce skupiny č. I stranické organizace KSŠ Ústí nad Labem o vyloučení José Antonio Valledora z KSŠ [Resolution of the group no. I of the organisation of the PCE in Ústí nad Labem about the expulsion of José Antonio Valledor from the PCE], 8. 6. 1955.

[37] Idem, file: V. Cuestionario – Dotazník [Questionnaire]: José Antonio Valledor Alvarez, 4. 7. 1953.

[38] Ibidem; Idem, file: V – Valledor José Antonio (93). Biografía del camarada Valledor [Biography of comrade Valledor], 4. 7. 1953.

the PCE in Occitania.[39] Moreover, at the end of 1940, Valledor founded a lumber company in the French department of Aude, which two years later become a political-military centre of Spanish guerrillas (*maquis*) and from 1946 bore the name "Enterprise Forestier du Sud-Ouest", also known as "Fernández, Valledor y Cía.", with the objective of the liberation of Spain.[40] This notwithstanding, the company, which functioned as a cover for a Communist political and tactical training centre and a support establishment for the crossings of *maquis* from France into Spain, was the property of the PCE and Valledor was the owner only *de jure*. Nevertheless, the company found itself in difficulties even before the PCE was outlawed in France in 1950 and became more of an economic problem for the party.[41] For this reason (as well as for the unreliability of Valledor, who allegedly acted as the real owner and not as a Communist), he was dismissed from this position and, due to a decision by the PCE, was sent to Czechoslovakia.[42]

Valledor arrived in Czechoslovakia on January 17, 1949. As early as February, he was employed as a translator with Czechoslovak Radio and received monthly support from the KSČ for his accommodation in a hotel before finding himself an apartment.[43] However, at the beginning of 1950, Valledor was still staying at the Hotel Union in Prague and the first complaint in Czechoslovakia against him was a direct result of this fact. A record from the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Mezinárodní oddělení Ústředního výboru KSČ*, MOÚV KSČ) in February 1950 stated that in this hotel Valledor "ruins the reputation of the Spaniards […] refuses to pay, prolongs and postpones payment as much as possible, reproaches other Spanish comrades for paying, saying that they are stupid […]".[44] His job search practices were also criticized as he was visiting companies with his own offers for translation, even though translations were already being done there by other Spaniards. Furthermore, he did not agree with the accommodation offered outside the hotel; however, frequent

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[39] Ibidem; ABS, f. OB/MV, a. č. OB – 1718 MV "Spanish emigration", sv. 1/3, l. 59–65. Seznam cizinců zaměstnaných v STZ v Ústí nad Labem [List of foreigners employed at the STZ in Ústí nad Labem], n. d. Moreover, after the end of WWII, Valledor was awarded the highest French order of merit, the Legion of Honour.

[40] Alfredo LÓPEZ CARRILLO, *Manuel López Castro: A modo de biografía*, San Sebastián de los Reyes 2011, p. 68.

[41] Ibidem, pp. 68–69; Fernando HERNÁNDEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Comerciando con el diablo: las relaciones comerciales con el Telón de Acero y la financiación del PCE a comienzos de los años 60* [on-line], in: *VI Congreso de la Asociación de Historiadores del Presente: La apertura internacional de España. Entre el franquismo y la democracia, 1953–1986*, Madrid 2014, pp. 3–5. www.historiadelpresente.es, [accessed 17 February 2022]. Accessible from: http://historiadelpresente.es/sites/default/files/congresos/pdf/43/fernandohernandezsanchez.pdf.

[42] ABS, f. OB/MV, a. č. OB – 1718 MV "Spanish emigration", sv. 1/3, l. 122. Výpis z agenturní zprávy ze dne [Summary from the agency report from] 28. 12. 1954. Issue: Valledor José Antonio, španěl. polit. emigrant [Spanish polit. emigrant] – poznatky získané od agenta "KONČA" [information received from the agent "KONČA"], 28. 12. 1954.

[43] NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file V. Questionnaire: José Antonio Valledor Alvarez; 4. 7. 1953; Idem, sv. 188, a. j. 657, l. 7–8. Spanish emigration in Czechoslovakia, 13. 9. 1949.

[44] Idem, a. j. 653, l. 12–13. Španělští soudruzi v Praze [Spanish comrades in Prague], February 1950.

complaints about him were arriving from the Hotel Union.[45] Valledor was thus criticized at the reunion of the Prague Spanish collective at the beginning of 1950 for his "excessive selfishness", but in the meantime, he acknowledged his mistakes, identified himself as the source of these errors, and underwent self-criticism.[46]

Valledor was once again criticised by the Czechoslovak authorities in March 1950. In a report processed by the ÚV KSČ, it was claimed that he is "a man who wants to live easily, if possible, at the expense of the KSČ. He refused to accept an apartment from us and then asked for money to pay for the hotel."[47] Until 1951, Valledor was living in Prague, where he was working as a translator for several companies and as a Spanish tutor. Nevertheless, in April of that year, he expressed his willingness to move with his future wife Heloisa Horcajo to Ústí nad Labem – the PCE did not have any problems with their transfer.[48] Valledor allegedly argued that he could also do translations in Ústí and was ready to work in a factory; however, his condition did not allow physical labour.[49] On the other hand, in 1953, Valledor stated in his CV that back in 1951 "he had been told he had to go to live to Ústí"[50] and was eventually transferred there on July 27, 1951. Three days later, he started working in the laboratory of the North Bohemian Fat Factories (*Severočeské tukové závody*, STZ) as a clerk, while his work morale was evaluated as "good".[51]

In the summer of 1953, José Valledor was still living in a flat in Ústí with his wife Heloisa Horcajo (whom he married in July 1951), where their son José was born in February 1952.[52] At that time, Valledor was still a member of the Ústí nad Labem's collective of the Spanish political emigration and had been employed at the STZ, but his wife was not able to work, due to the poor health of their son – in his biography, Valledor described his son's state of health as "bad from the sixth month of his life", while his own throat was in poor condition due to his unsuccessful recovery from injuries.[53] Later, in a survey of Spanish families in Ústí nad Labem dating to March 1954, it was stated that Valledor was still living in this North Bohemian city and working in the laboratory of STZ, while his wife took care of the household,

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45 Ibidem.

46 Idem, l. 14–28. Informe al PC checoslovaco sobre la organización y trabajos del colectivo de camaradas, miembros del PC español, en Praga [Report for the KSČ about the organisation and the work of the collective of comrades, members of the PCE in Prague], 16. 2. 1950.

47 Idem, a. j. 657, l. 22–27. Zpráva o činnosti španělských soudruhů v Praze [Report on the activities of Spanish comrades in Prague], 3. 3. 1950.

48 Idem, sv. 187, a. j. 652, l. 89–90. Zpráva o španělských soudruzích, kteří jsou ochotni přestěhovat se do Ústí nad Labem [Report on the Spanish comrades who are willing to move to Ústí nad Labem], 19. 4. 1951.

49 Ibidem.

50 Idem, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file: V – Valledor José Antonio (93). Biography of comrade Valledor, 4. 7. 1953.

51 ABS, f. OB/MV, a. č. OB – 1718 MV "Spanish emigration", sv. 1/3, l. 59–65. List of foreigners employed at the STZ in Ústí nad Labem, n. d.; NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file: V. José Valledor to Chaluš, 20. 6. 1955.

52 Idem, file: V. Questionnaire: José Antonio Valledor Alvarez, 4. 7. 1953.

53 Idem, file: V – Valledor José Antonio (93). Biography of comrade Valledor, 4. 7. 1953.

the main problem of the family being their son, diagnosed with anaemia.[54] Moreover, Valledor and his wife complained that their apartment was too cold and that their son needed, at least during the summer, a change of ambience.[55] As a consequence, at the beginning of 1954 Valledor obtained medical certificates stating that the climate in Ústí was bad for his and his son's health and requested authorization from the organization of the PCE in Ústí to be allowed to move to Prague. Despite the rejection of this petition, in April 1955 the Valledor family, without the knowledge of the PCE or the KSČ, transferred to Prague and Valledor began working as a translator for the Ministry of Foreign Trade.[56]

It was at this time that Valledor's conflict with the leadership of the PCE in Czechoslovakia became more severe. Enrique Líster (leader of the Spanish exile in Czechoslovakia) in his letter to the MOÚV KSČ argued that Valledor was criticized and punished by the Ústí nad Labem's collective for his indiscipline – he refused to continue living in this industrial North Bohemian city.[57] However, once being punished, Valledor addressed the leadership of the PCE with the ultimatum that if the criticism of him did not stop, he would ask for his expulsion from the party. He argued that the PCE wanted to sentence him and his son to death as they could no longer live in Ústí due to the health issues stated in the medical certificates presented.[58] At the end of this letter, Líster stated that the Spanish collective in Ústí nad Labem had decided that Valledor be examined at a clinic in Ústí; however, Valledor refused any treatment there, on the grounds that he was recommended by the Prague doctors to undergo his treatment in the Czechoslovak capital.[59]

Taking into account his conflict with the leadership of the PCE in Czechoslovakia, Valledor decided, at the end of May 1955, to inform the Czechoslovak authorities about the "true reasons" for his transfer to Prague.[60] He declared that based on a medical recommendation to leave the factory in Ústí (due to chronic respiratory disease), he asked the organization of the PCE in Ústí for authorization to go to the capital to visit a specialist. After the approval of his request, Valledor came, at the beginning of 1955, to Prague, where he was prescribed a therapy – his return to Ústí would minimize the effect of this treatment.[61] Nevertheless, Valledor was ordered by the party to return to Ústí nad Labem and thus could not undergo this therapy. At the end of his letter, he claimed that he had backed up his request to the PCE for his definitive departure from Ústí with various medical certificates regarding his health condition; however, the local organization of the PCE rejected his petition, claiming

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54 Idem, sv. 188, a. j. 654, l. 91–95. Sociálně-zdravotní průzkum španělských rodin žijících v Ústí n./L [Social and health examination of Spanish families living in Ústí n./L], 15. 3. 1954.

55 Ibidem.

56 Idem, sv. 188, a. j. 656, l. 53. Záznam o španělském pol. emigrantu Valledorovi José [Report about the Spanish political emigrant José Valledor], n. d.

57 Idem, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file: R – Rubio Ramon (88). E. Líster to the MOÚV KSČ (Baramová), 14. 4. 1955.

58 Ibidem.

59 Ibidem.

60 Idem, file: V. José A. Valledor to the MOÚV KSČ, 31. 5. 1955.

61 Ibidem.

that the certificates presented were falsified and that, despite his health problems, Valledor should remain in Ústí.[62]

With regard to his ongoing resistance to the decisions of the PCE leadership, on May 12, 1955, at the meeting of the collective of the PCE in Ústí nad Labem, an agreement about Valledor's expulsion from the party was pronounced.[63] Later, on June 8, 1955, a resolution confirming this expulsion was discussed and approved. Mentioned as the main reasons for this step was the fact that Valledor preferred his personal interests to those of the PCE and fought against party discipline and its leadership. Also, he had acted as an element alien to the party since his arrival in Czechoslovakia and by 1949 he had already been punished by the organization of the PCE in Prague for his conduct. Subsequently, he expressed constant political indiscipline, especially by refusing to fulfil the PCE's decision to move to Ústí and then trying to relocate back to Prague.[64] He was accused of provocation and of discrediting some comrades and exile groups while pointing out the imperfections of the people's democracy. Valledor was therefore officially reprimanded at the party meeting in March 1955 but was also given the opportunity to correct his behaviour. Although Valledor, for appearances' sake, agreed with the PCE's decisions, in reality, he carried on and resisted them, while taking advantage of his sickness, presenting himself as a victim of the Party and concealing the medical and economic help received from the PCE and the KSČ.[65] When asked to explain this conduct towards the PCE, Valledor requested to be removed from the Party. This partisan resolution ended with a statement that the group no. I. of the PCE organization in Ústí admits that in the case of Valledor, who "unmasked himself as an anti-Party element", the group did not maintain revolutionary vigilance and then unanimously adopted a decision to expel him from the PCE.[66]

Nonetheless, on June 3, 1955, in the period between the partisan meeting regarding his expulsion and the adoption of a resolution approving this decision, Valledor visited the Social Department of the Czechoslovak Red Cross (*Československý červený kříž – Sociální odbor*, ČSČK SO), responsible for the material welfare of Spanish exiles living in Czechoslovakia. During this visit, Valledor claimed that the reason for his transfer to Prague were his health issues, more specifically, chronic catarrh of the upper respiratory tract.[67] The climate in Ústí was allegedly detrimental to his health and he supported this statement by medical reports. The health of his son, who was suspected of having whooping cough and was eventually hospitalized with chronic bronchitis, was another motive for their departure from Ústí, as he was advised by the doctors to change his ambience. During the interview at the ČSČK SO, Valledor stated that he was not willing to return to Ústí and that he did not know any reason why he could not work and live as a political emigrant in Prague, where

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62 Ibidem.

63 Idem, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file: V. Resolution of the group no. I of the organisation of the PCE in Ústí nad Labem about the expulsion of José Antonio Valledor from the PCE, 8. 6. 1955.

