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# Indigenous and Minority Populations

Perspectives From Scholars  
and Writers across the World

*Edited by Sylvanus Gbendazhi Barnabas*





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Populations - Perspectives  
From Scholars and Writers  
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Edited by Sylvanus Gbendazhi Barnabas

#### Contributors

Fabian S. Kapepiso, Britney Villhauer, Coro J. A. Juanena, Wilson Zivave, Yusri Khaizran, Vladislav Volkov, Marina Alonso-Bolaños, Clarence St. Hilaire, Abdisa Olkeba Jima, Dominic Mashoko, Constance Nhambura, Olivia Allende-Hernández, Evelia Acevedo Villegas, Norma Martínez, Flavio Juárez Martínez, Jonathan Credo, Jani C. Ingram, Margaret Briehl, Francine C. Gachupin, Eucharía Chínwe Igbaf, Abhishek Bhowmick, Amir Mussery, Bárbara do Nascimento Dias, Marco Anthony Steveson Villas Boas, Gustavo Paschoal Teixeira de Castro Oliveira, Vitor Hugo Nunes Villas Boas

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# Meet the editor



Sylvanus Gbendazhi Barnabas has a Bachelor of Laws degree from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, a Master of Law degree with distinction from the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK, and a Ph.D. in international human rights law from Northumbria University at Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, in 2017. His research focuses mainly on the land rights of indigenous peoples through comparative law approaches based on two theoretical outlooks: legal pluralism and post-colonialism. However, his research was also multi-disciplinary by heuristically touching on anthropology, sociology and history. He obtained his. He is a qualified barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Dr. Sylvanus Gbendazhi Barnabas is currently a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Law at Nile University, Nigeria, where he teaches various modules in law.





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# Preface

Indigenous and minority populations across the world currently face a number of challenges at national, regional and international levels, encompassing a variety of issues, some of which are existential. The significance and gravity of these issues are perhaps the reason why the United Nations General Assembly has adopted two declarations seeking to protect them. These are the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, 1992; and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.

However, issues around indigenous and minority populations across the world transcend their human rights concerns in relation to dominant groups and institutions within the territorial boundaries of the modern states where they currently live. These issues are cultural, anthropological, sociological, philosophical and epistemological, as well as historical. Any scholarly piece of work on indigenous and minority populations is therefore inevitably inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or both.

This book is sub-divided thematically into four sections and seventeen chapters, covering different issues about indigenous and minority populations in different continents. While in some chapters there is no specific geographical location or ethnic group focus, others focus on Africa in general, as well as on states such as Latvia, Costa Rica, Zimbabwe, Namibia, India and Israel. The authors examine issues such as these populations' rights, the significance of preserving their identity and culture, the importance of their traditional knowledge in various contexts, their survival vis-à-vis other dominant tribes and ethnic groups, their challenges and struggles, as well as theoretical and philosophical approaches to studying such issues. Hailing from diverse academic backgrounds, disciplines and institutions located in different parts of the world, they approach the topics from different perspectives.

The academic editor expresses his profound appreciation to IntechOpen for providing him with an excellent opportunity to edit such an interesting and significant book on indigenous and minority populations. The editor is very grateful to the authors for making such significant contributions to this important piece of academic work. The constant help of the Author Services Manager is hereby acknowledged.

**Sylvanus Gbendazhi Barnabas**  
Department of Public and International Law,  
Nile University of Nigeria,  
Abuja, Nigeria



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Section 1

# Indigenous Knowledge

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## Chapter 1

# Indigenous People and the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) in Zimbabwe

*Constance Nhambura*

### Abstract

Indigenous people in Zimbabwe possess a wealth of indigenous resources, which has always sustained them and their preceding generations. Indigenous resources are disappearing at an alarming rate due to exploitation by non-indigenous people. The exploiters of indigenous resources are benefiting from the indigenous resources at the expense of the indigenous communities who own the resources simply because they do not have IPRs. The sustainability of indigenous resources is being compromised by a lack of intellectual property rights (IPR) which accords the indigenous people's right to own and protect their resources. This paper assessed the rights of indigenous people and the initiatives put in place to protect the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples in Zimbabwe. Qualitative descriptive research was used to establish the perceptions, feelings and behaviours of respondents in their natural setting. Interviews and document reviews were used to collect data from indigenous people and IP practitioners. The results indicated that the protection of indigenous people's intellectual rights is quite imperative, hence the urgent need for implementation of the IP policy in Zimbabwe. The study recommends more legal instruments that support the protection and preservation of indigenous knowledge in Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** indigenous people, indigenous knowledge, intellectual property rights, protection, education

### 1. Introduction

Zimbabwe's indigenous people have been underprivileged with the right to their intellectual property. These indigenous people possess a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, which can sustain them and their preceding generations for eternity. The sustainability of their indigenous knowledge and resources is being compromised by a lack of intellectual property rights which accords them the right to own their knowledge and resources [1]. Unfortunately, in spite of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Zimbabwe remains among some countries that are yet to comply with the comprehensive and exhaustive instrument. The transformation of the global economy into a knowledge-based economy where knowledge becomes valuable when recognised and transferable within intellectual

property rights frameworks calls for the protection of the indigenous peoples' intellectual property.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) was established in 2000 as a result of economic globalisation to bring close attention to various kinds of knowledge in different parts of the globe [1]. Deliberations on the intellectual property (IP) issues that arise from the need to protect and access genetic resources, indigenous knowledge and traditional cultural expressions (TCE) were made in the above forum. The existing frameworks for intellectual property rights (IPR) have been anticipated as likely alternative means to protect indigenous knowledge, but the knowledge holders have demanded a legal instrument with a justified ability and authenticity to protect their rights [2]. Indigenous people, globally, have also demanded clarity on the legal systems and traditional leadership's role in the fortification and safeguarding of their knowledge. This approach necessitates the mutual supportiveness of the current measures used for the protection of traditional knowledge and other global systems and practices discussed in various global conventions. Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognises the rights of indigenous people over their traditional cultural expressions, indigenous knowledge and indigenous resources which include their related intellectual property rights [3]. However, the available intellectual property laws is sadly inadequately protecting Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property rights, thus denigrating their relevance in society. The existing laws seem to support inventions and creative works which do not include intangible heritage. Indigenous peoples' intangible cultural heritage, ranges from, traditional songs and dances, knowledge of medicinal plants and environmental conservation, languages, folklore, stories, beliefs poetry, riddles and many more [4]. All this knowledge is their intellectual property which is often treated as belonging to the 'public domain' and is continuously being embezzled by those within the established industry.

For centuries, indigenous people have been marginalised, disenfranchised, isolated and disposed of their ancestral lands. Despite being deprived of their own rights, indigenous people have also been labelled backward and superstitious culminating in the suppression of their religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic particularities. Indigenous people throughout the world have been oppressed and suppressed, and their rights and well-being were ignored [2]. However, a new generation of educated indigenous men and women rose up in the nineteenth century during the course of the civil and human rights movement. Several indigenous organisations were developed in most developed countries such as the United State of America, Canada, Australia, Brazil and many more. The United Nations Conference on the Discrimination of Indigenous Communities held in Geneva in 1977 was the first conference to mobilise indigenous people globally. More than 150 representatives from various indigenous groups attended the conference [2]. This conference laid the foundation for a united coordinated indigenous community through the establishment of a global network that allowed them to lobby for their rights and to present their demands publicly. Indigenous people's demands reached some level where they became noise to the ears of the international community, and they could no longer ignore them. Several international organisations began advocating for the interests of the indigenous peoples and the rights to their intellectual property. The International Labour Organization (ILO) headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, was the first United Nations (UN) body to deal with indigenous peoples' issues in 1929 [4]. ILO Conventions 107 and 169 stipulated several indigenous peoples' rights, including

rights to natural resources and preservation of their languages and culture. The establishment of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) in 2000 to discuss intellectual property issues relating to indigenous knowledge and intangible cultural expressions was a great move towards the solution to indigenous peoples IP issues [2]. However, the indigenous people felt that the existing legal framework was not quite clear on their rights to IP and hence demanded an instrument that recognises the holistic nature of indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights.

## **2. Contextual setting**

Zimbabwe's IPR system can be traced back to 2014 when the country developed its first draft IP Policy with the assistance of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Intellectual Property [5]. Zimbabwe's IP Policy was later produced by the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, with technical assistance from WIPO under the framework of the WIPO Development Agenda [<http://www.wipo.int/ip-development/en/agenda/>] and other stakeholder consultations [6]. On 28 June 2018, the National Intellectual Property, Policy and Implementation Strategy was launched to direct and promote the 'IP generated activities by focusing on managing innovation as well as research and development more effectively among research institutions, tertiary schools, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and individuals' [4].

Indigenous peoples in Zimbabwe have sought recognition of their rights and identities which they have been deprived of since time immemorial. Indigenous people have been responsible for protecting and preserving their culture, religion, natural and sacred resources for years, yet throughout history, their rights have always been violated. Indigenous peoples today are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world despite having their wealth of knowledge and resources [7]. Fortunately, the international community through United Nations and other indigenous organisations have recognised the need for special measures to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life globally [3]. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) defines indigenous/traditional knowledge as 'any knowledge originating from a local or traditional community that is the result of intellectual activity and insight in a traditional context, including know-how, skills, innovations, practices, and learning, where the knowledge is embodied in the traditional lifestyle of a community, or contained in the codified knowledge systems passed on from one generation to another' [6]. The term covers a number of technical fields including agricultural, health, environmental conservation, education and training, culture and many more. The indigenous peoples' intellectual property lies in the fields of agriculture, wildlife management, health and culture [8].

## **3. Problem statement**

Indigenous Peoples are distinct social and cultural groups of people sharing the same ancestral links to their lands and natural resources. They have their own unique way of relating to their environment which is different from the way the other dominant societies do. Indigenous people have distinct characteristics that

make them unique. Despite their social and cultural differences, indigenous peoples globally share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. The rate at which indigenous resources are being exploited and abused by non-indigenous people is worrisome in Zimbabwe. While there is reverence from the international communities for the importance of indigenous knowledge and indigenous resources, there are no binding instruments to protect the knowledge and sacred resources from exploitation. Without a clear and comprehensive legal instrument to protect the indigenous resources, which are the indigenous peoples' intellectual property, there could be continued exploitation of the resources until they completely disappear from the communities.

#### **4. Purpose of the study**

The aim of this study is to assess the rights of indigenous people and the initiatives put in place to protect the indigenous people's intellectual property rights in Zimbabwe.

#### **5. Literature Review**

##### **5.1 The rights of indigenous people and the protection of their intellectual property**

Indigenous intellectual property comprise information, practices, beliefs and attitudes that are unique to every indigenous culture. Removal of traditional knowledge from the indigenous community causes the community to lose control over the utilisation of the knowledge, hence the need for IPRs [5]. Indigenous people have the right to protect their intellectual property, from inappropriate use or misappropriation [9]. The need to protect their traditional knowledge and practices from commercial exploitation has caused indigenous people to seek an audience from international indigenous communities. Some individual researchers, agriculture and pharmaceutical companies are patenting or claiming ownership of traditional medicinal plants which have been used by traditional people for generations. The same also applies to traditional songs and dances, stories, practices and beliefs, to mention just a few. In many cases, such companies, individuals and organisations fail to recognise the indigenous people's right to their own knowledge and deprive them of their fair share of the financial benefits that accumulate from the usage of their knowledge, skills and practices. According to the Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore (ARIPO), the following exclusive rights shall be conferred to the holders of traditional knowledge [6]

- a. rights to authorise the exploitation of their traditional knowledge; and
- b. rights to prevent anyone from exploiting their traditional knowledge without their prior informed consent

Section 19 of the Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore (ARIPO) calls for the protection of expressions of folklore against unlawful acts such as misappropriation, misuse and unlawful

exploitation [6]. The Contracting States are therefore required to provide suitable and effective legitimate and practical measures to protect the indigenous people's intellectual property against unauthorised publication, broadcasting, printing, distribution, public performance, rental, communication and access to their intellectual property. Prior Informed Consent should be sought before such actions are taken [6]. According to the United Nations Declarations on the Right of Indigenous Peoples, Article 31:

1. 'Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literature, designs, sports, and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.
2. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights' [3].

A number of instruments have been developed to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and their intellectual property. Some of the instruments include

- a. the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 169,
- b. the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,
- c. the International Covenants on Economic, Cultural, Social Rights, Civil and Political Rights, and
- d. the draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [9].

'However, the nature of indigenous peoples' intellectual property, which is often inseparable from spiritual, cultural, social and economic aspects of indigenous life, and the notion of collective ownership of such property is not adequately addressed in existing international intellectual property law' ([9], p. 1-2).

## **5.2 Initiatives to protect indigenous peoples' intellectual property**

The establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Generic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore by WIPO members in 2000 prompted an agreement to develop global legal instruments that would provide comprehensive and effective protection for all indigenous knowledge, including intangible cultural heritage [10]. There are various laws available in the conventional IP legal system to protect innovations and inventions but do not address the indigenous knowledge rooted in the minds of individuals and environments and transmitted orally from one generation to the next. There is a need for individual countries to develop their own IP systems (*sui generis*) that are specially designed for the protection of such indigenous knowledge which is orally transmitted [11]. It is also suggested that indigenous knowledge should be documented for easier transmission and patenting, although it is also feared that once the knowledge is available for wider

dissemination and access, there will be greater chances of abuse and misappropriation of the knowledge by foreigners [12].

## **6. Methodology**

A qualitative descriptive research design was used in this study. Qualitative research was used to investigate the lives of indigenous people, including their behaviours, emotions, experiences, feelings, social set up and their relationship with other people, [13]. 'Qualitative descriptive studies tend to draw from naturalistic inquiry, which purports a commitment to studying something in its natural state to the extent that is possible within the context of the research arena' [14]. Interviews and document analysis were used to solicit the views of participants on the protection of indigenous people's intellectual property rights in Zimbabwe. Data were collected from 10 participants, seven indigenous people and three IP practitioners. Participants were selected because of their ability to provide the information relevant to the study [15]. All participants' informed consent was sought before the research began. Participants were told of their ability to draw from the study any time they felt they were no longer comfortable with the study. Participants' confidentiality was also ensured. The results of the study were used for the purposes of the research only.

## **7. Results and discussion**

This section presents and discusses the research findings based on the following themes that emanated from the data collected:

- a. Significance of indigenous resources
- b. The IP policy in Zimbabwe
- c. Initiatives to protect IP rights for indigenous people

### **7.1 Rational for protecting indigenous resources**

Participants were asked how important the indigenous resources were to the indigenous communities in Zimbabwe. All participants agreed that the indigenous resources were should be protected because they define who they are, and they are also their source of livelihood. Participants indicated that indigenous people relied on vegetative resources for their medicines, carpentry, firewood and for their rituals, hence the importance of protecting them for future generations. They indicated that they have their own indigenous ways of protecting their resources, but they have no power to stop foreigners from exploiting them. Some participants revealed that all their life they had been depending on the indigenous resources for survival, and their worry was some of the resources were now scarce because of abuse by foreigners who do not value them the way the owners do. It was also revealed that some indigenous communities were displaced and were relocated because their land was now used for other developmental purposes. Some of the shrubs and trees and roots they use as medicine have been destroyed. The destruction of the trees and shrubs meant that the medicinal plants would not be available again given that some trees and plants are

only found in certain geographical areas and not in others. Their most fear was if the destruction continues throughout the country, there could end up with no traditional medicine at all, hence the need to protect the resources for eternity.

## **7.2 The IP policy in Zimbabwe**

The results from this study indicated that the ZNIPPIS 2018–2022 is yet to be put into action, hence they could not comment on it. However, the respondents applauded the government for taking such an initiative which showed that they were taking the concerns of indigenous people seriously. Although most of the indigenous people prophesied ignorance of the existence of the ZNIPPIS, they were positive that the government would take measures to protect their IP rights. The indigenous people were mostly concerned about the time the government was taking to address their concerns because most of the resources were fast becoming scarce because of abuse and vandalism.

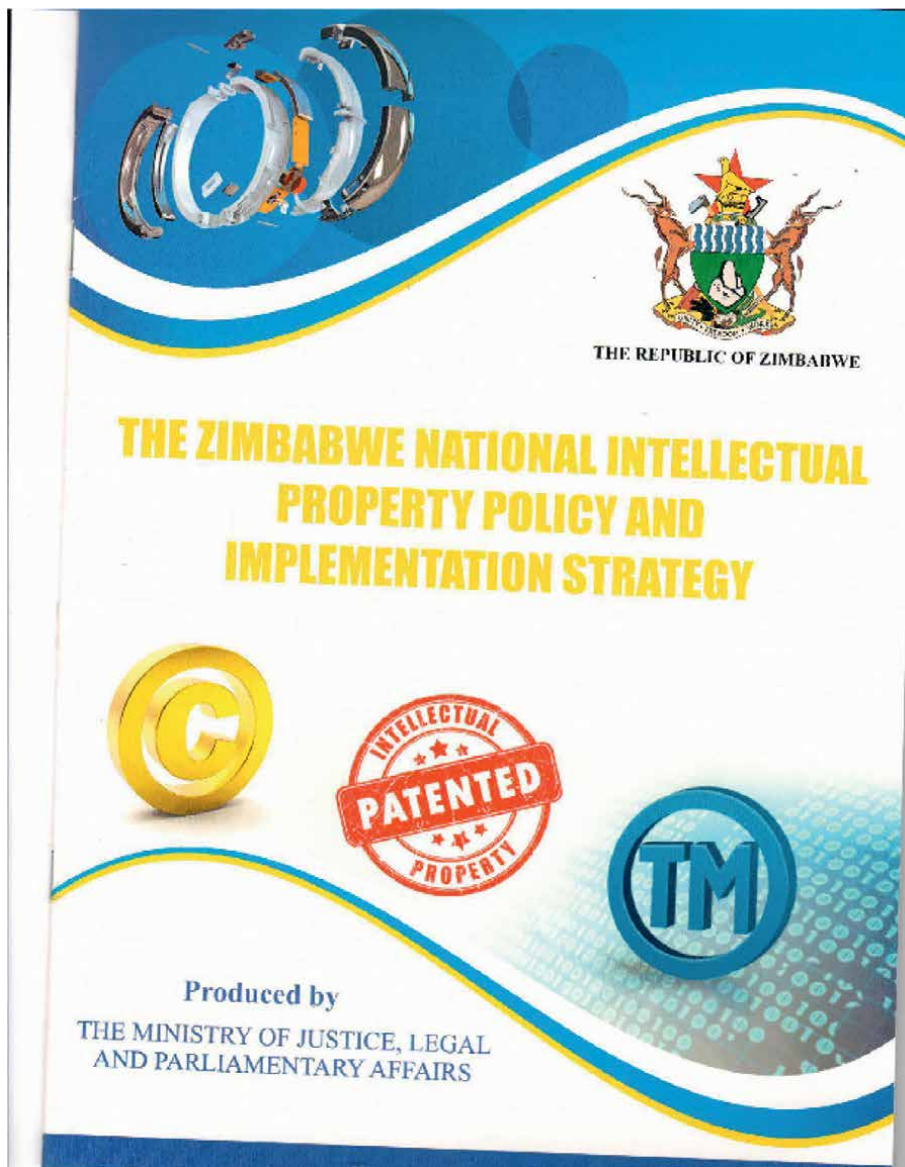
## **7.3 Initiatives to protect IP rights for indigenous people**

It is unfortunate that all the seven participants among indigenous people indicated that they were not aware of any initiatives being taken by the government to protect their IP rights. The respondents from the IP practitioners showed that the development of the ZNIPPIS was a step towards implementing the national IP policy which would cater for the needs of the indigenous people. However, the policy document does not explicitly explain how the intangible cultural heritage of the indigenous communities was going to be addressed in terms of intellectual property rights. On the ZNIPPIS action plan on point 3.4.6(e), the government shall establish a model licensing system for all information products, and it is assumed that indigenous knowledge is part of the information products. Since indigenous knowledge is resident in the minds of individuals, it is not clear how the knowledge would be patented since it is not a creation or invention. It was established that various laws were enacted in Zimbabwe to protect the rights of individuals' creative works, for example, Traditional Medicinal Practitioners Council Act of 1981, Patent Act, Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act and Trademark Act, but the laws do not address the intangible cultural heritage of the indigenous people. Documents reviewed also showed great efforts to protect the rights of indigenous people from international organisations such as the United Nations, WIPO, ILO, UNESCO and many more.

## **8. Conclusion**

The study therefore concludes that Zimbabwe has made strides towards the protection of indigenous people's intellectual property by developing the ZNIPPIS which is yet to be implemented. It is hoped that once the IP policy is fully implemented and operational, all the worries of indigenous people will be addressed. They will be enjoying the economic benefits of their indigenous knowledge.

**Appendix 1. Zimbabwe National Intellectual Property Implementation Strategy 2018–2022**






## **Author details**

Constance Nhambura  
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

\*Address all correspondence to: [c.nhambura@yahoo.com](mailto:c.nhambura@yahoo.com)

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## Chapter 2

# Indigenous Cultural Expressions and Methodological Frameworks: Some Thoughts

*Marina Alonso-Bolaños*

### Abstract

Within the contemporary global world, there appears to be an inevitable lag between the changing factual reality and the concepts and categories scholars use to analyze it, i.e., “indigenous peoples,” “traditional oral expressions,” “ethnicity,” “cultural identity,” and “cultural heritage.” But are these discrepancies insurmountable? This article delves into such mismatches, examining the relentless search for heuristic instruments to deal with the diverse indigenous artistic expressions in their socio-historical and political contexts. It presents some thoughts about the methodological frameworks used to ponder indigenous cultural expressions. The main argument is based on ethnographic research among Zoque and Mayan peoples in the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas in Southern Mexico, while establishing a dialog with ethnographies by other authors on different indigenous regions.

**Keywords:** indigenous peoples of Mexico, contemporary global world, indigenous cultural expressions, cultural identity, methodological frameworks

### 1. Introduction

According to the French historian Marc Bloch, “humans resemble their times more than they do their fathers” [1]. This becomes evident in a variety of ways. Suffice it to observe the range of forms, ideologies, and ideas adopted within contemporary daily life. However, what interests me here are scholars, theoretical discourse, and their social networks. That is, where some such academics search for conceptual frameworks to deal with specific phenomena, others appear to assume the disquieting pretense of living the academic avant-garde through the uncritical accumulation of concepts created for the study of specific cases, but which are considered novel, current, and generalizable. If a given concept or category that presents a solution to the research questions of a scholar is coined by other authors for different contexts, the fact, that they are outside, seems to allow for legitimacy, currency, and validity; if it were different, they would be kept outside academic discussion. At this point, we may recall what Walter D. Mignolo names “traveling theories,” that is, bodies of theory and know-how that move toward other places and that are transformed and transculturated in the process. Their relevance, however, lies in arriving at the critical position from which they are enunciated ([2], p. 246–248).

Sometimes the uncritical course of action that several scholars follow responds to the legitimacy of a Eurocentric discourse, which has provided the core frame for anthropological reflection – as well as that of other disciplines – as Mary Louise Pratt notes. That is, according to this author, there has been a monopolistic use of categories and of “epistemic operations through which the West is strengthened and self-constructed as a single source of generalizable cultural models” [3]. If to this epistemic problem, which Aníbal Quijano has called “the coloniality of knowledge” [4], one may add the fact that “new worlds” never cease to be created ([5], p. 9), the contemporary global world would seem to inextricably guide us toward a lag, as the critical epistemologist Hugo Zemelman [6] has called the mismatch between the factual changing reality and the concepts and categories in which we study it.

Thus, it is appropriate to remember the complexity of the contemporary global world when undertaking research about the types of cultural expression acknowledged as “traditional,” because we either take it for granted or overestimate it by considering it to exist beyond a socio-historic analysis. The context is determined by the market economy characterized, on the one hand, by the flow of communications and people, and on the other, because it creates deep inequalities. Both phenomena have a direct effect on cultural expressions. Therefore, it goes without saying that societies set in motion strategies that allow them to reproduce and modify their diverse cultural expressions – in a broad sense - in the conditions of risk and uncertainty imposed by modernity ([7], p. 133–155). Nevertheless, some scholars consider that these social responses correspond to neoliberalism’s own mechanics, which demand alternative expressions for survival ([8], p. 311–314).

Hence, how do we render accounts of indigenous cultural expressions, within changing contexts and in the interplay between local and global? As researchers are not neutral and possess a site of enunciation, we must build an explanation-understanding that escapes Manichaeism and the overdetermination of the present. For instance, sometimes indigenous societies and their artistic expressions are victimized vis-a-vis globalization, and on the other hand – assuming a quasi-evolutionary perspective -, it is said that it is only valid to think of such societies regarding what they are, given their degree of flexibility and adaptation to the present ([7], p. 11).

Given these stances, we have the obligation of presenting alternative questions, which will guide us toward the understanding of phenomena such as the spectacularization of cultural expressions such as music and the insertion of young indigenous musicians in the industrial music economy, as well as their use of digital technology. Interesting research around this topic is the one undertaken by Héctor López of the *Danza de los Voladores* (dance of the flyers). This is a ritual that comprises a musical-dancing practice of pre-Hispanic origins, which is presently part of the devotional expressions of many indigenous societies ([9], p. 84–86). Some scholars have approached this practice by focusing on the flyers’ ritual process and its centuries-long persistence, in the costumes they wear or in the performative act, but López touches upon the new uses of this ritual in terms of a paid staging. The author claims that this issue marks the actuality of the original Papantla, Veracruz, flyers, a cultural expression of the Totonacapan of the Mexican Gulf Coast ([9], p. 229–247) and probably the most widespread and studied, as it is part of the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Whereas such acknowledgment by UNESCO is of such an importance that it should not be bypassed given its social, economic, and political –and academic in light of the interest it has sprung among scholars - impacts, what it brings to the fore is the

practice of this musical-dancing expression as a means of sustenance for the flyers and the way in which they have entered into the cultural touristic market in search of a more or less steady income. The staging of the flying ritual in fairs, regional gatherings, and tourist spaces has led the performance to opt for a sort of synthesis of the ritual, as well as for the modification of the order or omission of the *sones* (musical pieces), part of the musical-dancing performance.

Without a doubt, we stand before a multidimensional phenomenon that should take economic diversification into account as a characteristic of indigenous people in the contemporary global world and not simply explain the case by resorting to categories of resistance and cultural heritage explaining that, despite tourism and mercantilization of culture, Totonaco people continue to perform their ritual-dance. We would perhaps be simplifying and romanticizing this practice, and we would somehow be speaking for the performers without listening to the local interpretation regarding how and why they have decided to alter certain aspects of the performance.

Equally, seeking to “speak for” the other has been a constant feature – often implicitly – of the praxis of many academics, through which stereotypes about indigenous peoples have been perpetuated. In this sense, we may remember what Spivak asserted about Western academics who have objectified the colonized subaltern, as a voiceless object of study [10]. In the case of studies concerning the cultural expressions of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico, it is important to reframe those features which have changed within their artistic expressions, so as to escape the focus on those believed to inherit direct cultural continuities with the pre-Hispanic past, defined as such in great measure by the cultural and educational politics of the post-revolutionary state [11].

For many years, an interest took hold in determining the ethnic identity of indigenous groups, without considering the narratives of the individuals involved. Ethnic identity has been a fertile field for academic discussion. Nonetheless, this turns out to be ambiguous, often contradictory, and complex territory, with identities emerging that are as mobile as societies themselves. This is so much the case that the values of a people, it has been convincingly demonstrated, are not consubstantial but are instead modeled in self-other interactions with other people-groups through media such as, for instance, the differing clothing that identity adopts makes its substrate even less graspable ([12], p. 287). Hence Miguel Bartolomé warns that “ethnic phenomena only take on their full visibility in the light of the depths of the historical field in which they have developed”; as such, “ethnic identity cannot be reduced exclusively to the contextual manifestations that express it in any given moment” ([13], p. 449).

Let us move on to a different case.

## 2. Legitimacy of the different voices

Many years ago, I met Don Gelasio Sánchez†, a Chima Zoque, in San Miguel Chimalapa, Oaxaca, in Southern Mexico. Don Gelasio was a peculiar character. While he was not a musician himself, he knew all the musical repertoire of the region. He was not a *mayordomo* or part of any ceremonial group, but he knew each one of the ritual phases prescribed for each celebration. According to Don Gelasio, he had forgotten a significant part of the Zoque lexicon, but he was able to communicate in that language to such an extent that, some time ago, an American linguist who was there paid him one peso for each Zoque word he taught her. While I am unable to confirm directly whether or not this happened, what remains true is that, through the years

and the comings and goings of several researchers through San Miguel, Don Gelasio has specialized as a kind of “professional informant,” somebody through which access to other interlocutors could be gained ([14], p. 80–81). I asked him to tell me some local stories about music, the mythical origin of animals, and so on. In brief, I wanted him to tell me Zoque myths. Don Gelasio gladly agreed to help me and gave me an appointment at his house. Before that, he asked me to help pay for a worker who would substitute for him in his milpa while he answered my questions.

Once in his home, my host offered me a chair, sat me by a table, took out a recorder, and played a tape in which, years prior, he had recorded a series of narrations in his own voice. He adjusted the volume of the recorder and left the room. I do not remember for how long I remained stunned before the contraption, listening to stories in his taped voice: “The Story of the Dog,” “The Tortoise,” “The Rook,” the lyric of Isthmus sones (musical traditional pieces). I did not know what to do nor how I felt. Many might think that the most appropriate response was to leave the place feeling offended; others would have thanked Don Gelasio for his time and for having shared his stories. In my case, I tried to see the funny side of could be considered my “hazing” in the Chimalapas.

While I let this episode pass as part of the vicissitudes of fieldwork, I was also drawn toward other analytic possibilities. It became evident that Don Gelasio’s actions were not a reaction to any boredom he may have felt vis-à-vis researchers’ questions and visits; during that period of fieldwork, we shared enjoyable conversations on several occasions. Rather, it was a different issue. Don Gelasio was talking to me on my own terms – or in those which, to his mind, passed as such – because he supposed my logic should be like that of the linguist mentioned above. Besides, he was providing me with the information he thought I wanted to know.

Nonetheless, a sort of “asymmetric imaginary” as Renato Rosaldo ([15], p. 67) calls the power relations presented from the perspective of the subject when there are conditions of social inequality present at each encounter, were at play here. Trained in anthropology, with its methodological emphasis on unmediated, in-person sensory experience, I had underestimated the worth of the recording and of this episode. Was the cassette not, however, another equally valid way of presenting and transmitting part of the oral memory of Chima Zoque people? This was especially the case, if this was a place known, during the last three decades, for suffering deep political crises, conflicts, and tensions between local and regional actors, as well as population displacement and land invasion processes.

The previous ethnographic narrative above deserves methodological attention ([15], p. 63). What would be the worth of recorded words? How do we deal with the fact that we are before the appropriation of “modern” technology by members of a society whose musical tradition we consider to be oral? How do we quote this source? To what idea of substantiation should I refer? Are we prepared in academia to explain this type of phenomenon? We are facing a different form of preservation and transmission of memory but, does it have the same legitimacy as if Don Gelasio would have narrated those stories and if I had taped them then and there? Does “tradition” consist straightforwardly of transmitted information? To the last question, Morin responds that “just because cultural transmission involves an exchange of ideas does not mean that traditions themselves *are* the ideas that their proliferation relies on” ([16], p. 49).

Chima Zoque society has been a site of ongoing agrarian, political, and cultural conflict. Given the complex landscape of the surrounding rainforest, the social sphere of cultural expressions like music often seems to dilute prior agrarian and

political conflicts as well as of quarrels among religious denominations. Nevertheless, there are different elaborations of local musical expressions that exactly respond to their convulsive milieus, that is, they are not only immersed in these, but they are in dialog –so to speak - with them. For example, in Santa María Chimalapa there is a group of “cultural missions” whose aim is to foster Zoque Cultural Expressions or inventions of what is thought would characterize the “Chima Zoque”. In fact, it is enough to translate songs of the national popular repertoire into that language to be considered Chima Zoque musical expressions.

Likewise, in this municipality, there are versatile soloist musicians who perform diverse repertoires, as well as a Catholic Church committee in charge of organizing the adoration cycle for the saints, which foments certain musical traditions. In San Miguel, the other municipal capital of the Chimalapas, there are versatile musical groups that participate in a variety of social spaces, such as the *corridistas*, composers, and performers in the Zoque language, besides a handful of musicians devoted to Catholic rituals. Other religious denominations also carry out their own forms of religious service within which music is relevant, but these types of music are not considered traditional, nor of interest to academics, because they are not part of the Catholic ceremonial calendar. While there is an intention of social control, in anthropological terms, of these types of music –as there is in Catholicism -, their aim, as sacred music, is to create a sense of collectivity and shared identity.

In the Chimalapas there are two non-Catholic Churches: The Seventh Day Adventists and the Pentecostals. Together they group a significant number of believers. In this context, music locally deemed “evangelical” or “Protestant” represents one of the most important and vigorous forms of musical expression. In fact, Protestant worship music is the most listened to and produced musical genre in Santa María. Similar to what happens among many other groups around the world, in the Chimalapas the songs of the gospel are combined with traditional musical practices, such that they became local types of music reproduced in group chanting, contributing to the creation of different levels of local identity. All of the music which results from these processes is considered local and regional when placed beside other types of music. For example, in Yucatan, Vargas-Cetina has shown how the music of Mormon worship is considered just as important as the music of religious domains different from Catholicism [17]. An unyielding defense of traditional kinds of music, only considering those that belong to the practice of Catholicism (the festive cycle and adoration of the saints) has encouraged an oftentimes narrow view of present-day indigenous music. This also constitutes a lag since not all music is documented and studied and, moreover, many are denied as in the case of religious music produced beyond Catholic or traditionalist practice. This is precisely a result of prevailing ideas about what indigenous people-groups and cultural practices “should be,” which result in particular form the *indigenismo* of the post-revolutionary Mexican state, politics toward indigenous peoples, which enforced integration and *mestizaje*, one of whose consequences was the establishment of a stereotype of indigenous identity: an adherence to tradition, a profound religiosity, which connected pre-Hispanic belief with Catholicism, and a resistance to integration within the nation.

There is nonetheless a great deal of musical production in the Chimalapas generated by musical ensembles and soloist musicians devoted to different religious denominations; in fact, one Pentecostal musical ministry consists of a musical ensemble for evangelization campaigns. Their music has a religious character; however, their musicians know the local repertoires because they have played them in other settings. In addition, a commercial repertoire may be performed during

Christian civic events, so long as there is no dancing. The selection is based on local taste and demand: cumbia, salsa, bolero, pop ballads, and *duranguense pasito* are all included. Likewise, there is yet another element that has contributed to the expansion of local taste for these types of music: women may perform them as soloists – as singers or instrumentalists – as opposed to the performance of “traditional” genres, in which women’s participation has long been restricted. Only recently have young women been permitted to play reed flutes or drums, marimbas, and guitars, as well as perform ritual dances.

Thus, the range of Christian evangelical music available in the Chimalapas and in the Tehuantepec Isthmus is remarkable; this is the most popular form of music both at home and in public spaces. There is a considerable production and circulation of compact discs in the region, covering the music of both devout ensembles and soloists of the different non-Catholic religious denominations. Here the presence of women composers and soloists is significant, presenting a sharp contrast with the forms music takes in Catholic milieus, in which the musical sphere is generally masculine.

It is worth mentioning that in many cases Christian evangelical ensembles have displaced traditional ones. This has generated local internal tension not only because of the numbers of people who have changed their religious affiliation but also because, somehow, the new evangelical ensembles signify the integration of regional music into the market system; thus the incomes many had been able to draw from musical activity have been compromised. A consequence of this in turn is that phonogram editing companies, both in Juchitán and in other close localities, such as La Venta, have increased; musicians choose to record because this is the way to advertise their services and be hired.

A worthwhile case to comprehend the peculiarities of Chima contemporary music is that of Pedro Vázquez, from Los Limones, born in 1942. Vázquez’s family had been seventh day Adventists during the last two generations. As a young man, Pedro set up a musical trio together with two friends, which consisted of two guitars and a requinto; they learned to play some isthmus sones acknowledged as traditional, which they spread through home-made recordings: “La Sandunga,” “La Llorona,” “La Juanita,” “La Petrona,” and “Canción Mixteca.”

The Adventist performers rehearse prior to their presentation, whether it be in the church, in a family gathering, or among friends. Sometimes theirs is a non-paid performance, provided that those requesting the performance practice the same religion, as they consider this to be community service and not a paid activity. Thus, musicians caution that they would not be able to play in celebrations of people who practice a different religion. Vázquez notes that “the groups of the pagan world do make a living with music” whereas they [evangelicals] play music because it is a “joy to praise God.” Like Vázquez, other musicians who abandoned Catholicism got to know the traditional repertoire, besides composing corridos and songs about the problematics surrounding mestizo and Zapotec new – in the 1930s and 1980s - *avecindados* (more recently arrived residents, many through having occupied and appropriated land) and playing in bars.

Adventist and Pentecostal composers and performers have taken advantage of the recording studios and musical market to edit their phonograms. Whereas these musicians have more economic resources than their Catholic counterparts, it is not only this which has favored the creation, edition, and dissemination of their production, the social ties they have achieved with members of their Church have also been relevant. In contrast, Catholic and traditionalist musicians consider they have lost



social spaces and significance due to migration, political divides, social disarticulation, and depreciation of “traditional culture” to the advantage of real or fictitious cultural patterns and values from other parts of the country, and to those promoted by various means of communication.

In accordance with señor Emilio López, from Santa María Chimalapa, “to be a good musician one needs love for music. Nothing else.” However, in everyday life, Zoque Chima interpreters and composers observe something else is indeed needed. To begin with, the times of unease under which they live generate a state of permanent distrust vis-à-vis outsiders and official institutions. On the other hand, inhabitants of Santa María think about Chima musical expressions, that “today all that is lost.” Here, drum, whistles, and reed flutes music were part of every important event. For instance, when a house was built or a community building fixed, authorities made sure there was music and that interpreters were “authentically Chimalapa;” equally, the celebratory repertoire for Christmas, weddings, and even burials has stopped being performed. According to Chima Zoques, the conflicts experienced in the forest since the eighties, together with changes in religious affiliation, have only left small fragments of tradition alive.

Currently, those in charge of the church of San Miguel – where the reed flute and drum are safeguarded – invite children to play these instruments together with rattles during Easter celebrations. But more than to generate “music” in the conventional sense, because the memory of the repertoire of this ensemble has not been locally retained, these instruments are used to produce sound at moments in which noise and bustle are required during the celebration.

We could go on with an unending list of musical moments, repertoires, abandoned instruments, and types of music as well as musicians’ biographies. Importantly, the discourse of loss and an ideal past in the Chimalapas leads to novel forms of expression. In fact, it is not by chance that the composer maestro of San Miguel writes musical pieces in order to teach Zoque Language. The titles of some such tunes are: *WaanØ bim angpØn* [Sing your Language], *Bi tØk angjØ’k yom une* [La Migueleña], *Bi Mok Yukpa’g PØn* [The Peasant], and *Bi yangke tsaame* [The English]. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning here, together with Miguel Bartolomé and Alicia Barabas, that currently, linguistic affiliation is not a necessary element to consider oneself Chima, even when it still is a relevant differentiating factor vis-à-vis other societies. For instance, while Chima have had continuous conflict over land with neighboring indigenous Zapotec people, since the Zapotec constitute a dominant group, Chima Zoques have at the same time incorporated and reinvented aspects of Zapotec culture in many cases ([18], p. 238).

A few interpretations of these examples understand broader cultural changes as a cause of identity loss, which put local musical heritage at risk. Or, in contrast, this transformation is dignified as if it were a straightforward result of musicians’ or people’s willingness and agency to bring about creative change and “become modern” as a form of resistance, especially given the symbolic transformations that these changes facilitate. Both analyses are valid but limited; we are then inclined to favor critical anthropological thought from which to offer different explanations or, at least, as a framework to pose pertinent questions. In that regard, a possible helpful viewpoint emphasizes the power relations intrinsic to all societies insofar as tension among subjects, conflict, and dispute are conceptualized according to heterogeneity of collectivities, understanding these acts within given locally accepted conceptual frameworks and practices, from which ethnic groups derive their sense of who they are ([19], p. 203).

### 3. Searching for “new” cultural indigenous expressions

The first time that I made a trip to the northeastern part of Chiapas, I was aiming to get to know a region that had been affected by the eruption of the nearby Chichomal volcano in 1982. Back then, I and the ethnologist colleagues with whom I took the field trip were worried about the question of “identity” and “interethnic relations”; I was particularly interested in “indigenous music.” The “reality” of the towns I visited during that trip was overwhelming in terms of what “the” Zoque people had to offer me as a possible research topic, beyond the dismay that their poverty and marginality provoked in me. I was attracted by a series of elements such as the Zoque’s ways of remembering the eruption; the role of musicians in mediating local conflicts and power struggles; the food; the milpa; the pathways people trod through the landscape; the readiness of people to talk and share their stories. Hence, I returned, again and again, many more times.

Throughout that trajectory I got to know several people; I stayed in their homes, had many, many deep conversations, and left some connections in the “field” aside because, wrongly, I thought that as I was interested in “traditional” music, I should not establish contact with the non-Catholic population. Therefore, I lost the opportunity to have a relationship with the Catholics’ “others” (although researching as a nonbeliever, ultimately these interlocutors were equally as “other” to me as Catholics themselves).

Furthermore, the choice of a research problem to investigate – with the level of individual preference and constrained practical possibilities this implies – may predetermine the individuals involved. One thus runs the risk of fracturing knowledge before we begin. My interest in music led me to establish initial relationships with musicians and practically only with them, leaving aside whole groups of people. Initially, I did not approach their wives and children; by the same token, I even placed myself, without noticing, in closer proximity to older than to younger people.

Years later, my institution, the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) initiated the National Project of Ethnography of Mexican Indigenous Peoples (PNERIM, acronym in Spanish), in which I participated as a researcher. Together with several colleagues, I formed part of the “Chiapas team.” I spent some periods of fieldwork in other regions and, once more, in the Zoque area. Reflecting on discussions within the PNERIM and subsequent visits to the different Zoque localities, I realized that, when it came to “choosing” my research subjects, I had not considered the younger population of these fieldworkers’ towns, even when they make up the most vulnerable group in different areas of local and regional life, specifically regarding access to land. At the same time, a reflexive approach began to take hold within the PNERIM more broadly, in which researchers started to question our roles as academics both in documenting the indigenous populations’ lived experiences and in developing potential collaborations with them – even if the latter idea more an intention than a reality. At the very least, there now exists a greater effort to understand-interpret whom we are talking to and of whom.

Zoque musicians in Chiapas have explicit concerns regarding their role in a constantly changing social context, in a society that is spatially and territorially moving, and which demonstrates itself to be highly open to the music of others. Zoque musicians assert that “the *cowa* (traditional Zoque drum) has a spirit” and that playing it links them to their ancestors. Nevertheless, they also ascertain that “we see how our culture is modifiable.” Some others express a different type of discourse: “I am not

interested in dances. They will not produce any money. I want to go to the university [...]. I want to have my own car,” remarks a young man from the Selva Negra in Chiapas. By contrast, other young people, responding to these words, state: “If you break with your origins, if you break with those who know the music and dancing tradition, you are lost.”

This last testimony represents the parable of the discourse in defense of traditional knowledge. But beyond that, we are confronted with the meaning that the collectivity bestows on its existence ([20], p. 35), such that the new musical proposals are not esthetically illegitimate for these subjects; rather, they constitute processes of adaptation within the sound discourse appropriate to new social contexts. We may not, therefore, conceptualize these transformations in terms of a principle of straightforward linear causality in which music evolves toward “modern” forms.

Therefore – by the bye – the dichotomy of tradition/modernity is not useful because both categories are not mutually exclusive as result of the same historic processes [11, 17]. Consequently, its use must be presented in a critical way; we are obliged to refuse any simplification of the complex interlapping practices that constitute the current indigenous musical world. That is, in the terms described by Mignolo, the importance lies not in what is thought as such, but in the positionality from which, and time in which, one is thinking ([21], p. 22). Processes of musical creation are linked to collective memory and, therefore, are dynamic, consistent with new realities, and characterized by the coexistence of several distinct musical traditions. Thus, several young people of Zoque background, of the Sierra de Pantepec in Chiapas, have created a ska group called “la sexta vocal” (the sixth vowel) – a reference to the vowel *ü* which exists in the Zoque language. One of this band’s pieces is called *cowatayu* (drums) as a reference to the musical ensembles of these instruments, used in a wide traditional repertoire. Their first recording was called *O’de mambuxü* (Zoque dream), a name which references the importance of oneiric expression in the life of Zoque people who live in the foothills of the volcano El Chichonal.

The interpretation usually arrived at by the scholars who study youth musical movements in Chiapas – especially those situated in the Los Altos region – is centered on ideas about youth, modernity, about a generational gap; resistance, identity, and hybridity; so-called “Indigenous modernities”; and amid the cultural influence of an ambiguous, stereotyped West. These things, supposedly, are opposed to indigenous cultural expressions. It is often said, for example, that use of and access to technology serve to distinguish what is not indigenous culture, which is in turn presumed to be archaic rather than “modern” ([22], p. 27). In this sense, it is worth mentioning recent discussions about indigeneity and modernity among first peoples in other contexts, such as the texts assembled by Levine and Robinson on the topic of music and modernity among first peoples in the United States and Canada. Arguing for the existence of multiple and diverse modernities, Levine and Robinson contend that “the idea of juxtaposing the word modernity with indigenous or first peoples infers a sort of incongruity [...] as if native peoples cannot be at once indigenous and modern.” From an indigenous perspective, they are always modern ([23], p. xiii–xiv). Indigenous musicians employ technologies in their compositions, “and their works are Native” ([23], p. xiv).

Facing these issues, we may ask ourselves: is it helpful to talk about a “youth” category in such a context, or is this a category that we impose from a certain outside perspective about what, in our experience, constitutes the “stages” in the social life of an individual? Does there exist a cultural (social, political, and economic) way of “being Zoque” that allows us, in turn, to construct other meanings of “being

young” on the basis of these indigenous people’s experiences of their own lives? In light of these questions, I would question whom it is that we see as “indigenous” and as “young,” and whether the (evidently colonialist) concept of “indigenous music” operates to account for the socio-cultural configurations we actually encounter in our research. Given the foundational status of “indigenous music” within Mexican ethnomusicology, it is indispensable to approach this concept with critical intent.

These queries are related to the fact that scholarship may indirectly feed stereotypes; for instance, in scholars’ surprise at being confronted in the field with “new” cultural aspects, and newer generations of anthropologists’ refusal to restrict themselves to what is considered traditional, within a democratic paradigm in which all fields and phenomena are judged worthy of anthropological analysis ([5], p. 9). What is surprising is the astonishment of some colleagues about the recent turn to “urban” musical expressions, given that Urban anthropology began to bear root since the 1930s. Even within this change of scholarly focus, however, it is considered that the urban, the city, must constitute the sphere of novelty, of newness, of the modern. This is part of the agonizing career toward feeling current, “modern”; the overvaluing of what is “modern” and “global” determines a certain pathway of knowledge.

Such is the case of ethno-rock groups of Los Altos in Chiapas like Sak Tsevol or Vayijel [guardian animal], and Lumaltok, who contend that to play rock “is to preserve identity in a multicultural world.” But furthermore, some scholars have praised these types of music, astonished by their “Indigenous modernity” and use of technology – implying stereotypes concerning modernity, and defining the new in opposition to the old as if societies occupied successive evolutionary stages. These attitudes imply that Tsotsil and Tzeltal youth are somehow less “modern,” in turn reinforcing Eurocentrism and the fetishization of the West as a unique civilizing model, as if Western paradigms for knowledge production exist at the center, and dismissing or marginalizing the knowledge of African or indigenous Peoples ([24], p. 4).

Despite the support, these ensembles have obtained from public institutions and academia – and the support the latter has tended to give to syncretic Catholic traditions over and above other religious denominations – in Chiapas, there is a Christian musical movement based on ethno-rock. Alan Llano has documented some Christian musical groups formed by indigenous musicians who inhabit the margins of San Cristobal de las Casas. These groups perform a combination of praising music and Christian worship performed in Tzeltal and Tsotsil, in agreement with the cultural and musical movement ([25], p. 129) called “ethno-rock” or ethno-rock Maya Tsotsil by their managers and academia, while social actors call this *bat’si rock* or *Tsotsil rock*.

#### **4. Final thoughts: critical visions**

Many researchers of cultural expressions are interested in processes through which indigenous identities in the contemporary global world are transformed and re-forged. Whereas the possibilities for making theory and having results are multiple ([6], p. 9), the rhythm of social reality is not the same as that of conceptual construction, says Zemelman, and at this point, we return to the idea of “lag,” which references how we use concepts “thinking they have a clear meaning, and they do not. This presents the need for a constant re-signification [...] which is also a fundamental task of the social sciences” ([6], p. 1). Concepts that were coined in or for other contexts ([6], p. 2) – such as traditional or tradition, nontraditional, modern, and the idea itself of indigenous music, orality, change, continuity, identity, costume, resistance,

patrimony, world vision, and musical culture – are sometimes used without “second thoughts” [6].

For instance, we sometimes use the notion of musical culture to refer to a traditional repertoire in specific geographies, in brief, to the music of “others.” Power relations are inherent to processes of musical creation, and it is interesting, for example, that sometimes our interlocutors have appropriated these notions, resignifying them or incorporating them within strategic heritage discourses for negotiation with government institutions. This recalls what Linda Tuhiwai Smith has documented among the māori in New Zealand, for whom the notion of the “researcher” embodies a *persona non grata* – somebody to distrust, in the knowledge that research does not constitute an innocent or disinterested academic exercise, but one which both operates within and perpetuates certain political and social conditions ([26], p. 22).

My intention is not to exhaust this discussion within this chapter, nor to reduce it, but to present an invitation for critical reflection on the existing analytic topography of indigenous cultural expressions – if we can term them as such. Likewise, I have sought to highlight the relevance of updating, reflecting, and contributing to the scientific debate about theoretical and methodological paradigms that have underpinned the study of traditional types of music. I have dealt in particular with the analysis of that which we have called “indigenous music” in the complex contemporary world; it seems important to me to mention the fact that there is no inclusive debate around the diverse perspectives nor of the diverse social actors – evidently, the musicians themselves – that address the issue of music as a part and consequence of societies in constant transformation. The idea itself of indigenous cultural expressions constitutes another form of mismatch facing the great complexity and diversity offered by the musical expressions of contemporary indigenous people.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that ethnographic work continues to be vital to understand the differentiated contexts in which artists perform. Therefore, beyond turning to the epistemologies of the global South to decolonize knowledge, I would like to stress the need to build an ethnography from “below,” which not only includes the “Other” – that has been done – but an ethnography that will build together with those subjects present in our study regions. Then we may see how indigenous and modern memories confront one another; and the extent to which these epistemes may resonate together.

This constitutes the construction and nourishing of languages in common. Ethnography thus understood could solve this competition to be continuously updated, because factuality should lead us to the creation of ad hoc concepts and categories in a critical way. This should also work toward situated knowledge [27] and a concern for reflexivity; continuously questioning researchers’ roles, in recognition of the fact that reflexivity is an epistemological problem that lies in the way knowledge is created, and in who the subjects with whom we are creating a possible dialog are. In sum, we aim not only to disseminate knowledge but to co-construct it.


## **Author details**

Marina Alonso-Bolaños  
Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, Mexico

\*Address all correspondence to: [cenizadevolcan@gmail.com](mailto:cenizadevolcan@gmail.com)

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## Chapter 3

# Indigenous Farming Knowledge as a Tool for Addressing Global Warming: A Case Study of the Bedouin in the Negev Arid Highlands – Water Catchments Construction

*Amir Mor-Mussery*

### **Abstract**

In the previous century, the Bedouins a nomadic people who migrated all over the Arab peninsula with their herds began to settle in villages, one of their settlement areas is the Negev highlands. While the younger generation searches for similar occupations as the surrounding urbanized Israelis, the adult ones in many cases sustain their traditional farming practices. In many cases these practices are not profitable and not sustainable, nevertheless, these practices are based on long-term experience in arid terms. Until recently the municipalities did not invest money and efforts to collect this knowledge and render it a sustainable and profitable one. A mission that became crucial not only due to the adults aging and the risk that this knowledge will be lost but due to the rapid transition of un-arid regions into arid or desertified ones worldwide that requires suitable farming practices. Hereby the scheme of acquiring this knowledge from the Bedouin farmers, designing sustainable and profitable solutions, managing the cultivated lands, and analyzing with them the outcome will be described together with samples from the Negev highlands. This chapter will focus on water catchment construction, which became a crucial requirement for sustainable agriculture due to the increased intensity of the rainfall event worldwide.

**Keywords:** Indigenous farmers' knowledge, Bedouin of the Negev highlands, water catchments on wadis, global warming, water catchments construction

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Indigenous farmers**

Clusters of indigenous population settlements worldwide are located in marginal lands, which are characterized by low fertility, incised lands, and suffering from climate

extremes, that the indigenous populations were pushed aside into them during the years [1, 2]. Nevertheless, the long existence of the indigenous populations in such areas enforced them to suit their agricultural cultivations to these terms until it became part of their life cycle. In many cases, these cultivations are traditionally utilized even after the terms were changed and these cultivations became unsustainable and unprofitable leading the authorities to treat these cultivations as improper ones. The recent years with a focus on 2021 and 2022 were characterized by climate extremes, such as long droughts, which are characterized, in many cases, by high-intensity rain events [3], bushfires, and intensive trophic storms that cause damage to public and personal infrastructure and even to human life. Additional damage, which is less discussed, but with broad effects that may be in many cases prolonged, is the damage to agricultural facilities expressed by massive soil erosion, land incision, and collapses that can lead at the end an area to a lack of ability for further agricultural utilization and desertification [4, 5]. This state arising the need to design cultivations and land management practices suited to extreme climatic and land terms. An important source of knowledge, still poorly studied, is the indigenous farmers existed one [6, 7]. Hereby, the research process and findings of recent studies dealing with land modification of wadis areas suited to wadis area of the Negev highlands using collected Bedouin knowledge will be described.

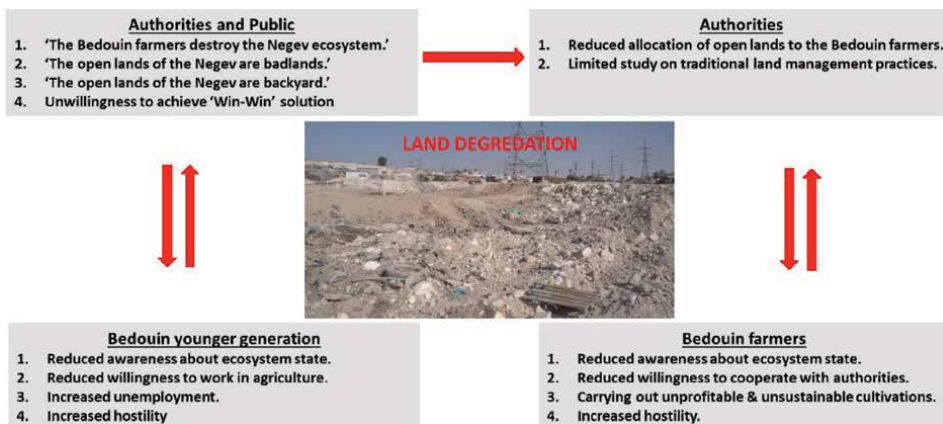
## **1.2 The Bedouin in the Negev highlands**

Until the previous century, Bedouin tribes used to migrate with their herds between rangelands along the Arabian Peninsula and Mediterranean region, characterized by wadis landscape, flooded plains, gullied loess plains, and dunes acquiring knowledge about arid rain-fed and flood water irrigated agriculture, grazing, and cereals breeding in such areas [8, 9]. In the second half of the 20th century, part of the Bedouins settled in towns, which the municipalities built for them such as Hura, Lakia, and Rahat, while the other part settled in informal settlements, also termed: the Bedouin diaspora of the Negev. Recently, the municipalities encourage the population of the Bedouin diaspora to settle in touristic-agricultural villages. Such settlement is based on a village with allocated areal units per each Hamula (big family characterized by internal marriage correlations, composing the tribe) for carrying out its traditional farming practices, such as grazing and rainfed cultivations. Such design, as planned, will attract tourists from Israel and abroad and supply additional income to the residents [10].

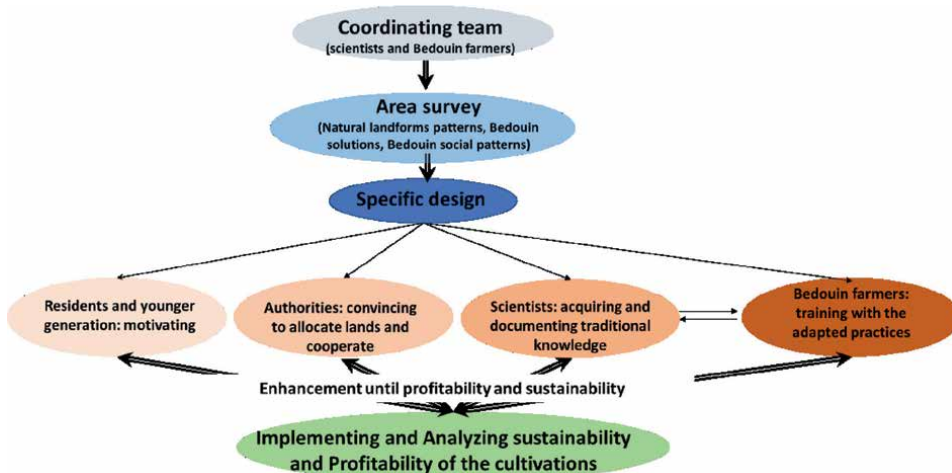
Studies with Bedouin farmers are highly challenging. The first challenge of such studies is the interaction with the indigenous Bedouin farmers. Unfortunately, the core pattern of the correlation between the Bedouin farmers and municipalities is distrust, which is resulted from misconceptions or half-trues that the Bedouin destroy the Negev highlands. In addition, the authorities treat the Negev highlands as a backyard as expressed by spreading construction waste over a wide part of its open lands leading to changes in the topography and the land hydrology [8, 11]. The Bedouin youth due to these reasons and the lack of profitability in cultivation, or agriculture utilization as an example for grazing, enhance land degradation by carrying out improper land management practices, as summarized in **Figure 1**.

To 'break' this 'loss-loss' state and achieve an alternative sustainable and profitable land management utilization, a scheme was designed aimed to encourage the Bedouin farmers to contribute their knowledge and cooperate with the project coordinating team (**Figure 2**).

The first step was analysis of the area, which is the Negev highlands. Therefore surveys all over the Negev indicated the following main agricultural Bedouin



**Figure 1.**  
 The current loss-loss state between the public, municipalities, Bedouin adults and younger generation, and the land state [8].



**Figure 2.**  
 The scheme of acquiring traditional Bedouin knowledge from the farmers, designing a rehabilitation scheme for wide areas, sustainable and profitable utilization, and implementing it in-field.

landform designs in the Negev are gully terraces using check dams, which will be exemplified by the study in PWA (Hura), and Elwashla family (El-Sir village); Hillslope terraces, which will be exemplified by the wadi Shualim (Yeroham) and Rahma foothill project; Flooded plain modeling into MAR (Mange aquifer recharge) area, which will be exemplified by El-Freijat (Rahma village); and wadi banks reclamation by small ruminants herding, Yeroham ephemeral stream.

## 2. Gully reclamation using check dams, PWA study

PWA (rectangular plot, sized 45 ha centered around Lat. 31°16'20", Lon. 34°56'17") is located in the Northern Negev in Hura municipality land on an area that statutory belonged to ILA (Israel Lands Administration) and was leased to Project

Wadi Attir association for constructing a sustainable agricultural utilization in the Negev for the Bedouins ([www.sustainabilitylabs.org/wadiattir/home](http://www.sustainabilitylabs.org/wadiattir/home)).

## **2.1 Interacting with the local Bedouin farmers**

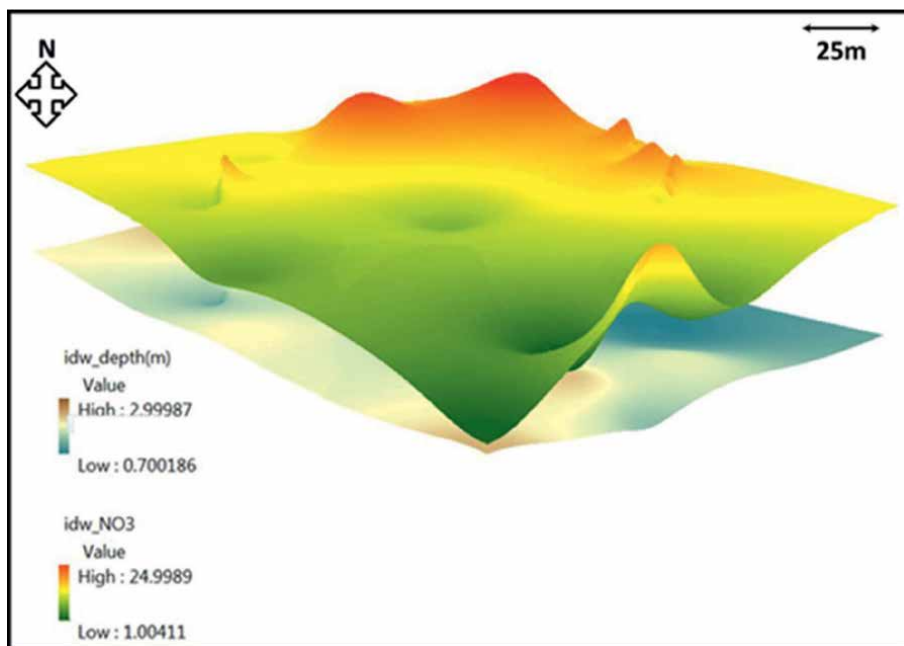
Parallel to the PWA farm establishment, several actions were carried out to interact with the local indigenous farmers for encouraging them to contribute their traditional knowledge to the project. As an example, old Bedouin women guided a course for unemployed ones in Hura on the way of making traditional Bedouin cheeses, a knowledge that was integrated at the end into a modern dairy on the site. The second example refers to collecting ethno-botanic knowledge from local Bedouin Sheikhs (the religious Bedouin leaders) of local aromatic plants. This knowledge was used for commercial breeding that is managed by one of the sheiks, a nomination that was used additionally to encourage his participation [12]. The third example refers to area rehabilitation. The main reason that PWA belongs to ILA and no farmer claims ownership of it was its extremely degraded state is expressed by a dense net of gullies that prevents its' cultivation. The soil is loess and the Bedouin used to construct dams over the crossing gullies from the local soil, and waste to enable partially agricultural utilization. Nevertheless, this solution enhances in many cases the land incision [13].

Previous studies indicated the positive influence of tree plantation on area stabilization [14]. Therefore, the project managers consult with the local Bedouins on preferred trees and shrubs that may suit a plantation in the rehabilitated gullies that were bred in a unique nursery at Hura. One of the Bedouin farmers was nominated to manage it.

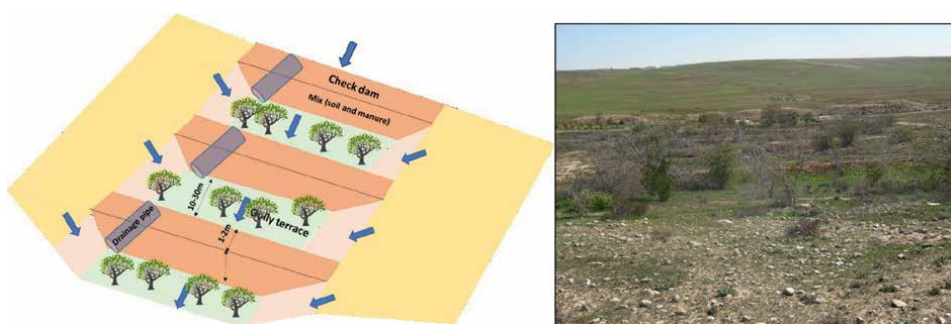
## **2.2 Survey of the area**

The hydrological experience of the Bedouin farmers, which was achieved during the years of existence in these extreme arid terms, is highly important for designing the rehabilitation plan of the area, nevertheless, this knowledge is partial, cannot be calibrated, and cannot be digitized on a geographic coordinates system for further analysis and for designing a rehabilitation plan. Therefore, the areas of study were air photographed in high-resolution mode n using a drone or unmanned plane together with the heights over Above Sea Level (ASL) to form a Digital Elevation Model (DEM) map and orthophoto [15]. PWA is characterized by highly incised land that is expressed by a multi-landform landscape. Therefore, in addition, the land fertility and stability were characterized by 3D maps that were calculated based on ~30 drilled bore-holes over the site of study using kriging (ArcGIS® Pro.) (**Figure 3**).

Based on the Bedouin knowledge and scientific data, chains of checked dams were constructed along the crossing gullies aimed to absorb the floodwater from the surroundings, prevent soil erosion and stabilize the area (preventing further incision). Based on the Bedouin advice in each soil rampart manure from adjacent small ruminants' enclosure was added as bio-cementation [17]. The width of the confined area between the check dams, which is termed: the 'gully terrace', was determined based on the Bugeat formula [18]. Over the gully terraces, surface a mix of savanna trees and ones that were bred in the Bedouin nursery were planted. Inside the dam at a height of 1 m, a drainage pipe was laid to drain out the excess water that may be accumulated inside the gully terrace and may lead to the check dam collapse (**Figure 4**) [19].



**Figure 3.** 3D map of soil Nitrate content and soil depth in PWA (7/2013) important survey in the initial state of each rehabilitation survey [16].



**Figure 4.** The checks dams' design in PWA, which is based on the integration of the indigenous Bedouin knowledge and scientists' analysis. Blue arrows—water flow direction.

### 2.3 Designing rehabilitation scheme for sustainable cultivation

The collected data was analyzed and integrated with scientific ones by experts for designing the water catchments, which are suited to PWA and Rahma-Yeroham sites. The construction of the water catchments was carried out by the project managers and the nominated Bedouin farmers not only to increase their willingness to cooperate in the projects but also as an additional way to acquire from them the traditional knowledge that may be integrated with the project and further ones [20, 21].



**Figure 5.**  
*Elwashla olive orchard in the wadi of El-Sir village.*

## **2.4 Maintenance and monitoring profitability and influence on the ecosystem**

Farm maintenance is carried out by the incorporation of the initiators and local Bedouin delegates and the farming activities by employees from Hura to raise their awareness of sustainable land management practices. The profitability is determined by a wide range of economic tools [22], fertility by chemical measurements [23], and land stability by manual and satellite imaging [24]. The finding was used to suit the cultivation regime to the current terms. The cultivations and measurements, based on the study narrative, are carried by the local farmers. Still, dozens of years after completing the gully terraces construction, the employed Bedouin farmers on the farm are using in many cases unsustainable land management practices such as inadequate tillage and manure spreading due to inherent traditional customs.

## **2.5 El-Whashle, El Seer village**

An additional example of agricultural utilization of gully terraces located in a wide wadi is the Bustan of El-Whashle hamula in El-Seer village adjacent to Dimona municipality (a rectangular area, centered in 31°5'45"25N, 34°58'39"89E, sized 3 ha). The gully terrace was constructed by bordering the wadi in the middle of the village with soil ramparts of 1.5 m in height and width and letting the drained water from the open and settled areas in the north and south sides irrigate it [24]. The area was planted with 100 olive trees in 2019 and aimed to analyze the influences of traditional Bedouin Bustan on the ecosystem. The trees were uprooted and replanted due to disagreements with other El-Seer residents and governors, which indicates the importance of taking care of positive kin relationships between the Bedouin Hamulas for successive rehabilitation by the land managers (**Figure 5**).