64 Ibidem.

65 Ibidem.

66 Ibidem.

67 Idem, Záznam [Memo] – J. Chaluš, 7. 6. 1955.

he had possibilities to solve his own as well as his son's health issues, and also adequate work conditions.[68] Nevertheless, he also claimed that if his stay in Prague was undesirable for the PCE, he was ready to live in another city; nevertheless, in case the health of his family would be jeopardized, he would then ask the Czechoslovak Prime Minister or President for help. Consequently, the ČSČK SO recommended that in Valledor's case, his return to Ústí should not be insisted upon, but rather decided in agreement with him and the ÚV KSČ that he be allowed to choose his place of residence (aside from Prague), where he could work and continue with his treatment.[69] Notwithstanding this recommendation, a new report was prepared at the MOÚV KSČ, in which it was stated that the PCE leadership was requesting from the KSČ the forced return of Valledor to Ústí with the help of the Czechoslovak National Security Corps (*Sbor národní bezpečnosti*, SNB).[70] The above-mentioned letter from Valledor to the MOÚV KSČ of May 1955, with a request for his situation to be solved, was also forwarded by the Czechoslovak authorities to Enrique Líster for his statement. Líster refused to allow Valledor to be banished, as he had arrived in Czechoslovakia as a member of the PCE, and he and his wife possessed internal partisan information.[71] For this reason, the Czechoslovak side proposed that Valledor be handed over to the security organs and transferred to some Czech city (except Ústí or Prague), while Líster agreed with this proposal.[72]

Valledor once again got in touch with the Social Department of the Czechoslovak Red Cross in the second half of June 1955. On this occasion, he presented his assumption that there was no reason for the deprivation of his right of asylum,[73] which had been granted to him by the Czechoslovak government.[74] Based on the decision about the urgency of his departure from Ústí, which was issued at the beginning of 1955 by the Health Commission of the Ústí nad Labem Region, he had returned to Prague, where he wanted to stay, despite directives to leave the capital for "petty reasons".[75] In his letter, Valledor added that should he not be allowed to live and work in Prague, he would demand a decree from the respective ministry about the deprivation of his right of political asylum.[76] His letter was forwarded by the Head of the ČSČK SO Jaroslav Chaluš to the MOÚV KSČ with a commentary that all attempts to convince Valledor to return to Ústí or to live in another city than Prague had failed.[77] Chaluš also claimed that during their interview, Valledor had

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[68] Ibidem.

[69] Ibidem.

[70] Idem, Zpráva o býv. španělských polit. emigrantech Valledor a Rubio [Report about the former Spanish political emigrants Valledor and Rubio], 7. 6. 1955.

[71] Ibidem.

[72] Ibidem.

[73] However, the Czechoslovak legal system did not officially recognize the institution of political asylum until 1960 – prior to that, political emigrants were granted a temporary asylum based on a proposal drafted by the MOÚV KSČ, according to the size of the group of respective political emigration, in: HOLEČKOVÁ, *Příběh*, p. 36; BÁRTA, "Právo", pp. 16–19.

[74] NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 198, a. j. 689, file: V. José Valledor to J. Chaluš, 20. 6. 1955.

[75] Ibidem.

[76] Ibidem.

[77] Idem, ČSČK SO to the MOÚV KSČ, Issue: José Valledor – rozhodnutí [decision], 5. 7. 1955.

appealed to his right of asylum as a political emigrant in Czechoslovakia and as such, he expected his case to be solved by the ÚV KSČ, but at the same time, he was refusing financial help from the Czechoslovak Red Cross – all he asked for was an authorization to work for the Czechoslovak Chamber of Commerce.[78]

In October 1955, Valledor contacted the MOÚV KSČ once again. He complained that at the beginning of this month, he had been deprived of his identity card (obtained after his arrival to Czechoslovakia) at a police station, due to his current status as a former political émigré. Moreover, he was given a "*carte d'apatride*" (ID card of stateless person – M. T.) and permanent residence in Prague was forbidden to him.[79] Valledor claimed that he refused to accept this new identity card and wanted to know the reason why he, a convinced Communist and a fighter against Francoism and fascism, was denied the status of Spanish political emigrant, as he came to Czechoslovakia at the government's invitation. Allegedly, he knew the real reason behind his situation – it was his conflicts and breaking of relations with the organization of the PCE in Czechoslovakia, as he disagreed with some methods employed against him within the party, although he did not criticize every feature of the PCE policies.[80] In this letter, he stated that some Spaniards misused their authority within the Spanish collectives, as well as their influence over the Czechoslovak state authorities against him, with the aim of persecuting him – according to Valledor, these practices were not beneficial to the PCE, the KSČ or Czechoslovakia and he added that without regard to his position, he would always report truthfully and refer in the first place to the KSČ, considering the "Marxist-Leninist ideas, deeply rooted in me […]".[81] Valledor summarized his decisions at the end of his letter: he rejected every "*carte d'apatride*", as he was a Spanish exile regardless of the country of his residence and, in case he would be prohibited from staying in Prague and would be stripped of his status of political emigrant, he would understand it as a restriction of his right of asylum. Moreover, he claimed to be forced to appeal to the Czechoslovak government officials in order to inform them about the measures and persecution against him, as well as to apply for a revision of his position as a political émigré in Czechoslovakia, so that it could be decided, whether his presence in the country was desired or not. Finally, Valledor stated that he did not wish to leave Czechoslovakia and that it would be unfortunate if his conflicts with some Spanish exiles would negatively affect the solving of his situation and also warned the MOÚV KSČ, that if his old identity card was not returned, he would contact the highest state authorities.[82]

In response to his letter, another memo about his case was processed at the MOÚV KSČ. It mentioned that after Valledor's refusal to return to Ústí, an interview took place with the doctor for Spanish exiles who claimed that Valledor was "a fraudster who is healthy and who tries to get out of physical labour in every possible way".[83]

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78 Ibidem.

79 Idem, file: V – Valledor José Antonio (93). José Valledor to the MOÚV KSČ, 7. 10. 1955.

80 Ibidem.

81 Ibidem.

82 Ibidem.

83 Idem, Záznam k případu Valledor [Memo to the case Valledor] – MOÚV KSČ, 7. 10. 1955.

In this memo, it was also stated that Valledor had been able to find a job as a translator at the Ministry of Foreign Trade (despite his poor knowledge of Czech) and was refusing to return to Ústí. Based on a conversation with E. Líster, the MOÚV KSČ decided, in accordance with this ministry, that it would no longer offer translations to Valledor and advised that he should be found employment and accommodation outside Prague.[84] Nonetheless, these steps were not carried out and, in the autumn of 1955, Valledor was still working as a translator for the above-mentioned ministry. Eventually, and in reaction to Valledor's letter, the MOÚV KSČ recommended allowing Valledor to keep his old identity card, to find him employment in a less prominent position or outside Prague and to find out how Valledor was even able to get a job at the Ministry of Foreign Trade.[85]

At the end of 1956, Valledor was still living in Prague, since further efforts to transfer him forcibly back to Ústí or at least outside the capital, had been unsuccessful. Moreover, thanks to his contacts abroad, he had managed to gain support from a renowned personality from an international organization. This was José V. Trujillo, the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the UN, who during his visit to Czechoslovakia in August 1956 asked about Valledor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as he was allegedly (according to information from Trujillo's friends) imprisoned in Czechoslovakia or had been denied the possibility to leave the country.[86] In a communiqué for the MOÚV KSČ, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Trujillo was an influential personality within the UN and the ministry wanted to maintain his positive attitude towards Prague. For this reason, Trujillo was informed in September 1956 by the Czechoslovak side that Valledor lived in Prague, worked as a translator and was never imprisoned in the Czechoslovak Republic. Information about Valledor's problems regarding his relocation to Prague, his health condition, his expulsion from the PCE and his threats of leaving the country was not communicated to Trujillo.[87]

The issue of Valledor's departure from Czechoslovakia culminated in the autumn of 1957. In September, he asked for authorization for his definitive departure for Tétouan.[88] He was to be employed as a professor in this Moroccan city; nonetheless, he did not receive his passport on time. In a letter addressed to the ÚV KSČ Valledor asked for help, the quick processing of his application and the issuing of his passport and that of his wife, as he was not able to apply for entry visas to Morocco without them.[89] However, if the ÚV KSČ would not intervene in his matter,

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84 Ibidem.

85 Ibidem.

86 Archiv MZV (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), f. Teritoriální odbory – Tajné (Territorial Section – Secret) 1955–1959, Španělsko (Spain), carton (c.) 205/1, file: 057/115 (3). MFA, no. 015.583/56. Issue: Zjištění osudu španělského emigranta Valledora [Findings about the destiny of the Spanish emigrant Valledor. Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the MOÚV KSČ], 24. 9. 1956.

87 Ibidem.

88 NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 192, a. j. 681, l. 54–55. ČSČK SO to the MOÚV KSČ. Issue: Odjezdy Španělů [Departures of Spaniards], 25. 9. 1957.

89 Idem, l. 44–45. José Valledor to the ÚV KSČ, 25. 11. 1957.

he planned to turn to Czechoslovak President Novotný for help. Valledor concluded with the statement:

> [W]e do not forget what our duty as Communists is and we are determined as such to try all means to solve our problems within the party. In our current position towards the Spanish Party, we can only turn to your Party, which we can always rely on, as you have already proven on other occasions.[90]

Another record at the ÚV KSČ from the end of November 1957 states that Valledor and his wife wanted to leave the country,[91] but the leadership of the PCE was against it.[92] Líster had informed the ÚV KSČ that even if they had both remained members of the party, their departure would not be allowed by the party leadership, as Horcajo had been working in the PCE directorate and possessed confidential information. Nevertheless, the main problem for the Czechoslovak organs was that Valledor had already in his letter to the ÚV KSČ of November 1957 threatened that if he was not be allowed to leave Czechoslovakia, he would turn to one of the embassies in Prague and apply for authorization to leave for the West – it was the risk of his provocation against the Czechoslovak state (by contacting a Western embassy) that menaced the Czechoslovak authorities. Therefore, the ÚV KSČ suggested that the PCE leadership re-evaluated the potential threat of deconspiration posed by Valledor and his wife, as Horcajo had worked at the party's headquarters a long time ago and their departure would eliminate the danger of their provocation against the state, whilst it would be difficult to keep them in Czechoslovakia by force.[93] In December 1957, Líster responded to this suggestion by saying that Valledor should be kept in the Czechoslovak Republic as long as possible and, if unavoidable, should be allowed to leave; but any kind of scandal had to be avoided.[94] Valledor eventually left Czechoslovakia for Morocco on February 14, 1958, after the departure of his wife and son.[95] Despite the scarcity of information about his subsequent life, it is known that as a commander of the 15th International Brigade, he was a frequent guest of honour of former *interbrigadistas* in Britain and France. José A. Valledor returned to Spain after the death of Francisco Franco and died in Alicante on December 7, 1995.[96]

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[90] Ibidem.

[91] In 1956, the PCE changed its anti-Francoist strategy, started pursuing the "Policy of National Reconciliation" and since 1957 supported voluntary returns of Spanish exiles from the Eastern Bloc countries to Spain, in: PETHŐ, *El exilio*, pp. 44, 67–68; MORÁN, *Miseria*, pp. 411–417.

[92] NA, f. MOÚV KSČ, sv. 192, a. j. 681, l. 43. Záznam ze dne [Memo from] 28. 11. 1957 (3. 12. 1957).

[93] Ibidem.

[94] Ibidem.

[95] Idem, l. 56. Záznam ze dne [Memo from] 19. 2. 1958; Idem, sv. 191, a. j. 670, l. 132. Záznam ze dne [Memo from] 10. 2. 1958.

[96] Howard GODDARD, "José Antonio Valledor", *The Volunteer. Journal of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* 1, 1996, p. 10.

To conclude: Being more left than the comrades

Valledor's everyday resistance after his move from Ústí to Prague in 1955 consisted of two resistance practices: one carried out against the leadership of the PCE and another against the Czechoslovak state authorities; however, they were interconnected and entangled (as is the relationship between power and resistance).[97] His insubordination against the leadership of the PCE took the form of rejecting their directive (pronounced in order to discipline and "normalize" a party member), leading to Valledor's visible exemplary punishment – his expulsion from the PCE (resulting in his social ostracism, the worsening of his economic situation and the loss of benefits provided to other Spanish exiles), as he refused to return to Ústí and insisted on living in Prague. Subsequently, Valledor attempted to seek, through his petitions, help from the Czechoslovak authorities – when they also insisted on his departure from Prague (in line with the PCE), Valledor then reoriented his resistance towards the Czechoslovak state organs. He threatened them that he would inform government officials about his issues and that he would contact a Western embassy, and, thanks to his connections abroad, he successfully obtained support from the Ecuadorian representative to the UN. Valledor's objectives and the motivations behind them were personal (medical treatment) and professional (employment in Prague); nevertheless, they also changed with time, due to problems with their fulfilment. Eventually, his main aim became departure from the country (motivated by his bitter experience with state socialism, and better opportunities abroad) while he was trying to use the complex relationship between the PCE and the KSČ to his advantage – by underlining his trust in the Czechoslovak Party and thus winning the Czechoslovak authorities to his side. The primary objective of the Czechoslovak state bodies in their relation to Valledor was the same as that of the PCE and was mainly safety-related – at first, to control a heterodox exile and later, to prevent an international scandal and the deconspiration of the Spanish Communist exile.

With this in mind, Valledor's everyday resistance coincides with the model of *consentful contention*. When resisting the Czechoslovak authorities, he was not opposing the regime; instead, through his petitions, he contested (only) specific decisions made by the state apparatus. By presenting himself as a dutiful citizen consenting to the people's democratic regime (a convinced antifascist and a Communist), he tried to redeem the commitments of the state.[98] Also, Valledor's resistance against the Czechoslovak authorities, carried out through letters and petitions with the threat of contacting Western embassies and informing the highest state authorities (and even a representative to the UN) about his situation, was in a sense productive. With his petitions, which can be understood as a discourse repetition/reversal, he was parasitizing on and misusing the regime's legitimating discourse of an anti-fascist people's republic for his own benefit, since overpassing the boundary

[97] Anna JOHANSSON – Stellan VINTHAGEN, "Dimensions of everyday resistance: the Palestinian Sumūd", *Journal of Political Power* 1, 2015, pp. 111–112.

[98] STRAUGHN, "Taking", pp. 1603–1604.

of Czechoslovak political norms would be too risky for him.[99] To put it another way, Valledor intended with his resistance against the Czechoslovak authorities to repeat and reverse the dominant discourse existing in state socialist Czechoslovakia: he was underlining the people's democratic character of the state, its antifascist and Marxist-Leninist ideology, as well as its commitment to secure basic material welfare for its citizens and guests – therefore, in his petitions, he tried to "speak socialist".[100] Nevertheless, as he was obstructed in solving his health issues and was not allowed to leave the country, he criticized the Czechoslovak state bodies for not fulfilling these commitments, by "taking the state at its word".[101] At this point, an interesting question arises: What other possibilities did Valledor have to achieve his objectives? Unfortunately, due to the limited archival materials and the scope of this study, in this respect, I cannot offer a tangible answer. Be that as it may, as an ostracized and expelled Communist exile with poor knowledge of the Czech language, living with a seriously ill son in a foreign country, his possibilities were undeniably quite limited.

Therefore, in conclusion, I argue that Valledor was, with his petitions, trying to "beat the authorities at their own game: by appealing to their own legitimating value system, by being 'more left' than the comrades".[102] With his "discursive attack from the left", he was trying to push the state bodies to grant concessions in his favour by confronting the Czechoslovak state with the danger of "losing face" – his tactic was in this case based on his threats of an international scandal due to the fact that it was impossible for him (a Communist and an antifascist) to solve his health issues and to leave a socialist country; Czechoslovakia would thus risk the loss of its international credibility.[103] Valledor's resistance against the Czechoslovak authorities was thus "accompanied by a public discursive affirmation of the very arrangements being resisted"[104] – although he contested specific decisions of the Communist authorities carried out against him, he was not fighting against the regime, and to ensure his safety, he was underlining his Communist and revolutionary conviction and past.[105] Hence, taking into account Straughn's model, it was the *petitioner's* (Valledor's) *capacity* – the ability to demonstrate worthiness and commitment, together with the *issue profile* ("the extent to which a controversy has become public") and his connections abroad, that enabled him to contest the Czechoslovak authorities successfully.[106] To preserve its international prestige, the Czechoslovak state agreed to give way to Valledor's requests, thus confirming Straughn's hypothesis that "a *'consentful' petition*, which presents the petitioner as a dutiful citizen pressing claims

[99] Catherine OWEN, "'Consentful contention' in a corporate state: human rights activists and public monitoring commissions in Russia", *East European Politics* 3, 2015, p. 284.
[100] VILÍMEK – RAMEŠ, "Pohyblivé", pp. 26–28.
[101] STRAUGHN, "Taking", p. 1602.
[102] Ibidem, p. 1626.
[103] Ibidem, pp. 1630, 1639–1641.
[104] SCOTT, "Everyday", p. 56.
[105] STRAUGHN, "Taking", pp. 1603–1605.
[106] Ibidem, pp. 1639–1640.

consistent with socialist principles, should stand a better chance of success […] than one articulating an oppositional political platform".[107]

Not only could Valledor's everyday resistance be considered in the end successful (as his objectives were achieved), but his insubordination also proves that the life experiences of Western European Communists in people's democracies were not always positive and in the case of politically heterodox exiles, one could even label them as Kafkaesque. Moreover, these complex interconnections between Czechoslovak state bodies, a heterodox Spanish exile, and the leadership of the PCE in Czechoslovakia are not only an example of Cold War mobility through the Iron Curtain, seeing that many Spanish Communist exiles were able to travel between the Eastern Bloc and the capitalist West, they also illustrate how the political emigrants living in state socialism were able to threaten the state authorities by informing international organizations about their problems in people's democracies and thus challenge the reputation of the regime. Altogether, the story of José Valledor is an interesting insight into the "Czechoslovak branch" of the global network of the PCE, as well as into the ingenuity of citizens (and even Communists) living under state socialism.

(Written in English by the author)

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[107] Ibidem, p. 1641.

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REPORTS

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REPORT FROM A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH TRIP TO NORTH-WESTERN MEXICO[1]

This short selective report is the result of a study trip to the state of Chihuahua in north-western Mexico. In it I will try to summarize the assumptions, highlights, central concepts and meetings with key people. I refer to this study trip, carried out from September 15 to October 7, 2021, as preparatory and return fieldwork. The main motive of the trip was to map the terrain and prepare the ground for a new anthropological project. At its core will be an ethnographic investigation of local biodiversity, its negotiation, local knowledge related to the conservation of natural resources, and the responses of local actors to environmental change and the violent destruction of their territories by external actors.[2] I refer to it as recoverable because I conducted research there in 1992, 1996 and 2001. At that time, research visits were conducted almost exclusively in Tarahumara (Rarámuri) communities, the largest indigenous ethnic group in north-western Mexico. These three long-ago research visits produced first a master's thesis (1998), and later a dissertation (2007) and several texts published in the faculty journal *Urban People* (2010). They also served as chapters in a collective monograph (2010), and finally a monograph based on my dissertation, which I expanded and revised as a book (2019).[3] I have recently completed a study in which I return to these three periods of field research, mainly on a methodological level, describing and analysing the gradual transformation I have undergone as an anthropologist and ethnographer over a period of more than thirty years. In the conclusion of this text, I briefly outline the main focus of future larger-scale research.[4] Twenty years have passed since my last in-depth ethnographic research in the Tarahumara communities of the Ejido Munerachi,[5] so one of the goals of the trip was to renew old

[1] This study trip was funded by the Progress Q 22 *Anthropological Studies in the Natural Sciences, Humanities and History* programme with variable symbol 20602219 under the project *Sierra Tarahumara as a biodiversity hotspot: local knowledge and environmental change*.

[2] The working title of the project, which I plan to submit to the GACR (Grant Agency of the Czech Republic) competition in 2023, is *Glocalization of Local Knowledge of Biodiversity Conservation in an Anthropological Perspective*.

[3] These are: *Acculturation among the Tarahumara with a Brief Comparison with the Native ethnic Groups of Northwestern Mexico*, MA thesi defended at the Institute of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in 1998; *Tarahumara/Rarámuri in Mexico: From Caves to Ejido*, (PhD Thesis), defended in the same department in 2007; "Ritual compadrazgo as an Instrument of Interethnic and Social Adaptation among the Rarámuri in Northwestern Mexico and its Possible Correlations to Local Political Events", *Urban People / Lidé města* 8/1, 2010, pp. 331–384; "Social Adaptation of the Tarahumara in Northwestern Mexico in the Context of Local Ecology", in: Vendula Hingarová et al. (eds.), *Mexico: 200 years of independence*, Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2010, pp. 151–170; *Lost in Canyons and on Ranches: Social and Ecological Adaptation of the Tarahumara in Northern Mexico*, (expanded and revised version of dissertation), Prague: TOGGA, 2019.

[4] The text, *Between "Chaos" and "Order": the Anthropologist and his Experience in the Changes of Time*, is published in the journal *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* 49/1, 2023, pp. 11–38.

[5] The ejido is a complex socioeconomic, political, and ecological unit introduced in Mexico primarily after the revolution of the 1920s to integrate a dispersed rural of predominantly Indian origin. For a more detailed discussion of the genesis of the ejido in general and in the

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contacts in the indigenous communities of this ejido, while another was to establish contacts in some new localities that I consider important for future research and in those Mexican institutions whose activities are related to the topic of my project.

In the long interim between my last research in 2001 and the exploratory trip in 2021, I conducted other non-European research on the east coast of Madagascar,[6] but at the same time the idea of returning to the Tarahumara and conducting new anthropological research that would optimally link the two remote areas thematically gradually matured in me. While thinking about the new project, I came across Edward O. Wilson's book *The Diversity of Life* (1992, Czech translation 1995), among many others, in which the famous American naturalist discusses the concept of biodiversity and draws attention to its disappearance in relation to human activity. In one of the chapters, Wilson summarizes the eighteen biodiversity hotspots (hereafter BH)[7] known at that time. The term BH was introduced into the scientific lexicon by the British environmentalist Norman Myers. In the environmental sense, BH are biogeographical regions with a considerable degree of biodiversity significantly threatened by human presence and activity. They are the areas that, from a global perspective, most urgently need protection: extremely threatened areas containing large numbers of endemic species, with less than 10% of their original range remaining or threatened with such decline within a few decades. The disappearance or severe threat to the diversity of such a region can lead to irreversible consequences, with the original landscape turning into barren desert, savannah, etc. Thus, for me, as a social anthropologist, the key claim of both Myers and Wilson and other biologists, ecologists, and other natural scientists was that humans are strongly interfering with the natural environment. I began to gather literature on this concept and to study it more thoroughly. I soon discovered that the two areas in which I was conducting field research (Madagascar and north-western Mexico), which are otherwise quite different from an environmental point of view, were linked by the fact that they were successively classified as "hot spots". Myers initially identified ten of these BH exclusively in tropical areas, as he believed that it was in tropical rainforests that biodiversity was most threatened, but with other naturalists gradually expanded the group to the current number of thirty six, which also includes large areas in the oceans and seas, and occur on every continent except Antarctica.[8]

Long before the trip, I did a thorough search of studies that I would describe as an *anthropological turn to biodiversity,* going back to around the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. At the theoretical and methodological level, the pioneering work of Arturo Escobar in the field of *ethnography of biodiversity* is crucial to my research. Escobar pointed to the fact, which he also studied extensively in Colombian communities, for example, that in many parts of the world there are social movements developing their own (native) conceptions of biodiversity, its appropriation and conservation, and whose environmental policies differ from those developed by other major actors such as progressive intellectuals, NGOs, but also some indigenous leaders, advocating a more open approach to the outside (global) world, etc. One of Escobar's concepts of so-called *hybrid natures* is based on this approach, based on:

> […] a certain openness of local communities to the transnational apparatus associated with biodiversity and an attempt to

Mexican context, see HALBICH, *Lost in the Canyons*, 2019, pp. 239–245.

6 I conducted ethnographic research in Madagascar in 2011–2014 within the framework of the GACR project P410/12/P860 *Ecological Change in Madagascar: Betsimisaraka in a Glocalized World*. The main output of the project is a book currently being completed, *The Transformations of the Big Island: Ecological and Social Change in Madagascar. Betsimisaraka in a Glocalized World*, which will be published by Pavel Mervart Publishing House in Červený Kostelec.

7 First time in the article "Threatened Biotas: 'Hot Spots' in Tropical Forests", *Environmentalist* 8/3, 1988, pp. 187–208.

8 Russell A. MITTERMEIER et al., "Global Biodiversity Conservation: The Critical Role of Hotspots", in: Frank E. Zachos – Jan Christian Habel (eds.), *Biodiversity Hotspots. Distribution and Protection of Conservation Priority Areas*, Berlin – Heidelberg: Springer, 2011, pp. 3–22; Christian MARCHESE, "Biodiversity Hotspots: A shortcut for a more complicated concept", *Global Ecology and Conservation* 3, 2015, pp. 297–309.

> incorporate different constructions of nature in negotiating with translocal forces in order to maintain at least a modicum of autonomy and cultural cohesion.[9]

This approximate characterization of hybrid natures has become one of the key epistemological concepts for my planned future research. While most anthropological research on biodiversity and local knowledge to date has focused on different ecosystems, ecological niches, microenvironments, protected areas, ethnoclimatology, etc., my project will focus on one or more BH, which from 2004 has included a large part of the Sierra Madre Mountains in north-western Mexico (*Madrean Pine-Oak Woodlands*).[10] At the heart of the biodiversity here, with its high number of endemics, are the pine and oak forests (hence the name of this BH), which are one of the most important economic commodities of the region and the subject of conflicts between local (mainly Tarahumara) communities and regional urban centres such as Chihuahua, Cuauhtémoc, Creel and others, where political power, often linked to organised crime, is concentrated. Shortly before my trip to the Tarahumara communities, I came across a 2019 Amnesty International report on a series of murders of indigenous leaders and activists defending their natural resources.[11] The very first days of my stay in Chihuahua showed that organized crime, consisting mainly of illegal pine logging and narcotics trafficking, is or could be the biggest obstacle and danger for future field research.

I would divide the three-week trip itself, which was to some extent influenced by the current epidemiological situation,[12] into two main parts: 1. meetings (face-to-face, online) with colleagues in academic institutions such as Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City, government institutions (e.g. Coordinadora Estatal de la Tarahumara), non-profit organizations and independent projects (Tarahumara Sustentable), and with people who are in regular contact with the local native population in the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua; 2. A stay of approximately ten days in the Tarahumara communities of Ejido Munerachi (Munerachi, Retosachi, Sorichique communities) in the Lower Tarahumara, where I have conducted field research in the past; a five-day stay in two important Upper Tarahumara centers, Guachochi and Norogachi; and one transitional community between the Upper and Lower Tarahumara (Samachique), as sites I consider significant for my new project, which territorially will

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9 Marek HALBICH, "From environmental determinism to a new ecological anthropology", in: Marek Halbich – Václav Kozina (eds.), *Reader of Texts from Ecological Anthropology: the Americas*, Praha: TOGGA, 2012, p. 49. Among the most important texts by Arturo Escobar in the field of ethnography of biodiversity and hybrid natures is "Comunidades Negras de Colombia: en defensa de biodiversidad, territorio y cultura", *Biodiversidad* 22, 1999, pp. 15–20, and "After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology [and Comments and Replies]", *Current Anthropology* 40/1, 1999, pp. 1–30.