## **3. Hillslope Bedouin terraces, Rahma-Yeroham site**

The second study site is located in the open lands of Rahama a Bedouin touristic-agricultural village and the adjacent Yeroham municipality [10]. The methodology of these study stages will be discussed in detail as case studies.

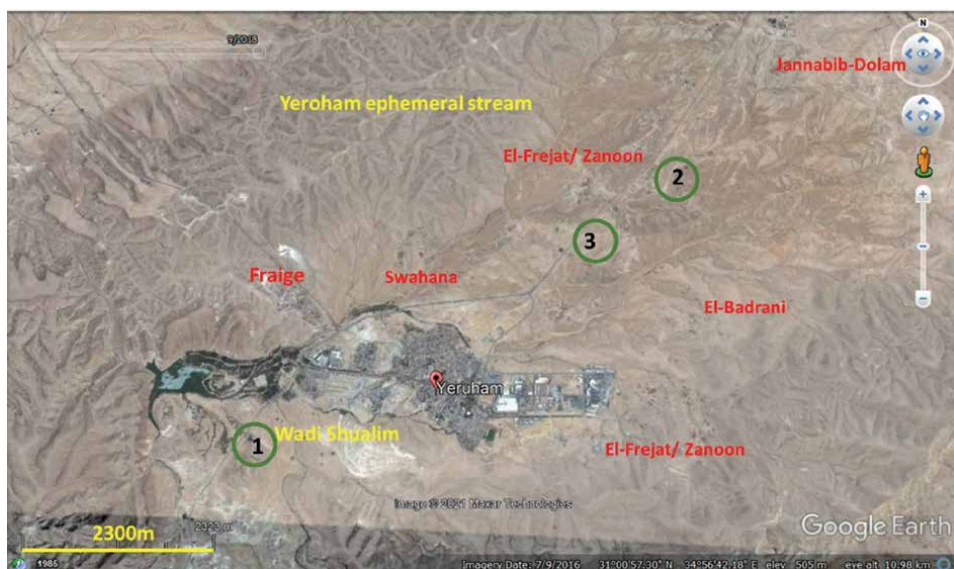


### 3.1 Interacting with the local Bedouin farmers

The Bedouins in Hura can be defined as urbanized, therefore the formation of communication with them was relatively easy. In Rahma-Yeroham it was more challenging due to the spread Hamulas settlement and the reduced communication between them and even the people inside the Hamula. Therefore, to communicate with them, we first map the Hamula settlements in the area, secondly, study the kin interrelations in the Hamulas, Thirdly, form unofficial communication with the Hamula heads through their hosting rituals [25], and only then isolate the ones who wish to cooperate and contribute knowledge. The hamuals in Rahma-Yeroham site and the sites of study are presented in **Figure 6**.

### 3.2 Survey of the area

Rahma-Yeroham site demonstrates an additional and important pattern of the Bedouin farmers, which relates to knowledge acquired by them from the existence of ancient agriculture systems. It seems somewhat unreasonable due to the extreme climate terms, but evidence all over the Negev highlands indicating intensive agriculture utilization which is dated to the Roman (63 BCE–324 CE), Byzantine (324–638 CE), and Early Islamic (638CE–1099CE) eras. More than that, new measurement instruments indicated even an earlier utilization that is dated even to the Late Bronze age (3300BCE–1200BCE) and the Iron age [26, 27]. The Bedouin farmers reclaimed part of these ancient agriculture systems, constructed new ones aside from the ancient ones, or used the blocks for their own farming (termed also: ‘Secondary utilization’ [28]). Therefore, to get a comprehensive insight into the land’s potential agricultural utilization and the hydrological patterns, the area was photographed using an unmanned plane, and then the plots of interest (Bedouin and ancient facilities), were analyzed in-field (**Figure 7**).



**Figure 6.**  
*The hamulas in Rahma-Yeroham area and the site of study.*



**Figure 7.**  
*Bedouin agricultural dams and their integration with ancient agricultural facilities, Rahma open lands.*

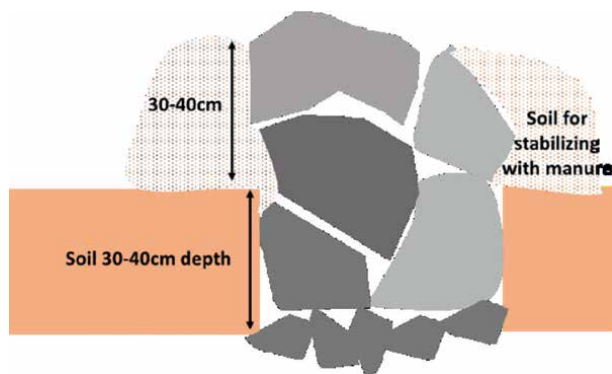
In Rahma-Yeroham site the soil and the topography differ from the ones in PWA. While in PWA the landscape is hilly loess plains, in Rahma-Yeroham the landscape is mountains and the soil is in the interface of loess, calcite (bedrock), and sand [9]. Therefore, based on the ancient ruins and the Bedouin experience, the project managers decided to rely their rehabilitation scheme on rocky dams and retaining walls. While in PWA the construction of the check dams was carried out using heavy machinery, in the Rahma-Yeroham site the construction of the rocky facilities requires manual labor. Therefore, one of the study goals was to determine the required amount of manual labor, nevertheless to minimize it by using machinery that will not damage the landscape and ecosystem. The project in Rahma-Yeroham is being carried out in two stages. The first site over wadi Shualim (Basin size is 24 km<sup>2</sup>, centered in Lat. 30°95'86"N, Lon. 34°92'42"E, radius 2.4 km, western aspect) subjected to analyze the influences of the constructed retaining walls on the hydrological functioning of the existent Byzantine terraced system. The retaining walls were constructed by three courses, the lower one, which composes of rock segments sized 20–30 cm was laid at the bottom of a dug slot 30–40 cm depth. Then rock segments sized 30–40 cm were laid with their wide edge outside the wall in two vertical units, and between them, rock segments smaller than 10 cm were laid over the wall space for filling. From both sides, local soil was poured aside for stabilization (**Figure 8**) [13].

The two constructed retaining walls and their integration with the ancient terraces system are presented in (**Figure 9**) [27]. The finding indicates that in addition to increased agricultural utilization of the area, reclamation of a wider terraced area may contribute to the area's stabilization from soil erosion and incision [29].

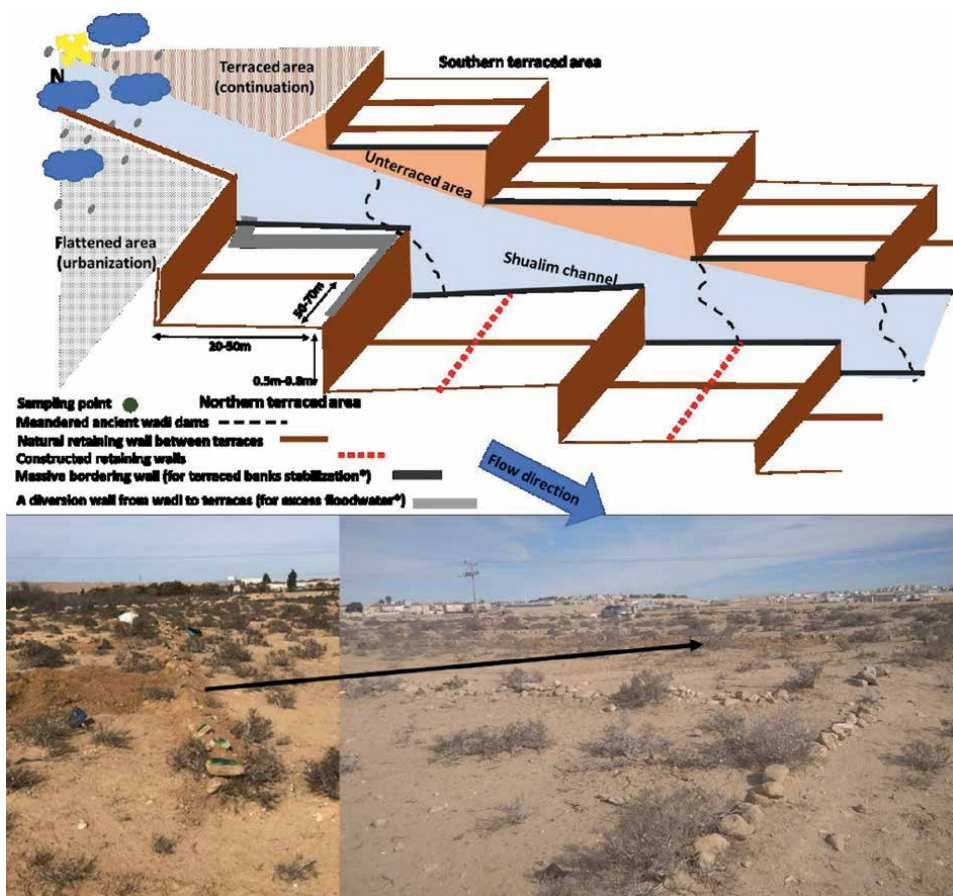
### **3.3 Designing rehabilitation scheme for sustainable cultivation**

The second stage became feasible in 2022 only after the regularization of Rahma statutory state [29]. Its' design is based on the finding of stage one. Along the area contours of a highly incised slope on the lower part of Rahma, rock terraces will be constructed from rock segments. These terraces will cross the gullied area with two active gullies east–west located. Therefore, the parts, which cross the gullies will be composed of two vertical units: the vertical unit downstream, will be composed of massive rocks with a 0.4–0.5 m radius subjected to reduce the water flow intensity in



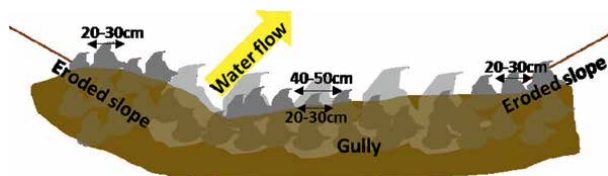


**Figure 8.**  
 Schematic description of courses in the constructed retaining wall in Shualim wadi.



**Figure 9.**  
 The integration of the constructed retaining walls with the ancient (Byzantine) terraced system of Shualim wadi.

the gully, while the upstream unit will be composed of rock segments sized 0.2–0.3 m subjected to prevent the soil runoff through the gully. In the remaining incised area, the rocks courses will be similar to the ones in Shualim wadi (Figure 10) [30].



**Figure 10.**  
The terrace courses over the gullied area in Rahma foothill site.



**Figure 11.**  
Rahma foothill site that subjected to reclamation by rock segment terraces.

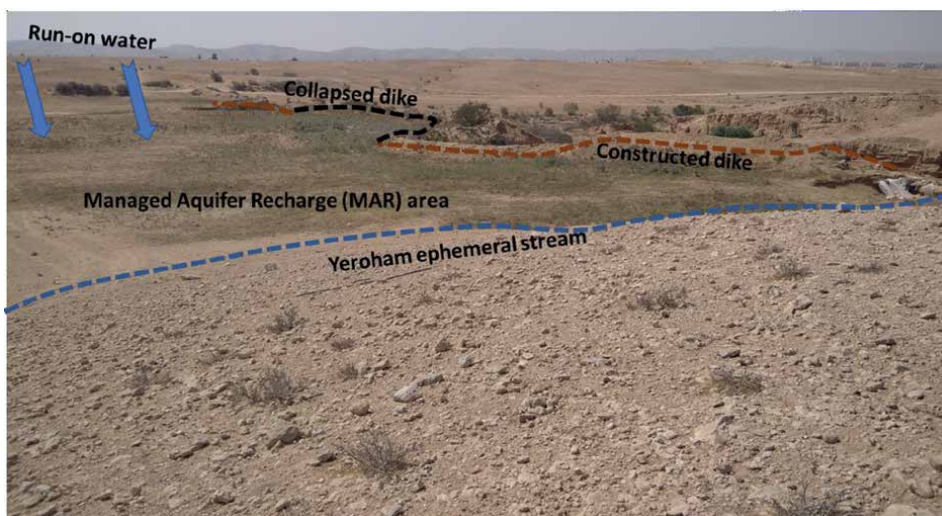
Nine rock terraces will be located one by one differing by 1m height perpendicular to the slope direction (the location will be determined using GPS), along the sloped gullied area. The change of the incision will be determined by comparison of DEM maps achieved from drones over the years (**Figure 11**).

#### **4. Flooded plain modeling into managed aquifer recharge area, El-Freijat, Rahma area**

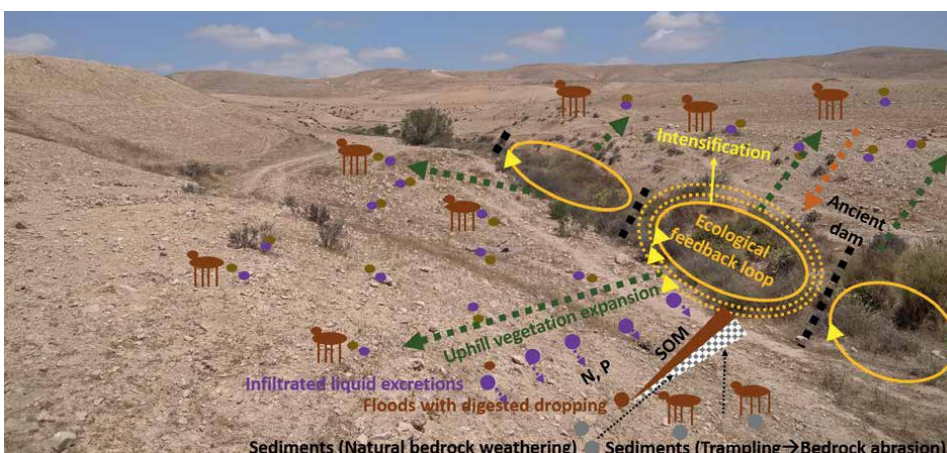
All over the Negev the Bedouin used the drainage patterns of the wadis flooded plains as MAR (managed aquifer recharge areas) for growing crops such as wheat and even grapes and olives with minimal supplementary irrigation. An example is located in the land of Salem El-Freijat, Rahma (31°0'52.57"N, 34°56'44.16"E, sized 1 ha). To suit the area for agricultural utilization a reclamation of the dike is needed. Such reclamation must be done together with the Israeli Drainage Authority, nevertheless, due to a lack of interaction between the Bedouin farmer and ILA, such an action is not carried out (**Figure 12**) [9].

#### **5. Wadi banks reclamation by small ruminants herding**

Grazing is not defined as a land modeling practice, nevertheless, similar to the other Bedouin practices is been considered in public as an ecosystem-destructive agricultural branch. Recent studies indicate many facets of controlled grazing may



**Figure 12.**  
 MAR area located on a remodeled wadis floodplain in Rahma foothill area.



**Figure 13.**  
 The influence of small ruminants grazing on the sediment layer formation in the lower part of the wadi banks [31].

contribute to the rehabilitation of degraded lands, such as [31]. Hereby, one facet regarding the influence of controlled small ruminants grazing on the wadi's landform will be described. The site of study is located on the wadi opposite Rahma foothills on the western side of Yeroham ephemeral stream (31°02'58"N, 34°55'43"E, 500 ASL). This wadi is composed of parts that were exposed to small ruminants grazing, while the others were not. The finding indicated that in the parts that were exposed to grazing a sediments layer from the wadi' bank integrated with the small ruminants' excretion, which was mixed by their trampling, was formed over the years. This layer decreased the incision in the wadi banks and moderated the slope and serves as beds for plant settlement and growth (**Figure 13**) [31].



## 6. Concluding notes

This chapter demonstrates the challenges in the implementation of profitable and sustainable agricultural systems in the Negev highlands, an area that suffers from intensive desertification and has been neglected for years by the authorities. The farmers of the Bedouin diaspora have to suit themselves to these terms using their long years of experience in breeding crops at extreme climatic and land terms (**Figure 14**).

Therefore, a successful rehabilitation scheme requires firstly regularization of the land's statutory state, which includes allocating lands for livelihood and agriculture to them and nominating them as 'ecosystem guards' together with scientists and the municipalities. Such an attitude will arise awareness of the ecosystem state and sustainable utilization by the Bedouin farmers and youth and contribute to ecosystem rehabilitation.



**Figure 14.** *Adaption of Bedouin agriculture farming to desertification (reduced rainfall amounts), landform infringement by waste and landfills in El-Darghat village, traditional Bedouin olive grove on wadi (south of Yeroham).*

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.


## **Author details**

Amir Mor-Mussery  
Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Soil and Water Sciences, The Hebrew  
University, Rehovot, Israel

\*Address all correspondence to: [amir.mussery@gmail.com](mailto:amir.mussery@gmail.com)

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## Chapter 4

# Knowledge and Understanding of the Forest Peoples and the Protection of Their Intangible and Material Heritage in the Context of the Technological Society

*Vitor Hugo Nunes Villas Boas, Marco Anthony Steveson Villas Boas and Gustavo Paschoal Teixeira de Castro Oliveira*

### Abstract

The multiple revolutions of the last 300 years have produced a technological development, that has materialized in a process of socioeconomic and cultural mutation which has ahead paths to be trodden that can promote benefits to humanity and the environment or lead to its destruction. The peoples of the forest, among them the indigenous, bring with them the knowledge that is at risk, both of disappearing and of being appropriate for purposes other than those currently used. This chapter sought, from an exploratory perspective and from a qualitative approach, to present some reflections to the problem involving which measures, and philosophical conceptions should guide the protection of knowledge of forest peoples and the biodiversity in which they are inserted. For that, aspects related to the current national and international regulatory framework directed to environmental protection were analyzed. In addition, it also analyzed aspects related to the economic value of biodiversity and knowledge of forest peoples, as well as the need to use new philosophical assumptions that integrate human ecology in its individual dimension, the environment, and social relations that involve human subjectivities, to present a new look, a new way to sociopolitical and legal treatment, the protection of these goods.

**Keywords:** knowledge of forest peoples, environmental protection, technological society, indigenous knowledge, biodiversity, fundamental rights, indigenous rights

### 1. Introduction

The indigenous peoples of America have accumulated knowledge and experiences for over 20,000 years, some of which have been shared with traditional populations in the last five centuries, which gives them an extraordinary wealth of information about nature, including the association of plants and other natural elements for the

production of medicines and substances for pest control in agriculture, in addition to a diversity of beneficial applications for society, which has contributed to the development of scientific research in favor of people and nature.

In the midst of a true biotechnological revolution, which has brought to light the economic potential existing in genetic resources and their commercial value, greed and ambition have begun to endanger the intellectual property of these communities, as well as the natural environment where they live. For this reason, the protection of biodiversity against piracy and the regulation of procedures for access to these resources have become extremely relevant today, a factor that has led the United Nations to worry about the issue and move forward in establishing a global framework, as deliberated on October 29th, 2010, in the Nagoya Protocol, in Japan.

In this context, the risk of biopiracy has increased considerably with the use of associated knowledge in scientific research developed in a network, in the context of digital globalization that has interconnected the planet, broken the physical borders, eroded sovereignty, and impacted the people and, especially, the neediest and most vulnerable communities.

Moreover, the dominance and use of artificial intelligence by the developed countries presents itself as another factor of concern for vulnerable peoples and communities in Latin America and Brazil, who do not live according to Western traditions and practices and have neither developed nor used disruptive digital technologies.

The new instruments of appropriation of knowledge and expertise of the forest peoples and the material fragility of the States in controlling the tangible and intangible heritage that complex biomes—such as the Amazon—comprise, lead to the following question: Aiming at the implementation of new forms of environmental protection, which should take into account, besides biodiversity, the human factor, what measures and philosophical conceptions should be developed for the implementation of a new model of environmental protection inserted in the context of the technological society?

In the search for answers, this chapter in the following three sections presents reflections that are essential to the understanding of the current regulatory and epistemological stage directed at protecting the knowledge and expertise of the forest peoples, as well as the biodiversity where they live.

The following section, from an exploratory perspective and a qualitative approach, outlines the current regulatory framework that governs the instruments for protecting biodiversity and knowledge of the forest peoples, pointing out the meetings and mismatches of Brazilian and international regulations in relation to the events generated by the biotechnological revolution we are currently experiencing.

In the third section, aspects related to the character and economic value of knowledge and expertise of the forest peoples, especially the indigenous ones, will be presented, and how they have been appropriated by Western civilization, still under a modern liberal perspective, putting at risk the existence of biodiversity, the forest peoples, and humanity.

Afterward, in the fourth section, some aspects related to the possibilities of conciliation of the digital revolution with the fundamental rights of the forest peoples will be presented, from a new philosophical conception, so that, through it, instruments can be sought to understand the dynamics of the complexity that involves the multiple existing relations between human beings in their individual and collective dimension, social relations, and the environment in all its amplitude.

## **2. The protection of biodiversity and the traditional knowledge of the forest peoples**

The knowledge, practices, management, and experiences accumulated for more than 20,000 years by indigenous peoples and traditional populations, during the last 500 years, give Brazil and Latin America, in particular, international recognition on the importance of preserving these practices, rituals, and techniques for natural resource management, as well as for the management of territories and traditional lands.

The traditional knowledge of these communities allowed the survival and development of these peoples in the midst of the mega-diverse nature of our region, contributing, in the same way, so that the Europeans who came to the American continent could also survive in totally unknown environments and implement their colonial projects.

The recognition of the ecological, scientific, cultural, and economic value of these practices was drawn more sharply from the 1989 International Labor Organization Convention No. 169, culminating in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2012.

However, before the proclamation of UNDRIP, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), signed at the close of Eco-92, in Rio de Janeiro, materialized in its text the principles of sustainable development, precaution, the polluter pays, social participation in environmental management, access to environmental information and the obligation of state intervention, and brought in the Principle 22 an important clause that included indigenous and traditional populations in the management of the environment and development, and recognizing and valuing their cultures and traditional practices as a preponderant factor for environmental management within the criteria of sustainability.

This inclusive posture has opened up opportunities for the preservation of the climate forests and other biomes of the Brazilian indigenous lands, not only in the conservation of biological diversity, but also in the possibility of obtaining material and immaterial benefits for the traditional knowledge they possess, much of it already used in the pharmaceutical industry, for example, since the CBD and the Brazilian Legislation have honored the sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources, which fit perfectly with the practices of the indigenous communities.

Brazil together with Colombia, Mexico, and Indonesia is one of the countries considered to be mega diverse, and ratified the CBD through the Decree no. 2 of 1994, internalizing it through the Executive Decree no. 2519 of 1998, followed by the Provisional Measure no. 2186-16, of 2001<sup>1</sup>, which instituted the legal regime of the access to genetic resources and benefit sharing provided in the CBD and created the Genetic Heritage Management Council (CGEN).

Several decrees, resolutions, technical guidelines, and deliberations of CGEN were edited, in this interregnum, in order to make the CDB effective in Brazil, whose objectives combine preservation and development, when they established the fair and

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<sup>1</sup> Provisional Measure No 2186-16, 2001, it was revoked by law no. 13,123 of May 20th, 2015, which now regulates item II of § 1 and § 4 of Art. 225 of the Federal Constitution, Article 1, *Article 8(j)*, *Article 10(c)*, Article 15 and §§ 3 and 4 of Article 16 of the Convention on Diversity Biological promulgated by Decree No. 2519 of March 16, 1998; there is also access to genetic heritage, protection, and access to associated traditional knowledge and the sharing of benefits for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

equitable division of benefits from the exploitation of genetic resources and rights over the transfer of knowledge and technologies, alongside the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

As a result of the commitments made by Brazil in Nagoya, a revision of the Provisional Measure n° 2.186-16, of 2001 was sought to stimulate “[...] solidarity among nations, establishing legal mechanisms that allow the use of biological resources in an economically fruitifiable way, preserving, recognizing, and valuing associated traditional knowledge [...]” (p.72), to preserve, conserve, and disseminate biological diversity and at the same time obtain economic benefits and leadership of new markets [1].

The regulation on biodiversity in Brazil advanced with the edition of Law no. 11.105, of March 24th, 2005 (Biosafety Law), which created the National Biosafety Council (CNBS) and restructured the National Biosafety Technical Commission (CTNBio), whose objective is to establish safety norms and inspection and control mechanisms on “[...] the construction, cultivation, production, manipulation, transport, transfer, import, export, storage, research, commercialization, consumption, release into the environment and disposal of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their derivatives [...]” [2].

Despite the advanced technical-legal content, establishing limits for genetic engineering, it was forgotten; however, the participation of the traditional communities in the CTNBio, through FUNAI, which could better represent the interests of the indigenous people regarding access to and use of their traditional knowledge and the biological diversity existing on their lands.

In analyzing this issue, Juliana Santilli [3] noted that under the CBD and Provisional Measure no 2. 186-16, of 2001, there was “a clear distinction between the genetic resource and the biological resource that contains it,” recalling that the indigenous usufruct over the lands they occupy is exclusive over their natural resources, except in relation to water and mineral resources, whose limits are outlined in §§ 2° and 3° of the Constitution, reason why the access to genetic resources in these areas depends on prior and informed consent with subsequent benefit sharing ([3], pp. 187–188), in the form of art. 16, § 9°, of the mentioned Provisory Measure no 2.186-16, of 2001.

In that time, scientific research has corroborated the understanding that the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people, associated with biodiversity, including precious information about the respective biota, notably about the classification and nomenclature of the specimens and about food, pharmaceutical, and agricultural properties, as well as hunting and fishing not known by the non-Indians, constitute a real database of scientific data of incalculable value, which must receive the necessary legal protection against biopiracy, in view of the significant interest of the biotechnology industry, especially of chemical and agricultural products.

Although there is no unequivocal legal concept of what biopiracy is, sometimes presenting itself in a broader form, sometimes more restricted, since it is still under construction, Santilli [3] clarifies that “[...] biopiracy is the activity that involves access to the genetic resources of a given country or to traditional knowledge associated with such genetic resources (or both) in disagreement with the principles established in the Convention on Biological Diversity [...]” (pp. 198–199).

The value of traditional indigenous knowledge about the biological diversity that surrounds it, in this context, transcends material and utilitarian limits, since it integrates knowledge of symbolic and spiritual value, in a peculiar way of life, in perfect integration with the forest, since both the knowledge process of combining different

specimens for a certain purpose (possibility of direct use of traditional knowledge) and that applied in the manipulation and production of varieties of the same species, such as the multicolored ear of corn for making handicrafts (possibility of indirect use), deserve protection ([3], pp. 195–196).

A legal regime for the protection of traditional knowledge associated with biodiversity is extremely necessary to the significant interest of the industry, which in the past decades has unduly appropriated this knowledge with or without the consent of the communities, and without informing the countries of origin, expressly contradicting what is determined in art. 8, j, of the CBD, as occurred in the cases of *neem*, *ayahuasca*, *quinua*, and the cupuaçu seed, and similarly has been occurring with the *cunani* and *tipir* of the Wapixana Indians in the State of Roraima [4].

But in the midst of this biotechnological revolution, which has brought to light the economic potential of genetic resources and their commercial value, greed and ambition have begun to endanger the intellectual property of these communities, as well as the natural environment in which they live. For this reason, the protection of biodiversity against piracy and the regulation of the procedures for access to these resources have become extremely relevant today, a factor that has led the United Nations to worry about the issue and move forward in establishing a global framework, as deliberated on October 29th, 2010, in the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS).

The new Forest Code, in this sense, included, among environmental services, “[...] the conservation of biodiversity” and “the valorization of cultural and traditional ecosystem knowledge [...],” in the terms of art. 41; but the insufficient regulation remitted the task to future legislation, within the scope of the Brazilian indigenous law.

In addition, Law No. 13,123, of May 20th, 2015, regulated the operation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Brazil, providing significant advances when dealing with the protection of associated traditional knowledge and the respective biotas, creating a protective system for the preservation of biodiversity and its scientific use, in which access to traditional knowledge depends on the prior informed consent of the respective population, which will be entitled to the fair distribution of the benefits arising from them.

In the scope of the referred Law No. 13,123 of 2015, CGen was created, the competent body to, among other attributions, establish: “(a) technical standards; (b) guidelines and criteria for the preparation and fulfillment of the benefit sharing agreement; and (c) criteria for the creation of a database for the registration of information on genetic heritage and associated traditional knowledge” [5].

The creation of the database for the registration of information on genetic heritage and associated traditional knowledge, despite providing more control of the State over such information, especially with regard to the fair distribution of gained benefits, also opens perspectives of vulnerability to attacks by biopirates, even with all the restrictions and precautions established in its articles 11 and following.

In March 2021, Brazil ratified the Nagoya Protocol, reaffirming its commitment to the Access and Benefit Sharing of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). However, in the international trade, despite the convergence of wills for the protection of the rights of the traditional and indigenous communities over associated traditional knowledge, the appropriation of intellectual property by the biopirates has been occurring in the field of international trade, through the registration of patents, an internationally widespread legal institution that guarantees intellectual property and the exclusive exploitation of the product or process for a certain period of time, after which it falls into the public domain.

Thus, although the CBD and this entire normative framework call for the cooperation of the signatory countries in guaranteeing the intellectual property rights of traditional knowledge and the rights of the biodiverse countries, in its article 16.5, the initiatives at the international level to make the principles of the CBD compatible with the provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), of the World Trade Organization (WTO), whose article, 27.3 (b) is the result of an agreement between the United States and the European Union, are not yet sufficient or effective:

*O acordo Trips é um dos pilares do regime do comércio global, que define padrões de proteção para os direitos de propriedade intelectual dos 146 países membros da OMC, responsável pelos maiores acordos multilaterais de comércio. A OMC opera segundo o princípio de um sistema liberal de comércio internacional baseado na não-discriminação e na eliminação de barreiras comerciais. O artigo do acordo Trips que mais tem suscitado controvérsias, em relação aos princípios da CDB, é o 27.3 (b), que permite que os países membros excluam do patenteamento plantas e animais, mas determina que eles estabeleçam proteção patentária para microorganismos e procedimentos não-biológicos ou microbiológicos. Determina ainda que os membros devem outorgar proteção a todas as variedades de plantas mediante patentes, por meio de um sistema eficaz sui generis ou de uma combinação entre os dois [3] (p.2006).*

It is worth mentioning that the biodiverse countries have requested the WTO to change art. 27.3, “b;” however, the discussions on the subject have been constantly postponed, because the northern countries are not interested in this situation, which has caused legal instability and the possibility of a violation of the rights of the megadiverse countries and their traditional populations.

The website of the World Trade Organization [6] informs that the issue still depends on the convergence of wills in the construction of an agreement that reaches a satisfactory level of security against biopiracy, as it appears from the actions of the Negotiations Committee, still developed in July 2008<sup>2</sup>, despite the fact that the developing countries on the occasion of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, in December 2005, supported the need for amending the TRIPS Agreement [7].

As a result, until a stable legal situation that guarantees the rights of the indigenous populations in the international sphere is not reached, their traditional knowledge will be at risk, which constitutes a factor for the exclusion of these communities from international policies aimed at implementing the CBD, since the latter does not provide for any sanction for noncompliance with its precepts, while there is such a provision in the TRIPS Agreement.

Furthermore, the dominance and use of artificial intelligence by developed countries present itself as a cause for concern for vulnerable peoples and communities, who have not yet developed or used disruptive technologies.

In this aspect, it is necessary to point out that the development of the indigenous and traditional communities is not in conformity with the development implemented by liberalism and global capitalism that has taken control of the World Wide Web.

<sup>2</sup> Article 27.3 (b) does not recognize the conditions for access to genetic resources and the distribution of benefits established by the CBD. Such mechanisms should be introduced into the Agreement to ensure the distribution of benefits and authorisation of access to genetic material. Article 27.3 (b) has generated, especially among developing countries, enormous concerns, and represents one of the most controversial issues to be discussed at WTO meetings [6].

Often, it should be stressed, the dialog established at the intra- and intercommunity digital level, especially with Western society, does not have the community legitimacy and traditional forms of decision making of the indigenous peoples, who in many situations are still literally isolated, deep in the forest, without contact with Western men and their technologies.

These difficult factors, besides excluding the forest peoples, and also the isolated peoples from the debate, bring legal insecurity and the possibility of injury to their rights, and also to national sovereignty, given that the sociocultural and mega bio-diverse wealth of countries like Brazil have already conquered important positions of prominence and technical-scientific value that can result in monetary dividends far superior to the practices of extractive exploitation and cultures developed in the forests by the productive sectors of Western society.

### **3. The economic and environmental value of traditional knowledge of the forest people**

At the same time, payment for environmental services also presents itself as an important strategy for environmental preservation, in order to avoid future deforestation, based on the polluter-pays principle and its corollaries of user-pays and provider-pays.

The increase in global warming around 0.6° Celsius during the twentieth century, with projections for another 1.4° to 5.8° by the end of the twenty-first century, diagnosed by renowned scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), led the United Nations to hold in Kyoto, Japan, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in an attempt to minimize, by means of objective Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction targets, the causes of this planetary phenomenon.

In Kyoto, it was agreed, under the terms of art. 12 of the Protocol, based on the sub-principle of prevention and the polluter pays principle, the creation of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), a legal-economic mechanism in which “[...] the foreign economic agent that needs to reduce its GHG emissions, may acquire carbon credits, called certified emission reductions (CERs) [...],” implementing a CDM project in the national territory through a local economic agent that receives the project on its property ([8], pp. 66–67), or according to Blanca Mimbrero [9]:

*[...] un contrato voluntario entre un proveedor de uno o varios servicios ambientales explícitamente definidos (o un uso de la tierra que asegure dicho servicio) y un beneficiario que retribuye por ellos (un comprador), y se retribuye sólo si estos servicios ambientales son efectivamente provistos –principio de condicionalidad—y si son adicionales a los ya existentes antes de implantar el PSA (adicionalidad) (p.138).*

To avoid deficits and foster negotiations around carbon credits, the UN created the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for the FCCC on May 9th, 1992 in New York, the year in which the Kyoto document was opened for signature during the Eco-92 in Rio de Janeiro, being signed by 185 countries.