10 In a major interdisciplinary publication on the origins and distribution of Mexican biodiversity, the authors argue that Mexico is the only country with "megadiversity" that was also one of the centres of the origins of agriculture see Thennilapuram Parasuraman RAMAMOORTHY et al. (eds.), *Biological Diversity of Mexico: Origins and Distribution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

11 According to the report, *Caught between bullets and neglect. Lack of protection for defenders of the territory in the Sierra Tarahumara*, London: Amnesty International, 2019, more than ten Tarahumara leaders, environmental and human rights activists, the most famous of whom was Julián Carillo Martínez, were murdered between August 2015 and October 2018 in the small community of Coloradas de la Virgen alone, which has some 45 inhabitants. None of these murders have been independently investigated, and no one has yet been punished for these acts.

12 Before the trip I had to have a negative PCR test for Covid-19, which I had to prove before boarding the plane in Prague. On all flights, including two domestic flights in Mexico, I had to wear an FFP2 respirator at all times. At the time of my stay, the Mexican authorities were no longer as strict as the Czech MFA website said, but on the streets of the capital or Chihuahua in the north of the country many people wore respirators, masks or even protective plexiglas not only in enclosed spaces but also on the street.

go well beyond the boundaries of Ejido Munerachi and Batopilas district.[13]

I spent the first two days in the capital, Mexico City, negotiating with several Mexican anthropologists who are conducting field research among the Tarahumara. One of them was Carlo Bonfiglioli, a professor of anthropology at the Autonomous National University of Mexico in Mexico City, whose main specialization is the anthropology of dance and its symbolism in a transcultural perspective. This experienced ethnographer and educator has been working systematically among the Tarahumara for more than thirty years, and most of his research has been concentrated in the native communities of the Upper Tarahumara, Tehuerachi, Carichi or Sisoguichi.[14] Carlo, in addition to providing me with valuable information about the current situation in the area, gave me the contact details of his best student, as he pointed out several times, José Alejandro Fujigaki Lares, whose name I had not known until then. I could no longer meet Alejandro in person or online due to lack of time, but I was at least able to download some of his texts based on his recent research among the Tarahumara, focusing on their deep connection with the surrounding nature. On the eve of my departure from the capital to Chihuahua, during my regular internet research, I came across several texts by Enrique Salmón, a North American social anthropologist and ethnobotanist of Tarahumara descent, unknown to me until then, based at California State University, East Bay, with whom I am in email contact.

These three contemporary anthropologists were, at the time of my departure for Tarahumara, crucial to my planned research, and still are. Bonfiglioli, in particular, with his analysis of several Tarahumara dances, of which the *yúmari*, whose origins go back far beyond the arrival of the first Spanish colonizers in present-day Chihuahua, is probably one of the keys to understanding Tarahumara cosmology, and encodes the collective memory of the Tarahumara ethnic group, their history, but above all their relationship to nature and life in its complexity.[15] Fujigaki Lares's recent research and, independently of him, the earlier but relatively little known research of Enrique Salmón, in turn, clearly show that the Tarahumara and all the environment that surrounds them (land, mountains, rocks, rivers, streams, trees, heavens and celestial bodies, all wildlife and domestic animals, etc.) are an inseparable, deeply connected whole. The concept of *iwígara*, ethnographically explored by Salmón, is probably the greatest inspiration for my research. Salmón characterizes it as a cognitive model of nature similar to Western notions of biodiversity/nature, but with the difference that Western cultural models separate humans from nature. The Tarahumara, and in various forms many other native (indigenous) ethnicities, treat the land (nature, environment) in ways that are ***culturally encoded ethics of spiritual and practical knowledge and thought shaping access to their land***. Salmón convincingly points to the connection with the term *iwí,* which has multiple meanings among the Tarahumara. It means both the soul, in a broader sense the essence of all life, but also the breath, breathing. *Iwígara* thus expresses the continuous cycle of spiritual and physical life, the maintenance of physical, social, spiritual and mental health.[16] Fujigaki Lares, in

[13] In terms of methodology, the three previous research projects were based mainly on so-called stationary (single-sited) research, i.e. observations in a relatively limited area of one community or, in my case, one ejido. The new research will be based on other methods, such as multi-sited ethnography observing people, things, stories, conflicts, etc., in multiple places, or glocal ethnography focused, for example, on trying to know and understand how people's thinking and behaviour is shaped by local and global influences, etc.

[14] The Jesuit missionary Joseph Neumann, who worked in Prague before leaving for overseas missions, was active in this area for over fifty years at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. He was the author of a chronicle of the uprisings of the Tarahumara Indians, whose Latin original has from 1730 been in the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Prints at the National Library in Prague. It is still a valuable historical and ethnographic source for understanding this largest North Mexican native group. For an ethnohistorical analysis of Neumann's Chronicle, see HALBICH, *Lost in the Canyons*, 2019, pp. 84–90.

[15] Carlo BONFIGLIOLI, "El *yůmari* clave de acceso a la cosmología rarámuri", *Cuicuilco* 15/42, 2008, pp. 45–60.

[16] Enrique SALMÓN, "*Iwígara:* A Rarámuri Cognitive Model of Biodiversity and Its

his recently published text, in turn shows how important the "ordinary" pine tree is for the life of the Tarahumara, which for the majority of Westerners, but also for the average Mexican, is, for example, a tree with long fragrant needles, one of the symbols of the Mediterranean coast, or at best a tiny part of biodiversity. For many Tarahumara communities, however, the pine tree and pine forests are literally of existential importance; they are considered relatives of the people and their care is a reflection of "the collective protection of the natural environment".[17] The Tarahumara also relate to other non-human actors in a similarly "kincentric" way,[18] and their coexistence with them reflects their notion of themselves as "pillars supporting the world".[19]

I spent approximately twenty days in the state of Chihuahua, mostly in the districts of Batopilas, Guachochi and Norogachi. Practically from the beginning of my return to Chihuahua, I was confronted with the current security situation. It was explained to me everywhere I went, how dangerous it was to travel, particularly to the regions of the Lower Tarahumara, which includes the district of Batopilas and the surrounding Tarahumara communities. Searching on the internet, I discovered that this region is part of the so-called *Golden Triangle*, an area that runs through three Mexican states (Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango), notorious for organised crime. I had to keep this circumstance constantly in mind prior to my planned movements between locations, and it greatly complicated and affected my logistics. Despite this serious problem, I managed to spend approximately one week in two of the four important communities in Ejido Munerachi, right in the locations of my former fieldwork. My base for this short stay was the "Karí Owáame" (literally "House of Healing") clinic recently established in the Retosachi community by the American composer Romayne Wheeler, who has lived among the Tarahumara since the early 1990s.[20] I attempted to acquaint Romayne thoroughly with my research project, and as a result he and several of his Tarahumara friends became my main informants for several days, helping me to map quickly the current environmental, economic, social, political, human rights and other situations in the ejido and the wider region. In my interviews and observations, I was most interested in whether it would be possible to study local knowledge of biodiversity and those concepts that are predominantly explored in Upper Tarahumara communities by Carlo Bonfiglioli, Enrique Salmón, José Alejandro Fujigaki Lares, and other anthropologists ethnographically. I wondered if these were more theoretical concepts that might not work in the field. Thoroughly walking in the land of the communities of Munerachi, Retosachi and Sorichique convinced me that not only the pine trees, but also the ubiquitous rocky surface, the small cornfields, and the almost dry beds of small streams, are so existentially crucial for the local inhabitants that their condition is negotiated in regular community meetings.[21] At

Effects on Land Management", in: Paul E. Minnis – Wayne J. Elisens (eds.), *Biodiversity and Native America*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000, pp. 180–203.

17 In the language of rarámuri "napawika tibupo kawi" (José Alejandro FUJIGAKI LARES, "Caminos Rarámuri para sostener o acabar el mundo. Teoría ethnográfica, cambio climático y antropoceno", *Mana* 26/1, 2020, p. 16.

18 A term used by Enrique Salmón to express the kinship of the Tarahumara with all that surrounds them see Enrique SALMÓN, "Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship", *Ecological Applications* 10(5), 2000, pp. 1327–1332.

19 FUJIGAKI LARES, ibid.

20 I met Romayne Wheeler by chance at the Votive Church in Vienna in the summer of 1989, then met him in November 1992 at the House of Culture in Creel, North Mexico, and then several more times in 1996 and 2001 when he hosted me at his "eagle's nest", as he calls his house in the Retosachi community on the edge of deep canyon Munerachi. Romayne is an iconic Sierra Tarahumara figure known far beyond Mexico. His concerts in the United States, Mexico, and numerous European and Asian countries continue to contribute to the development of Tarahumara communities, for which he founded the Tarahumara Relief Fund, even in his 80s. Approximately 450 Tarahumara families are now benefiting from this foundation and the availability of medical care by top Mexican medical professionals.

21 On September 25, 2021, several dozen people from this community and its neighbors gathered in the Retosachi community for a full day to discuss how to continue building small

these meetings they discuss ways of looking after these assets and how to protect them not only from climate change, of which the local people are very aware, but also from the encroachment of foreign companies trying to penetrate the Tarahumara communities for logging or to find new farmland, etc.

From the communities of Lower Tarahumara, I quickly moved by rental car to the two central urban centers of Upper Tarahumara – Guachochi and especially Norogachi. Guachochi is now a bustling mestizo town with a branch of the Coordinadora Estatal de la Tarahumara, a government organization whose main objective is to map the social, economic, health, etc. situation. It is also responsible for determining the financial assistance to families and individuals. Some of the most common problems that Coordinadora agents have to deal with throughout the Tarahumara territory are the annually recurring crop failures, especially of corn, sacred and crucial to Tarahumara culture, as well as the lack of potable and, locally, even utility water, diseases for which the locals have no cure, and illegal logging. These problems have led to relatively strong internal migration, even of entire families, to towns located both inside the Tarahumara habitat (Guachochi, Creel) and even further outside (especially Chihuahua, Cuauhtémoc, Ciudad Juárez, etc.). The situation is complicated by the fact that some of the Tarahumara men work for these timber companies, while others, according to the information I have received, are involved in various positions in organised crime, whose traces go far beyond the borders of the northern Mexican states, mainly to the United States and other Mexican regions. I was confronted with this reality at the end of this trip in Norogachi, where I spent the last two days before returning to Chihuahua city. On the one hand, there are people who live in harmony with the *iwígara*, such as the former *selíame* (mayor) of this community and the environmental activist Marcelina Bustillos Romero,[22] while on the other hand, one can encounter individuals who thwart collective efforts to protect nature and fight for human rights, at best through their indifference, and at worst through their collaboration with narco-traffickers and other actors of organised crime.

My last day in Chihuahua was spent in a personal meeting with the staff of the Central Coordinadora Estatal de la Tarahumara, whose mobility covers all the Tarahumara regions. Perhaps working with this organization would allow me to move quickly between communities in an otherwise vast and rugged territory, interviewing indigenous activists and observing the activities of local societies in the context of a multi-sited ethnography. Even more important for my return research was an online meeting with biologist Manuel Chávez, who is now employed by CONAFOR (Comisión Nacional Forestal), a state organization that maps in detail forest management in Chihuahua and especially in the Sierra Tarahumara regions. Manuel Chávez was the principal researcher of the *Tarahumara Sustentable* project from 2014–2019, which primarily addressed the conflict between Tarahumara communities and illegal sawmills that plunder pine and oak forests, resulting in the loss of biodiversity and the disruption of entire ecosystems. A personal meeting with Mr. Chávez, his former collaborators on this project, and access to their archives will be a great help in understanding the complex issues of indigenous peoples' relationship with their environment and their resistance to external pressures to exploit it illegally.

To conclude, whereas in the past I have focused more on the social and ecological adaptation of a particular Tarahumara (micro)group in a more general (theoretical) way, the new research will focus mainly on how local communities respond to and think about biodiversity loss, how they negotiate it with other actors (local, regional and national politicians, companies focused on the exploitation of natural resources and their use in different industries, environmental activists, social movements, travel agencies, missionaries, etc.), and how they deal with biodiversity loss), but

canals and pools to hold water that could then be distributed to individual households. A large part of the meeting was devoted to how to deal with dead trees and how to care for the small pine and oak shoots, of which I saw hundreds in Retosachi and which the local people believe may be of great importance to them in the future. This collective concern for the surrounding nature is exactly in the spirit of the Tarahumara approach to their surroundings *napawika tibupo kawi*, mentioned by Fujigaki Lares.

[22] In a brief personal interview, Marcelina clearly reported that the Tarahumara are "pillars supporting the world".

also among themselves, as the perception of their own environment by indigenous actors varies, or may vary, within the same ejido or community. The pre-research trip helped me to clarify some ideas, themes and questions – e.g.: Can a better understanding of local biodiversity, the knowledge of which indigenous peoples have accumulated over many millennia, help to build a sustainable and appropriate future? Can the Tarahumara relationship to the environment lead to some more general ontological or existential turn that acknowledges or even questions the relatedness of human and non-human actors and contribute its part to a global discourse on saving the planet? Is the native ontology represented by the concept of *iwígara* also applicable in the areas of the Lower Tarahumara (or other places on the planet), where there are people whose life cycle is different, more dependent on transhuman alternations of settlement and for subsistence linked mainly to the cultivation of sacred maize, beans, tropical and subtropical fruits, etc.? Although I plan to carry out my project through extended ethnographic research primarily in north-western Mexico, my intention is to conduct more in-depth comparative research using my findings from other BHs (Madagascar, Mediterranean, Mesoamerica, Tropical Andes) in combination with available sources reflecting environmental anthropological issues in other BHs of the Earth. I would like to submit the final version of the project to the GACR standard project competition in 2023.

by Marek Halbich, Prague
(Written in English by the author)

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT, SEARCH FOR INDIAN AMERICA 5

A two-day conference called *Search for Indian America 5* was held from February 28 to March 1st, 2022, at the University of Pardubice in Pardubice, Czech Republic. The conference, unlike in previous years, was organized by Radoslav Hlúšek from the Department of Ethnology and World Studies at University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava in cooperation with Lívia Šavelková and Milan Durňak from the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at the University of Pardubice, and the Center for Mesoamerican Studies at Comenius University in Bratislava. *Search for Indian America 5* was a hybrid event for the first time, featuring participation both in person and online. This way allowed the conference to be attended by a larger number, including even overseas researchers. That is why the official languages of the conference were not only Czech and Slovak, but also English and Spanish.

After the welcome speech from Lívia Šavelková, Ukjese van Kampen, an independent scholar from Canada and the author of the painting on the conference program cover, opened the conference with his keynote address, "Origins of the Early Yukon First Nations Beading Style". The keynote address was followed by a Czech language section chaired by Monika Brenišínová from Charles University. The first speaker, Anna Libánská from Charles University, presented her contribution entitled "Indiáni a praxe zjinačování v česky psaných pramenech 16. století (Native Americans and the Practice of Othering in Czech Written Sources of the 16th Century)". Another speaker from Charles University, Tadeáš Dufek, introduced his work on "Indian Hobbyism as Cultural Appropriation (Indiánský hobbismus optikou kulturní apropriace)". The section was concluded by Jan Dolejš, an independent scholar from the Czech Republic, with his "Comparative Analysis as a Tool for Identification Collection Artifacts (Srovnávací analýza jako nástroj identifikace sbírkových artefaktů)".

In the afternoon there were two simultaneous sections. The first one in the Czech language chaired by Lívia Šavelková (Section 2), and the second in the Spanish language chaired by Radoslav Hlúšek (Section 3). Miroslav Černý from University of Ostrava opened Section 2, focusing his presentation on "Last Speakers of Native North America (Poslední mluvčí nativních jazyků Severní Ameriky)". He was followed by Martin Heřmanský from Charles University who introduced the audience to the "Construction of Gender in Native American Hip Hop (Konstrukce genderu v indiánském hip hopu)". Tomáš Boukal from the University of Pardubice talked about "Genes and Stories: Native Siberia and North America in Biocultural Comparison (Geny a příběhy: nativní Sibiř a Severní Amerika v biokulturní komparaci)". Jan Kapusta from the University of West Bohemia made a presentation on "Maya Cosmology between (Indigenous) Animism and (Western) Spirituality (Mayská kosmologie mezi (indigenním) animismem a (západní) spiritualitou)". The final contribution under the title "Fenomén tarantismu v hispanoamerickém románu (The Phenomenon of Tarantism in the Spanish-American Novel)" by Roman Zaťko from Charles University terminated the panel in the Czech language.

Section 3 was dominated mostly by Mexican scholars, except for the first speaker, Oldřich Kašpar, from the University of Pardubice, whose contribution bore the title "Prohibidos vuelos de papalotes. Acerca de un manuscrito novohispano del siglo XVIII (Flying Kites Prohibited. On a New Spanish Manuscript of 18th Century)". Rogelio Martínez Cárdenas from University of Guadalajara gave an insight into the Festivities of the Virgin of Guadalupe, analyzing the tweets in his presentation "Las fiestas de la Virgen de Guadalupe, una visión a través de la red social de Twitter (The Festivities of the Virgin of Guadalupe: A View through the Social Network of Twitter)". Karen Jeanette Reyes Badillo from Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo introduced her

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work entitled "La tradición oral y los medios de la comunicación masiva. El caso de la tradición oral totonaca en el contexto de la comunicación moderna (Oral Tradition and the Mass Media. The Case of Totonac Oral Tradition in the Context of Modern Communication)". She was followed by Rosa Elena Durán González also from Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo who presented her paper "Historical Approach: Being Native Woman in the Otomí-Tepehua Region, Hidalgo (Acercamiento histórico; ser mujer indígena en la Región Otomí Tepehua, Hidalgo)". The last contribution by Luis Francisco Rivero Zambrano from the National Polytechnic Institute of Mexico focused on the same region, specifically on the impact of globalization on the carnival. His presentation "El carnaval en la región Otomí-Tepehua en el Estado de Hidalgo. Diversidad cultural y globalización (Carnival in the Otomí-Tepehua Region in the State of Hidalgo: Culture Diversity and Globalization)" closed not only Section 3 but also the first day of the conference.

The following day the participants gathered in the morning in the Czech language section chaired by Tomáš Boukal (Section 4) which started with a presentation by Monika Brenišínová from Charles University on "The Walls that Talk: the Street Art of Bogotá (Stěny, které mluví: pouliční umění Bogoty)". Then Jana Jetmarová from the Technical University of Liberec in her speech "Ani rovnost, ani rozdílnost: komunita! Antipatriarchální komunitní feminismus v Bolívii (Neither Equality nor Difference: Community! Anti-patriarchal Community Feminism in Bolivia)" unfolded the social issues sketched by the former speaker. She was followed by Marek Halbich from Charles University who offered a "Brief Report of Preliminary Research in Sierra Tarahumara in 2021 (Sierra Tarahumara v roce 2021: Stručná zpráva z předvýzkumu)". The morning section ended with a contribution from Peter Vyšný from Trnava University named "Predhispánská nahuaská rodinná domácnosť a Lévi-Straussov koncept domu (The Pre-Hispanic Nahua Household and the Lévi-Strauss House Concept)".

The afternoon program was divided into two simultaneous panels (Section 5 and 6) according to the research areas. The Mexican one (section 5) consisted of four speakers, starting with John Chuchiak from Missouri State University and his contribution "'Itz en caan, itz en muyal': Offerings to the Primordial Lord and Lady of the Heavens – Colonial Yucatec Maya Rituals to the Sky Deities Itzamna and Ix Chebel Yax". Then Maria Felicia Rega from Comenius University Bratislava and Sapienza University of Rome shared her results on "Playing on the frontiers: analysing the distribution of ballcourts along regional borders in Peten through GIS". Michelle Leisky from Charles University presented her research on "Danza Azteca and the Movement of Mexicanidad (Danza Azteca y la Mexicanidad)". Section 5 concluded with the contribution of Raquel Barceló Quintal from the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo.

Section 6, chaired by Martin Heřmanský, opened with a presentation by Lucie Kýrová from Charles University called "An 'Indian Think Tank': Native American Transnationalism and Intellectual Sovereignty". She was followed by György Tóth from the University of Stirling with his contribution "The Politics of Allyship in Scholarship and Praxis". The last speaker Jan Ullrich from The Language Conservancy concluded the conference with his contribution entitled "It is All About Aspiration. What motivates and informs attitudes toward orthographic choices and other aspects of Lakota language revitalization?".

The conference program was exciting in its wide ranging and multidisciplinary content. The *Search for Indian America 5* offered a unique opportunity to meet and learn from fellow researchers, academics, and scholars, to share recent research, and to answer questions and doubts in a friendly atmosphere. A sincere thank you to the organizing committee for creating such an inspiring event and platform for not only Czech and Slovak Americanists. I returned from the conference with new ideas, approaches, and energy for my future work. *Search for Indian America* is an event that is not to be missed.

by Michelle Leisky, Prague
(Written in English by the author)

BOOK REVIEWS

Carolina Alonso Bejarano, Lucia López Juárez, Mirian A. Mijangos García, Daniel M. Goldstein, *Decolonizing Ethnography: Undocumented Immigrants and New Directions in Social Science*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2019, 208 pp. Paper ISBN: 978-1-4780-0395-3, Cloth ISBN: 978-1-4780-0362-5.

The book *Decolonizing Ethnography* demonstrates what happens when ethnography meets social activism. The publication is coauthored by four people with different backgrounds, all of whom participated in the field research and activism. Both fields are perceived here as mutually inseparable. In August 2011 ethnographers Carolina Alonso Bejarano and Daniel M. Goldstein began, in their own words, a project in activist anthropology that aimed to join the work of ethnography to the struggle for undocumented workers' rights in New Jersey. Two undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Guatemala, Lucia López Juárez and Mirian A. Mijangos García, not previously qualified in the field of ethnography, joined them as field researchers and equal coauthors. The research was conducted mainly around the center for undocumented workers in New Jersey where all participants had met and where all four coauthors have been volunteering. In order to keep the identity of the migrants' secret, it has been necessary to change some data. For the same reason, the book is also accompanied by illustrations instead of using the migrants' photos which makes it quite outstanding in graphic terms. One of the main title objectives is to question the meaning and tools of anthropology nowadays and its possible changes. The book follows the idea of the anthropologist Faye Venetia Harrison[1] that anthropology needs to transform itself dramatically to overcome its colonial heritage, and that it needs to be decolonized by, for example., incorporating theories and scholars from the Global South and outside the mostly white western academia. However, in *Decolonizing Ethnography*, the concept of decolonization is not only a theoretical subject but situated to specific anthropological practice. Regarding theory, the coauthors are asking an important question: Is it even possible to make a decisive break with anthropology's colonial past and eurocentrism? Colonial anthropology was distinguished by a division between those being studied and those doing the studying. This approach is still a frequent practice in the field, leading to power imbalances and asymmetric relationships between ethnographers and the people in the terrain up till now. In this book, the coauthors argue that a new kind of anthropology can emerge from taking a more collaborative perspective towards, and engagement with, decolonial theory and methodology. This approach can make common cause with the struggles of those with whom ethnographers work – in this case, undocumented migrants. According to the coauthors, that means not only questioning the hierarchical relations between ethnographers and their participants, but also questioning the hierarchy in universities as places of western dominance – i.e., the hegemony of western thought and theories. In order to change this system, the need to create a theory from below or a theory from the south is urged. What does it mean for ethnographic research? The coauthors suggest, to disturb the hierarchy and coloniality one can put the instruments of ethnographic research in the hands of local people so that they may produce knowledge about themselves, for themselves.

The publication comprises a preface, an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, notes, references, and an index; it is supplemented with seven illustrations. In the first chapter, the authors introduce basic theories, concepts and names of scholars connected with the subject of decolonial theories, while mainly discussing concepts of coloniality, eurocentrism in research and their understanding of colonial anthropology. Reconsidering the researcher/researched relationship, they call for not co-optative but collaborative anthropology instead. Anthropology, where, in their own words, the researched are not treated as objects and raw materials. By changing the research process, knowledge is shared between the

[1] Faye Venetia HARRISON (ed.), *Decolonizing Anthropology – Moving Further Toward an Anthropology for Liberation*, Arlington: American Anthropological Association, 1991.

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two parties, rather than extracted from the person being researched. Overall, I find the chapter useful as a summary of contemporary debates relating to coloniality, colonialism etc., and introducing scholars like Walter Mignolo[2] and Nelson Maldonado-Torres.[3] The chapter thus comes in handy for everyone who is not exactly familiar with decolonial theories.

The second chapter aims to introduce all four coauthors, their backgrounds, stories, and position in the project. I consider this part to be highly important as it reveals the mutual relations and power structure and the asymmetry among the participants and points out either their various privileges or their inequalities i.e., race, gender, non/possession of US citizenship etc. I am convinced that reflecting the researcher's own positionality is the key point of any kind of research regarding the question of power and power relations. It is a necessary vehicle for research aiming to give new perspectives on ethnography using decolonial practice.

The third chapter describes all the details and history of the research project and gives us an outline of how the fieldwork was conducted. The coauthors offer this account as an example of how they think anthropology beyond colonial(ity) should be practiced: anthropology conceived not as the ultimate manual but as an inspiration. I regard the effort of carefully describing decolonial practice as being highly useful for further anthropological projects and fieldwork. The chapter also presents the background of the undocumented migrants' community, their problems, and struggles. This enables readers to gain a better idea about the research setting.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the fieldwork and a theory which emerged from it. Focusing mainly on Mirian and Lucy's experience in the role of ethnographers, it sums up their research methods and the problems they had in approaching immigrants. It further pursues their efforts to combine fieldwork, the organization of workers, advocacy, and having workers know their rights. Involving locals into conducting anthropological research is not an unusual step. What makes it unique is the roles played by Mirian and Lucy as coauthors and equal researchers. Following the research, they came up with their own research-based *theory of undocumentation*. The theory explains what it means to be undocumented in the U.S. and wherein lie the principal sources of the problems faced by undocumented people. The coauthors call it emic or native understanding of the topic, an *undocumented activist theory* as developed by undocumented activists themselves. As the coauthors stress, the theory stands in contrast to the theories of Carolina and Daniel, who emphasize the structural explanations they represent – Mirian and Lucy are aware of them but emphasize also other factors, i.e., lack of unity on the part of the immigrant community, resulting in people's failure to know their rights and to demand them collectively. I consider the way of developing an emic theory, which means a theory using research participants' knowledge gained through the research process, as being extensively inspirational for decolonial ethnography practice and appreciate the demonstration of how a theory can be created from below.

The field research was interwoven with activism including various directly organized actions, legal advocacy, and consultancy. According to the coauthors, the research became an instrument of social resistance, transformation, and liberation.