Brazil is a signatory to the FCCC, promulgated by Decree n° 2.652, of August 1st, 1988, which is part of the Brazilian legal framework for controlling atmospheric pollution, together with Law 6.938, of 1981 (National Environmental Policy Law); Decree 99.274, of 1990 (Regulates Law 6.902, of April 27th of 1981, and Law 6.938, of

August 31st of 1981, that provide, respectively, on the creation of Ecological Stations and Environmental Protection Areas and on the National Environmental Policy, and makes other provisions); CONAMA Resolution n° 5, of 1989 (National Air Quality Program (PRONAR), in addition to Resolution n° 3, of 1990, which establishes the primary and secondary air quality standards; Resolution n° 237, of 1997, which regulates environmental licensing ([8], pp. 38–39).

Since the Climate Change Framework Convention held in Bali, in 2008, and Copenhagen, in 2009, among others, the interest in implementing REDD in favor of developing countries that suffer from deforestation and forest degradation processes has been the keynote.

In this regard, it is necessary to clarify that the contract for the implementation of a CDM project is governed by private international law, as it is an instrument that establishes international obligations for the parties to the contract. However, the principle of the autonomy of the will allows the parties to choose the legal system applicable to the contractual relationship, which finds contours in the social function of the contract and the supremacy of public policy, in the precise terms of art. 421 of the Brazilian Civil Code. The silence of the contract refers to the Private International Law for a solution regarding the legal system to be applied, which, in the terms of the Mexico Convention, points to the “law of the country in which the specific part of the contract related to the conflict will be executed. In Brazil, the National Congress is still examining the terms of the convention in the PL no. 4.905, of 1995, in the meantime, the rule of art. 9 of the Law of Introduction to the norms of Brazilian Law (LINDB) applies, which, in the words of Lorenzoni Neto [8],

*[...] disciplinará qual a lei aplicável ao contrato internacional firmado por brasileiro ou executado em território nacional, estabelecendo que, quanto à formalidade da obrigação, aplica-se a lei do local em que irá ser cumprida (art. 9º, § 1º). Quanto ao restante da relação contratual firmada, aplica-se a lei do domicílio do proponente, observando-se a também cogente norma do art. 17 da LICC<sup>3</sup>, que considera ineficaz qualquer contrato que viole normas brasileiras de ordem pública, a soberania brasileira e os bons costumes (p. 83).*

So, despite global and internal vagueness, it is theoretically already possible to enter into contracts of this nature and implement the CDM in the Brazilian legal system, under Law No. 13,123 of May 20th, 2015, even in the case of the indigenous communities, gradually overcoming questions about the absence of specific provisions in Decree No. 7747 of 2012 (PNGATI) on the sale of environmental services internationally.

Because it is a new institute, which is slowly gaining consistency in the Brazilian normative body, there is still a lot of caution in dealing with the matter, especially due to episodes reported by the national press in which large multinational companies, supposedly malicious, are using mega carbon sales contracts, signed with the Indians, bypassing the laws and Brazilian authorities, in order to appropriate Amazon flora species.

In the Brazilian legal system, the Forest Code (Law no. 12,651, of May 25th, 2012), modified by Law no. 12,727, of October 17th, 2012, instituted, in its article 3, XXVII, c/c 41, I, “a,” the “payment or incentive to environmental services as a monetary

<sup>3</sup> The Law of Introduction to the Civil Code had its menu amended by Law No. 13,376, of December 30, 2010, and was called the “Law of Introduction to the Norms of Brazilian Law&#x201D;.



or nonmonetary retribution to the activities of conservation and improvement of ecosystems and generating environmental services, such as isolated or cumulatively: a) the sequestration, conservation, maintenance and increase of carbon stock, and decrease of carbon flow; [...]" Despite this, several authors still have doubts about the new institute.

A few years ago, a controversial contract signed between the Munduruku indigenous people and an obscure multinational company came to light, in which apparently there would be no benefit for the indigenous people, and even put at risk, at first sight, possible future rights to sell forest credits based on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). Apparently, the object of the contract was restricted to the sale of future rights for the commercialization of possible carbon credits, that is, an uncertain future object, not covering situations indicative of biopiracy practices, but other information subsequently published on the World Wide Web has placed this contract under suspicion, notably with regard to the lack of legitimacy to contract, since it would not have been a decision by the community, but only by some Indians and local politicians.

In an article on the Munduruku Indian contract case, Raul Silva Teles do Valle clarified, at that time, that.

*O desmatamento evitado não é o resultado de um contrato ou mesmo de um pagamento. Sobretudo em terras indígenas, ele só pode ser alcançado a partir de um adequado planejamento de uso do território, que possa projetar no futuro a forma como os índios querem lidar com os recursos naturais de suas terras. Na Colômbia esse planejamento tem reconhecimento oficial (planes de vida) e é a base para o repasse de recursos públicos para gestão pelas autoridades indígenas. No Brasil, eles ainda não existem oficialmente, mas poderiam – e deveriam – ser incentivados se a Política Nacional de Gestão Ambiental em Terras Indígenas (PNGATI), elaborada pelo governo federal, em 2010, com ampla consulta às populações indígenas, já tivesse sido aprovada pela presidente da República [10].*

The case of the Surui Paiter, from Rondonia, for example, also gained space in the media. According to a publication in the newspaper "O Estado de São Paulo," one of the leading media outlets of the country, due to the lack of regulation on the sale of carbon credits in Brazil, the Surui Paiter, internationally certified to generate credits in the carbon market, could not sign international contracts due to the lack of regulation in Brazilian law [11].

However, a decade ago, Raul Silva Telles do Valle and Erika Magami Yamada [12], already argued, based on Article 92 of the Civil Code and Article 24 of Law No. 6.001, 1973 (Indian Statute) that it was possible for the indigenous communities to sign CDM contracts and receive monetary values through the sale of REDD or reforestation on their lands:

*Não há nenhuma proibição no âmbito do direito internacional ou nacional à realização de atividades de REDD+ ou reflorestamento em Terras Indígenas, na medida em que estas estão em consonância com o uso tradicional feito por esses povos de seus recursos florestais e, desde que realizadas por iniciativa dos próprios povos em e diante amplo acordo interno, não têm o condão de interferir em seus modos de vida ou afetar sua sobrevivência física ou cultural; [...] Sendo os créditos de carbono bens transacionáveis, com valor econômico, e derivados da existência de florestas nas terras indígenas e do poder exclusivo de disposição que têm os índios sobre elas, esses créditos*

*têm a característica de frutos civis. Como se depreende do art. 92 do Código Civil Brasileiro, os créditos de carbono são frutos derivados da floresta (ou do reflorestamento) encontrada na terra indígena. A floresta por sua vez é o bem principal, que pertence aos povos indígenas que tradicionalmente ocupam as terras indígenas. E é a presença e atividade indígena que garante a floresta em pé. Portanto, os créditos de carbono também pertencem aos povos indígenas. [...] O Estatuto do Índio (Lei Federal 6001/73), em seu artigo 24, dispõe sobre a exploração das riquezas naturais existentes em terras indígenas e assegura aos povos indígenas o seu usufruto exclusivo, que compreende o direito à posse, uso e percepção de todas as utilidades existentes nas terras ocupadas, bem como ao produto da exploração econômica de tais riquezas naturais (pp. 98–99).*

Telles do Valle and Erika Yamada [12] also rule out the eventual legal incapacity of the indigenous peoples to establish these agreements, considering that art. 232 of the Federal Constitution put an end to the tutelary regime, a matter that is also already settled in International Law, under the terms of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Declaration of the United Nations (UN) on Indigenous Rights.

Apparently, this is the most reasonable position. However, despite the legal relevance of the position defended by Valle and Yamada, the participation of Funai and the Federal Prosecutor in the inspection of these contracts is of great importance for the preservation of indigenous rights, as well as to avoid malicious multinationals' use contractual ruses to obtain profits to the detriment of the Indians, whether in relation to carbon trading, or in the undue appropriation and patenting of traditional processes that directly or indirectly result in a specific outcome, or even of specimens existing on their lands.

In the midst of these doubts, the House of Representatives is in the process of approval Bill 528, of 2021 [13], authored by Representative Marcelo Ramos, of the Liberal Party of the State of Amazonas, which intends to regulate the Brazilian Emissions Reduction Market (MBRE), that is, the purchase and sale of carbon credits in the country, in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 12187, of December 29th, 2009, which deals with the National Policy on Climate Change.

Bill 528 of 2021 defines that the carbon credit results from the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, which cause global warming, recognized by a specific certificate. In order to attribute economic value, one carbon credit corresponds to one ton of GHGs not released into the atmosphere. These credits, however, are linked to projects for the reduction of GHGs in the atmosphere, such as the restoration of degraded areas, reforestation, and nature preservation, negotiated with the governmental sectors, private initiatives, and individuals who are obliged to meet targets arising from laws or international treaties.

In addition, the project intends to dispose of the legal nature, registration, certification and accounting of carbon credits, and neuralgic points of this new market, which requires regulation, besides granting a period of 5 years for the Federal Government to institute and regulate the mandatory national program for compensating GHG emissions.

Along the same lines, a voluntary market for carbon credits is created, so that companies or governments that do not have mandatory GHG reduction targets to meet but want to compensate for the environmental impact of their activities, can invest in GHG reduction projects.

Projects and negotiations will be registered in an electronic system under the management of the National Institute for the Registration of Climatic Data (INRDC),

exempt from PIS, Cofins, and CSLL. The National Institute for the Registration of Climatic Data (INRDC) will be a private institution supervised by the Ministry of Economy, which will also appoint some of the members to its Board of Directors.

However, other opportunities and threats are emerging in the international market, such as the tokenization of carbon credits, with these credits being backed by cryptocurrencies. The token is a digital representation of an asset in the blockchain, which in turn is a decentralized digital network that ensures the registration, publicity, and traceability of assets. On the one hand, cryptocurrencies can bring more liquidity, efficiency, and security to the carbon market, but on the other, the lack of linkage of these securities to GHG reduction projects has led to their conversion into digital assets by “retirement,” fulfilling only the initial stage of compensation. The situation is aggravated by the resurgence of the so-called “zombie credits” and also of the “old vintage” credits, which make no significant contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases [14].

The migration of the green economy to digital platforms seems inevitable and has been a topic of concern, a new facet of the concept of sustainability, more in line with the idea of economic development than with the preservation of nature.

Beyond that, the issue of crypto-activities is still unknown, and requires care and regulation, as it is not guaranteed by the State as a controlling entity. On the contrary, blockchains work from supercomputers scattered all over the globe, and the security of emissions and validation of crypto-activities is still a big unknown and may put at risk the fundamental rights of the forest peoples.

#### **4. The digital revolution and the fundamental rights of the forest people**

The search for solutions to fundamental rights conflicts, according to Villas Boas [15], has migrated with intensity to the virtual world, so that the sophisticated digital techniques require from the guaranteeing institutions, especially the Judiciary, much more than simply reproduce in the virtual world the real world solutions, nor act as a digital platform for conflict resolution, because other more complex challenges have emerged at every moment, turbocharged by global capitalism 4.0, which has erupted from the virtual “Trojan Horse” that intends to seize political power and mitigate the sovereignty of the State and the people, to impose the digital culture of the instantaneous and the superfluous, deconstructing institutions and cultures. This is the invisible battle that is taking place in the digital field and challenges all prospects of sustainability.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that the proposals and initiatives to limit the influence of the economic sphere in the real world have not brought the expected results, since the phenomenon of digital globalization has weakened the “good fences” [16], which have gradually lost consistency and collapsed, making it more difficult to correct the distortions of liberalism and the prospects for sustainable development.

In this aspect, sustainability, if this joker concept can serve as any parameter in the virtual world, has been incorporated into the concepts of corporate governance with the purpose of ensuring socioeconomic and cultural development with equal chances among nations, for the benefit of States, but also of the present peoples and their future generations. But at every turn, the concept of sustainable development is being shaped to the needs of the market economy, much more to ensure economic development than the good life.

From this realization, one cannot leave in the background the idea that sustainability implies guaranteeing lines of escape for subjectivation, so that man can

breathe and think in the middle of the process of re-signification and construction of post-truths, guaranteeing freedom of expression, but also the ethical limits of the discourse delineated by Human Rights and by the framework of fundamental rights inscribed in the Constitution, because the sustainability and digital globalization that really matters are those of Human Rights, of the promotion of man in his individuality and collectivity, opening lines of escape for subjectivity and intersubjectivity, as well as for the ecological dimension of self-determined action.

By the way, Villas Boas [17] has already had the opportunity to emphasize that the serious ecological imbalances of contemporaneity, borrowing the ideas of Guattari [18], are the result of human action without conscious projection, which has been insistently reiterated generation after generation. To avoid an announced catastrophe, only the formation of a new human being, based on the three ecologies he proposes (of human subjectivity, social relations, and the environment), will be effective against the reduction of subjectivation and consequent implosion, or infantilization of the human condition.

Along this intellectual line, it is possible to see in Guattari [18] that the environmental problem resulting from human actions is in the context of the evolution of society, in everyday relationships (economic, political, and social), and in standardization of behavior and thoughts perpetuated with considerable participation of the media, now turbocharged and uncontrolled by social networks, factors that lead to this infantilization of the human condition.

The perception of the world and ourselves, limited and conditioned to the standards of a system that has guided society over the centuries, which permeates even science and education and directs the environmental problem to the damage caused by industry, for example, does not bring a solution to the problem that is structural and is situated in the field of ethics and politics. This is where the failure to understand the environmental problem lies, for which he proposes an articulation between ethics and politics, which is called Ecosophy, based on the ecologies of the environment, social relations, and human (mental) subjectivity.

Only by a planetary awareness, through a radical political, social, and cultural change that guides the objective of the production of material and immaterial goods, it will be possible to solve the environmental problem.

The relations between first and third-world countries show this distortion in all areas, with the enrichment and empowerment of the countries of the North, to the detriment of the countries of the South, which are increasingly poor and dependent on increasingly intelligent technologies, science, and the production of material goods produced by the rich nations. Such political and economic relations are based on two crucial points: the imperialism of the world market that levels to a single plane of material goods, cultural goods, and natural areas; and social and international relations that are under the domination of a police and military machine that oppresses threaten, and even punishes.

From this reading, it is possible to sustain that the restrictions to the real needs of sustainability of nature and life in its fullness demand the reconstruction of the concept of sustainability from reflections and best individual and collective practices, and it is up to the political power and institutions to rebuild the notions of politics and nature, that is, of a *realpolitik* that brings man back to nature, to his true habitat [19].

In that regard, it is necessary to use scientific rationality with a certain transcendentalism [20], in order to make the political processes of construction of the society more inclusive and participatory, providing an opportunity for a science of nature to rebuild all links [21], eliminate the old concept of nature, and provide the emergence

of a new procedural ethic that honors lives of humans and nonhumans, and a task that matters significantly to the justice system.

In search for this goal, digital globalization and the use of increasingly intelligent technologies can serve to implement a cooperative global network to ensure the administration of justice in the island and global systems, as envisioned by Linda Hajjar Leib in her “Genesis System,” including environmental interests in the catalog of human rights, whether from an anthropocentric, ecocentric, or biocentric, as the interrelationship between human rights and the environment has been materializing in several situations that encompasses the expansion or reinterpretation of human rights, revealing procedural dependence and the facet of a human right to the environment of a transcendent character, and as an innovative and sophisticated legal instrument of the twenty-first century [22].

The new, more intelligent and disruptive technologies, on one hand significantly help in the solution of problems, they have become indispensable, but on the other hand, they potentiate new problems that, consequently, cloud the vision and make us stumble on the path to sustainability, on the way to the reconstruction of an ecological mind—steps to an ecological mind [23].

The situation gets worse when we have to deal with sustainability and governance in emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which imposed on humanity the worsening of the state of exception, with social distancing and a more sophisticated necropolitics, which definitely demanded the transition from the real to the virtual, unveiling governmentality in its 4.0 version [24].

Furthermore, worrying projects that want to surrender the freedom, security, property, health, and even the life of the individual to the exclusive or substantial control of artificial intelligence present a significant risk to the international human rights system, increasing the risks of building an authoritarian and domineering artificial intelligence, such as the LaMDA Project (Language Model for Dialog Applications), under development at Google, which became sentient last June, according to reports by Blake Lemoine [25].

The analysis of these disturbing scenarios gives us the tone of the complex difficulty of using and compatibility with the new disruptive technologies, which expand exponentially to guarantee and affect fundamental rights such as that of the indigenous peoples.

Since now, it is possible to observe that only the tolerance of classical liberalism will not meet this perspective because the state of the fragility of these peoples on the digital plane is quite evident, has been significantly aggravated, and will depend on adequate public policies to promote their visibility, digital inclusion, as well as to protect their fundamental rights of self-determination in the scope of the World Wide Web and in commercial relations that appear as opportunities, but also as worrisome threats.

It is not too much to add that the right to indigenous self-determination, proclaimed since the Covenants Nos. 107 and 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and reiterated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is a multidimensional right, with a significant ecological dimension as Villas Boas [26] has maintained, which encompasses the rights of personality, privacy, sociopolitical and legal organization, property/ownership of the ancestral territories and their forests, and of the spiritual ties established with them, in addition to the associated traditional, cultural, and religious knowledge, among others.

In this regard, the preparation and technical-scientific training of these vulnerable communities, evidently unqualified for dialog at the digital level, or even of

their indigenous or nonindigenous representatives, chosen by the traditional methods, through easy understanding consultation, borrowing the idea of justice from Amartya Sen [27], are presented as strategies to reduce the inequalities of liberalism in the digital world.

## **5. Conclusion**

Digital globalism driven by capitalism 4.0 has exercised strong pressure on States, peoples, their cultures, and on all sectors of life, eroding the concepts of sovereignty and self-determination, as well as worsening the impact of Western civilization on indigenous peoples and traditional populations.

If in the world of life, indigenous peoples and traditional populations suffered from invisibility and exclusion in the democratic process, often formally consulted only to formalize procedures that were impactful and harmful to them, the public sphere replicated in another totally unknown world, puts at risk not only individual and collective privacy, but also their social organizations and the rights over their cultures and traditional practices, notably with regard to precious knowledge unknown to the Western world.

The evident state of vulnerability of the forest peoples, especially indigenous peoples, in relation to the protection of their fundamental rights on the digital plane, requires more than the tolerance of liberalism because without protective and inclusive public policies they will have no visibility or voice in the public sphere replicated on the digital plane.

State regulation and instruments of appropriation must take into consideration that the existential conditions of humanity hierarchically supersede the economic dimension. Formal regulation is not enough. The observance of national and international legislation must take on a new look, a new mentality, one that understands the existentially necessary relationships between the human being in its individual and collective dimension; the subjectivities that arise from the relational processes at the social level; and the environmental dimension that shelters and involves the human one.

It follows that any and all legislation, General Law of Data Protection, Law of Biodiversity Protection, legislation on REDD, and legislation on international trade must conform to a framework of protection for knowledge and understanding of the forest peoples, both in its material and immaterial dimensions, from policies of treatment of the individual and collective data of the individuals and these communities, as well as their associated traditional knowledge, biological diversity, and their territories, because without such an understanding of the complex reality that involves these relational processes, it will not be possible to move from formal guarantees to material ones, and this is what is expected of the State and of human beings in their individual and collective dimension in the current context that embodies the technological society.

## Author details

Vitor Hugo Nunes Villas Boas<sup>1,2,3,4\*</sup>, Marco Anthony Steveson Villas Boas<sup>5,6</sup>  
and Gustavo Paschoal Teixeira de Castro Oliveira<sup>1,7,8,9</sup>

1 Judicial Provision and Human Rights at the Federal University of the State of Tocantins – UFT, Brazil

2 University Center of Brasília, Brazil

3 University of the City of Ribeirão Preto, Brazil

4 University of the City of Franca, Brazil

5 Pontifical Catholic University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Brazil

6 University of Lisbon Law School (FDUL), Portugal

7 Federal University of the State of Tocantins, Brazil


8 Superior School of the Judges of the State of Tocantins – ESMAT, Brazil

9 CEU Law School, Brazil

\*Address all correspondence to: [masvb@uol.com.br](mailto:masvb@uol.com.br)

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## Chapter 5

# Modern Education Vis-à-Vis Indigenous Knowledge in Ethiopian School Curriculums

*Abdisa Olkeba Jima*

### Abstract

Many scholars have undermined indigenous knowledge for many years. Western scholars considered it backward knowledge and had nothing to do with modern science. However, recently, the issues of the relationship between modern education and indigenous knowledge at school have gotten scholars' attention. This paper explores the nexus between indigenous knowledge and modern education in Ethiopian school curriculums. It addresses the definition of indigenous knowledge, the difference between modern science and indigenous knowledge, the significance of indigenous knowledge, and the Ethiopian school curriculum and indigenous knowledge issues. It mainly focuses on the Gadaa system indigenous knowledge, the beginning, and the importance of Gadaa system teaching. The paper argues that teaching Gadaa indigenous knowledge system assists the Oromo community in rediscovering the Gadaa system values, ethics, norms, cultures, politics, economics, religion, and environmental concepts. It also allows teaching others about how Oromo transfer power peacefully and the harmonious living of the Oromo community among themselves and with others.

**Keywords:** curriculum, indigenous knowledge, modern education, Ethiopian school, Gadaa system

### 1. Introduction

There is no single definition for indigenous knowledge (IK hereafter). Consequently, different scholars stipulate it differently. Ref. [1] defines IK as the totality of strategies, practices, techniques, tools, intellectual resources, explanations, beliefs, and values accumulated over time in a particular locality. It is the foundation of indigenous governance that consists of the expressions, practices, beliefs, understandings, insights, and experiences of indigenous groups generated over centuries of profound interaction with a particular territory [2]. Further, [3] posits that IK includes indigenous technical, traditional environmental, rural, local, and farmer's or pastoralist's knowledge. It is "the basis for local-level decision-making in food security, human and animal health, education, natural resource management, and other vital economic and social activities" [4]. It comprises all theoretical or practical understandings that have been held by people [5].

Generally, IK is a collection of experience, customs, norms, values, traditions, cultures, languages, socio-economic activities, political systems, ways of life, political governance systems, ecological preservations and environmental management, and spiritual rituals. That “indigenous peoples around the world have preserved distinctive understanding, rooted in cultural experience, that guide relation among human, non-human, and other than human beings” [6]. It is a network of knowledge, beliefs, and traditions intended to preserve, communicate, and contextualize indigenous relationships with culture and landscape over time [6]. Consequently, IK has become the centre of global concern recently [7].

## **2. Importance of indigenous knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge has much more importance. The importance of IK to development has been established over the years [8]. Ref. [9] explains that IK enriches and supports modern education systems. It is a useful tool for modern education [10]. Similarly, it covers the limitation of modern education [7]. IK is a system of local capacity building. Local capacity-building is a crucial aspect of sustainable development in which researchers and development specialists need to design approaches that support and strengthen appropriate IK and institutions [3]. Environmentally, IK is an important contributor to planning for sustainable development and environmental conservation means; the indigenous community has been doing a great deal of research field [3]. In nutshell, teaching IK reverses the western hegemonies that have been dominating for many years in Ethiopia [7].

However, some scholars have negative attitudes and understandings of IK. Ref. [3] argues indigenous beliefs, values, customs, know-how, and practices may be altered and the resulting knowledge base incomplete. For this reason, their life is far away from their community’s lives [10]. And the enjoyment of the right to education is hindered mainly by poverty in developing countries like the Philippines [11].

## **3. Comparison of indigenous knowledge and modern education**

Most scholars agree that there is no water tie departure between indigenous knowledge and modern education. Ref. [12] presents that there are rooms and spaces where both IK and modern education interact. Therefore, most of the time, they co-exist. Furthermore, Ref. [9] suggests that IK supports modern education. Indeed, we cannot set a clear border between IK and modern education. Ref. [10] adds that IK is helpful for modern education. Hence, the importance of IK to development has been established over the years [8].

Contrarily, some scholars debate that modern education is responsible for the erosion of IK. Ref. [13] argue that the involvement of foreign academicians affected the IK, for example, in Ethiopia. The country has undermined IK teaching in schools because it depends on western education heavily [14]. Western practitioners affect the inclusion of IK in the school curriculum [6]. Ref. [15] conclude that IK and modern education are divergent so they cannot go together. In sum, the following (**Table 1**) demonstrates the difference between IK and modern education.

No	Indigenous knowledge	Modern education
1	It is a more intuitive and holistic view	It is an analytical and reductionist method
2	It is spiritual	It is positivist and materialist
3	It is acquired via experience	It is gained in class
4	It has been passing from generation to generation orally (mostly)	It has a well-organized document that passes to the coming generation
5	It does not create a subject-object dichotomy	It creates a subject-object dichotomy
6	Learners' competency depends on the practical aspect	Learners' competency is based on predetermined ideas
7	It is embedded in the cultural context of the truth	It sets criteria to determine the truth
8	It is subjective and qualitative	It is objective and quantitative
9	It is bounded contextually	It is abided by set rules and regulations
10	It depends on specific local conditions	It depends on the experiment
11	It has a holistic approach	It has a specific approach
12	It is multidimensional and complex	It is easy and simple
13	It believes in public values	It believes in individual view

Source: Author summary, 2022.

**Table 1.**  
 Comparison of indigenous knowledge and modern education.

#### 4. African indigenous knowledge

Africa has a diversified IK system [16]. Africa's IK consists of medicine, agronomy, food processing, chemistry, textile, architecture, biology, geography, engineering, history, and literature [1]. Then again, it has been undermined by many scholars, even by African intellectuals. Ref. [17] summarize that:

*Eurocentric discourse has greatly influenced research, teaching, and learning of social sciences in higher education in Africa. The principal focus of developments in social thought continues to originate from the work of American, British, French, and German scholars. The implication of this is that higher education institutions in Africa have reduced themselves to the reproduction of the intellectual outputs of social thinkers of western countries, including their theories and methodologies of research selection problem priorities. As a result, there is little attention given to African indigenous literary and philosophical traditions because they tend to be viewed as primitive and unscientific. And hence they are not proper sources for social theory and research development. This is accompanied by the inability of African social scientists to generate their own indigenous concepts, definitions, theories, and methods that could guide intellectual development in their research and academic fields.*

African IK balances the African cultures, ways of life, norms, experience, and knowledge with the world's strategies [7]. Incorporation of IK into higher education curriculum has a pivotal role to boost development, for example, in South Africa [17].

For instance, the Ubuntu, African IK Systems (AIKS), has decolonized curriculum content and imparted moral principles and the value of communal identities. “The use of Ubuntu philosophy in the school curriculum has been shown to stimulate critical thinking, creativity and promote collective values in learners” [18]. By the same token, comprehending the past and present indigenous practices of the Kenyan ethnic communities furnishes positive perspectives on groups’ sustainable economic and social responsibilities [7]. Generally, the African IK system is useful in accelerating sustainable development [19].

## **5. The Ethiopian education system and indigenous knowledge**

Traditionally, Ethiopian education was based on religion. And it was delivered in church schools and monasteries to the elite few—mostly males. Western modern education did not arrive in Ethiopia until the twentieth century [20]. In Ethiopia, western modern education was introduced in 1908. Nevertheless, traditional education began in the country following the entrance of Christianity during the sixth century [14]. Modern education introduced science and technology but focused on foreign languages [13]. Then the establishment of modern schools spread throughout the country. The curriculum includes science, mathematics, drawing, English, French, Arabic, physical training, and home management subjects [14]. Additionally, some courses in religion, law, and calligraphy were offered [21].

However, Ethiopia has been adopting western education without conceptualizing and contextualizing it. Thus the country has not recognized, explored, and used IK yet [15]. Between 1908 and 1935, education aimed to master different languages. As a result, the curriculum was mostly developed in French, Italian, Geez, Arabic, and Amharic languages [21]. Most of the schools were headed by foreigners. For example, Egyptians led Menelik II School, the French headmaster led Teferi Mekonen School and the French headmistress guided Menen School. In general, the period between 1908 and 1935 was known as the French Period because French teachers and headmasters dominated the school system. Also, examinations were administered in French [13]. Consequently, the education system from its inception until the occupation by Italian Fascists in 1935 was criticized for being too European and unable to respond to the actual needs of Ethiopian society [13].

During the Italian occupation, Ethiopian education concentrated on scooping on Italian culture, cultivating many soldiers, and imposing Italian ideology [14]. Following that, the Ethiopian education system was dominated by the British and U.S. respectively after the Italian occupation [20]. The first Ethiopian higher education is Haile Selassie I University, later Addis Ababa University, which was launched in 1950. That depended on Western models in its staffing, curriculum, duration, timing, philosophy, and ideology [20, 22, 23].

During Derg, the Ethiopian education system continued by foreign domination. Yet, it shifted from western domination to eastern domination. Thus, education advisors from communist countries like the Soviet Union and East Germany influenced education policies [20].

Ref. [24] summarizes that:

*The Derg established a Marxist-Leninist education system. Schools became centres of party mobilization. Students had to study revolutionary songs, and attend*

*Marxist-Leninist classes. They were subjected to forced recruitment for national military services. Questions of academic freedom and other political freedoms were banned. Then a few students escaped to the forest to start a guerrilla movement and later seized power in 1991.*

In nutshell, the involvement of foreigners, particularly the significant numbers of French and Egyptian advisors, largely affected the selection and organization of the curriculum, which did not necessarily address the needs and interests of the Ethiopian people [13]. Nonetheless, “Ethiopia had a real chance of using its own traditions to develop an education system that could suit its rich traditions” [24]. Unless the formal education is combined with IK, the educators cannot connect their environment with modern science [10]. The integration of IK into higher education must be supported by a strong institutional system [17]. In summary, Ref. [8] recommends that universities and libraries need to look inward and find creative ways of integrating Western and IK systems in their teaching, research, engagement, and information management.

And yet, the scientific education system introduced in Ethiopia did not appreciate the indigenous education system [9]. Ethiopia still gives less attention to IK. Instead, it copied the western curriculums without conceptualization and contextualization them [25]. Hence, the educators have become far away from IK that the local community practices in everyday activities. The educators began to undermine the IK in favor of the western one. All policies, programs, strategies, and plans are designed by foreigners and experts who do not understand the real situations of the country. The local communities who are responsible to implement the policies face challenges since they have no skills and know-how to do so. That creates two groups: the group that designs policies without understanding the problems of the local communities, and the group that does not know the designed policies very well. In consequence, the country’s political economy development stagnated for many years.

In the same vein, the current Ethiopian educational system marginalized IK and excluded experienced local people [26]. That has not developed a modern educational system that produces students who can solve problems and enables the country to be competitive in the contemporary world [27]. Normally, the curriculum did not depend on the economic, social, and cultural realities of Ethiopia. The country copied its components from other countries. It translated textbooks for primary education from other languages without reflecting the Ethiopian situation [13]. Thus exogenous western educational paradigms dominated the Ethiopian education system [28].

## **6. The Gadaa indigenous knowledge system and school curriculum**

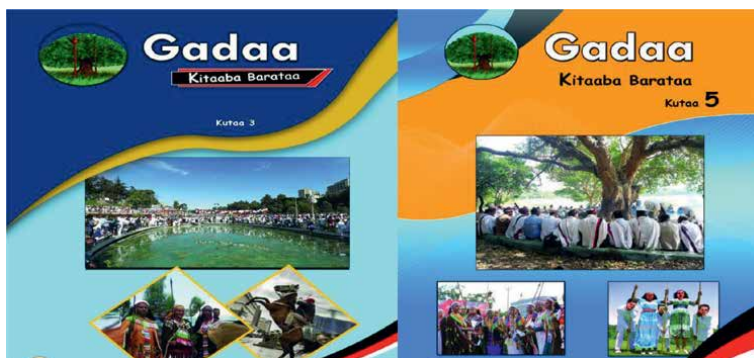
For many years, the Gadaa system has been transferred orally from generation to generation. The practices of the Gadaa system are so long. Ref. [29] elucidates that the Gadaa system is an intrinsic element of the indigenous Oromo people’s everyday lives. Ref. [30] demonstrates that Gadaa was practised during the leadership of 225 Abbaa Gadaas. That means the Oromo people have been exercising the Gadaa system before 1800 years. Before Amde Tsion and Zara Yaicob attempted to intensify the Christian religion in the lands of Oromo, the Oromo community had already organized under the Gadaa governance system. Gadaa system is active in some places such as Borana, Guji, Warqa, and Kokosa [31] Tulema, and Karayyu [9]. What is more, the Gadaa system is operated effectively for many years among most of the Oromo [32] albeit different factors challenge it.

Ref [28] stipulates that:

*... the Gadaa system exists as far as the Oromo community exists. Thus we cannot separate it from the Oromo. And yet, different threats challenged it many times. Modern education was introduced into Ethiopia during Menelik II around 1908. Since then, the country's educational curriculum has been dominated by the western. This undermined indigenous knowledge like the Gadaa system. Also, during the Emperor Haile Selassie, western education dominated highly. Besides, the Derg government followed the previous trends in the education curriculum. The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front further continued to copy and paste the western educational curriculum. All educational curriculums did not encourage indigenous knowledge.*

By the same token, it has not gotten the attention of scholars. The Gadaa system IK has been taught based on the traditional ways that depend on the calendar. There is a narrow space to include IK like the Gadaa system in school since the country exercises a western curriculum [25]. And “the pre-existing hegemonic education system denied peoples’ identities” [9]. Consequently, many challenges affect an attempt to teach the Gadaa system [33].

Nonetheless, Bule Hora University has started to teach the Gadaa system at various levels since 2019 [28]. Before Bule Hora University has begun to teach it, the Gadaa system has been transferring from generation to generation orally. Initially, the University launched the generic course entitled Introduction to Gadaa system course that is offered for all undergraduate students. The pupils also acknowledged the significance of learning it after they learned it. Ref. [9] summarizes that Bule Hora University has begun to teach the Gadaa system as an independent program under Gadaa and Oromo History in BA. Besides, there is a master’s program entitled Gadaa and Peace Studies. Also, the PhD program was launched as Gadaa and Governance Studies and entered into work fully. And the curriculum of the postdoctoral fellowship-related Gadaa system has already been completed. Furthermore, the University has put the direction to include the Gadaa system as a course in all postgraduate curriculums. That shows the shift of the Gadaa system from oral transmission to formal transmission. Following that, Oromia Regional State Education Office has designed Gadaa curriculums, and books (**Figure 1**) and began to teach students from grades one up to eight. In addition, Matu University has developed the curriculum MA in Gadaa and Heritage Studies and began to teach it.



**Figure 1.** Sample of Gadaa books for elementary school students. Source: Oromia educational office, 2020.



In nutshell, the Gadaa system was not considered at school curriculum for many years. The Ethiopian school curriculum's dependency on western and bad attitudes and phobia of the Habesha elites towards the Gadaa system in particular and other IK, in general, challenged the Gadaa system to remain as oral knowledge. Conversely, Bule Hora University has reversed that bad attitude and inaugurated the base for the Gadaa system formal education by incorporating it into the school curriculums. That also motivated other universities to include the Gadaa system and offer it either independently as a department or alongside modern education. Ref. [9] concludes that the incorporation of IK strengthens modern education since it addresses the weakness of modern education and vice versa.

## 7. Consequences of teaching the Gadaa system

Teaching the Gadaa system has paramount consequences. "The IK integration into scientific education allows students to conceptualize and contextualize modern education and solve local problems accordingly" [9]. Withal, it allows learners to understand, explore, examine, reiterate, analyze and repeat what they have already acquired knowledge from their parents orally. Besides, it helps the Oromo people to convert the Oral and informal knowledge into a written and formal one. Thus, it widens the chance to record and keep the Oromo's ways of life, experience, history, norms, values, customs, cultures, taboos, folklores, riddles, idioms, and others.

Similarly, the incorporation of the Gadaa system into school curriculums assists non-Oromo students to gain the egalitarian governance system and leadership, clear separation of power, the existence of horizontal and vertical check and balance, how the decision is made and implemented, the mechanism of recalling the leader when he unfits the position and women participation in decision making of the Oromo community. Ref. [34] explains that Gadaa is an egalitarian governance system. And there is a clear separation of power. For instance, the Gadaa governance system has nine officials known as *Saglan Booranaa*. Those are:

1. *Abbaa Bokkuu (Abbaa Gadaa)*—President
2. *Abbaa Bokkuu I*—Vice President,
3. *Abbaa Bokkuu II*—Vice President,
4. *Abbaa Caffee*—Chairman of Assembly
5. *Abbaa Dubbii*—Speaker
6. *Abbaa Seeraa*—Memorize of Laws,
7. *Abbaa Alangaa*—Judge Who Execute Decision
8. *Abbaa Duulaa*—Leader of War, and
9. *Abbaa Sa'aa*—in Charge of Economy.

From this, we understand that there is a clear separation of power in Gadaa system governance. In addition, there is a check and balance among that cluster. Wherefore,

there is no room in which power is monopolized by a single leader. The division of power in the Gadaa governance system is not the recent one. It has been practised among the Oromo community throughout their life for many years. “Under the rule of the Gadaa government, the Oromo indigenous education system was conducted by individuals, who currently have the required intellectual competence to teach at different academic levels” [35]. Therefore, Gadaa education is a part parcel of the Gadaa system (Ibid).

Ref. [9] enriches that:

*Gadaa is peaceful and loving. The system respects the rights of individuals. It preaches about the harmonious relationship among people. When the Oromo surrendered enemies, they adopted into Oromo via Moggaasaa—naming. We have to invest in the youths’ minds to equip them with IK and thought. Otherwise, youths favoured the western styles by giving up IK. Again, in the Gadaa system, power is transferred peacefully via the Baallii. The Luba ruled only for eight years. After eight years, he handovers the Baallii to the next Luba. Also, there is a check and balance. Luba’s success and failure are evaluated after four years, mid a year. If the given Luba is unable to bring the desired goals, he will be removed from power and replaced by others.*

Pupils further acquire the role of *Siiqqee* institutional conflict resolution mechanism, ritual ceremonies and religions, unique calendars, mechanism of environmental conservations, and identities and languages of the Oromo. Among Oromo people, women have a special place. As Gadaa is for males, *Siiqqee* is for females. Most scholars agree that the male cannot hold the *Haadha Siiqqee* position, and females cannot hold the *Abbaa Gadaa* position. That means their jobs and powers are classified based on sex compositions. No one can cross *Haadha Siiqqee* because she has a special status among the Oromo. Crossing her is prohibited [9]. Generally, the Gadaa system plays a significant role to boost development [34], and it helps to restore the civilization and identity of the Oromo people [33]. To include an IK system like the Gadaa system, “indigenous educators” [35] who have a sufficient understanding of IK need to involve in curriculum design, need assessment, teaching and implementation. In sum, teaching the Gadaa system enable the Oromo people to rediscover and document the social, political, economic, experience, ways of life, culture, development, religion, and environment in Gadaa values and systems. It more helps them to teach others the Gadaa systems’ values, norms, mores, folklores, concepts, ways of life, calendars, customs, marriages, gender equalities, checks and balances, justices, power separations, recalling when leaders are unable to discharge the duties, harmonious relationship with others, and how adoption and *Moggasaa* are taken place to add non-Oromo to Oromoo society.

## **8. Conclusion**

This paper addresses the nexus between indigenous knowledge and modern education in Ethiopian school curriculums. Different scholars provide different justification regarding the relationship between IK and modern education. Some scholars such as [8–10, 12] state that there is mutual inclusion between IK and modern education. Thus they support each other. Other scholars like [3, 6, 13–15, 26, 28] debate that modern education is responsible for the demise of IK.

Ethiopia is rich in IKs. To mention some Konso people terracing system, Awramba people gender equality, Oromo Gadaa system, Sidama Fiche Chambala New Year

celebration, Hadiyya Yaahode Maskala New Year celebration, and Tigray people Ashenda women festival [9]. However, the country has little experience in teaching IK alongside modern education at school. Ref. [22] concludes Ethiopia's education system is a reflection of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Koranic school system. Similarly, the western and Japanese educational policies, for instance, influenced the Ethiopian education system albeit the country was not colonized [23]. Hence, Ethiopian educators are either unable to participate in curriculum design to incorporate the IK into school curriculum or neglect IK purposively favoring western knowledge as modern, but IK as backward.

Despite this fact, Bule Hora University has started to teach the Gadaa system at different levels since 2019. That inspired other universities, colleges, and Oromia Regional State Education Office to design Gadaa system IK curriculums either as an independent program or include in different programs as courses and teach students. Teaching the Gadaa system helped the Oromo people to shift from the oral transfer to a well-organized document of the Gadaa values, norms, socials, cultures, politics, economics, religions, calendars, and environmental protections. And it motivates researchers and academicians to focus on digging into Gadaa systems and their values and document them well.

## **Author details**


Abdisa Olkeba Jima

Department of Governance and Development Studies, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Bule Hora University, Bule Hora, Ethiopia

\*Address all correspondence to: [olkebabdisa@gmail.com](mailto:olkebabdisa@gmail.com)

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## Section 2

# Challenges and Struggles







## Chapter 6

# Changing Socioeconomic Structure of Paudi Bhuyans, a Particular Vulnerable Tribe of Odisha, India

*Abhishek Bhowmick*

### Abstract

Socioeconomic change in the era of globalization is omnipresent. The impact seems to be more in the case of indigenous people. The present article is an attempt to understand these changes from both the emic and etic perspective for the Particular Vulnerable tribal Paudi Bhuyan. As any indigenous people, the inherent capacity to protect the change in their cultural core is a challenge. With the effect of Globalization, there is a steady change in the culture, and the article tries to decipher these changes and the way forward. The changes that are being studied are related to social, which include life cycle rituals, religious practices, material culture, administration (politics), and economic pursuits. These changes will lead to adaptation of certain phenomena, which is either voluntarily adapted or due to incorporation to facilitate the ease in administrative functionality of the Union of India. Thus, social change is inevitable to any society and especially the indigenous population such as Paudi Bhuyans. The present article tries to find out the primitive cultural expression and the present form of socioeconomic changes that are relevant to the Paudi Bhuyans society. To carry out the study, the researcher carried out ethnographic study in three districts of Odisha where the concentration of Paudi Bhuyans is maximum. The findings can be summarized as though there are changes in socioeconomic condition from the past, but the cultural core related to life cycle rituals, administration, economy is still significantly present in the Paudi Bhuyans.

**Keywords:** Paudi Bhuyans, social change, cultural core, particular vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG), social structure, economic structure, globalization

### 1. Introduction

Change is omnipresent and comprehensive in itself. Change is considered to be an important factor behind variability. Both change and variability are interrelated factors that are prevalent in humanity. The variation can be considered as a basis of all anthropological studies. Though variation can be considered as a component of social change, conceptually they are widely different, and every variation we encounter in daily life cannot be considered as social change. Thus, physical growth in terms of age or change of seasons does not fall under the concept of social change. In social

anthropology and sociology, the concept of social change has been considered as alterations that occur in the social structure and social relationship. The International Encyclopedia of Social Science (IESS 1972) looks at change as the important alterations that occur in the social structure, or in the pattern of action and interaction in societies. Alterations may occur in norms, values, cultural products, and symbols in a society. It also includes alteration in the structure and function of a social system. Institutions, patterns of interaction, work, leisure activities, roles, norms, and other aspects of society can be altered over time as a result of the process of social change.

In other words, social change is a term used to describe variation in any respect of social process and social interactions. It can also be described as a mode that either modifies or replaces the “preexisting” in the life of a people and in the functioning of a society. Every society exists in a universe produced from the dynamic influences. It can be experienced in most of the society that changes in material equipment and expansion of technology resulted in reshaping of ideologies and values in the society [1–3]. This affects institutional structures as they take on new components, and later they are induced to alter their functioning. The common example of this form of impact of alteration can be evident in change of family structures. Joint family system has been a common pattern in India. The head of the family exercises absolute powers over its members and distributes work among them. It is now fast being replaced by the nuclear family wherein family ties and authority of the head are gradually weakening. The structural change also produces functional change. But considering the tribal or indigenous people, this change is very slow, or they are reluctant in the drastic changes as they held social bonding above all. To understand this, change the author took up and focused ethnographic study on Paudi Bhuyans to understand the changes that are slowly and steadily induced changes in them with respect to the historical account. The author has taken all the effort to include all the available literature including published and unpublished work, but as the work is empirical and firsthand study among the Paudi Bhuyans of Odisha’s belonging to the three districts, namely Sundergarh, Angul, and Keonjhar, the author is unable to find very rich literature to work with. Hence, there is dearth in literature review, which can be considered as the limitation to the study.

## **2. Paudi Bhuyans**

### **2.1 The Paudi Bhuyans**

They are also found in large numbers in the adjoining states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, and some parts of Tamil Nadu. They are divided into two broad sections—Southern section with its center in Orissa comprising a backward section of the tribe and Northern section with its center at Chota-Nagpur containing the relatively advanced section of the tribe [4].

The Paudi Bhuyan is one of the major sections of Bhuyan tribe. They are mostly found in Bhuyan pir of Keonjhar, Banai mountainous areas, hill tracks of Sundergarh and Angul districts [5]. The name “Bhuiya” might have derived from the Sanskrit word “Bhumi” meaning land or earth. This tribe is also known as Bhuiya, Bhuiyan, and Bhuinia [4].

According to S. C. Roy, the racial and cultural elements of the Paudi Bhuyans have a greater affinity to the Munda tribes [see 4]. Roy further described the physical features of men and women, which are in conformity with the study of the present

researcher. Paudi Bhuyans are well-proportioned, muscular, of medium height and light build. The hair is black and plentiful on the head, but generally not present on the rest of the body. The thick mustache and beard are occasionally found among them. The hair is wavy in the feature. The mouth and teeth are well formed, and the eyes are straight and of medium size. Their heads are dolichocephalic, and nose is broad and lips are thick. The skin of the Paudi Bhuyans is of a lighter brown tint than that of average Dravidian aborigines. Paudi Bhuyans speak their (Bhuyan) dialect as their mother-tongue, though they can speak Oriya.

The historical account of the Bhuyans can be traced from the Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya, the two Bhuyan traders name Tapasu and Bhallika were inhabitants of Utkal (former name of Odisha). They met Lord Budha after his enlightenment and offered honey and rice cake to Lord Budha who had taken the food after 2 months of fast. They became disciples after listening to the sermon from Lord Budha [6].

Bhuyans are well documented in the Odhisian history for their participation in wars. And its reference can be traced from Madala Panji. The King Anangabhima Dev donated 25,0000 Madhas of gold (1 Madha = 5.8319 grams) for preparing Sri Jaganath's gold ornaments, and around double of this value (40 Lakh madhas) has been received from the Bhuyans as war indemnity. It can be inferred that the Bhuyans have a separate state and were quite rich and prosperous in the Ganga Age [7]. Some historians are also of the opinion that the famous Atavika kingdom that had even resisted king Ashok of Magadha dynasty from conquering their land were of Bhuyans along with other tribes such as Savars [7].

The second phase of the tribal uprising in the Odishan history consisted of accounts of struggle and movement in Keonjhar in 1890. Leadership was given by Dharanidhar Naik, a Bhuyan by birth. The struggle lasted for 5 years. The rising aimed at abolishing Bethi and other oppressive systems of extraction. The Bhuyans, the Juangs, and the Kolhas of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, and Pallahara joined into the movement. Interestingly, some of the non-tribals particularly some school teachers supported Dharanidhar Naik in this rising. It was, in fact, a unique event in the history of the freedom struggle in Orissa. Raja Dhanurjaya Bhanja of Keonjhar fled to Cuttack to seek the help of the Commissioner. Police forces were sent to suppress the rising. Dharanidhar was captured and was imprisoned for 7 years. Later on, he was released and led the life of a saint and began to preach his philosophy (see [6, 7]). This history is very much known to the present tribal people, and they usually talk that *Pitha* (a sweet dish made up of rice) was used as weapons for its hardness.

## 2.2 Carrying out the research work

Initially, the work carried out as part of research work for the PhD work on ethno-archaeology but to trace variation among the Paudi Bhuyans, the researcher carried out the research work on six different villages spanning the three district of Odisha state, namely Sundergarh, Angul, and Keonjhar. The villages thus chosen are selected on two major criteria: the population of Paudi Bhuyans is above 80 percentage of the total population, and the second criterion is that the two villages should lie in different geographical setting with respect to accessibility of major communication system. Thus, one village among all the three districts is living near the major communication system such as interstate highway, and other lies at least 15–20 kilometers away from the major communication system, i.e., far away from the major road. This is being done to understand the impact of forces that impart changes in the socio economic aspects of Paudi Bhuyans.

### 2.3 Population composition of Paudi Bhuyans of the studied villages

Paudi Bhuyans settle themselves near the forest area in the hilly setup. Their subsistence pattern and lifestyle depend on the forest products. Their socioeconomic life is characterized by surrounding geophysical setting.

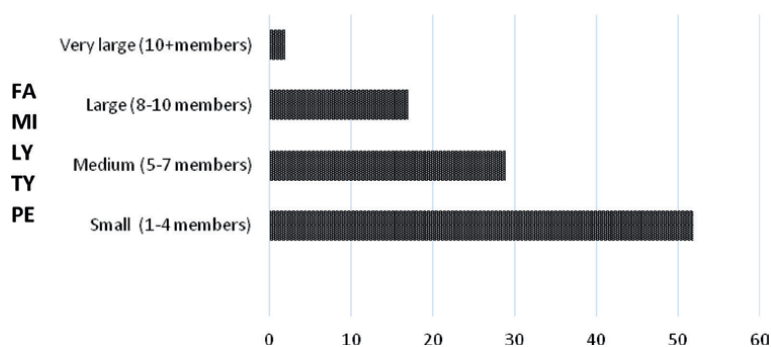
Society is composed of sum total of individuals. Individuals are the representative of group of population. Each individual of a group has certain norms and values influenced by the society’s cumulative behavior. Classification of population begins with an individual as a member of the family, which is the smallest unit of a social system [8].

#### 2.3.1 Family

Family plays an important role in economy, social organization, and ritual performance among the Paudi Bhuyan community. Member who shares a common hearth is considered as family. The members of the family are related either by consanguine or in affinal basis. Family size is calculated on the basis of the persons sharing a common hearth. The classification is as follows:

- i. Small – One to four members present in a family.
- ii. Medium – Five to seven members present in a family.
- iii. Large – Eight to 10 members present in a family.
- iv. Very large – Ten and more than 10 members present in a family.

Frequency distribution shows that small-sized family (1–4 members) is predominant among the Paudi Bhuyan community. The Paudi Bhuyans live in nuclear families with married couple and their unmarried children. Sometimes unmarried brother and/or sister used to stay with them. Frequency of medium and large-sized families is 29.00% and 17.00%. Very large family is the lowest in frequency (**Figure 1**). Family size reflects the economic status of the community. Low frequency of large families indicates small productive unit. As they practice shifting agriculture, they have small plots of lands. The produces from these lands are unable to sustain the large and very large families [9].



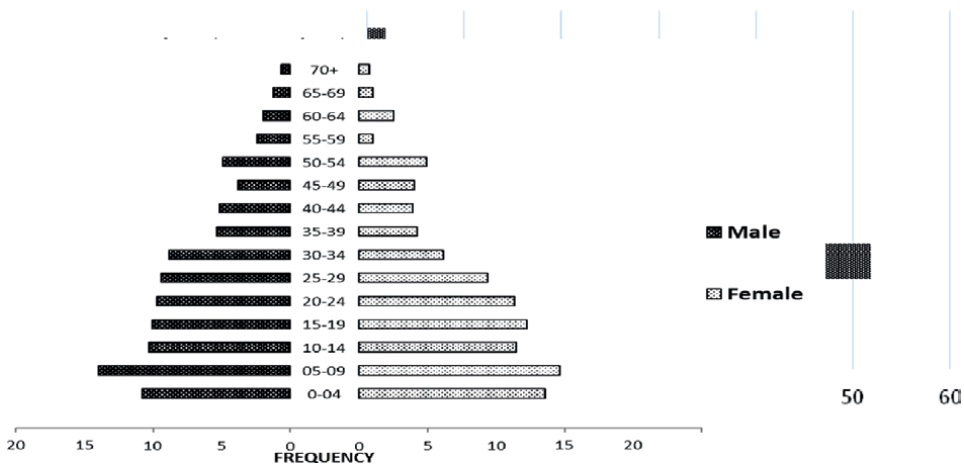
**Figure 1.** Frequency distribution of families on the basis of size of the studied population.

### 2.3.2 Age and sex

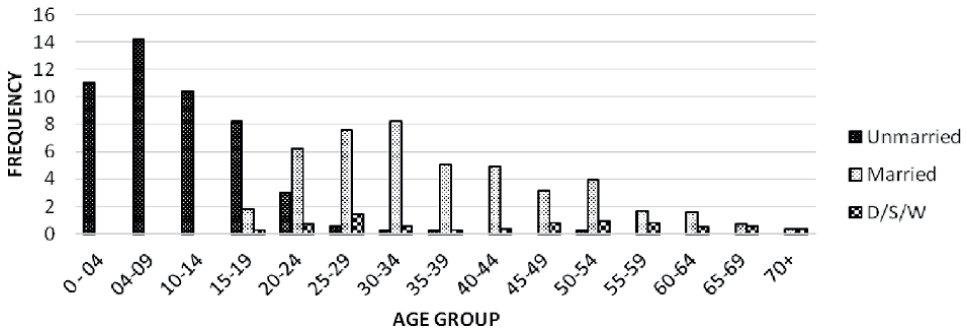
Age-sex structure is important to understand the marital status, educational standard, and economic activities of the families. Age grouping is done at the interval of 5 years. The calculation is done up to 70 years. The first group is newborn baby to 5 years. Then the age groups are classified into 5–9, 10–14, 15–19, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35–39, 40–44, 45–49, 50–54, 55–59, 60–64, 65–69, and 70+. The population of ages of 70 and above is grouped into the category 70+. The male-female ratio in each age group is more or less equal. So the population is a stable population. Age groups between 0 and 34 incorporate maximum number of individuals. So the population is growing in nature. The population pyramid shows the higher number of individuals in lower age groups, and with the increase of age, the population decreases gradually. Maximum number of children belong to the age groups 0–4 and 5–9. The frequency distribution of population indicates that it is a growing population. The sex ratio also indicates that it is a stable population (**Figure 2**).

### 2.3.3 Marital status

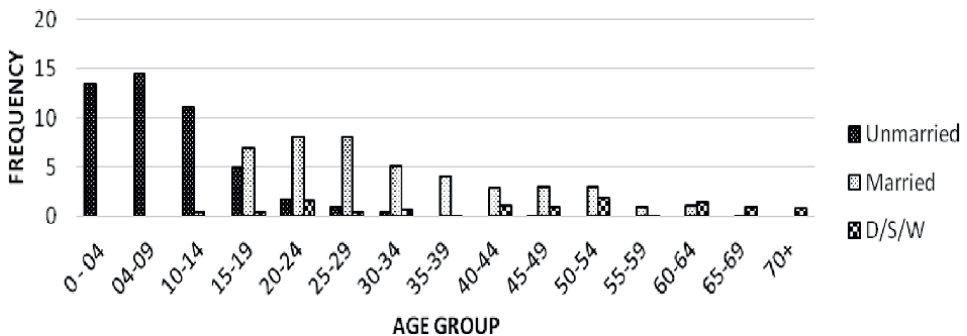
Civic condition of a population is reflected in the marital status of the population. Paudi Bhuyans are generally monogamous. Marriage within the community is permissible. They follow clan exogamy. Marriage within consanguinal relatives is extremely prohibited, whereas marriage within affinal relatives is permissible. Generally married women started to live with her husband in a newly built house with a new hearth setup. Paudi Bhuyans generally prefer to marry at an adult age. Child marriage is also in occurrence in case of females. The age of marriage of male is 18, and in case of female, 14. Widow and widower marriage is also permissible in the society (**Figures 3 and 4**). The frequency of married females is higher than males in case of age groups 15–19 and 20–24. Marriage follows clan exogamy and tribe endogamy. Mate is generally selected from the concentrating area of the Paudi Bhuyans, i.e., Banspal block in Keonjhar district of Odisha. Bride is also selected from the different families of the village. Marriage within a community is crucial to maintain their traditional rituals and associated norms and values.



**Figure 2.**  
 Population pyramid of the studied population.



**Figure 3.** Age- and sex-wise distribution of marital status of the studied population (male).



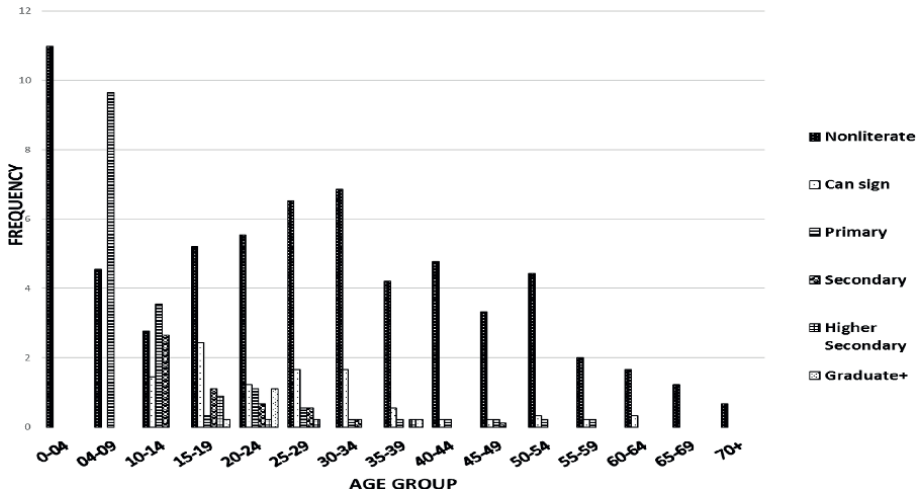
**Figure 4.** Age- and sex-wise distribution of marital status of the studied population (female).

### 2.3.4 Education

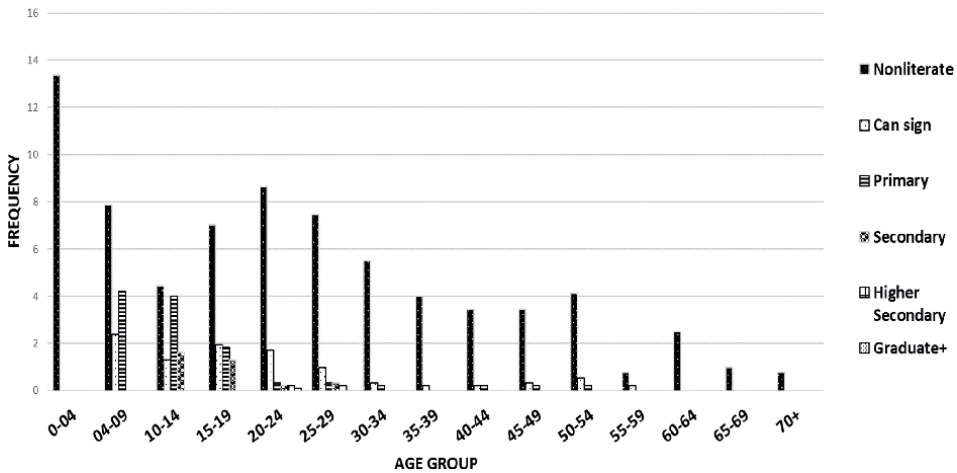
The village has educational facilities. There are Anganwadi, Primary, Secondary, and Higher Secondary schools within the village and nearby areas at walking distance. The graduate college is about 25–100 kilometers away from the villages. The level of literacy of Paudi Bhyans is significantly low. Illiteracy is also found among the younger generation. The frequency of illiteracy in case of males is 64.75% and in case of females, it is 74.30%. Frequency of can sign category is 10.31% in case of males and 10.15% in case of females. Primary educated male is 16.52% and female is 11.56%. The frequency of secondary education in case of male is 5.32% and 3.46% in females. The frequency of higher secondary education and above is very low in case of both males and females. The educational standard of the people shows that most of them belong to non-literate and can sign category. Due to low literacy level, the shifting from their traditional occupation is limited, which affects the organization of the society (**Figures 5 and 6**).

### 2.3.5 Occupation

The primary occupation of the community studied is cultivation (43.79%). Shifting cultivation is the primary occupation of Paudi Bhuyans. Male children from the age group 10–14 help in cultivation such as broadcasting of seeds and control their cattle. Males of age groups 60 and above also engage themselves in supervision of different stages of cultivation. Main labor force of cultivation comes from the age groups of



**Figure 5.** Age- and sex-wise distribution of literacy status of the studied population (male).



**Figure 6.** Age- and sex-wise distribution of literacy status of the studied population (female).

15–54. As their produces do not fulfill their economy, so they supplement their economy with daily wage labor (11.09%). Unemployment is significantly present among the male Paudi Bhuyans (26.83%). It is also important that unemployment is also present in the younger generations. Neither have they had opportunities to higher studies nor do they have interest in job. Service and business are rare in occurrence (**Figure 7**).

Females, both married and unmarried, are engaged in household work. Besides household work, both married and unmarried females of age group of 15–59 also help in cultivation in broadcasting of seeds and weeding. Females also engage in daily wage labor (**Figure 8**).

Per capita income of the families does not exceed rupees 5000/– per month. All of them are BPL (Below Poverty Level) card holders. It is also interesting that they also practice barter system of economy. They generally exchange their crops with basket, broom, mat, garments, and any other necessary items for their daily life.

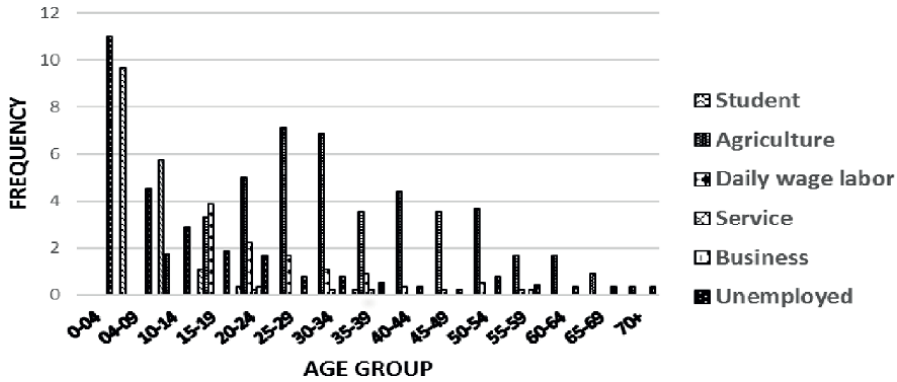


Figure 7. Age- and sex-wise distribution of literacy status of the studied population (male).

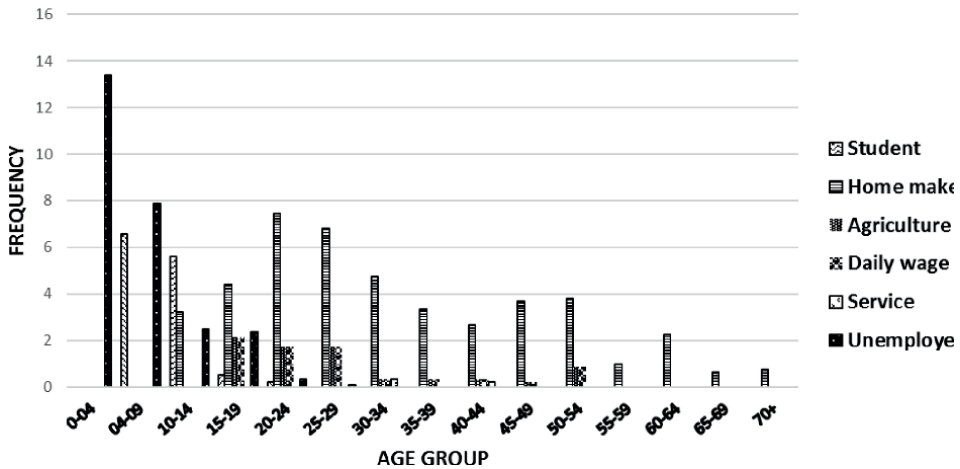


Figure 8. Age- and sex-wise distribution of literacy status of the studied population (female).

### 3. Economy

The economic life of the Paudi Bhuyans mainly centers on shifting cultivation, which is the primary source of their livelihood [10]. Paudi Bhuyans also engage themselves in different works, such as collection of minor forest products, hunting, fishing, basket making, wage earning, and other economic pursuits to supplement the shifting cultivation [10].

The following paragraph provides a brief discussion on land utilization, agricultural practices, and related economic pursuits and their changing aspects with respect to the economic life of the Paudi Bhuyans.

#### 3.1 Cultivation

The Paudi Bhuyans mostly settled between the block of plateau, hills, and forests intersected by rivers and ravines. In India, there is a strict rule related to habitation and settlement near the forest area. But, as autochthons, Paudi Bhuyans enjoy



immunity and can avert strict surveillance from the government. This immunity helps Paudi Bhuyans to cut and clear the patches of forest to practice their age-old practice of slash and burn cultivation. The land is communally owned by the villagers [10]. Each Paudi Bhuyan village has a definite demarcated area of the forest that was generally owned by them through feudatory chiefs of historical Kings. The villagers only have access to practice shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing, and gathering, within the pre-allocated area of that particular village. Generally, the Paudi Bhuyans prefer not to trespass the boundary of other villages [10].

The dispute among the villagers related to cultivable land is very few in number. They mutually respect the amount allotted to them in a specific year. If any dispute arises, village council and its members will assemble at a pre-decided place and the conflict over the dispute will be settled. The procedure to resolve the dispute is unique to them. In the pre-decided place, both the villagers who are interested to take part in the resolution will gather. Each village contributes a healthy chicken, an earthen pot, and some un-husked paddy. Both the chickens are then put inside the earthen pot with some un-husked paddy, which is sealed from outside with mud and is kept overnight. The next day both the fowls are checked. If any chicken died, then the corresponding village loses the right to the disputed land, and if both the chickens are alive, then the disputed land is equally divided [10].

### 3.2 Types of land under cultivation

**Biringa:** Biringa is a patch of land brought under cultivation for the first time. During the period of cultivation, a piece of land remains under the individual ownership, but after it is left fallow, it reverts back to the village. In Biringa, the *Biri dali* (black gram) is the principal crop that is grown, but a variety of other crops such as niger, *suturi*, *kolatha* (horse gram) mung, pumpkin, goard, etc., are grown.

**Kaman:** The patch of land that was cultivated earlier, and in this land principally paddy is planted along with the principal crops *gangai*, *rugi*, *maize*, and *ruma*. These are sown on all sites of a Kaman to mark the boundary lines.

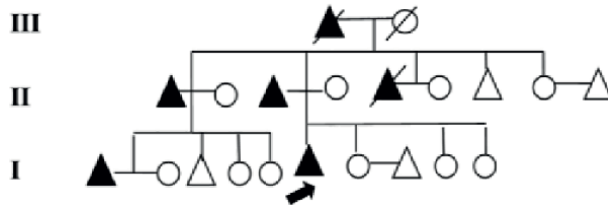
**Guda:** The patch of land that was cultivated third and final time called Guda. After being cultivated for consecutive 2 years, a patch of Guda generally lacks much of fertility. Hence, such crops as paddy, niger are usually sown on such plots, after three successive years of cultivation. The land is left fallow for 5–6 years till the fertility of the soil is rejuvenated.

**Bila:** The patch of land where permanent paddy plots are present. These types of plots are close to the river or perennial stream body in the valley, so that the water of the river can be diverted to irrigate these lands. Such lands are individually owned on a permanent basis. Paddy is the only crop grown in these lands.

**Bakadi:** Bakadi is the land close to residential dwellings, preferably at the back side of the home stead. In some houses, even the three sides are found to be used for cultivation. Bakadi is owned permanently by individual families. To improve the fertility of the soil natural manures such as daily waste and cow dung are added regularly. These lands are generally used to cultivate mustard or maize in alternate year. In villages under study of Angul District, some vegetables and tobacco are also cultivated.