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[2] See e.g.: Walter D. MIGNOLO, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, & Colonization*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995; idem, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000; idem, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity – Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011; Walter D. MIGNOLO – Catherine E. WALSH, *On Decoloniality – Concept, Analytics, Praxis*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

[3] See e.g.: Nelson MALDONADO-TORRES, "On the Coloniality of Being", *Cultural Studies* 21/2–3, 2017, pp. 240–270; idem, "Césaire's Gift and the Decolonial Turn", *Radical Philosophy Review* 9/2, 2006, pp. 111–137; idem, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn – Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique: An Introduction", *Transmodernity* 1/2, 2011, pp. 1–15; idem, "The Decolonial Turn", in: POBLETE, Juan, *New Approaches to Latin American Studies – Culture and Power*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 111–127.

The theater of the oppressed,[4] which uses the dramatic form as an instrument of public political engagement, is also pursuing these objectives and prodding audiences into being its active participants. In the fifth chapter we are confronted with the script of *Undocumented, Unafraid*, theater of the oppressed written by all the coauthors. Based on real stories of migrants, it translates some of our research findings about immigrant workers' rights into an intelligible message for ordinary people. Thus, the research can have a direct positive impact on the migrant community.

Despite the coauthors' slightly different opinions about whether and how ethnography can be decolonized, it is certain that the publication serves as a great example of the effort to do so. With its reflective method towards the positionality, privileges, and transformations they both experienced during the research, it offers a more conscious attitude towards the fieldwork setting from which new possibilities in the field can arise. First the book emphasizes the importance of turning to theorists outside the usual Western canon as a way of challenging the authority of colonial anthropology. Secondly, according to the coauthors, it appeals to researchers to think more consciously about what ethnographic research is, how it is conducted, and what its purposes are.

by anna řičář libánská, Prague
(Written in English by the author)

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[4] The specific dramatic form called Theater of the oppressed (TO) was developed by a drama theorist Augusto Boal in the 1970s as a tool to liberate the oppressed people by themselves through participative theater experience. TO has become popular practice among social and political activist worldwide. See: Augusto BOAL, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 3rd. ed., London: Pluto press, 2008.

Jonathan Rosa, *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race. Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning of Latinidad*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019, 286 pp. ISBN 978-01-9063-473-5.

In the last fifteen years or so, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in homicides and acts of violence against people of color in the United States. Although the main targets of this hate are predominantly African Americans, prejudice, hostility and even outright violence is also increasingly evident against Americans of Hispanic origin[5], who are now one of the largest minorities in the United States and already make up the majority of the local population in many places, especially in the Southwest[6], which is logically reflected in various disciplines such as social anthropology, sociology, psychology, demography, and linguistics, including linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. One such work is the recently published book by the young sociocultural and linguistic anthropologist Jonathan Rosa, showing how ethnic origin ("race"), education, and especially language competence, in particular among people of Latin American descent (Rosa uses the term "Latinx" by which he means a gender nonbinary alternative to Latina, Latino, and Latin@) to refer to US-based persons of Latin American descent) are stigmatized in American everyday life despite various efforts to use inclusive language.

The central thesis of Rosa's book is the strong claim that race and language, at least in the contemporary United States, are key factors in modern governance, by which Rosa means the legitimacy of racial capitalism and the colonial power relations out of which this form of governance evolved (pp. 4, 5, 213). Although Rosa makes several

[5] According to data from American investigative journalist Tonya Mosley published in an article *The 'Forgotten' History of Anti-Latino Violence in the U.S.* for Here & Now on 25 November 2019 and managed by Boston radio station WBUR, there were 485 hate crimes against citizens of Latin American descent in 2018.

[6] According to U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics made up about 20% of the U.S. population in 2020, i.e. about 65,000,000.

references to, for example, Foucault's concept of governmentality, based on a broad conception of power as a specific style of governance, particularly in the conditions of emerging modern European society, he bases his thesis more on recent theoretical and empirical inspirations reflecting researches primarily in the United States. It is not possible to mention all of them in this review, so I will include at least the ones I consider the most important. Rosa draws on the notion of *racial naturalization* developed by the Indian American linguistic anthropologist Shalini Shankar in her research on Asian Americans. Racial naturalization is concerned with the ways in which these (phenotypically) "non-native" Americans are recast through multicultural advertising into the image of the contemporary American racial landscape, which, while on the one hand acknowledging cultural or linguistic difference that is outwardly publicized, on the other hand demanded less explicitly the duty to be a model citizen, i.e. an American.[7] Perhaps a stronger inspiration for Jonathan Rosa has been the work of H. Samy Alim, professor of anthropology at Stanford University, on the direct connection between language and race in his research on the coexistence of 'white' and 'other' Americans, for which Alim, along with the African-American English professor Geneva Smitherman (2016), coins the somewhat provocative term *raciolinguistics*, which explores how language is used to construct race, and how ideas about race influence language and its use. The origins of raciolinguistics thus formulated clearly allude to the speeches of the first black American president, Barack Obama. Alim speaks of the "Black-language-speaking" in reference to their speech style, somewhat pejoratively referred to as Blaccent, and in particular to the public reactions and metalinguistic commentary that revealed many aspects of the linguistic and racial politics of the contemporary United States. Barack Obama's constant vacillation between discriminatory discourses of race, citizenship, religion, and language led Alim and Smitherman to think more deeply about what it means to articulate when one is (in the US and in this case) black. The central problem of raciolinguistics is thus obvious: What does it mean when one speaks as a racial subject in contemporary America?

From these inspirations, it is clear what Rosa sees as the necessity to examine the connaturalization of language, race, and modern forms of governance in the contemporary United States when he speaks of their birth or rootedness in the distant colonial past. First, it was the relationship of supremacy of the European "race" over the Native American Indian population, leading to the genocide of some tribes, then later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the creation of a slave system directed against people of African descent, and in the twentieth century and contemporary times against other newcomers whose native language is not English and who are also often distinguished by their skin color. Rosa may be speaking somewhat simplistically of the dualism of Europeanness vs. other non-Europeanness, or Whiteness vs. Blackness, etc., but that does not change the line of his argument: ethno-racial status is still very much present in the contemporary United States, deeply embedded in white supremacist colonial management schemes that homogenize and differentiate populations in varying ways. On the linguistic, or perhaps more precisely, speech level, the result is often a violent exertion[8] by many speakers and a drive for linguistic inclusion, as Jonathan Rosa tries to show in his book.

The ethnographic research, based mostly on interviews with students and their teachers, participation in school classes or in Local School Council meetings supplemented by media analysis was conducted between 2007 and 2010 at a newly founded public high school on the Near Northwest Side of Chicago. During the period of the author's fieldwork in the New Northwest High School (NNHS), Chicago Public Schools classified nearly 90% of NNHS's approximately 1,000 students as Mexican or Puerto Rican (and almost 92% overall from any national Latinx subgroup); almost all of the non-Latinx students were classified as African Americans, reflecting the school's proximity to the predominantly African-American West Side of the city. In efforts to conceptualize the connaturalization of linguistic and racial borders, this book deploys what

[7] Shalini SHANKAR, "Racial Naturalization, Advertising, and Model Consumers for a New Millennium", *Journal of Asian American Studies* 16/2, 2013, pp. 159–160.

[8] Indeed, Pierre Bourdieu has written about exertion in specific speech situations see Peter AUER, *Jazyková interakce* [Linguistic Interaction], Praha: Lidové Noviny, 2014, p. 230

Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa have termed a *raciolinguistic perspective*, drawing, as noted, on the raciolinguistics of Alim and Smitherman[9] that analyzes the ongoing rearticulation of colonial distinctions between populations and modes of communication that come to be positioned as more or less normatively European. Rosa looks for further inspiration in the works of the Japanese linguistic anthropologist Miyako Inoue, especially in her theoretization of the "listening subject" as the masculine subject position that produces the overdetermined category of Japanese women's language in the context of Japan's political and economic modernization. Through the adaptation of Inoue's analysis of Japanese women's language in hegemonic representations and perceptions rather than the communicative practices of Japanese women themselves, Rosa shows how Latinx linguistic practices are construed from the perspective of hegemonically positioned White perceiving subjects. This is exemplified by the author's analyses of racialized ideologies of "languagelessness" through which Latinxs are perceived as producing neither English nor Spanish legitimately. Moreover, Rosa also examines "Inverted Spanglish" practices through which Latinxs invoke White Americans' stereotypes about Latinxs. Thus, relations among ideologies of race and language – raciolinguistic ideologies – are at the center of the analysis. This raciolinguistic perspective combines Inoue's argument that "noise and language are neither naturally pregiven nor phenomenologically imma nent" (2003b: 157), with Barnor Hesse's "colonial constitution of race thesis," which holds that "[r]ace is not in the eye of the beholder or on the body of the objectified," but rather "an inherited western, modern-colonial practice of violence, assemblage, superordination, exploitation, and segregation [...] demarcating the colonial rule of Europe over non-Europe" (2016: viii).[10]

The book consists of an extensive introduction (pp. 1–30), followed by two parts with six chapters (each part having three chapters), a conclusion and extensive notes. In Chapter One (pp. 33–70) of the first part called "Looking Like a Language: Latinx Ethnoracial Category-Making", Rosa explores how interconnected binary gender stereotypes about Latino men's criminality and Latina women's promiscuity became central components of the anxieties surrounding race, class, gender, and sexuality that structured NNHS's project of youth socialization, and describes how institutional efforts toward managing student bodies cohered in an explicitly stated administrative project of transforming students from "gangbangers" and "hoes" into Young Latino Professionals, which is the program and goal of the principal of NNHS dr. Baez (pseudonym). In short, "gangbangers" are members of a gang, who participate in gang activity. This can be anything from graffiti to shooting up a rival gang. "Hoes" are usually young girls offering sexual services (whores). This is how people usually see Latinxs, but Rosa tries to show that they can become young Latino professionals. Gangbanger and ho are conventionally constructed not only as binary gender concepts but also as heternormative. As an emergent local category, Young Latino Professional did not necessarily stipulate normative gender and sexual identities in this way (p. 43). Rosa argues and points to examples that the simultaneous embracing and stigmatization of Latinx identity is no coincidence. This approach involves a negotiation with respect to the relationship between what Leo Chavez and Arlene Dávila call the "Latino threat narrative"[11] and "Latino spin",[12] respectively. These joint discourses allow seemingly opposing characterizations of Latinxs, such as "illegal, tax burden, overly sexual, patriotic, family-oriented, hard-working, and model

[9] Jonathan ROSA – Nelson FLORES, "Unsettling Race and Language: Toward a Raciolinguistic Perspective", *Language in Society* 46/5, 2017, pp. 621–647.

[10] Cited according ROSA, *Looking Like a Language*, pp. 6–7. For original texts see Miyako INOUE, "The listening subject of Japanese modernity and his auditory double: Citing, sighting, and siting the modern Japanese woman", Cultural Anthropology 18/2, 2003, pp. 156–193; Barnor HESSE, "Preface: Counter-Racial Formation Theory", in: P. Khalil Saucier – Tryon P. Woods (eds.), Conceptual Aphasia in Black: Displacing Racial Formation, Lanham – Boulder – New York – London: Lexington Books, 2016, pp. vii–xi.

[11] Leo CHAVEZ, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*, Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2008.

[12] Arlene DÁVILA, *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race*, New York: NYU Press, 2008.

consumer […]".[13] Therefore, on the one hand, Latinx youth are often stereotyped as gangbangers and hoes— this is the *threat narrative* (Chavez); on the other, there is some hope that they could become young professionals and join the rest of America in the largely imaginary middle class – this is the *spin narrative* (Dávila). Rosa argues that NNHS tries to challenge the inverse ideological relationship between class status and marked ethnoraciality. While prevailing ideologies in the United States position upward socioeconomic mobility in opposition to ethnoracial difference, the NNHS' category of Young Latino Professionals attempts to allow students to escape socioeconomic marginalization without losing their Latinx identities.

In Chapter Two (pp. 71–101), Rosa focuses more on the students themselves, on what they understand to be a primary axis of differentiation within the school: "Mexican" and "Puerto Rican". Rosa is aware of other distinctions within the various Latino communities in the United States, in the case of Mexico, for example, norte/sur, brazer/paisa/Mexican American, etc. These are important, he argues, in other parts of the United States, and even in other parts of Chicago, but they have not been prevalent in the Mexican-Puerto Rican relations in the NNHS, which is why in this review, in keeping with the author, I write about Mexicans or Puerto Ricans, not Mexican Americans or Puerto Rican Americans (p. 87). Students construct and experience these categories through diasporic imaginaries that remap the boundaries between Puerto Rican and Mexican identities within Chicago. Rosa demonstrates how the erasure of Mexican-Puerto Rican difference within the school's project of creating Young Latino Professionals paradoxically (re)produce rigid discourses of distinction between self-identified Puerto Rican and Mexican students. These self-identifying students' discourses of Mexican/Puerto Rican difference are analyzed in relation to the institutional trajectories and the broader political-economic dynamics that shape the construction and management of ethnoracial identities within NNHS. A number of Rosa's interviews with students revealed that despite the prevailing belief at the NNHS that Puerto Ricans and Mexicans are separate "races", when students were asked whether they consider romantic relationships between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans to be interracial, they almost always rejected this designation. Analysis of the interviews revealed that students understood Mexicanness and Puerto Ricanness not only in terms of governmental categories, but also as based on a long history of face-to-face relationships between the two groups; they were often classmates, friends, playmates, neighbors, and family members.