#### 3.2.1 Ownership of land

Paudi Bhuyans inherit homestead land, which is generally assigned to them permanently. Apart from homestead land, all other land is owned by the village. The



**Figure 9.**  
*The genealogical distribution of homestead.*

individual family enjoys the right of cultivable land and its produce with respect to specific time period. The period can last up to 2–3 years.

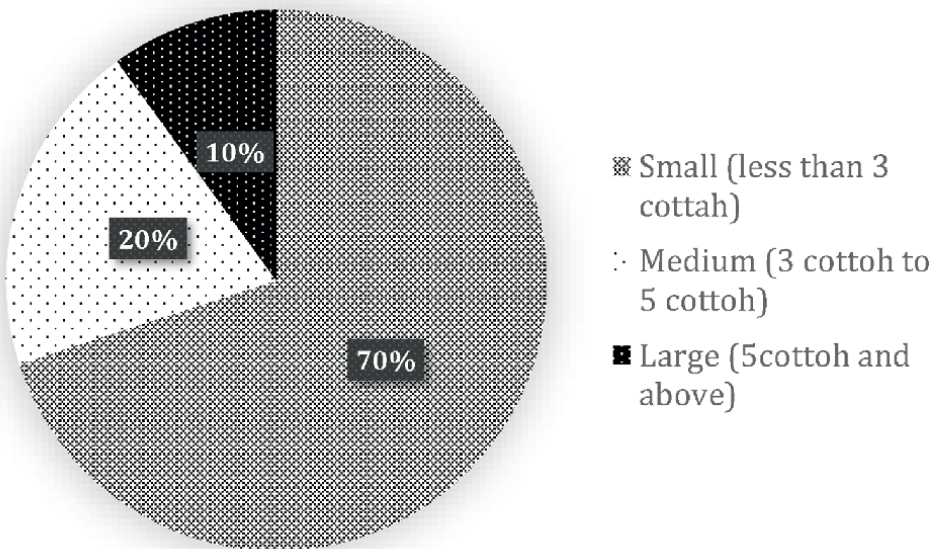
To understand the ownership of land, genealogical and case studies methods are undertaken (**Figure 9**).

In **Figure 5** (genealogical distribution of homestead), it becomes clear the homestead land is owned and inherited jointly by all the sons. Each of the sons has equal share, which again is transferred to the male children of the next generation.

### 3.2.2 Distribution of land

In every Paudi Bhuyan village, there is a pattern of distribution of land. Shows the trend of distribution of land among the Paudi Bhuysans of studied villages (**Figure 10**).

From the abovementioned pie chart, it is very clear that the cultivable land among the Paudi Bhuysans is very less [10]. The small land holding, which is less than 3 cottah { $67\text{m}^2 \times 3 = 201\text{m}^2$  (approximately)}, is more in percent (70%). The 5 cottah or  $335\text{m}^2$  land-holdings on an average is quite low (20%). Large landholding is lowest (10%), which is similar to the earlier study done by me in Kuanar Village of Keonjhar District [10].



**Figure 10.**  
*Frequency distribution of distribution of land.*

Other than abovementioned occupation of cultivation, they have taken to petty trade and commerce and industrial employment also to supplement the income. Rope making and ordinary carpentry are known to all men, and mat making is the recreational activity of the Bhuyans women. Though, there is very feeble division of labor by sex for certain activities. Generally heavier works such as cutting trees, plowing, sowing, hunting, and fishing are generally carried out by men while lighter works such as cooking and other domestic works are mostly carried out by women. Thatching of houses and climbing trees are taboo for the women folk. Works such as forest clearing, weeding, transplanting harvesting, threshing, and collection of minor forest products are carried out by both men and women [10].

Cultivation is a family affair in which all able-bodied adult members of the family cooperate. If any extra labor is required, it is not done by exchange of money but exchange of similar kind of labor. Extra labor is generally required only for weeding and harvesting. A man having no draught animals may take the help of others having such animals. The Bhuyans domesticate various animals such as cow, bullock, goat, sheep, fowl, etc. The main purpose for keeping cattle is not for milk but for draft animal for cultivation and for breeding.

### 3.2.3 The procedure of cultivation

The Paudi Bhuyans practice shifting cultivation [11]. The use of bullock-driven plows for tilling all types of land is common in the village. Paudi Bhuyans generally coined it as *Podu chasa*. They generally cultivate a patch of forest land for three consecutive years after which it is left fallow. These patches are located on flat hill tops stretching up to foot hills. The hills in this area are generally flat-topped and without much stone boulders, and the gradients are gentle. After cultivating a patch of land for 3 years, they leave it fallow for a period of 5–6 years for rejuvenation. Previously the fallow period was 10–12 years. But the main cause for its reduction is the population pressure and shortage of land for *podu* cultivation. The land under shifting cultivation belongs to the village, and a patch is distributed by the village committee to the individual, and it remains in possession for cultivation to the man as long he cultivates it.

The first year shifting cultivation (*biringa*) involves several stages given below. It begins with selection of hill slopes mostly in the month of December–January by the village committee headed by Pradhan. Cutting of trees and bush clearing started from February to April. Piling of timbers and firing it (*anapuda*) in April–May. Bush clearing (*patikaa*) in May. Sowing (*Buna*) in July after Akhin Parab ritual. Plowing and hoeing (*bhuinyanga*) in July immediately after hoeing. Weeding and debushing (*Judabachha*) in – September–October after Ashiaripuja. Watching the crops in November–December onward. The crops grown during the first year are Kolatha (*Macrotyloma uniflorum*), Biri (*Vigna mungo*), Rasi (*Guizotia abyssinica*), and various types of vegetables and creeper plants. During the second year of shifting cultivation, the main crop grown is a short-duration paddy (*aman*) along with Gangei (*Sorghum bicolor*). The former is sown in the middle of the plot, and the latter on the borders of the plot. Besides, they grow Mandia (*Eleusine coracana*), Kangu (*Setaria italica*), Sarso (*Sinapi sarvensis*), and various types of vegetables in the second year. In the third year's shifting cultivation (*Guda*), only Rasi is grown. If a patch fetches good harvest in the second year, then it is cultivated for the third year. The same patch can be brought under fourth year's cultivation if there is a good harvest in the third year [10].

The Paudi Bhuyans use very simple implements in their agricultural operation. The most important implements used in shifting cultivation include plow, leveler yoke, crowbar, spade, sickle, knife, wooden pole, etc.

#### *3.2.4 Stages of shifting cultivation*

There are finite numbers of stages of the shifting cultivations and are somewhat similar in all the villages under study. These are i) *Preparation of Land* – in this stage, the patch of land that has thick vegetation is chosen. After clearing the patch, the big trees that are being cut are sold to timber markets. And all other residues of the plants are put together in stack and set into fire. The fire clears the land for cultivation and the residue acts as fertilizer. ii) *Plowing* – Ploughing is done as per the requirement of crops to be sown and the season of production. Locally made plow (hal) and leveler (kuruala) are used for plowing. Implements such as cylindrical iron rod (sabal) are also used for the removing stones. Plowing is done 2–3 times before the rainy season and sometimes in the rainy season also. Plowing is necessary for preparation of the land to conserve the soil moisture, to uproot the weeds, to make the soil arable, and also for the mixing of ashes that are produced from the burning of trees and shrubs. The method of plowing varies according to the type of soil and terrain. For example, the animal-drawn plowing is done where there is flat land, and handheld plowing is done on the steep slopes. There is difference in plowing in slopes where *podu* cultivation is practiced. The cultivators generally drove the plow in the lines perpendicular to the direction of the slopes. iii) *Selection of seeds and preservation* – The Paudi Bhuyans take very seriously the seed selection procedure and also its preservation. It is a complex process and is varied according to the villages. They practice various measures to select seeds, such as quality of shine, shape, undamaged, mostly collected from the best plants from the previous yield. They carefully select the patch of crop, which is suitable for seed preservation for next sowing. They process it and store it carefully. Preservation of seeds is also done in indigenous methods. The seeds are dried in sun for several days to make it hard and moisture-free. Most of the farmers put their seeds in their own houses for their personal use. More than 80% of the respondents informed that they kept the seeds in airtight baskets, which are locally made. This is a drum-like container made of thin bamboo strips. Both the inner and outer walls of the containers are plastered with mud and cow dung, and the seeds are mixed with dry neem (*Azadirachta indica*) leaf and ash. They keep it protected from moisture. Upon further investigation, another way of preservations of seeds is prevalent. A set of dry paddy straws are interwoven into thick rope form with a thickness of 10–12 cm. These are called *Benti*. The *Benti* is then coiled over making a basket-like shape in which the seeds are kept along with the dried Begunia leaves (*Vitex nigunda* L.). The seeds are occasionally exposed to sunlight. This practice is useful in maintaining the quality of seed and grains [10]. iv) *Irrigation* – Paudi Bhuyans practiced particular systems to preserve water resources and control distribution of the water in the fields. All the villages under study, which are situated in the hilly tracts, have perennial streams originated through capillary action of groundwater. These streams are trapped for irrigation through construction of smaller channels. They use bamboo and banana plants to make these temporary channels. Flow irrigation was not possible in an undulating topography; hence, the runoff water is stopped at different levels and allowed to soak deep into the soil. This resulted in availability of adequate moisture at root level, which helped for better crop production. v) *Weeding* – Generally in the studied villages, the weeding started in the month of September–October. The weeding is mostly done by

the women and is done by simply uprooting the weeds by hand. The weeds are collected on the earthen embankments of the fields. There may be more than one weeding cycle till the time of harvest. vi) *Harvesting* – Harvesting is done according to the year of cultivation and the type of crop cultivated. Paudi Bhuyans generally cultivate rasi (*sesame*) in the first year, and it is usually harvested in the month of November–December. In the second year, the harvesting can be extended up to January, and in the third year, it again is restricted to November–December. vii) *Threshing* – It is the process of separating the edible part of grain from the stalk, the straw. Threshing may be done by beating the grain using a flail on a threshing floor or just thrashing the paddy stalk over a sloping platform, made of bamboo strips. viii) *Winnowing* – Wind winnowing is an agricultural method developed by ancient cultures for separating grain from chaff. It is also used to remove weevils or other pests from stored grain. The Paudi Bhuyans practice it extensively in the paddy cultivation and other crops as and when required. ix) *Husking* – In all the villages under study, almost every 5–6 households, there is a husking lever. The husking lever can be utilized by more than one household on mutual understanding. Husking of the grains is done to separate the grain from its scales, inedible chaff that surrounds the grain.

### *3.2.5 Pastoral activities*

Among the Paudi Bhuyans, the Pastoralism is not an important economic occupation [10]. Very few families are engaged full time in this occupation. The variety of cattle that are being reared is not milch variety. They are only used for the agricultural purpose. The beef is a taboo for the Paudi Bhuyans. Apart from bovine, the most common animal that is found being reared is goat. Both she and he goats are reared and are primarily used to sell them in the weekly market in exchange for money or are consumed if not sold. The goat is also offered as a sacrifice to the gods and goddesses. The cattle and goats are grazed in their respective places as designated by the village council members.

### *3.2.6 Poultry farming*

Most of the Paudi Bhuyans family maintains a considerable number of poultry, mostly hen. They are used as food or sold in the market. Eggs obtained from fowls are mostly consumed or exchange with rice in certain cases. Fowls are cooked on festive occasions and cherished as great food. Moreover, eggs and fowls are very important as religious offerings. Almost all their God and Goddesses and ancestors require fowls as offerings. They are also used in almost all ceremonies of life cycle.

### *3.2.7 Fishing*

Fishing is limited to very few Paudi Bhuyans and is self-sustainable form. They consumed it themselves, and the catch is very limited in quantity. They catch fish in the springs and nearby river with indigenously built traps.

### *3.2.8 Gathering of forest products*

One of the minor economic occupations of the Paudi Bhuyans is gathering of forest resources. They usually gather fruits from the nearby jungles. Mostly women are engaged in the collection of fruits, but men and children are also involved in this minor economic activity of collecting fruits. Mango and jack fruits are the most

common fruits that are being collected in the forest. They even collect flowers of mahua plants that are used to prepare solution of country liquor. The important items of forest collection include Mohua flower (*Madhuca indica* seed), Mohua seed (*M. indica* seed), mango (*Manifera Indica*), jack fruit (*Artocarpushetero phyllus*), Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), Harida (*Terminalia chebula*), Bahada (*Terminalia bellerica*), Kochila seeds (*Nux vomica*), Phula Jhadu (*Thysanoleana maxima*), a kind of plant for making broom stick, Jhadu (*Aristidas etacea*), Gaba (*Jetropha curcas*), various types of green leaves, mushrooms, edible roots, and rubbers. They also collect fire wood, thatching grass, fibers for rope making, and different types of medicinal herbs and shrubs. The Bhuyans are in the habit of collecting minor forest product extensively for their own consumption, and at very few occasion they sell it for a secondary income [10].

In a particular village of Sundergarh district, Paudi Bhuyans women, especially the young girls and occasionally men, are engaged in collecting many forest products that are industrially needed. They collected it for specific contractors who allocated them a certain fund in exchange of the forest product. They do not disclose it properly about the particular items, but they inform the author about this activity. They are then paid according to the collection and the item ranges from Rs 30 to 100. They mostly collect resins, barks of certain plants, gum, etc., that have no direct resale value in the local market.

### *3.2.9 Wage earning*

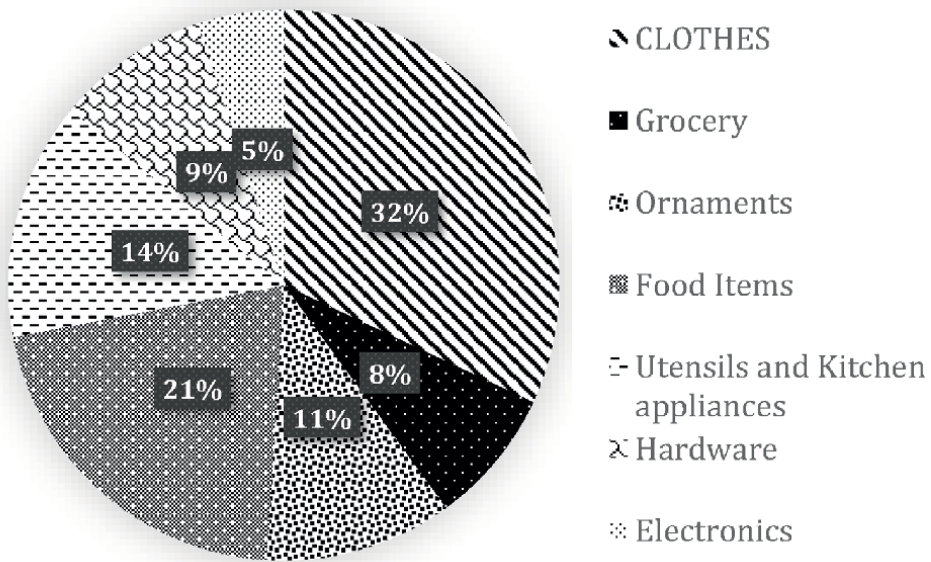
Paudi Bhuyans are nowadays engaged in 100 days work that is being provided to them by the Panchayat under the National Rural Employment Guarantee act, 2005. Wage earning is only occasional and even prevalent in the areas where the Paudi Bhuyans live in close contact with the other non-tribal peoples. Most of the wage earning that has been observed is engagement in governmental development work. Agricultural laborer is absent, and if engaged as agricultural labor, they are paid in terms of labor only.

## **4. Market and price mechanism**

### **4.1 Market**

The market is extremely vital to study from the perspective of material exchange [12]. The market not only provides the essential items required by the villagers, but also opens the avenue to access the goods, which are new and can really help them in the betterment of their daily life style. Thus, market study is done to analyze the items that are present in the market and mode of procurement of the goods those are present for exchange. The primary focus of the study is to access the villagers' response toward the particular items and the mode of payment that is prevalent in the market, i.e., price mechanism [10].

In the all the villages studied, there are average 50–60 stalls. And all of them are weekly market. That is, the market is assembled and open in specific day of week. There is no fixed day for all the villages under study. The market can be classified in two broad categories. The divisions can be made on the basis of the nature of construction, that is, semi-permanent structure and without any structure at all. The semi-permanent structure is built upon a fixed base that is made up of concrete, and



**Figure 11.**  
*Frequency distribution of major items sold in the market.*

the platform is raised above the surface to support the upper structure. Generally, the upper structure is constructed mostly by bamboo and occasionally with iron pipes. All shops used plastic sheets as roofing and covering of the structure.

Mostly the semi-permanent structures are raised by wealthy merchants whose articles are costlier and more prone to damage by sunlight and rain, such as clothing articles, grocery items, or ornaments. There are generally placed within the raised semi-permanent structure. For items such as vegetables, fish, and smaller commodity, shops are seldom seen with any kind of structure (**Figure 11**).

The above pie chart shows that the maximum items sold are clothes. Food items are next in order of sell. Utensils and kitchen implements are also found in appreciable quantity, and so are the ornaments.

#### 4.2 Price mechanism

The Paudi Bhuyans' economy is definitely influenced from the general Odishan economy, and thus, the same monetary exchange mechanism is followed except for special cases, where the barter is more preferred over the monetary exchange system. Thus, Paudi Bhuyans' price mechanism can be termed as mixed system of exchange that has been guided with the general rule of feasibility [10]. The Paudi Bhuyans shift from one pricing system that is from monetary exchange (where the goods are exchanged for money) to barter system (where the goods are exchange for similar goods) according to their need and asset underlying. The guiding principal of exchange is solely as per need of Paudi Bhuyans. They are largely in need of rice, which is their staple food. More or less 80% of their daily food intake is rice and its by-products. That means if we measure the amount of food consumed by Paudi Bhuyans any day, it will contain 80% of rice (*bhata*) or rice products and the remaining 20%

may be products such as pulses, vegetables, etc. Therefore, primary need of the Paudi Bhuyans is rice, and barter exchange is commonly utilized to trade rice in exchange of any other crop. In the month of sleek production, they even prefer to sell their goods in exchange of rice.

## 5. Daily life

The daily life of Paudi Bhuyans is very much similar to rural life of any other community in India. Their daily routine is influenced by their economic life. In the morning, both men and women get up with the sunrise, mostly at the dawn with the first cocks crow. Nearly about 5 am in the summer months and rest of the year around 6 am. The man sits leisurely for a while in the verandah of his house and then most of the men will travel to the dormitory (manda ghar), to have a chit chat with fellow villagers. Women folk of the village start household work in the early morning. They sweep the courtyard and sprinkle water mixed with cow dung on it before doing any other work. Then she either visits the neighborhood where Dhenki (husking lever) is available or if present in her own home. They either husk paddy or jali (Ragi). After the grains for the day's meal are husked, she generally washes the utensils with water that is kept in store day before.

Time	Men	Women	Children
5.00 to 6.00 am	Waking up	Waking up	Sleeping
6.00 to 7.30	Visiting the mandaghar For general talking or discussing any probable work.	Grinding or Husking Brooming and putting cow dung with water on the courtyard.	Sleeping
7.30 to 9 am	Breakfast	Cleaning of utensils and fetching water and bathing.	Waking up. And have their breakfast
9.00 to 12 am	Work in the fields or the forest.	Cooking and doing house hold work.	Either went to school or play or forage for wood.
12 to 1.00 pm	Midday meal	Midday meal	Midday meal
1.00 to 2 pm	Rest	Rest	Rest
2.00 to 4.30 pm	Work in the field or foraging	House hold work like preparing leaf cups, mats or may go to the forest for foraging along with husbands or older children	Either go with parents to jungle or play with the other children.
6.00 to 8.00	Bathing, return home, may visit the evening gathering around the mandaghar.	Preparing dinner or chit-chat with other village women.	Either play or study.
8.00 to 9.00 pm	Dinner	Dinner	dinner
9.00 pm	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep

**Table 1.**  
*Daily routine of the Paudi Bhuyans.*



After the men return from Manda ghar, either they first go for defecation while brushing teeth with datuns (either neem or sal twig) or take breakfast. They take stale rice with some onions and salt as breakfast. The children meanwhile wake up, and they also take the fermented rice or pan cake made of rice. The children either go to school, or they play with other children of the village. Women then go for fetching water from the stream or tube well. There they take bath and wash clothes of entire family. Then they return with pots filled with water. After returning home, they start preparing the midday meal. As the firewood is used as fuel, it takes considerable time to boil the rice and dal. Simultaneously, the women folk take care of their babies, prepare leaf cup or plaster of wall with mud and cow dung.

At noon, men come home from the work, wash themselves, and have their meal. Then both men and women spend some leisure time. Before sunset, they are engaged in gathering of wood for fuel. In the evening, they cook meal for dinner and members of the family sit around the hearth and gossip. After dinner, they go to sleep (**Table 1**).

## **6. Social organization of Paudi Bhuyans**

### **6.1 Family organization**

The smallest social unit of the Paudi Bhuyans is family consisting of parents and their children. The family is patriarchal and patrilineal, and father is the supreme authority in the family. The descent is traced through male line from father to son [13, 14]. Family plays an important role in Paudi Bhuyan society in rearing of children, socialization, enculturation, security of members, care of elderly people, decision-making, economic activities, and ritual performances.

“Khilli” is local descent group of Paudi Bhuyans [15]. A daughter belongs to her father’s khilli before marriage. Married woman becomes the member of her husband’s “Khilli.” The adopted son also has a full property right. The family is mostly nuclear consisting of husband, wife, and their unmarried children. In some cases, unmarried brothers and sisters live with the brother’s family.

### **6.2 Position of women**

Females among the Paudi Bhuyans do not inherit property. After the death of a husband, the widow looks after his property. Jewelry is considered as women’s personal property. Females do not inherit property. After marriage, woman lives in her husband’s house. Marriage is ordinarily monogamous, though the husband of childless woman may take a second wife. Women can take decision about some family affairs such as shopping, marketing, and rearing of children [16].

### **6.3 Village organization**

The village, “Grama,” is a unit in the Paudi Bhuyans social structure. It consists of number of hamlets (Sahis). Hamlets constitute a number of families. The village acts as a unit for a number of activities of Paudi Bhuyans. Members of different families help each other in construction and repairing of houses and in economic activities. When there is any ceremonial feast, members of the whole village have to be invited. The village as a whole has certain common rights over the village pasture. Village also plays an important role in religious and social functions.

## **6.4 Traditional and modern political organization**

Intra- and inter-village disputes are rare occurrence. However, the human nature in general as it is, the Paudi Bhuyan is not above jealousy, covetousness, and greed, which create occasionally quarrels and conflict. Bride capture is frequently in occurrence, which may lead to serious problems.

The conflicts that arise in the village are decided upon by the village head called Pradhan, while inter-village quarrels and conflicts are decided by the joint meeting of village head of the respective villages together with elders and the Dehuri (the village priest). Traditional norms and values are maintained by village priest and village head man [17].

Such leaders of Paudi Bhuyan society may be classified as traditional and hereditary. But in modern Panchayati Raj system, Sarpanch is also an elected head and has a considerable say in the matter of judicial decisions. Thus, members of gram panchayat and Sarpanch also hold a very special position as villagers understand that all the government benefits that are being processed are under the judiciary of Gram Panchayat.

## **6.5 Village Head (Pradhan)**

The secular head of each Paudi Bhuyans village is called either Naek or Pradhan [4]. According to villagers, the post has been created by the ruling chief for administrative purposes. It was told that the Pradhan used to collect taxes, and judiciary functions on behalf of the ruling chief.

The post of Pradhan is hereditary. To understand it, a genealogy is prepared for understanding the pattern of inheritance (**Figure 12**).

From the above table, we can understand that the pattern of inheritance of the status of Pradhan of village is purely patriarchal in nature. In case of death of the elder brother and if the son is minor, the successive brother will become Pradhan. The post of Pradhan is again transferred to the eldest son of the family. In case the legal heir to the Pradhan is mental, physical or challenged in any other way, the title of Pradhan will go to the next male heir.

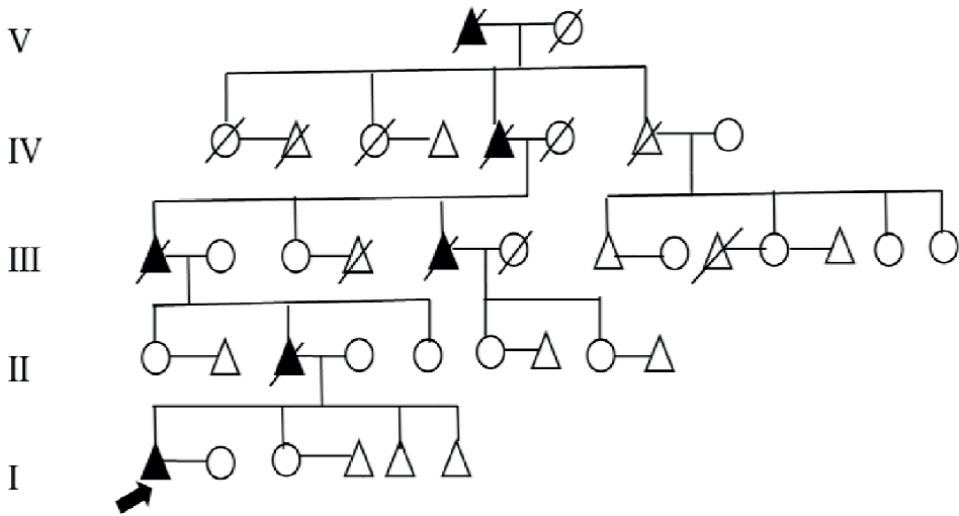
## **6.6 Village priest (Dehuri)**

As a patriarchal rule, the eldest son of dehuri inherits the post of dehuri (**Figure 13**).

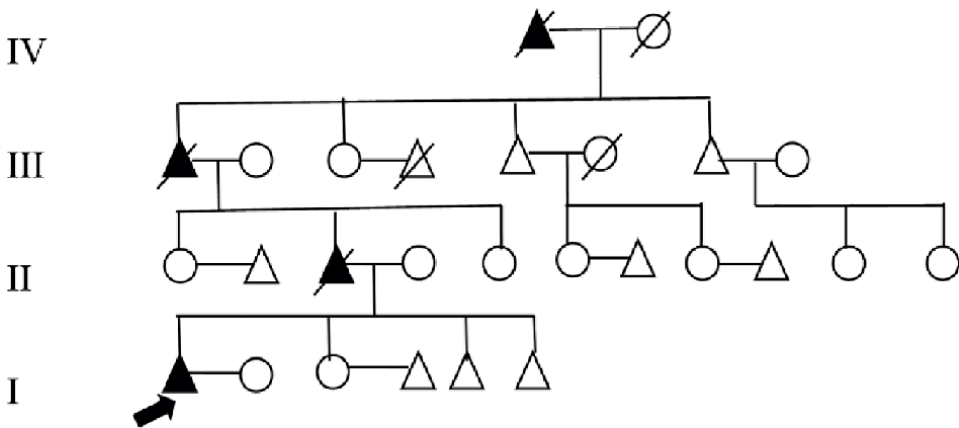
From the above table, we can easily understand that the post of Dehuri is again purely patriarchal. The post of dehuri is transferred to the eldest son. And in case of death, or any other incapability to hold the post, it is transferred to the eldest son of the family.

## **6.7 Pir council**

The Pir council has the greatest say if there is any kind of problems with inheritance. The Pradhan plays a very important role in judicial affairs of the village. He presides over the village meeting and decides cases relating interpersonal quarrels, breach of social customs, and disputes over possession of property among the claimants. In all such cases, he discusses the matter with all the elders of the village in the presence of Sarpanch also. The bride price or any other intermarital disputes arise between the bride's family and groom's family are also settled. On the first day of annual hunting festival "Pardih," a communal festival, such as Jatra and Bisri Usha, takes place and the Pradhan takes part in almost all the rituals.



**Figure 12.**  
 Genealogical distribution of Pradhan in the village studied villages.



**Figure 13.**  
 Genealogical distribution of Dehuri in the studied villages.

Pradhan along with some duties he also enjoys some privileges such as higher social respect, his farmland is being tilled by villagers. Almost all the rites de passages that are held, Pradhan always is in the chief guest. And he also gets free labor for any kind of household work.

Dehuri, the secular head, is the prime bridge between the villagers and the supernatural powers and ancestral world. Being the religious head and having hailed from the senior-most branch of the villagers, Dehuri is respected by every one of the villages and enjoys certain privileges, which are much similar to Pradhan. But there is the strict boundary between the Pradhan and Dehuri and demarcates their powers to execute.

Sarpanch is an elected member of gram panchayat. The posts of Pradhan and Sarpanch are functionally complementary to each other. The main difference between them is that the Pradhan is the traditional leader, who acts as a guardian of social control, values, norms, code of conduct, etc. Sarpanch, on the other hand, acts as a

government agent through which administrative works such as development of the village, rationing of foods, and any other benefits that are being administered by the government are provided.

Village elders, the oldest and renowned persons of the village apart from Pradhan and Dehuri play an equally important role in sociopolitical arenas of the village. The village elders take part actively in all discussions, which are taken up to the Sarpanch, Pradhan, or Dehuri. Their decisions are also equally important. Utmost care is given to include their decision.

### **6.8 Village council**

The village council is composed of the leaders such as Pradhan, Dehuri, and the group of elders. The deliberation of the council is made at the place near the dormitory either in the early morning before anyone went for routine works such as working in the fields or in labor work, etc. This may be summoned in the evening after everyone returns home from the day's work. Every day, the darbar area is generally visited by the village council members and other villagers for discussing current affairs and informal discussions on the topic of general interest. But when summoned for arbitration of any important case, the council of village leaders and elders constitutes the jury and the council serves as a courthouse. The Paudi Bhuyans though have leaders and are quite influential, but the jury gives out decision by exchanging view of all the present members of Darbar and everyone has right to say something. The Pradhan generally summons the decision to the villagers at the end of arbitration.

The topics that come up to the village council for decision, include matters, such as quarrel between the co-villagers, a quarrel arising from the partition of property, breach of the code of conduct, negligence toward duties, or inter-village marital disputes, and forbidden sexual relationships. The concerned parties are summoned to the Darbar and the party that is found guilty is fined a few measures of husked rice, a goat or fowl, a few bottles of liquor, and some cash. In case of adultery, the woman may be handed over to the adulterer as his wife. In the case of love between the Bandhus and khillis, the marriage is generally accepted with some fines as mentioned earlier. To pin down the offenders in general, detection is made by oath and ordeals, and they are made to touch the earth, water, or any good omens, which in turn with give bad results if anyone lied upon. The fine collected from the offenders is spent in holding a feast and the liquor is sprinkled ceremonially to mitigate the conflict.

The case of land disputes between two villages, incestuous love affair, and premarital pregnancy involving two villages; witchcraft, of serious nature, homicide, divorce, and separation; which cannot be decided at the village level, are referred to inter-village council.

### **6.9 Inter-Village (Pir) council**

The inter-village councils are looking into the matters of disputes over the boundary between the villages and cases of divorce, Especially verdict for which cannot be declared by village council and is of lesser importance to be brought into the notice of Pir Council. Disputes that arise between two villages go under the jurisdiction of Pir Council. The most common cases are land dispute and divorce issues. The land issues are generally mitigated with general understanding and mutually agreed on terms. The divorce issues are mitigated with the identification

of culprit. The guilty party is asked to give compensation to the aggrieved party. The groom may claim bride's price if found innocent, and the bride party may end up by getting compensation for the cost of living with her parents. The groom's party may claim compensation from the bride's new husband as the case may be. Though, the inter-village council takes utmost care to mitigate the matter of separation on the positive side by trying to reunite the separated pair. The wife may be told to go back to the husband's house.

For judicial purposes, the Paudi villages are grouped under a wide territorial organization called Pir council. The Pir council may consist of three or more villages. Kuanar Pir consists of seven villages. At Pir council, the sociopolitical affairs are discussed, which cannot be settled at the village level. Each Pir has his own titular deity, the Kuanar has Ma-Mangal Patha. Annual voyage of the deity Ma-Mangal Patha, which is locally known as Jatra, is celebrated.

As already stated, issues that are not mitigated with inter-village councils also are referred to it. The usage of the perennial water source, the ownership of land, crimes that are affecting the whole of Paudi Bhuyans, or any other such social, economic, or political offenses are discussed among the Pir council.

Each Pir council has functionaries who are appointed by the member of the Pir council to carry out certain functions as Pir Pradhan, His duty is to summon the Pir council and to announce the cumulative decision, which comes out after discussing the matter within the Pir council. He also carries out purification rites. Pir council consists of village elders of all the villages that constitute the Pir. Pir treasurer generally takes care of the whole finances of the Pir and puts in records all sort of procurement of finances that are levied on culprit or disbursement of finances for organizing an event on behalf of Pir. Pir barber comes in for punishment. Sometimes, the culprit may be punished by completely shaving his head. Earlier, the post was held by the Paudi Bhuyans themselves, but nowadays due to unavailability, a barber is borrowed from the barber caste. Pir Washer man generally washes clothes of the culprit, and the washed clothes are worn after purification. Pir Bramhana though previously was the oldest Dehuri among the villages in the Pir and was chosen for performance of socioreligious acts of purification of the culprits; but nowadays Hindu caste Brahmin is also taken from the Brahmin community from the nearby village for performances of purification ceremony. This is a case of "Sanskritization."

The different functionaries of the Pir are generally paid in kind for the services they render. There is no fixed remuneration for the functionaries, neither the posts are hereditary. All the post is honorary and can be changed according to the need of the Paudi Bhuyans. The money collected as fine is disbursed as remuneration, which is usually very negligible but, a feast is organized for the functionaries and for some dignitaries. All the fines collected as foodstuffs are cooked, and the feast is held by the Pir.

With the changing lifestyle and impact of global culture, the rigid code of conduct that is enforced by the Paudi Bhuyan councils relaxed to a great extent. The traditional political organization that is governed by the traditional norms and customs is nowadays not strictly adhered to. The cases such as same khilli marriage or intra-village marriages are common events now. The Pir council nowadays is rarely called upon for these kinds of crimes. The modern law enforcement such as Police and Judiciary take care of the cases of homicide or any such harsh crimes. Thus, the organization that held such a high position in the past is losing its identity and now mostly functions as a coordinator to celebrate Pir's annual festival of the of Pir goddess.

## 7. Kinship among the Paudi Bhuyans

The Paudi Bhuyans are divided into kin groups. The Paudi Bhuyans differentiate the marriage on the basis of Kutumb (agnatic) relation and Bandhu (non-agnatic) relation. Marriage between Kutumb relations is prohibited, whereas marriage with Bandhu (friend) relation is accepted. Similarly, marriage between same khili (extended lineage) is prohibited. Furthermore, though it is considered that Paudis have no clan organization (see [4, 15]), they identify their common ancestor in a particular way. As a common practice, people of common forefathers carry common surnames. The marriage of individuals with same surnames such as Swain to Swain, Pradhan to Pradhan, Dehuri to Dehuri is also prohibited.

Every society has its unique kinship terminology [18–20]. Though a detailed work on such terminology of kinship can be found in the work of S. C. Roy, there are some

Relation	Kinship terminology of Paudi Bhuyans
Father	Bapa
Mother	Ma
Elder brother	Nana
Elder sister	Nani
Younger sister	Bhauni, his
Fathers elder brother	Badu
Father younger brother	Kaka
Father's brother's wife	Bhauji
Nephew	Bhanaja, pile
Niece	Bhanji, jhia
Father's Mother	Dai
Father's father	Dada
Father's sister	Apu
Grand daughter	Natuni
Grand son	Nati
Mother's mother	Kaka
Mother's father	Aja
Mother's brother	Mamu
Mother's sister	Mausi
Mother's brother daughter	Nani, bhuni
Mother's brother's son	Nana, bhai
Brother's wife's son	Sangata, bhaiSali
Brother's wife brother	Sangata, bhaisala
Mother's mother's mother	Badei
Father's father's father	Badu

**Table 2.**  
*List of kinship terms among Paudi Bhuyans.*

anomalies also that the researcher has found. The researcher has come up with some very common relationship kinship terminology that is used in day-to-day activity in the present day (**Table 2**).

## **8. Religious beliefs and practices**

The religious beliefs and practices of Paudi Bhuyans are studied with respect to beliefs concerning the soul, in the aspects of belief concerning the soul in all its proliferation and the supernatural beings, the experts of religion and the rituals or ceremonies in the forms of prayers, offerings, sacrifices, feasts, and other actions (Garson and Read, 1951). The Paudi Bhuyans believe in malevolent and benevolent spirits, supernatural beings and their role in the origin of the world.

### **8.1 The concept of soul**

The term soul is known as “atma” by the Paudi Bhuyans. They know that if it leaves the body, the person is dead. The dream is regarded as the activity of the soul. They believe that everything living and non-living has soul. Good soul goes to heaven after death, and bad soul goes to hell. Soul is not destroyed, rather reappears in a new living body.

### **8.2 Belief in supernatural power**

According to Roy [4], the Paudi Bhuyans relate any kind of misfortune like bad luck in the food quest, crop failure personal security, and adversity in physical well-being, to the supernatural powers. If these supernatural powers are pleased with them, they tend to get success in overcoming the dangers of uncertainty that is present in their lives in the sphere of birth, marriage, death, and economic activities.

The supreme god of Paudi Bhuyans is Dharma Devta, and the Goddess Basuki Mata is a supreme goddess. Both of the gods are formless and invisible. They can take any form as they desired. The goddess Thakurani is village deity, and the god Pats described as hill god. The Kuanar village has three shrines, one is for Thakurani, second is for Bisri Usha Thakurani mandap, and the third one is Gaisiri. All the above-mentioned deities are benevolent in nature and can be appeased in their respective prescribed manner on different occasions. Apart from the indigenous deities, ancestral spirit, ghosts, and malevolent spirits are also appeased. Bisri Usha (serpent goddess) is worshiped with all sincerity and devotion and considered to be the protectess and can fulfill any desires of the Paudi Bhuyans.

### **8.3 Experts in religious sphere**

The Dehuri is considered as the sacerdotal head, who performs all community-level religious rituals and acts as mediator with village deities, spirits, gods, and goddesses. The Paudi Bhuyans may change the village Dehuri if they are not satisfied with his performances. But such case happens rarely, it happened. The post is hereditary and is transferred to the eldest son.

The shaman, locally known as Rulia, plays some important role particularly in curing patients and appeasing malevolent deities. A Bejuni (Sorcerer) is famous for his black magic, and he is hard to be found as he generally spends days in the jungle. The Paudi Bhuyans are afraid of him and never dare to go against the wishes of the

Bejuni. Thus, all of the specialized persons in religious sphere play a significant role in retaining social health and happiness and well-being of the community.

#### **8.4 Rituals performed for getting relief from misfortune**

An individual may perform rituals for personal reasons. This may be after consulting Pradhan or Dehuri to find out the source as well as cure of ailments and misfortunes. It may be through the Rulia or Bejuni (they may offer sacrifice on behalf of the ailing persons or may invoke supernatural aid for curing of the illness). The prayers that are addressed to the concerned deity consist of a description of the events about offering are told. Apart from personal ailments and ill lucks, there are occasions such as epidemic or mass destruction of an agricultural field or communal problems, then the Dehuri prays for the well-being of general community.

Sacrifices and offerings are important parts of any ritual activities. Animals sacrificed consist of chicken and goats. Offerings include all the natural substances such as milk, curd, mustard oil, uncooked rice and paddy, rice beer, mahua liquor, etc. The animals sacrificed and the articles mentioned are offered to appease supernatural beings. Before any sacrifice is made, the chicken is first sprinkled with water, and then a few rice grains are offered to it. If it takes the rice, it is approved for sacrifice. The blood of sacrificed animal is mixed with rice and then cooked. This is taken as Prasad.

### **9. Festivals**

The Paudi Bhuyans celebrate a number of feasts and festivals throughout the year. Each festival is associated with specific deities. There are Gods and Goddesses, ritualistic observances, special food items, agricultural cycle, activities relating to forest, shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing, food gathering, life cycle rituals, etc. Festivals play an important role in inter-village and intra-village solidarity. These festivals are as follows:

#### **9.1 Am-Nuakhai**

This festival is celebrated in the month of January–February when the mango blossoms come out. Offerings are made at the holy place (Gaisiri) and in the temple of Thakurani. Small green mangoes are offered to them and cutting of jungle for cultivation started.

#### **9.2 Nuakhai and Karam Jatra**

This festival is performed in the month of September–October at the time of harvesting of crops. On a festive day, the Dehuri goes to his own field and cuts some sheaves of paddy and offers them to the shrines along with some common offering, such as molasses, some flowers, mustard oil, milk, and sacrifice of a fowl. All the villagers are then told to bring the paddy from their respective fields and place them in their respective houses with offering of prayers to god and goddesses and their ancestral spirits.

#### **9.3 Magah Podol**

This festival is performed in the months of January and February. On this occasion, they mark the allotment of land for cultivation. Though it is not



mandatory to conduct this festival every year, it generally conducted when the fresh land has to be allotted.

#### **9.4 Kath Jatra**

In this ceremony, Dehuri and some villagers take part. It generally takes place in the month of January–February and is conducted to encourage the interested villagers for clearing of the jungle for their cultivation. The Dehuri ceremonially sets a log in fire and some offerings are made in the shrines.

#### **9.5 Akhin Pardih**

The ceremonial annual hunting festival is generally held in the month of March–April. The village priest selects any Thursday of the week day after Akshay Tritiya and asks the villagers to perform a small-scale offering in the shrines. In this ceremony, no fowl or animal is being sacrificed. This festival is related to ceremonial hunting. As soon as a game is hunted, the head of the game is given to that person whose arrow has pierced the game first. The person becomes the head for the next hunting. A big chunk of meat is being offered to Dehuri and Pradhan. Then the game meat is distributed among the hunters and their family.

#### **9.6 Thakurani Jatra**

This Jatra festival is the annual festival of the Pir Council. This festival is celebrated elaborately and in wider scale. People from seven villages participate in this festival. Most of the inhabitants from the nearby villages come gather at Kuanar for this annual festival. The festival spans for 7 days. On any Thursday after Makar Sankranti, the Maa mangal patha, which is represented by stone-carved emblem and its accessories were taken outside the shrine and was washed in turmeric water. Then it is taken to the Pradhan's House where some ceremony takes place secretly. After 7 days, it is placed back in the shrine and the ceremony starts again. In the morning of the auspicious day, along with the prayers, some rice is cooked. After an hour or two, Maa Mangal Patha is carried from shrine to the Ghumara nala at a point where it is deepest and widest. Most of the villagers join in the voyage with drums and other musical instruments. On reaching the predestined place, the articles associated with the Thakurani, such as daggers, swords, potsherds, and the stone emblems, were washed in the stream one by one and it is shown to the people. It is always regarded as sacred and kept away from the local people throughout the year. After washing the articles, they return to the temple and keep them separately. The whole voyage is called Jatra. People also make offerings to the Goddess. The villagers sacrifice animals to please the goddess Maa mangal patha.

Apart from the abovementioned traditional Paudi Bhuyan ceremonies and festivals, there are some Hindu festivals adopted by them. Some of these are given here. The festivals of Jhulan where the females and kids ceremonially swing in a special swing made of wood. The date essentially coincides with Akshay Tritiya, a Hindu festival. The second is the Bisri Usha, the serpent goddess. The ceremony is generally commenced after 2–3 weeks of Maa Mangal Patha Jatra festival. Generally, it takes place in the month of February–March. On an auspicious day, a potter is brought from the nearby village. The person is usually the traditional potter who prepares the idol for generations. He cleans and marks the ground where the idol is prepared. Then some alluvial

soil is carried by the potter himself. He mixes the mud with water and kneads it. After the soil is properly malleable, the potter makes some pots, in which two are smaller in size and one is larger in size. The larger pot acts as the body of the deity. Then the face is given proper shape. The potter lets the figure to dry in the sun. After few hours, the Pradhan visits the place and then puts some jewelry and clothes on the idol.

After the idol was completed, it is carried by a woman on her head to the temple. On the way, she passes various houses, where house owners give some offerings such as uncooked rice or fowl with prayers and chants. Then the idol is placed inside the temple.

At night, the folk singer (Gauni) along with villagers recites the story of the Goddess Bishri Usha. This will be repeated for 7 days until the final day of worshiping of Bishri Usha comes. On an auspicious day, the Gauni along with Dehuri and Pradhan utters chants for Usha Mata. The magnificent story of Lakhinder, the sea trader, and his favoritism toward lord Shiva and hatred toward Goddess Bisri Usha that started on the previous week and gradually progresses throughout these 7 days with the struggle of Behula to save his husband comes to an end on the final day. Thus, the festival is a combination of the folktale, the emergence of goddess Bisri Usha, and her magnificent power to curb the evil and provide overall happiness.

On the eighth day, celebration takes place. This is celebrated not only by the inhabitants of Kuanar, but the people of neighboring villages also visit Kuanar. The villagers offer various items, which include uncooked rice, molasses, domesticated fowls, goats, and as many objects that they afford to give. Young boys and girls actively participate in the festival. They dance with Oriya songs and Hindi songs while playing it on loud speakers that they leased from the Keonjhar. This is a new addition. Earlier, they danced by playing musical instruments, mainly drums.

## **10. Life cycle rituals**

Each successive stage in the life of Paudi Bhuyans is celebrated with certain rites and rituals. These include birth, marriage, and death.

The females are shy about discussing on maternity. Though, the physiological origin of maternity that is sexual intercourse is not unknown to them. According to the traditional belief system that motherhood can only be achieved with the help of benevolent spirits and blessings of gods and goddesses.

To appease the god and benevolent spirits, the ceremony related to birth is celebrated by all the villagers. According to the S.C Roy [4], it's not only to appease but also to relieve the individual from harmful spiritual influence in particular, to assimilate the new state of life that a person is entering. Entry into the new state of life should be safe and prosperous.

### **10.1 Name giving ceremony (Eikushia)**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of birth of a child, a socially accepted identity is given to a newborn baby in the form of name. A name is selected for the baby that will be his/her identity. This is done by some well-defined social customs that had been practiced among the Paudi Bhuyan society from the time immemorial. Most of the kin members and most of the villagers are invited to this ceremony especially at the time of the first child.

On the previous day, most of the relatives mostly the affinal and consanguine kins are invited. They are provided with the food and country liquor, handia. On the day of the occasion, all the relatives who arrived earlier get up early in the morning

except for the children. Most of them start cleaning the house. Both the floors and the walls are being cleaned splashing water mixed with cow dung. Generally, outer walls are splashed with the cow dung water. But it is splashed with the red soil mixed with water. After the house is cleaned and the inner part of the house is being decorated with designs made with rice paste.

After cleaning, men and women including the father and mother of the newborn take bath in the local stream. Though not mandatory, but running water is most favorable for performing the Eikushia.

After this, the father of the child arranges the feast that is the most important part of the occasion. And the Dehuri and Pradhan of the village are not only invited, but they perform rituals such as ancestral worship and worship of the god and goddess of Paudi Bhuyans. Various items such as uncooked rice, pulses, corn, etc., are cooked by the Dehuri and are offered to the ancestral spirits.

After ancestral worship, the Dehuri draws a circle on the ground with turmeric and a small pitcher (Lota) or measuring bowl (Mana) is placed in the center of the circle. Women sit around the Dehuri. Dehuri then puts some turmeric powder in the Lota or mana. The next procedure includes pouring of rice grain one by one and uttering of names one by one that are suggested by the parents of the child. When a rice grain floats, the name uttered while it was placed is selected. The ceremony ends with a feast given by the parents of the child to the villagers, kin members, and any distinguished guest who visited them on this occasion.

## **10.2 Case Study I (birth)**

Respondent is a 21-year-old female belonging to the Paudi Bhuyans. She resides in the Purana Sahi of the Kuanar village. Earlier she was living at Puttu Sahi of Telkoi Block. She was married in the year 2015. She got married to a male aged 24 years. The baby boy is born to them. This is her first baby. She is very shy in giving out the information to the researcher. But after persuasion, she talked to the researcher.

Both the parents of the child believed that the baby was born with the blessings of their fore fathers and almighty. They are also familiar with the physical mating between an adult male and female, which is responsible for conception. Although they stressed upon that without the support of the almighty, the child cannot be in mother's womb.

The symptoms she experienced after conceiving are nausea, vomiting, uneasiness, and the sudden stoppage of menstrual cycles. Upon examined by her mother-in-law, her grandmother-in-law and suruni (midwife) she was confirmed that she will become mother soon. She experienced changes in the size of belly.

She was restricted to her house and allowed to do only lighter household works. She was not allowed to do heavy tasks from the 8 months of pregnancy. Her diet was also taken care of by mother-in-law. She gave birth of a male child after 9 months and 20 days of pregnancy. The baby was delivered in home with the help of midwife. Very few relatives visit to see the newborn.

On the 21st day, the birth ceremony called ekushia took place, and the name was given to the child. A feast was given to the villages on this day.

## **10.3 Marriage**

Marriage is always viewed to be an affair of the village, rather than an exclusive concern of the concerned family. The unmarried girls biologically belong to their parents, but sociologically all the unmarried girls are the children of the village. In a broader

sense, unmarried boys and girls are the members of the village and the village youth's dormitory associates more closely with the socio-religious life in the dormitory organization. In case of girl's marriage, the opinion of all the village elders is never overlooked. Likewise, the marriage of the village boys is the responsibility of all the villagers. The parents finance the marriage, but the villagers extend their support and cooperation to make the marriage ceremony a success. While ceremonially handing over the bride, the girl's villagers request the groom's villagers that they offer the girl not only go to groom but into the custody of his villagers. The village should take proper care of the bride.

Marriage is the proper situation to study the roles played by different age and sex groups. The elderly men and women and unmarried boys and girls play specific roles in marriage. Marriage is monogamous among the Paudi Bhuyans. Widower can marry. In case the first wife proves to be barren, one has the liberty to take a second wife. Cross cousin marriages are not common. No cases found in the village.

Of all forms of marriages, Dharipala and Ghicha marriages are the most common forms. Love marriages with arrangement (Phulkusi) are very few in number among the Paudi Bhuyans. In the past 2 years, in the studied village only a single case of such marriage is found. Mangi Bibha is recently introduced in the village. The material culture and rituals tend to be way similar to the form of marriage, which has been adopted from the other Hindu caste people. Very recently, in certain cases of Mangi form of marriage, a Vaishnav or Brahmin is invited to act as a priest. This is also commonly known as Mukut Baha since the bridal pair wears crown (Mukut). Earlier it was made of real flower, but nowadays it is generally made of plastic flowers, similar to caste people during the marriage ceremony. This is a case of sanskritization.

During the field work, 34 couples were interviewed whose marriages were took place during the years 2013–2015.

From the **Table 3** and **Figure 14**, we can interpret that Dharipala bibaha is the most prevalent form of the marriage with nearly 38%. The second form of the marriage, which is preferred, is Mangi Bibaha and is about 32%. The Ghicha Bibaha is less prevalent than the above two forms of marriage. Phulkusi and Rundi Bibaha are rare in occurrence as compared with the Dharipala and Mangi Bibaha.

#### 10.4 Dharipala

This is a form of love marriage. When a boy likes a girl of certain village and falls in love with her and vice versa and agrees to marry. Then they come to the boy's village. The girl is left in the outskirts of the village and the boy goes and informs his family preferably brother's wife or grandmother first. And it is the responsibility of them to communicate

Dharipala	Love marriage with elopement
Ghicha	Marriage by capture
Phulkusi	Love marriage with arrangement
Amlesare	
Kadlesare	
Mangi bibha	Marriage by negotiation
Rundi bibha	Widow remarriage

**Table 3.** *Different forms of marriages among the Paudi Bhuyans (see [4, 21]).*



**Figure 14.**  
*Frequency distribution of types of marriages.*

to other family members. If the bride is accepted, the girl is made to wash her feet in water containing turmeric. Tilak of turmeric paste is applied on the forehead of both the boy and the girl and accepted as bride and groom before entering into the house.

After entering the boy's house, the bride was given fresh clothes to wear and the next day the bride's parents were informed. After the information, if the bride's family accepted the groom as their son-in-law, then father and maternal uncle along with some villagers visit the groom's house. Upon visiting the groom's house, they were welcomed with tobacco and country liquor (Handia/Mahua). According to the financial condition of the Groom's family, the feast is arranged for the bride's family members. And next day both the families along with the bride and groom visited the Thakurani temple. The Dehuri (village priest) in the presence of Pradhan sang some chants and the groom put vermilion on the forehead of the bride. Then the procedure of marriage is over, but the marriage is not accepted socially until a feast is organized by the groom's family, in which both bride's villagers and groom's villagers are invited.

### **10.5 Ghicha**

This is a form of marriage by capture. The boy and his friends hide in the forest to capture the girl. Then the guardians of the girl are informed secretly so that they send the girl to the desired place. The girl is then asked to visit the place either alone or accompanied by friends. There the chosen girl is captured and taken to the boy's village. The friends inform the guardians of the girl.

On the next day of capture, the girl's family members including her parents visit the boy's house. The boy's family arranges a feast for them. If a girl is captured on her visit to some village or from the market or fair, two kin members of groom go to the girl's village with a stick. Reaching there they first go to the Pradhan's house (village headmen) and inform. The Pradhan consults with the villagers about her identity.

Next day the boy's party visits to the girl's house and settles the marriage. Their feet are washed in turmeric water. Tobacco and country liquor (Rice brew) are offered to them. After a short discussion with the girl's father, all come to the Darbar to settle the marriage.

Next day the girl's party goes to the boy's house. They are welcomed with tobacco and country liquor (Rice brew). And the next day both the families along with the bride and groom visited the Thakurani temple. The Dehuri in the presence of Pradhan chants hymns and the groom puts vermilion on the forehead of the bride. The procedure of

marriage is over. The marriage is not accepted socially until a feast is organized by the groom's family. In this type of marriage, bride price is given after 2 or 3 years.

### **10.6 Phul Khusi**

This is also a marriage by love. During the festival of Bisri Usha, a boy puts flower on the bun of the girl he likes. If the girl accepts the flower, the marriage is settled among them, and if not, she is captured and the earlier procedures of Ghicha marriage are followed.

### **10.7 Am Lessare**

This is also a form of love marriage. In this marriage, a boy and a girl generally like each other. The boy splashes mango juice at the girl in the forest and in return the girl shows her acceptance by giving an ornament of her. If the girl accepts, the marriage is settled among them and if not, she is captured and the earlier procedures of Ghicha marriage are followed.

### **10.8 Kada lesare**

In this type of marriage, the boy splashes mud at the girl whom he likes. This generally happens during any marriage ceremony. If the girl in return throws mud at the boy, the marriage is settled among them and if not, she is captured and the earlier procedures of Ghicha marriage are followed.

### **10.9 Mangi Bibaha**

This is a type of marriage by negotiation. In this type of marriage, the parents of a marriageable boy go to other villages to search for a suitable girl. At first, they inform the Sarpanch about their requirements. Then the Sarpanch calls an assembly and conveys the requirements to the villagers. When anybody agrees, then both the parties discuss with each other to settle down the marriage.

## **11. Stages of marriage by negotiation (Mangi Bibaha)**

After discussion between girl's and boy's party, the date of marriage is fixed.

### **11.1 Haldi**

It is a ceremony of applying haldi (turmeric) mixed in sarso (mustard) oil on the body of the bridegroom and sanghi, younger brother of the groom by seven married women generally known as Mahatrais. Apart from them, most of the elderly women of the village apply the paste on the bridegroom's body.

### **11.2 Tel Handi**

The day before marriage, the would-be bride holds seven straws on her forehead and the Mahataris pour oil seven times on the straws with uttering of chants. The haldi (turmeric) mixed in sarso (mustard) oil is applied on the body of the bride and on her sanghi, the younger sister.

### **11.3 Phul Handi**

The day before the marriage, in the evening, ceremonial gift known as Phul Handi is sent to the bride's family from the groom's end. A big earthen handi painted with rice paste is used in this ritual. Different food items such as paddy, rice, gur, rice cake, and necessary items for bride, such as sari, petticoat, bangles, comb, mirror, and flower are kept in the handi and sent.

### **11.4 Dia Mangala**

On the day of marriage, in the morning, a group of seven married women (Mahatrais) go to the four directions in the village with the bride and offer homage to Dharma Devta, Basukimata, and Gaisiri for a successful marriage. The Dehuri of the groom's village also performs the same procedure.

### **11.5 Haldi**

On the marriage day, the haldi ceremony is repeated in both the cases, that is, the bride and groom, as described earlier.

### **11.6 Ghuru Pani**

The bride and the groom are given ceremonial baths by the women of their respective villages with the holy water of Baitarani River on the day before marriage and on the day of marriage also.

### **11.7 Baha jatra**

On the marriage day, the groom along with the relatives, friends, and villagers who reside in the neighborhood starts journey toward the bride's village. They either accompany modern music system or traditional drums. The groom's party dances and sings throughout the journey.

### **11.8 Baha**

After arrival of the groom's party to the bride's house, the mother of the bride welcomes the bridegroom by washing his feet with turmeric water and by offering Jau (puffed rice). The Dehuri prepares the place of marriage with rice paste and color. The area is bordered with bamboo poles. The bride and groom are made to sit in the place. The priest utters chants while the hands of bride and groom are held together. The maternal uncle of both bride and groom puts new clothes over them. The uncle of bride ties the garments of bride and groom in a knot. Then they move around the mandap seven times. The vermilion and turmeric are applied on the forehead of the bride by groom with the help of a coin. Then both of them throw puffed rice on the fire.

### **11.9 Kanyasamarpana**

On the next day of marriage, the villagers of bride hand her over to the villagers of the groom. They utter "Oh respected Bandhus, now you get your daughter in law. When she was young she was with her parents, but after her puberty, she belonged

to the village. Now we are giving her to you. She may be ugly or beautiful, blind, or only one-eyed, deaf or dumb or lame, she might be a witch or sorceress, she may not know how to cook, how to talk, and how to respect you. Anyway, she becomes your Bahu now if she does anything harmful to you, or she is not liked by you, don't let her wander from the shed to shed (begging food) but bring her back to the same tree (to her parents) where from you have taken her."

The groom's villagers reply "oh bandhus, she may have anything which goes against her, but she is our Bahu now, she is not only your daughter. Unless she does serious offence why should we bring her to you?"

#### **11.10 Gundi chaul and mandcheeli**

The bride's villagers give five pai of rice called Gundi chaul and one goat (Mandcheeli) to the groom's villagers. The villagers of groom arrange feast with these.

#### **11.11 Salabidha**

In a formal ceremony, relatives and villagers of bride give gifts and money to the bridal pair and to the sanghis (accompanied persons of groom and bride). The bride's younger brother pats on the back of the groom. The groom gives a piece of cloth to the bride's younger brother. He carries the groom on his back, and the groom's younger brother carries the bride on his back. Both dance for a few minutes.

#### **11.12 Kada lata**

After the marriage is over, the women relatives present gifts to the bridal pair on the marriage altar, then they throw mud, cow dung water, ashes, and black dyes at them. Jokes are exchanged between them and they make a lot of fun.

#### **11.13 Ceremonial Bath and Breaking the Bow**

The women and the girls of the bride's village take the bride and the groom to the stream for a bath. There the bride hides a steel pitcher (lota) under water and the groom finds it out. The groom also hides it and the bride finds it out. This is called "dub duba." The bride carries a pot full of water on her head on the way back. The boys of the bride's village make a strong bow with sal tree branch and put a string on it. The groom shoots at the water earthen pitcher carried by the bride. The groom breaks the bow and throws it away. He should break it in one stretch, otherwise, he is not considered strong enough to bear a child.

#### **11.14 Handi sira**

After returning from the stream, the bride and her women relatives husk about three to four pai paddy in husking lever (Dhenki). She cooks jau out of this rice and offers it to the family ancestors. The groom also offers it to their ancestor. All the participants of the marriage take a little of this jau.

After the feast, the newly married couple starts journey to the groom's village at afternoon.



### **11.15 Baha jatra**

The groom along with the relatives, friends, and villagers who reside in the neighborhood starts on journey toward the groom's village. They are either accompanied by modern music system or with traditional drums. Along the way they dance and sing.

### **11.16 Griha Prabesho**

After reaching to the groom's house, the feet of the couple is washed with turmeric water and Red dye (Alta). In front of the house, a square shape is marked out with 4 sal branches placed at the four corners. The place is decorated inside. This is similar to the mandap. The couple moves around the Mandapa seven times. Then they are taken into the house and take rest.

### **11.17 Bhuri bhoj**

Next day of coming in groom's house, the bride cooks a little "jau" in a new earthen pot and offers to the ancestors. At night, sister-in-law or grandmother of the groom brings the groom and the bride to the house and declare them as a couple. Then the newly married couple starts to live together.

### **11.18 Bada Khana**

After 2 days of marriage, the bridegroom arranges a feast for the villagers and bride's party. Gundi chaul is mixed with rice and along with the Mandcheeli, many goats are slaughtered, and the villagers of both the sides are given a hearty meal.

Feast is mandatory in a Paudi Bhuyan's marriage, which incurs huge expense. Thus, Paudi Bhuyans are very flexible in this regard they allow both the groom and bride families up to 2 years of time to arrange the feast to the villagers.

### **11.19 Marriage expenditure**

Marriage puts great economic strain on Paudi Bhuyans. Contribution from the relatives is negligible. The parents start hoarding crops and cash for 5 years or more till they are able to amass considerable amount for financing the marriage. In spite of the efforts, they run into indebtedness and incur heavy loans to meet the marriage expenses. A considerable amount is spent for feasts. Other heads of expenditure include bridewealth (Mula) paid to the bride's relatives, clothes for the bridegroom and other relatives, and other miscellaneous expenses.

The items and amount of bridewealth are same for all types of marriages, which are paid within a year or two after the marriage except in Dharipala (marriage by elopement) in which it may be paid after 5–10 years when the marrying partners accumulate enough amount for the purpose. Extremely poor persons are sometimes exempted from paying the full amount of bride wealth. The following gives item-wise detailed list of the standard bride wealth paid in Bhuyans marriages.

### **11.20 Case Study II (marriage by capture)**

Respondent was 21-year-old male belonging to the Paudi Bhuyans. He resides in the Purana Sahi of the Kuanar village. On the occasion of Bisri Usha of neighboring village Nipa around 9 km away, he found a very attractive girl and fell in love with her. He then enquired about the girl from the villagers that she also visited her uncle's village Nipa for the Bisri Usha festival. She resides in Pannanasha village under the Kuanar Panchayat. So the respondent tried to talk with the girl he had fallen in love with, but she was too shy to talk to him. The respondent then started some advancement like holding her hand and forcefully talks to her. He actually proposes to her for marriage. The girl was not clear with "yes" or "no" toward the advancement of the respondent. So the respondent talked to the girl's immediate guardians. The girl's guardians are informed secretly that they are going to capture her, which is acceptable in the Paudi Bhuyans. After the guardian expressed their willingness, the girl was captured by the respondent and his friends from the Mandap area. And the respondent took blessings of the guardians and told them that she was taken to his house.

On arrival in the village, though the girl was not talking to anybody but was eagerly welcomed by the boy's family. Her feet were washed with water mixed with turmeric. Turmeric powder was applied on her forehead. She was given a separate room to stay and relax.

The next day the respondent's two uncles visited the native village of the girl and told about the capture to the girl's family. The uncles are treated well by the girl's family and are offered Hadia, Rice, and Dal food. Next day along with the uncles, the girl's family members and some villagers along with weapons start the journey toward the respondent's village.

Upon arrival, the girl's family and the accompanying villagers are given a feast. After discussion with family members and the Pradhan of Kuanar village along with the Sarpanch, they disagreed with the offer of marriage. They took the girl back with them and respondent felt very sad. He said that the main reason of the dissolution of the marriage was that the girl did not like him and thus the marriage did not take place. The girl along with the family members got back to her native place. The respondent felt very sad with the rejection but he accepts it and said "I will find another girl who is made for him."

### **11.21 Case study III (marriage by negotiation)**

Respondent was 21-year-old male belonging to the Paudi Bhuyans. He resides in the Sonajhuri Sahi of the Kuanar village. The marriage ceremony started 1 day before the marriage with the haldi ceremony. On that day, the respondent and his unmarried younger brother were made to sit with bare upper body, only lower portion was covered upto knees. Only the female relatives and neighbors are taking part in the haldi ceremony. They made turmeric paste and mixed it with mustard oil. That was smeared upon the bridegroom and the sanghi with chanting of some blessings.

After smearing them with the turmeric and mustard oil paste, they were taken outside the house and were made to stand where the mother of bridegroom poured holy water on them. The holy water was prepared from the water that was brought from the Baitarani River the previous day. After the holy water, some more water was poured on them, then they took bath in the nearby stream.

After bathing, both the respondent and sanghi wore new upper undergarment and dhoti. After this they took lunch. In the afternoon, after the Haldi ceremony, the

family members started to prepare the nua handia, which was going to be sent to the girl's family in the evening.

On the marriage day, the bridegroom does not take food in the morning. On the marriage day again, haldi ceremony was held. In the afternoon after the haldi ceremony, the bridegroom was carried by his sister in the neighborhood for collecting rations as a token of love and affection. Then he was subjected to ritualistic bathing with the holy water and in the stream. On arrival at the stream, the participants consisting of children, teenagers, adult women started ritualistic play in which the bridegroom was continuously smeared with mud. The participants were divided into two groups in which one continuously tried to help them in bathing and the other group tried to put mud. In this process, the two groups started throwing mud at each other. If a girl and boy in this process continuously put mud on each other and develop affection for each other, they are supposed to be the next couple. So this ritual was also very important for showing affection toward the opposite sex. After an hour of enjoyment, the whole game came to an end and the bridegroom was allowed to take bath and wear the new clothes as mentioned above.

In the evening, the bridegroom was decorated with the alta (red dye) in the feet and the chandan (sandal wood paste) dots on the forehead.

In the evening, the near and dear ones who have been invited in the marriage started the journey toward the bride's village, Nipa, on foot. While walking at many places they stopped and danced. The music was played on the speaker that was carried with them.

After reaching the village, the bride's mother washed the feet of groom with turmeric water and all the members accompanying the groom were given sweet and water. Bride's sisters and friends started teasing the groom by forcefully putting sweets in his mouth. It was a fun-filled moment and enjoyed by everyone.

Dehuri of bride's village started preparing the Mandapa by smearing color, placing essential items such as both boiled and raw rice, four terracotta lamps, one brass lamp, insane sticks, holy water, ghee, some vegetables, small wooden sticks, and many such smaller things that are used by Dehuri to perform the marriage ceremony.

The marriage started with the groom first visiting the Mandapa. The Dehuri chants sacred mantras, which could hardly be heard and the groom does not repeat any chants with dehuri. The chants are mostly to please the forefathers and gods and goddesses and for their blessings.

Then the groom left and bride entered the Mandapa, here the same procedure was followed. Then both the bride and groom entered the Mandapa. The bride's face was now covered with her sari and the bride's maternal uncle was given responsibility for giving away the bride to the groom. The ritual was known to them as "Kanyadano."

Then the bride and groom just completed seven rounds across the Mandapa. Then next important ritual was Khoidaho in which the puffed rice was thrown in fire to appease the fire god. After this the groom puts vermilion on the forehead of the bride with the help of small bamboo stick. The marriage was over. There was an arrangement of feast.

The bride and groom were put in separate rooms to rest. In the morning the bride and groom were given food, and the journey started toward the groom's village on foot. Upon arrival the bride and groom's feet were washed by the sister of groom. And the groom generally spent the evening with friends enjoying country liquor and roasted chicken. The next day a grand feast was organized by the groom and his relatives. Most of the villagers are invited in the feast. From this day onward, the newlywed couple started living together.

## **11.22 Death among the Paudi Bhuyans**

The death is inevitable. It will come on a certain day, maybe tomorrow or day after tomorrow. Bhuyans conceptualized the death as a supernatural incidence. It is always related to the activities of a person, which he carried out in his life that results in the death, as a consequence of punishment. Fear of supernatural is the basis of the perception of all the major life crisis, and death is the ultimate crisis that is conceptualized in the sphere of fear for supernatural.