In the rather complicated third chapter (pp. 102–122) Rosa analyses the ways in which emblems of Latinx identity that are recognizable in everyday life are created. In particular, Rosa focuses on the processes through which qualia (culturally mediated perceptions that structure embodiment and experience) associated with objects, practices, and bodies are progressively linked in the formation of contemporary Latinx identity. Rosa's key claim here is that the construction of perceived differences between Latinx subgroups on the one hand and between Latinos and non-Latinos on the other is crucial to the production of the emblems, embodiments, and experiences that constitute the fact of Latinidad. Drawing on the analysis of discourses of Mexican-Puerto Rican difference from the previous chapter, in this section Rosa shows how the construction of, and familiarity with, Mexican and Puerto Rican models of personhood emerge as repertoires of Latinidad. NNHS Latino students' constructions and experiences of Latinidad enter into a critical dialogue with broader discourses of the "Latino threat" and the "Latino spin". In the Chicago NNHS setting, discourses of "Latino threat" correspond to the figures of the "gangbanger" and "ho", while narratives of "Latino spin" correspond to the figure of the "Young Latino professional". Rosa's analysis revealed that although NNHS students creatively seek to challenge the boundaries that make these figures recognizable, they are limited in this effort to escape stigmatizing views because they are still deemed unfit for legitimate political subjectivity. Students alternately reproduce, bend, renew, and reject this stigmatization. Later in this chapter, Rosa demonstrates the ways in which the dichotomies of Mexican-Puerto Rican and gangbanger/young Latino professional have become associated with the qualia of "ghettoness" and "lameness", and how the perception of these qualities constitutes emblems, embodiments, and enactments or representations of Latinidad.

Rosa uses Silverstein's metapragmatic approach to the recognizability of individual Latinx

[13] DÁVILA, *Latino Spin*, p. 1.

identity emblems, according to which any statement or object that people find culturally meaningful is only meaningful with respect to his metapragmatic model based on the recognizability of the kinds of people involved in the recognizable kind of interaction. These models are metapragmatic because they frame pragmatic or indexical (social, contact) features of identity. That is, these models make available the types of people that may be taking place in a given social context. Without them, we would not be able to identify who people are and what they say to themselves and others (p. 113). In the NNHS context, Rosa argues, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans became metapragmatic models that organized students' identification of themselves and others. While metapragmatic models such as Mexican and Puerto Rican are associated with broad ethno-racial categories, Rosa shows how these models took on specific forms in the NNHS domain. While "Mexican" and "Puerto Rican" have taken shape as metapragmatic models associated with distinct objects, practices, and characteristics, each of these terms has become an indexical measure by which to locate a person's proximity to the categories of gangbanger, ho, and young Latino professional. The distinction between gangbanger/ho and young Latino professional regimented the "ghettoness" and "lameness" of Puerto Rican and Mexican signs. In his tables of metapragmatic stereotypes/personality models (pp. 114–117), Rosa categorizes the constitutive elements of Mexican and Puerto Rican metapragmatic models as food, body, hair, clothing, language, names, personality, sports, hobbies, music, relationship to government/Americanness, socioeconomic characteristics, or geography, but as he notes in passing, this is by no means an exhaustive list. Within NNHS, these categories measured the relative ghettoness and lameness of Puerto Rican and Mexican students, which in turn placed them in relation to the school's socialization project. In fact, the ghetto focus that resulted from students' acceptance of the distinction between gangbangers/hoes and young Latino professionals increased anxiety within the group about the meaning of particular practices and characteristics. Rosa gives a number of specific examples of these practices – for example: the Mexican students liked Puerto Rican food, but the Puerto Rican students expressed concerns about whether their food was too tasty, too fried and served in large portions, etc. Such excesses, fears, or insecurities, according to Rosa, can lead to ghettoization in an environment such as NNHS (p. 115). One of the Latinx girls perhaps says it best at the end of the chapter when, in her account, she recalls a ninth grade elementary school classroom in which she candidly asked her classmates: "Do I sound like a ghetto? Do I look like a ghetto? I think I sound like a ghetto" (p. 122). These concerns about an already constituted or given racial subjectivity, in which the connaturalization of linguistic and racial categories resonates, become a profound social fact grounded in Rosa's central thesis that populations in different cultural contexts look like language and sound like race.

The second part of the book ("Sounding Like a Race: Latinx Raciolinguistic Enregisterment") opens with chapter four (pp. 125–143) on the ideology of *languagelessness*, which Rosa theorizes as the delegitimization of Latinxs' English and Spanish use within the NNHS. Rosa develops the notion of a racialized ideology of languagelessness (a kind of languageless state) and shows how this raciolinguistic ideology creates an inverted conceptualization of bilingualism, which is generally associated with the ability to speak in two languages (e.g., English and Spanish). Based on his observations and interviews, Rosa claims that the bilingualism we encounter at the NNHS is completely inversed. He argues that being bilingual does not mean using more than one language, but on the contrary, using less than one language in particular. Thus, Rosa examines the various difficulties of Latinx students when they transition into the mainstream English language classrooms. These difficulties emerge from anxieties about educational underachievement stemming from linguistic deficiency. Latinx students are then classified by the notion of "non-nons", which is explicit example of a racialized ideology of languagelessness. Bilingualism, then, at least in the context of Chicago's NNHS, is characterized by what Rosa calls languagelessness, which is meant to express the view that some people are unable to use any language legitimately, and to show how this racialized ideology of languagelessness informs language policymaking and implementation in several interconnected contexts. This language deficiency, languagelessness, or ideology of languagelessness is addressed by, among other things, efforts to transition students into mainstream classrooms with English language instruction. Rosa and other authors in other research show how these

ideas of language underachievement have led to the classification of thousands of Latino students as "non-nons", a category of "Spanish-speaking school-age children living in the United States who are reported to speak neither English nor Spanish" (p. 135). At the same time, this racialized, or at least simplistic, term is based on a biased assessment of language proficiency, defining Spanish or language competence in very narrow terms that systematically blur students' skills in both languages. The notion of "non-nons" is thus an explicit example of a racialized ideology of languagelessness.

In chapter five (pp. 144–176), Rosa discusses the process of *raciolinguistic enregisterment* and suggests that this concept creates a set of linguistic practices for students that enables them to manage competing demands. Rosa presents a set of sociolinguistic biographies of Latinx NNHS students who, under institutional and ideological pressure, look for ways to incorporate Spanish verbal and nonverbal elements into the English language without being perceived as having an accent. In this context, Rosa reconsiders Jane Hill's concept of "Mock Spanish",[14] which is used to describe a variety of Spanish-inspired phrases common in some monolingual Anglo-American circles. The term "Mock Spanish" first appeared in Jane Hill's article "Hasta La Vista, Baby: Anglo Spanish in the American Southwest". Hill argues that the incorporation of pseudo-Spanish terms like "buenos nachos" (for buenas noches), "hasta la bye-bye", and other humorous uses, to some people, constitute a type of covert racism. However, many monolingual Anglo-Americans feel that this type of language is a natural consequence of multiculturalism. While Hill claims that the use of Mock Spanish by monolingual English-speaking Anglo-Americans indirectly stigmatizes Spanish speakers in the US, Rosa argues that Mock Spanish stigmatizes populations racialized as US Latinxs regardless of their linguistic practices. He further shows how Latinx students at NNHS appropriate Mock Spanish and transform it into *Inverted Spanglish* to enact Latinx identities that are specific to the US context. Inverted Spanglish can thus be understood as a manifestation of the linguistic dexterity of Latinx students at NNHS, or as a manifestation of their linguistic resistance. With his notion of Inverted Spanglish, Rosa does not present a general model of English-Spanish bilingualism among students at NNHS, but rather talks about what García described as "translanguaging",[15] which problematizes standard conceptions of bilingualism and monolingualism. Garcia builds from Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia to suggest that a "translingual" approach can denaturalize presumed borders between and within languages and focus instead of the complex heterogeneity inherent in everyday language use. This approach makes it possible to reframe interrelations among varieties of English and Spanish in these students' language practices. That is, "translanguaging" is a helpful way to understand how self-identified monolinguals and bilinguals engage in linguistic practices that unsettle the boundaries between and within objectified languages. Thus, a translanguaging perspective is central to understanding the nature of Latinx NNHS students' "multilingual subjectivities". Thus the NNHS students not only navigate but also transform perceived linguistic boundaries. Thus, ideologies of languagelessness and Inverted Spanglish demonstrate how the administrative projects, ethnoracial contortions, and metapragmatic models described in the first half of this book become linked to language ideologies and linguistic practices (pp. 159, 175–176).

In the sixth and final chapter (pp. 177–208), Rosa explores the ways in which Latinx youth draw on semiotic practices to navigate and respond to experiences of stigmatization and marginalization across contexts, within the NNHS, but also based on an earlier analysis of the dynamics of marginalization of Chicago-area Latinx youth, etc. Rosa investigates in this regard literacy inversions and ambiguities structured by criminalized sign practices and contestations thereof. Furthermore, Rosa also overcomes the established dichotomy of "school kids" vs. "street kids" in this chapter. In analyzing the relationship between categories such as "school kid" and "street kid," it is crucial to remember that they are not separate. Rosa agrees with Johnson (2008) arguing that "'street' does not need to be situated in opposition to 'school'" and that both street and school "communities, while

[14] For example, Jane HILL, "Hasta La Vista, Baby: Anglo Spanish in the American Southwest", *Critique of Anthropology* 13/2, pp. 145–176.

[15] Ofelia GARCÍA, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

containing dangerous elements, can also serve as educative spaces" (p. 202). This chapter thus, at least implicitly, overcomes the more generally entrenched dichotomy of "culture" ("schooling") vs. "nature" ("street" in this case as a symbol of nature, naturalness, unbridledness). However, Rosa could find more similar examples in linguistic contexts (e.g., literacy/illiteracy).

In summary, in his book based on long-term research at the New Northwest High School in Chicago, Rosa primarily points to the complex configurations of identities of local Latinx students who have to complete difficult tasks to meet often conflicting loyalties. Using the example of some students (e.g., Rigo), Rosa shows how often these identities are transient, as an originally high school gang member becomes a night school student and, after he drops school, a prominent artist, and a member of a Mexican folk ensemble. Although these apparent contradictions are structured into a discursive distinction between "school" and the "street", cases such as Rigo's show rather that these seemingly separate categories cannot be separated, because they are not permanent, but variable and constantly negotiated. Although the final analysis of the school vs. street dichotomy is rather brief, its importance is evident, as it points to a broader dimension of Latinx identity that is not only based on linguistic and racial differentials in different situations and places, but above all points to its more general socializing potential, which is, of course, also typical of other groups of the contemporary American population, in Chicago's urban environment, for example, the black residents of the hyperghetto analyzed in a precise way by Loïc Wacquant.[16] This is, after all, perhaps one of the main messages of Rosa's book, which earned him the 2020 *Prose Award for Excellence in Language & Linguistics* from the *Association of American Publishers*. And as Arlene Dávila, a leading linguistic anthropologist dealing with Spanish and Hispanic-American identity in the United States, notes, Rosa's raciolinguistic approach provides a welcomed pathway for understanding, and transforming, systems of domination and should serve as model for all linguistic analyses and, I might add, socialization practices.

[16] For example, Loïc WACQUANT, *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*, New York: Oxford University Press; idem, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2009, etc.

by Marek Halbich, Prague
(Written in English by the author)

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Carles Brasó, *Los médicos errantes. De las Brigadas Internacionales y la revolución china a la guerra fría* [The Wandering Doctors. From the International Brigades and the Chinese Revolution to the Cold War], Barcelona: Crítica, 2022, 415 pp. ISBN 978-84-9199-375-9.

This book aims primarily to preserve the memory of a group of International Brigade doctors and nurses who worked hard to save their dreams in times of war. Their odyssey begins in Europe around the time of the Great War (First World War), continues through the Spanish Civil War, the Sino-Japanese War, the Second World War, and ends in the Soviet purges.

It has been awarded with the 2023 International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) Book Prize in Spanish language.

Through specific events, we contemplate personal landscapes and their political horizon. The author's discourse weaves through the threads of time, territory and geopolitics. It begins in the early twentieth century, with an emphasis on the 1930s, and continues until the 1970s. Geographically, it originates in Eastern Europe, continues in Spain and France, extends to the Far East, and returns to its starting point. In geopolitics, it commences with the great game of European imperialism, and ends in the bipolar world of the Cold War, exposing the different diplomatic scenarios: non-intervention, the bamboo curtain, and the iron curtain. The book develops themes of interest to specialists in the International Brigades, the Chinese aid organisations, and repression in the countries of the Soviet orbit. It is particularly novel in the biography of its main characters.

Brasó's passion for history is backed by his academic background: he holds a PhD in Economic History from the *Universitat Pompeu Fabra* and a degree in Sociology and East Asian Studies from the same institution. His knowledge of the Chinese language and culture has made it easier for him

to analyse and explain in detail the history of the doctors of the International Brigades who went to China. His interest arose because he wanted "to know how my grandfather Moisès Broggi, who was a surgeon in the International Brigades, met the Canadian doctor Norman Bethune, a very famous historical figure in China".[17] But this book is not only about China. By describing and analysing the life trajectory of the medical personnel, it plunges us right into the main historical events of the twentieth century.

The structure of the book consists of a brief prologue, an introduction, and nine chapters which we have grouped into four parts.

The first part takes us, through the first chapter entitled "The Doctors from Nowhere", back to the personal roots of the protagonists.

Part two finds us in Spain and France for three chapters: "The fight against death", "From brigadistas to refugees" and "Escaping Europe". We move through known references with unknown actors, presented to us in small doses. Obscure episodes come to light, while complicities and discouragements are interwoven. We live through the different war periods in the Republican front, with its infighting, right up to the hell of the French refugee camps.

The third part opens our eyes to a much wider theatre of operations: the Sino-Japanese war, the Second World War on the Asian mainland, and the changing relations between the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists. It includes the chapters: "The Chinese Front", "The Burma Road" and "The Bamboo Curtain". Institutional rigidity and corruption undermined the reforming attempts of some of the military doctors to prevent disease and famine, which caused more deaths than guns. The author attributes responsibility to the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) government. He then takes us to the epic Burma Road, and conveys the impression that the Kuomintang, despite massive US aid, failed to provide adequate medical care for its conscripts and also failed to restrain itself from making military decisions that resulted in the deaths of millions of civilians.

The fourth part, where the Cold War is the context for the last two chapters: "The Iron Curtain" and "Socialism with a Human Face". A suture and convalescence in the old Europe, the one that evokes Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, where the author narrates the last misadventures of professionals turned into cogs who find it hard to find their place.

The text continues with an acknowledgements section in which the author recalls almost a decade of wanderings through institutions, and obtaining help in translating documents. The work is accompanied by a lengthy notes section which helps the reader to follow his thorough research in linguistically diverse archives.

The author has used a variety of sources, which have involved a very extensive network of collaborators. He draws on primary sources such as the doctors' personal archives and public archives, notably the following: the International Brigades section of the Russian Archive of Socio-Political History (Moscow) – whose medical services subsection had not been extensively researched – the archives of the Chinese Red Cross (Guiyang); and the Fredericka Martin Collection at the Tamiment Library (New York), which focuses mainly on the medical personnel of the International Brigades. In Poland, he used the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, and in the Czech Republic, the Military Historical Archive / Central Military Archives, the National Archive, the Literary Archive of the Memorial of National Literature, and the Security Services Archive. The author notes that he has only opened a window for researchers. At the end, we find a bibliography and a complete onomastic and conceptual index. The volume includes some twenty photographs, mostly previously unpublished, of good quality, relevant to the subject, and with captions that provide essential information.

This work tackles a multi-layered theme as deep as the ocean that seeks to challenge the idea of the need for healthcare in a society at war. The focus shifts from individual care – a wounded man at the front – to comprehensive health care, trained doctors and supplies.

The turbulence of Fascism in the early chapters leads to the totalitarianism of the Cold War in the later ones. Although he approaches this issue from the medical viewpoint, the author manages to convey the life of his main characters, and the decisions they had to make at the many crossroads of their lives.

[17] José OLIVA, "Brasó Broggi, tras la huella de los médicos errantes de la Guerra española", *La Vanguardia*, 3 July 2022.

No one had as many opportunities to observe the perverse links between poverty and mortality as they did, as wartime shows how power and money make the privilege of health a reflection of class membership.

It plunges us into disturbingly bellicose times, where a discourse of exclusion surfaces with the blatant prejudices his doctors endured, a prelude to the worst evils. Their lives are, as Walter Benjamin wrote, like that of "someone who has been shipwrecked, who carries on while drifting on the wreckage, by climbing to the peak of the mast that is already crumbling. But he has a chance of sending out an SOS from up there".[18]

Carles Brasó's study highlights the little-known links between Spain and China: "The fact that the Chinese cities of Wuhan, Canton (Guangzhou) and Chongqing suffered intense aerial bombardment at the same time as Madrid, Barcelona or Valencia."[19] In particular, the book analyses the process of integrating the management of military medicine during the war. Planning, management, training, and hierarchy come to the fore in each chapter, and the author has sought in each context to apply it to the thesis that the International Brigade doctors ushered in a phase of modern military medicine. They spared no effort to cure the sick, to disseminate basic medical knowledge, and to train future doctors in isolated populations. The Chinese war scene reflects the statistics of the soldier as cannon fodder. We learn that they suffered a high mortality rate, without battles being the main cause.

The author suggests that military medical administrators in the Nationalist Army, especially the charismatic Dr Robert Lim and nurse Zhou Meiyu, came closer to meeting international medical standards than their civilian colleagues. It is argued that political ideology and corruption hindered scientific and humanitarian reform in China. Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist administration did not make public health a priority.

I quote these extracts from the main periods as illustrations:

On the Spanish Civil War:
"David Iancu left Campdevànol for La Garriga, where he joined an Austro-German battalion as a doctor […] They fought on the outskirts of Granollers. At one point in the battle, Iancu ran out of medicine and bandages and decided to enter the town accompanied by an armed man to look for supplies. He came across a completely empty town, as the population had shut themselves in their houses to await the entry of Franco's troops. The Romanian doctor found a pharmacy where he was supplied with dressings and other materials, after which he left the town again to rejoin the battalion. However, as he left the town along the road, he realized that his battalion had already left the area and that Franco's tanks were parading in the opposite direction to him. Luckily, Iancu was able to hide in a forest and avoid being shot dead. After walking north for half a day, he was reunited with his battalion."[20]

About the Second World War on the Asian continent: "Doctors Becker and Jensen were commissioned to travel to Hong Kong and Macau, and return to the Chinese-controlled zone with several tons of medical cargo, across Japanese enemy lines. Becker and Jensen had the double advantage of being of friendly nationality to the Japanese (an Austrian and a German), as well as being recognized in Hong Kong as refugees from the UK. The transport took place in junks. […] The junks did not come under attack from the Japanese, but were raided several times by pirates armed with machine guns, who took the money they were carrying. Fortunately, the medicines and medical supplies were of no interest to the pirates and arrived safely in Tuyunguan."[21]

On the Cold War:
"During the Kafkaesque process involving Flato, an even more surreal situation arose when Zhou Enlai paid an official visit to Poland at the end of July 1948. On landing in Warsaw, the Chinese leader asked for the Polish friend he had met in Chongqing. Flato was hurriedly taken out of his cell, elegantly dressed and brought into the presence of the Chinese leader so that he could greet him. During those years, the Chinese ambassador in the Polish capital was Wang Bingnan, an old

[18] Walter BENJAMIN, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940,* Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 378.

[19] OLIVA, "Brasó Broggi".

[20] Ibidem, pp. 101–102.

[21] Ibidem, p. 153.

acquaintance of Flato's from the Chongqing meetings, so Zhou Enlai must have been well informed of Flato's fate and the accusations against him."[22]

It is appropriate to name the main characters, although it is not a work of a biographical nature, nor does it attempt to develop the medical advances made, but rather provide an analysis of the times in which the doctors lived. It focuses on the nineteen *brigadists* who went to China in two expeditions, in May and August 1939. The first consisted of Dr Fritz Jensen (Austrian), Dr Rolf Becker (German) and Dr Friedrich Kisch (Czech). The second, which departed from London, was composed of doctors Herbert Baer (German), Walter Freudmann (Austrian), Ianto Kaneti (Bulgarian) and David Iancu (Romanian); and stopped in Marseille where it picked up doctors Heinrich Kent (Austrian), František Kriegel (Czech), György Schön (Hungarian); Szmul Flato, Leon Kamieniecki, Władysław Jungermann and Wiktor Taubenfligel (Polish); Jacob Kranzdorf (Romanian) and Alex Volokhine (Russian). Also on board were X-ray assistant Edith Kent (German) and laboratory assistant Mania Kamieniecka (Polish).

Most of them have in common that they were International Brigade members, were interned in French refugee camps, came from Central and Eastern European countries, averaged thirty-two years of age, were of Jewish origin and had Communist ideology.

The most captivating personality for the author is Dr Kriegel, who also serves as the book's closing character. The author devotes considerable attention to Dr Jensen and Dr Flato. Many secondary characters are on parade. Highlights among them are: Erika Glaser, André Marty, Robert Lim, Joseph Needham, Zhou Meiyu, Agnes Smedley and the three Song sisters: Ziwen, Qingling and Meiling.

The author strikes a good balance between the passion of the researcher and the reflection he provides. Throughout the book, he gathers specific data, especially biographical details, which act as political analysis. The main stumbling block can be found in his placement of a range of characters who, although they are the main protagonists, are unknown. Although he makes them known, framing them within a context, it can be difficult to follow them. This way of telling their story generates the suspense of a novel in the reader.

First, in its origins, it takes us to the many border changes in Central and Eastern Europe. Set in the Spanish Civil War, it describes through anecdotes the lives of the doctors in the main battles in which the International Brigades took part, from the defence of Madrid to the retreat from Catalonia. It then follows their lives in the French internment camps of Saint Cyprien, Argelès-sur-Mer and Gurs.

Later, as we enter the Asian continent, the reader is faced with challenges such as how to locate oneself in a vast territory, references to numerous secondary characters, and a word search puzzle of organizations. In addition, it can be difficult to keep track of the tenuous differences between the American, British and Soviet diplomatic games and the possibilist politics of the Kuomintang Republic of China, itself at odds with the Communist Party of China.

These are difficulties that are overcome because the analyses and adventures of these wandering doctors become more and more convincing and interesting. Their chosen lives have led them down dark paths. They are characters following a candle of light in an ideological minefield.

The last two chapters are more enjoyable to read. They take us into the universe of the Cold War where the narrative moves more fluidly. A finale in which the author shows the defects of real socialism, and the successes by which Chinese communism has survived. This last chapter and approach give the volume a lasting depth because it is based on verifiable facts and avoids simplifications and ideological schemes.

Hanna Arendt's phrase "For memory and depth are the same, or rather, depth cannot be reached by man except through remembrance"[23] is projected in Carles Brasó's work. Their lives, now less anonymous, are more than just the leftover crumbs served on the table of history.

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(Written in English by the authors)

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[22] BRASÓ, *Los médicos,* p. 251.

[23] Hannah ARENDT, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961, p. 94.

Eduard Freisler, *Venezuela. Rozklad ráje* [Venezuela. The Disintegration of Paradise], Prague: Media Publishing House, 2022, 296 pp. ISBN 978-80-88-433-11-8.

The journalist Eduard Freisler has been dealing with Latin American issues for years, repeatedly visiting the Latin American countries and offering informed texts to readers. He has, since 2015, paid systematic attention to Venezuela, replacing occasional visits by longer stays and systematic observation of political processes accompanied by a study of their historical roots and broader context. In doing so, he has been able to draw on contacts at every level of Venezuelan society, both convinced supporters of Chávez's twenty-first century socialism and its determined critics, and his book offers the readership an insider's view of a country that a quarter of a century ago was one of the most economically developed countries on the region, but at the same time was paradoxically threatened by its enormous natural wealth, large deposits of bauxite and high-quality iron ore, and then, perhaps most importantly, by the world's largest oil reserves.

Since the Second World War, the share of oil products in Venezuela's foreign trade has steadily increased, a fact that came under criticism in the early 1990s not only from the country's opposition forces but also from a group of soldiers whose leader, Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez, attempted to overthrow the government in an armed coup in 1992. Although he was unsuccessful and ended up in prison, he was released on amnesty, entered political life and won the 1998 presidential elections.

Chávez's admiration for the person and regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba and his program of building socialism then became constants in the economic and political life of Venezuela in the following period, when after nearly two decades of the Chávez regime and his unexpected death, all the economic indicators collapsed, the production of Venezuela's most important oil product fell by a high percentage, its refining was virtually halted by the technical breakdown of the refineries, and the country became dependent on imports of oil products. It is also vitally dependent on food imports, which had been an important part of its exports since colonial times. The army which, with the exception of the dictatorship of Peréz Jiménez, did not have the same position in the country as in other countries in the region, has begun to play an extraordinary role in political and economic life, and the police have become increasingly important, focusing their attention not only on rising crime but also, and especially, on manifestations of public discontent.

Freisler registers all these facts, as well as the negative features of the political development, where Chávez, after winning the democratic elections, seized not only executive power, but also legislative power, whose control he gradually secured by controlling the judiciary. The petrodollars, spent in part on various social programs, then strengthened his position among a section of Venezuelan society and provided him with support in his pursuit of the opposition, whose representatives were prevented by the judiciary from participating in political life. An important part of the economic policy of the regimes of, first Chávez, then Maduro, was the nationalization of a significant segment of industrial and agricultural production, with Cuban advisers in various ministries playing a significantly important role.

Freisler pays a lot of attention to the work of these Cuban experts. He writes not only about advisors to the police and the army, where he attributes to them a major role in actions against the opposition and a disaffected segment of Venezuelan society, but also about the corps of doctors, teachers and sports coaches, where he mentions two poles of their activities. Even if the teachers' activities are accompanied by their targeted ideological action, the improvement of health care and the quality of education, especially in the shantytowns of Venezuelan cities, is also accompanied by benefits for the Cuban regime in the form of financial gain; Cubans working in Venezuela receive only some of the funds paid by the Venezuelan authorities; the other rest is paid to the Cuban erary property.

Freisler's publication is not an analysis of a society where democratic traditions have given way to strong authoritarian tendencies in a relatively short period of time, but a description of the process of the disintegration of a national community into two blocks separated by the different possibilities of access to the conveniences of modern society. This difference is determined by the degree of conformity to the ruling regime. The latter, by controlling all the pillars of power in the state and especially the army and police, secured its existence for a virtually unlimited period of time, as developments after 2015 have shown. Although

the opposition won a relatively free election, it was deprived of its victory by the creation of a parallel body that, with the sanction of the judiciary, deprived parliament of the ability to carry out its mission. The disillusionment of a section of the opposition with developments following the collapse of hopes for regime change after 2015 then led to Maduro's recent strengthening. Freisler not only acknowledges this fact, but directly presents the example of one of the regime's critics resigning his views and accepting a well-honored position in the system, linked, of course, to membership of the ruling political party.

The work not only provides excellent information about the situation in a particular country, but is a definite warning about the processes that may take place not only in Latin American countries; victory in democratic elections may open the way to the establishment of an authoritarian regime, the dismantling of which may be a significant problem in the future, if it is possible at all.

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