This may be considered as the reason that Bhuyans are quite conscious to avoid all kinds of culturally prohibited activities and carrying out all the rituals as per their cultural norms to ultimately please the supernatural power to gain its favor [22]. Thus, the influence of supernatural power in all kinds of deaths can easily be established.

Though the Bhuyans are quite aware of the scientific explanation of causes of death such as deadly diseases, snake bite, etc. But they also believe that the cause of such crisis is also influenced by some external agencies such as witches, sorcerers, and the evil eye. The accidental deaths are also influenced by the life activities (Karma).

The existence of the soul and the position of the soul, after separation from the body (it is life activity driven), the concept of rebirth, and finally the treatment of physical body after death are all considered important life activities and are socially bounded.

Types of Death prevail in the Paudi Bhuyans community [23].

- Nature and types of death
- Death due to old age
- Death due to the accident
- Death due to witchcraft
- God's desire
- Death due to diseases
- Death due to snakebite
- Death due to murder (rare)
- Infant death

Death due to old age: The death for the old age is common to all the living organisms of the world. Due to the natural process of wear and tear and attaining a certain age, the organism has to die. It is considered as natural death. And this is considered as universal truth. Paudi Bhuyans are also not an exception, and they accept the fact very gracefully.

Death due to the accident: This kind of death is considered as ill fate for the dead one. Death is generally associated with his life's activity. Paudi Bhuyans believe that if the person leading a socially accepted good life is generally immune to the accidental death. But they also believe there are exceptions, where the accident occurs to socially accepted good persons also.

**Death due to witchcraft:** Deaths that are considered by the Paudi Bhuyans are sudden and generally unexplained causes without prior indications of ill health or any such symptoms and the corpse is being examined by raulia (witch doctor). If after examination rulia confirms that the cause is witchcraft, then after doing prescribed rites for the normal death. The raulia also confirms with his rites that other person of the family may not suffer similar death.

**Death due to God's desire:** If any death occurs without any witchcraft symptoms or with prolonged sufferings with incurable disease. Then that death is ascribed by the Bhuyans as God's desire.

**Death due to Diseases:** If any death occurs due to any disease all the prescribed rights that are performed as normal death but with most of his belongings are destroyed either in the pyre or buried with him. In case of children, his toys are also put on the funeral pyre or buried along with him.

**Death due to snake bite:** The rites associated with the death caused by the snake bite are also being dealt as the death due to old age. But the exception is that his family members have to generally offer goat or big hen in the worship of Bisri-Usha. Otherwise, the other family members may the same fate.

**Death due to murder:** Paudi Bhuyans nowadays have to consult police and after the autopsy, the body is handed over to the family members for the last rites, which are again similar to the old age death.

**Childhood death:** When small infants or children die, they are mostly buried. The burial ground may differ though. In some cases, the infants are buried in the vicinity of the dwelling house or in some cases in the community burial ground.

Some omens related to death that are common among the Paudi Bhuyans are as follows:

The howling of dog, which is commonly designated as weeping of dogs.

The unusual cry of the bird, Koyel (*Eudynamis schlopageus*).

The fearful dreams of demons and devils are very common before a few days of death.

In the event of death, the prime responsibility is to inform the affine, consanguineal kins, and other known persons of the deceased's family. Usually on such occasions, no kutumb is expected to carry the message to other people or other villages. It is believed as well as recognized culturally that the kutumbs are usually in grief and remain busy for the treatment of the corpse. The people who are the primary or secondary kins of the deceased and therefore they vary in utter grief. This may be the only reason for refraining the Kutumbs to carry the message of the death to people in other villages. On the other hand, the Bandhus (affine) or the members beyond the lineage who are not primarily or secondarily related to the deceased are sent as messengers on such an occasion.

The economic transaction on such occasions is very negligible and confined only to the payment for rice toward the food on the way. Similarly, the person or relative who received the information also pays the same amount of rice to the messengers for the same purpose. As already mentioned, for a common Bhuyan, the food cost for the messenger is to be borne by the family members of the deceased, whereas, if the deceased is a rank holder of the village, the payment of rice toward food cost is borne by the villagers.

In the house of the deceased, soon after the death, the family members inform all their lineage members first. With the crying of the family members, the message of death reaches all the villagers beyond the lineage immediately. People rush into the house of the deceased. It is the fine and foremost responsibility of the villagers (who are

usually the clan lineage member of the deceased) to come forward on such an occasion to prepare the stretcher (Kathagudi) first. Usually, the villagers search for the slender poles either of Sal or Jammu tree and few more branches in the nearby forest to prepare the stretcher. On such occasion, sometimes the villagers donate the wooden poles if they have. Sometimes, the family members also collect the wooden poles for the stretchers. The social responsibility of preparing the stretcher is, therefore, a humanitarian question for all the villagers in Paudi Bhuyans society helping in such occasion irrespective of the kinship relation is not based on any other motive than just to help each other.

With the above-stated responsibility of stretcher making cash transaction is not at all given importance. If somebody has the requisite wooden poles, he donates them without any objection and never demands any cash payment. Usually, people help each other in this respect mutually and reciprocally and never demand cash or kind for the material or service. In case, people do not have required wooden poles, some of the villagers or volunteers go to the nearby forest for immediate collection. Mainly because of deceased, on the occasion of grief, no body demands food from the deceased family. Bhuyans are usually buying ropes from the local markets. For the purpose of stretcher making and the expenditure for ropes were born by the family of deceased.

### **11.23 Rituals observed during Cremation**

Carrying the corpse to the funeral site is one of the major activities of the mortuary practice. In this activity, either the lineage numbers or anybody from the village may join. The family members of the deceased may join the group if found capable of carrying the bier. However, it is the responsibility of the villagers either of the same clan or different. The Bandhus or affine may also carry but usually, Paudi Bhuyans prefer to carry the corpse to the cremation ground as fast as possible, which may be within 3–4 hours of death, mainly because the Bandhus or affine live far away and they have to return home. In most of the occasion, they could not come before cremation. Usually, four male members carry the corpse on the stretcher to the funeral site. Women are not allowed to accompany the corpse to the funeral site.

The economic transaction in this activity is quite significant. As the Paudi Bhuyans are living with their family and lineage members, all such activities are performed on the basis of mutual or reciprocal help and people looking at the grief of the deceased's family members never expect any cash or kind from the deceased's family. Moreover, all the Paudi Bhuyans are in favor of disposing the corpse at the earliest possible, because of the fact that lineage members cannot take food until the corpse is cremated. Thus, this phase of social responsibility has absolutely no economic transaction.

After reaching the site for cremation, the first responsibility is the cremation. The corpse carriers together with other accompanying villagers to collect firewood either of Sal (*Shorea robusta*) or Jammun (*Syzygium cumini*) variety. It is just considered a humanitarian help, which all the villagers render. Most of the elderly people remain at the site till the burial or cremation activities are over.

In preparation of funeral pyre and placing the corpse on the pyre, the responsibility is taken by the same villagers as well as the host family. Paudi Bhuyans ignite the pyre or put the soil on the corpse inside the pit. The eldest son will ignite the pyre, husband in case of wife's death, or nephew in case the deceased had no son or husband. If no such relative is found, only then any male member who shares the same surname can ignite the pyre.

Soon after the cremation is over, the accompanying villagers go to the pond or river for a ritual bath. After which they come back to the deceased house and stand

in front of his house where the water mixed with cow dung and with a copper coin dipped in it is sprinkled over them. Usually, a bunch of sacred grass Durba is kept inside the water for sprinkling. Every person has to sprinkle of water over their own body with the help of grass bunch.

After this, all the accompanying persons go to their own house. This is a social responsibility among the Paudi Bhuyans; on the other hand, the responsibility is bestowed upon the concerned individuals accompanying the corpse to the cremation site. Directly from the cremation site, people come to a pond or streamside where all of them take a clean bath and their clothes are washed by the washerman. Though the Paudi Bhuyans have employed the washerman like the caste people, it was not a practice in the olden days nobody is also able to tell about the exact time of the first introduction of washerman in the Paudi Bhuyans society.

Soon after the cremation activities are over, on the very day to the 10th day there is no significant social or ritual activity in the family of the deceased except to offer food and drink twice a day to the spirit. During daytime, usually boiled rice is offered. The food is generally carried by the lady who usually cooked the food but can be carried by the men also. The place of offering is usually at one end of the village in the direction of the cremation site. It is mandatory that the lady will proceed alone without any accompanying her for such offering. This activity continues up to 11th day.

On the 10th day among the Paudi Bhuyans, the purification rites are usually observed taking into account all the Kutumbs or the consanguines in the village. Usually, the lineage members are to join and participate in the ceremony.

On 11th day morning, ladies wash the wall and floor with cow dung water and clean the kitchen, throw away earthenwares, and get all the clothes washed by the washerman. Just before the bath time, all the lineage members, especially males of primary kins go for tonsuring the head. The females only pare the nails by the barber. At the end, all the members apply turmeric paste on the body and take a ritual bath for purification. Soon after the purificatory bath, the mortuary rituals carried out. Soon after the purificatory bath, the mortuary ritual is over for the people and they come back to their respective houses and take food after cooking.

Usually, on the 10th day, the Bandhus along with the distant Kutumbs reach by the afternoon and the household head has to make all arrangements for their food and accommodation.

Early in the morning when the women remain busy in cleaning the house, all the Kutumb members go to the bank of the river Baitarani and throw the ashes and the earthen pot in the river. Dehuri undertook some rituals in the honor of the spirit. On this occasion the village priest and other leaders have no social responsibility. Only senior Kutumb members perform all the rituals. Social responsibilities of all the male members are outside and females confined to the indoor cleaning.

On 11th day feast is organized for the Bandhus and distant Kutumbs usually carry no rice or goat as gift or help. They simply participate in the feast and disperse.

## **11.24 Rituals of Burial**

Rituals related to burial have some similarities with the rituals related to cremation. The difference is noticed in the burial of the dead body. Dead body is buried in the North-South direction along with the articles, which are used by the deceased. These articles include bedding (mat and pillow), clothing, steel plate, small pitcher (lota), and coins. In case of women, ornaments are buried with the dead body. The

burial place is surrounded by stone blocks. Purification is done in 11th day from the date of death. A feast is arranged on the same day.

### **11.25 Case Study V (death)**

Respondent was 34 years old living in the Purna sahi of the village Kuanar. He belongs to Paudi Bhuyans community. His father died 2 months ago on 24-01-2015. He was the eldest son with four siblings. He was the most educated youth in the village, completed higher secondary with distinction, and worked in mines in Suakati area of Keonjhar. His family was among the most affluent families of the village Kuanar. He was not in his home and went for the work when the news arrived of his father's death. According to him, his father was suffering from heart ailments and had many heart attacks in the past. He took his father to Bhubaneswar for the bypass surgery. But his father's health did not improve as such. His father was under strict diet and medicines.

He told me that it was a sudden death of his father who was 62 years old due to cardiac arrest. On hearing the news over the telephone from his paternal uncle, he rushed to the home from his office. Upon arrival he saw that many of his relatives had already arrived and his married sisters along with brother in law also present. After 7–8 hours of death, the local physician from Kanjipani town arrived and the death certificate was issued. After that the dead body was bathed and new clothes were put on. Then the Hindu Brahman from the nearby village was called, and he performed the rituals. The respondent could hardly remember any such rituals.

The male relatives mainly men accompanied the dead to the cremation ground in a small matador vehicle. Most of the personal belongings of his father were taken to cremation ground. His bedsheets, mattress, lota, favorite garments, etc., were taken. They are also disposed of in the cremation ground. They went to the bank of Baitarani River and the Brahman again carried out rituals there. The pyre of wood has been prepared and the dead body was placed over it. He then put fire on the pyre. After the cremation was over, the dom brought some remains of the dead body and put it into a terracotta pot and that pot was then put into the water of Baitarani river. Thus, the ritual was over. All the male kin members shaved their head to show the reverence and affection toward the dead person.

On 11th day to end the pollution period, a feast was organized by the respondent and his relatives. The entire village was invited in the feast.

## **12. Summary of the chapter**

The focus of the chapter is on the economy and social aspects of the Paudi Bhuyans. The economy of Paudi Bhuyans centers on shifting cultivation and gathering of natural resources from the nearby forest. The different lands that are utilized by the Paudi Bhuyans are discussed. Daily life of the Paudi Bhuyans is being discussed with a table showing the daily routine, which shows that they live very simple life. The social organization of Paudi Bhuyans is discussed under the subtopics of family organization that shows the different types of families, village organization, traditional and modern political organization of the Paudi Bhuyans. The kinship organization and the kinship terms are being discussed. That shows a considerable difference from what Roy [4] has observed. It can be said that the influence of Oriya language may have influenced the kinship terms. All the major rituals that are practiced by the Paudi Bhuyans of the village Kuanar are described. These show the prevalence of animism



and a partial influence of Hindu rituals and festivals. The life cycle rituals are then discussed in the form of name giving ceremony, marriage, and death. The rituals performed in these ceremonies are discussed in detail. The economic and social organization of Paudi Bhuyans shows that traditional structure of the society is in action in every sphere of village life as well as family and individual level. Most of the rituals performed in different festivals and ceremonies are functioned as group cohesiveness, identity, and to strong bonding of relations between people of the village as well as the other Paudi Bhuyans villagers. The traditional social structure and rituals of Paudi Bhuyans show that they belong to pre-modern societies.


## **Author details**

Abhishek Bhowmick  
Guest Faculty Central University of Odisha, Koraput, Odisha, India

\*Address all correspondence to: [anth.abhi@gmail.com](mailto:anth.abhi@gmail.com)

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## Chapter 7

# Ethnic Self-Categorization of the Russian-Speaking Population in Latvia

*Vladislav Volkov*

### Abstract

The paper discusses the peculiarities of self-categorisation of Russian-speaking population as an ethnic minority in Latvia. The author considers categorisation as a cognitive process for classification of objects and phenomena into separate groups (categories). The article shows the institutional factors of reproduction of categorization and self-categorization of the Russian population of Latvia as a subordinate ethnic minority. At the same time, the issue of Russians as one indigenous people of Latvia is being discussed. The article examines the question of the extent to which the self-categorisation of Russians as an ethnic minority is reproduced in the younger generation of this ethnic group. In 2000 and in 2019, the author of the article conducted a survey of students studying in Russian in three private universities in Riga, to find out the evolution of this self-categorisation. The data of the study show that in the perception of young Russian respondents, Latvian society is stratified into Latvians and ethnic minorities, whose identities have different social weight in the country. The data of the study show that the narrative form of respondents is most often associated with identification with these groups, but not with Latvian citizens or residents.

**Keywords:** self-categorization, ethnic minority, system of the ethnosocial stratification, indigenous people, Russian-speaking population

### 1. Introduction

Latvia is a country where the ethno-cultural diversity of the population is a long-term historical and even political phenomenon. Since the 18th century, with the inclusion of the Latvian lands into the Russian Empire, and especially in the 20th century, during the period when Latvia was part of the Soviet Union, the share of the Russian population in the multi-ethnic diversity has increased significantly. And in modern independent Latvia, the share of Russians is about a quarter of the country's population. In addition, Latvia is characterized by a high percentage of representatives of other ethnic groups (Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, etc.), for whom Russian is also their native language. This fact significantly increases the proportion of the Russian-speaking population in the ethnic palette of Latvia. At the same time,

according to the Constitution and other legislative acts, the dominant socio-political discourse, Latvia is a Latvian national state, which, at the same time, proclaims the right to preserve ethnic and cultural identity to ethnic minorities. True, the scope of the Russian language in the social life of Latvia is sharply narrowed. According to the Constitution, national identity in Latvia can be built only on the basis of the Latvian language and culture, only Latvian is the state language, into which the education system of ethnic minorities is also fully translated. At the same time, the extremely insignificant representation of the Russian population in the socially prestigious spheres of public life, politics, business, culture, science, and art is also visible. This is accompanied by an extremely low interest on the part of the political elite and the media to discuss problems that concern the Russian population and ethnic minorities in general. In such a situation, which can be characterized as the subordination of the Russian population in relation to ethnic Latvians, it is important for researchers and public figures to understand the peculiarities of the ethnic self-categorization of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia. The author adheres to the notion that in the conditions of a clearly manifested ethno-social stratification for Russians as an ethnic minority in Latvia, ethno-cultural markers of self-categorization (Russian language, culture, features of historical experience, memory, etc.) are very closely intertwined with markers that characterize the social positions of Russians as a subordinated minority, which is characterized by perceptions of underestimated life chances in comparison with the life chances of Latvians. To confirm this hypothesis, the author conducted sociological studies of the narrative practices of Russian students in Riga in 2000 and 2019, the materials of which confirmed this interpretation of the ethnic self-categorization of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia. Moreover, in 2019, the self-categorization of Russian young people as a subordinate ethnic minority only intensified compared to 2000. The data of these studies confirmed the fact of increasing skepticism in the Russian environment regarding their official categorization as an ethnic minority, since the existing norms and practices of not protecting the interests of ethnic minorities do not imply full inclusion in social, political and economic life in Latvia. Therefore, it is no coincidence that among the representatives of the Russian public there is an interest in self-categorization as “one of the indigenous peoples” of Latvia. However, such ideas do not find support in the Latvian environment.

## **2. Self-categorization of an ethnic minority in the context of ethno-social stratification and the space of life chances**

Social self-categorization is the process of attributing oneself to one or another social, including ethnic, group [1, 2]. The most important condition for ethnic self-categorization is the ethnic differentiation of society, which permeates all its spheres and directly affects the nature of the distribution of social capital between different ethnic groups. P. Berger and T. Luckmann see in the established social institutions of society the most important resource for constructing social categorization and social identity [3]. The source of ethnic categorization and self-categorization is the features of the mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion in large social and civil communities [4]. Mechanisms of social exclusion in relation to ethnic minorities, realizing the dichotomy “we/they”, prevent their access to membership in prestigious social roles and statuses, increasing the marginalization of these groups in society and, according to I. M. Young, their social and political impotence [5].

The relevance of understanding the processes of ethnic categorization increases in multi-ethnic societies, where at the official, including the legislative level, as well as in the public consciousness, there is a long-term and stable consolidation of the division of society into a national majority and ethnic minorities. Thus, for ethnic self-categorization, both markers of ethnic identity (common historical origin, culture, language, religious beliefs shared by members of an ethnic group) turn out to be relevant [6]), and markers of ethno-stratification identity that characterize the most common social positions occupied by representatives of ethnic groups in the system of power in society [7]. As the practice of multi-ethnic states shows, where differences in the functional roles of the identities of the ethno-national majority and ethnic minorities are constantly accentuated in socio-political life, ethno-cultural and ethno-stratification markers can smoothly flow into each other [8].

For ethnic minorities, self-categorization is particularly sensitive to markers characterizing the position of these groups in the system of ethno-social stratification and life chances [9]. This correlation is especially relevant for those ethnic minorities that are poorly represented in the structures of state power, in socially prestigious activities and professions, and in relation to whose ethnocultural identity the dominant ethno-political discourse implements exclusion practices. In such a situation, representatives of ethnic minorities significantly actualize the dichotomy “we - they” in their ethnic self-categorization [10].

### **3. Social and political factors stimulating self-categorization of the Russian population as an ethnic minority in Latvia**

The geographical proximity of Latvia to Russia and mainly its entry into the Russian Empire from the beginning of the 18th century, and then the USSR, contributed to the emergence on its territory of a large group of the Russian population and representatives of other ethno-cultural groups for whom the Russian language was or became native. The materials of the first All-Russian population census (1897) indicate that 231.2 thousand Russians, or 12% of its population, lived in the current territory of Latvia, and more than 300 thousand before the First World War. Moreover, the Russian population of Riga, the largest city in the Baltics, in this period was approximately 100 thousand people, or 20% of all citizens [11]. During the years of independent Latvia (1918–1940), although the number of the Russian population decreased to 206.5 thousand (1935), it was the largest ethnic minority in the country (10.6%) [12]. The largest number of the Russian population falls on the last years of the existence of Latvia in the USSR (1940–1991), which was mainly caused by migration from its regions. In 1989, 905.5 thousand Russians lived in Latvia, or 34.0% of its population [13].

During the independence of Latvia (since 1991), the number of its Russian population has decreased by about two due to emigration, as well as negative demographic growth. At the beginning of 2022, 454.4 thousand Russians lived in Latvia, which accounted for 24.2% of the total population of the country, and their share in the population of the five largest cities is: in Riga 35.7%, in Daugavpils - 47.8%, in Liepāja - 27.2%, in Jelgava - 24.9%, in Jūrmala - 32.6% [13]. The high proportion of the Russian population in the largest cities of Latvia, as well as in Latgale, where Russian Old Believers settled already in the 17th century, as well as priority identification based on the Russian language and Russian culture, also led to the reproduction of the most important structural elements of their collective ethno-cultural identity [14, 15].

Among all the largest ethnic groups in Latvia - Latvians, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Poles, constituting 94.9% of the total population only for Latvians and Russians is the native language of their ethnic group. For Latvian Latvians, the mother tongue is Latvian in 95.7% of cases, for Russians, Russian - 94.5% of cases, for Ukrainians, Ukrainian - in 27.2%, for Poles, Polish - in 19.4%, for Belarusians, Belarusian - in 18.8%. Only Latvians and Russians, compared to other large ethnic groups in Latvia (with the exception of the Roma), are characterized by marriages mainly with partners of their own nationality [16].

The categorization of Russians as a ethnic minority is very clearly manifested in the peculiarities of their political consciousness and behavior. This is due to the extremely low representation of Russians among the Latvian political elite, the highest state bureaucracy, the scientific and expert community, which can be qualified as the operation of ethnic exclusion mechanisms. Since 1991, only one person of Russian origin, Maria Golubeva, has been Minister of the Interior for less than one year as a representative of the Development/For! party [17]. Nil Ushakov in the period 2009–2019 was the mayor of Riga. But among the advisers to the Prime Minister [18], among the nineteen heads of departments and departments of government departments, there is no one with a Russian name and surname [19]. There is not a single Russian among the rectors of all sixteen state universities, academies and higher schools. The proportional participation of ethnic minorities in Latvia is realized mainly in the leadership of private universities, where five out of eleven rectors are only representatives of these ethnic groups [20]. There are practically no Russians in the leadership of big business in Latvia either. Among the top 20 taxpaying businesses in 2019, ethnic minorities were CEOs of only one company, which ranked last on the list, and among the top 60 companies, only six (BERLAT GRUPA, SIA; GREIS, SIA; GREIS loģistika, SIA; Accenture Latvijas filiāle; LIVIKO, SIA; BITE Latvija, SIA) [21].

Given the enormous attention of the international community to the problems of preserving the identity of indigenous peoples, in terms of the collective consciousness of the Russian population of Latvia, self-categorization as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia also resonates. In Latvian science, including in works written by Russian scientists themselves, the term national (or ethnic) minority is mainly used in relation to Russians in Latvia [3, 22–25]. The categorization of the Russian population of Latvia as an ethnic minority is extremely important for the legitimation of the collective identity of this ethnic group in the conditions of a multi-ethnic and multicultural society in Latvia. The Constitution defines Latvia as a “nation state” with “ethnic (national) minorities” [26]. Recognition of the Latvian language as the only state language at the same time coexists with the right of ethnic minorities to use their native languages and develop their culture in private and public life. Within the framework of legal guarantees for ethnic minorities, Latvian Russians since 1991 have been able to create a system of non-governmental organizations, political parties, educational institutions, including higher education, the development of scientific, publishing, journalistic activities, etc. These forms of institutionalization of the collective identity of the Russian ethnic minority are an important channel integration into the Latvian society without threatening the interests of the Latvian language and culture [27].

However, it cannot be said that the categorization of Russians in Latvia as an ethnic minority is shared by the entire scientific community and experts. Particularly great disagreements on this issue are found in the political consciousness, which offers alternative forms of ethnic categorization. The main objections to the



legitimacy of categorizing the Russian population of Latvia as an ethnic minority can be summarized as follows:

1. “Statistical” objection. Latvian Russians are too large a population group, especially in big cities. This objection is most often found among Russians, for whom the political mobilization of this ethnic group is important;
2. “Historical” objection. Russians appeared on the territory of modern Latvia long before the formation of the Latvian state in 1918 and even long before the very term “Latvia” appeared. It is among the adherents of this objection that the categorization of the Russians of Latvia as one of its indigenous peoples is most often encountered;
3. “Legal and political” objection. Most of the modern Russian population of Latvia appeared during the incorporation of its territory into the Russian Empire and the USSR. This is what caused the mass migration of Russians to Latvia. Thus, Russians in Latvia cannot in any way be regarded as such traditional national minorities as the Basques of France and Spain, the Lusatian Serbs of Germany, etc. to Latvia. This view is very common among Latvian illiberal and nationalist circles.

#### **4. The concepts of “indigenous peoples” and “ethnic minorities” in international law and the experience of the Republic of Latvia (1991: 2022)**

The adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) contains a description of a whole system of individual and collective rights of people belonging to indigenous peoples [28]. However, there is no definition of “indigenous peoples” in this document. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues reveals the modern understanding of the term “indigenous peoples”, which includes a sign of individual self-identification and its recognition as a community, a special language, culture, religion, historical connection with the pre-colonial period, non-dominant status in society, etc. [29]. The World Bank also provides a detailed enumeration of the characteristics of indigenous peoples, which indicate the difference between their collective identity and the majority of the country’s population, commitment to their native languages, traditions, leaders, and connection to their land. At the same time, such peoples are characterized by a sense of danger associated with a reduction in their life opportunities, including the lack of their official recognition by the state [30].

The term “indigenous peoples” is quite actively used in the scientific and socio-political discourse in Latvia. In scientific articles, this term has been assigned to Livs, representatives of the Finno-Ugric language family, now numbering 170 people [31–33]. In the Constitution, it is the Livs, along with the Latvians, that are recognized as an ethnic group that forms the identity of Latvia [26]. Some representatives of the Latgalian community, as well as Russian publicists in Latvia, also consider Latgalians as an indigenous (“independent”) people of Eastern Latvia [34, 35]. There were even attempts by the opposition party “Consent Center” to induce the Latvian Parliament to recognize the Latgalians, along with the Livs, as the indigenous people of Latvia [36]. Such perceptions are supported by research data in Latgale, which

show a very high proportion of people who indicated their Latgalian identity (27.0%) and belonging to the Latgalian language (21.1%) [37].

Many features that characterize indigenous peoples (originality of language, culture, traditions, areas of traditional residence), as well as their rights to protect and reproduce their individual and collective identity, inadmissibility of discrimination against them by the state and society, largely coincide with the features national minorities contained in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) of the Council of Europe [38].

If the categorization “indigenous people” in relation to the Russian population is not officially accepted in Latvia, then the categorization “national (ethnic) minority” is usually applied. However, the application of this categorization in relation to the entire non-Latvian population is connected with the directions of nation-building in Latvia, which is not completed. In Latvia, at the state level, as a “normative” model of nation-building, the achievement of the goal is recognized, when “the Latvian language and cultural space form the basis of national identity, which strengthens belonging to the nation and the Latvian state. Therefore, maintaining and strengthening the position of the Latvian language and cultural space is a priority for the long-term development of Latvia” [39]. As the political history of Latvia since 1991 shows, this stated goal has not yet been achieved, and its implementation is expected by 2030.

The preamble to the Constitution of Latvia (2014) guarantees the rights of ethnic minorities to preserve their identity. At the same time, it is said that there are “Latvian nation” and ethnic minorities in the country, which, along with the Latvians, constitute the “people of Latvia” [26]. Thus, the categorization of “ethnic minorities” is excluded from the national identity, and the identities of ethnic minorities are subordinated to the identity of the Latvians. Other important ethno-political documents also emphasize the idea of differences in the socio-political value of the identity of Latvians and representatives of ethnic minorities. In the “Citizenship Law” (1994), only Latvians are automatically recognized as citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, as representatives of the “state nation” (*valstsnācija*) and autochthonous Livs [40]. The “Declaration on the Occupation of Latvia” (1996) speaks of “the need to eliminate the consequences of the occupation”, which included “hundreds of thousands of migrants”, with the help of which “the leadership of the USSR ... sought to destroy the identity of the people of Latvia” [41]. The “Law on the State Language” (1992, 1999) fixes the varying degree of responsibility of the state in relation to the Latvian language (“preservation, protection and development”) and ethnic minority languages (“the right to use the mother tongue”) and “expanding the influence of the Latvian language ..., to stimulate the fastest integration of society” [42]. The “Education Law” (1998) defines Latvian as the language of education in state, municipal and private educational institutions, while retaining the right to use ethnic minority languages in pre-school and primary schools that implement ministry-approved “ethnic minority education programs” [43].

In various social integration programs (2000, 2011) adopted by the government of Latvia since the early 2000s, ethnic minorities, primarily the Russian population, regardless of legal status (citizens of the Republic of Latvia or its permanent residents) are considered as only an object of the state integration policy. According to these documents, in the field of their education, it is necessary to achieve the existence of a “stable environment of the Latvian language”, and the goal of the integration policy is to preserve the “Latvian language, cultural and national identity, European democratic values, a unique cultural space” without mentioning the

interests of ethnic minorities in the development of their ethno-cultural identity [44, 45]. In fact, the principle of asymmetry is being implemented in the socio-political value of the Latvian identity and the identity of ethnic minorities.

## **5. Programs of Latvia's political parties on the place of ethnic minorities in nation-building**

In 2004, the Latvian Saeima (parliament) ratified the General Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities, which laid important legal grounds for recognizing the identities of these population groups as one of the legitimate forms of Latvian national identity. This created the prerequisites for taking into account the interests of ethnic minorities in the democratized process of nation-building. However, neither before the ratification of this Convention and Latvia's accession to the European Union in 2004, nor after any of the political parties expressing the interests of ethnic minorities to one degree or another, was invited to the ruling coalition. And this despite the fact that from 2011 to this day, the faction of the Social Democratic Party "Consent", which is supported mainly by Russian-speaking citizens, is the largest in the Saeima.

The programs of some political parties of the ruling coalition ("New Unity" and "Who Owns the State") do not even mention the existence of ethnic minorities in Latvia [46, 47]. At the same time, in the program of the radical "National Association", which is part of the government coalition, the native language of the Russian population of Latvia is mentioned in a negative connotation [48]. The election program of the Union of Greens and Peasants, which is in opposition, for which the Latvian voter votes, has recently begun to include a provision on the need to respect the right of ethnic minorities to preserve their language and culture [49]. In the party programs of the government's New Conservative Party and the Development/For! states the need for the state to create conditions for "the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the Latvian language, culture, worldview while preserving their language and culture." But in general, ethnic minorities are seen as social groups that need to be actively included in the space of the "Latvian language, culture and worldview" [50]. Or, in some variation, it is proposed "to provide all children with education in the Latvian language and the opportunity to master part of the educational material bilingually in the languages of ethnic minorities and EU languages" [51]. The presence in the program documents of the two government parties of some provisions on the preservation of the identity of ethnic minorities can be seen as a step forward compared to the situation before the elections of the current 13th Seimas (2018), in which all government parties did not mention in their programs the presence of ethnic minorities in the country. But in general, it is fair to say that the leading political parties proceed from the idea of nation-building in Latvia as an unfinished process that needs to achieve the linguistic homogeneity of the public space.

The Social Democratic Party "Consent" proceeds from the idea of the need to ensure a more worthy place for ethnic minorities in nation-building than is happening now. This party in its program emphasizes the group ethno-cultural values of this part of the population (the need for "teaching the languages of traditional ethnic minorities in Latvia within the framework of the education system", "the use of ethnic minority languages in communication with state and local government institutions in places where minorities live traditionally or in a significant amount, for the application of the norms of the General Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

in full and the withdrawal of reservations (declarations) made during the ratification of the convention.” the presence of ethnic minorities in the country [52] was mentioned. Only a serious loss of support for the Russian-speaking voter in the Seimas elections in 2018 at the level of political declarations increased the emphasis on the interests of the Russian-speaking population. In particular, “Consent” advocated the introduction of “optional programs in the native language in metropolitan schools of ethnic minorities” [53]. In addition to “Consent” the party “Russian Union of Latvia” also focuses on the interests of ethnic minorities. The program of this party proclaims the achievement of an official status for the Russian language, state guarantees for Russian schools and schools of ethnic minorities in general [54]. But the Russian Union has not been represented in the Seimas since 2010.

A significant place among the agents of nation-building is occupied not only by nationalist and radical parties, but also by public organizations, the media, whose representatives consider any independence of the Russian-speaking parties and the orientation of the political views of the Russian population that do not fit into the nationalist canon as “national betrayal” [55, 56]. Some politicians propose to liquidate the largest party of the parliament “Consent”, which is voted mainly by Russian-speaking citizens [57]. Information stuffing of extremely Russophobic content is regularly made [58, 59]. Moreover, xenophobia began to spread to the ethnonym “Russians” itself. In 2020, a discussion revived in the Latvian segment of the Internet whether this concept should be considered a curse [60]. Within the framework of this interpretation, the widespread interpretation of the “loyalty” of ethnic minorities to the state also fits in, in the content of which nationalist politicians “forget” to include a mention of the constitution, which contains articles on the guarantee of the Latvian state to respect human rights, including the rights of ethnic minorities [61]. The impossibility of combining Latvian patriotism and adherence to Soviet values is emphasized. One of the driving factors for the growth of the Russian population’s skepticism towards their official categorization as an ethnic minority is associated with the rejection of the categorization of Russians as “foreigners” (*cittautieši*), which is widespread in a significant segment of the Latvian socio-political consciousness, including some scientific publications [62].

## **6. Materials of sociological research**

The author of the article in 2000 and 2019 conducted a survey of students studying in Russian in three private higher education institutions in Riga. Taking into account the significant time gap in the study, the tasks were also set to determine to what extent the needs of self-categorization of Russian-speaking youth as an ethnic minority are reproduced in discursive practices for a sufficiently long period of time, as well as the extent to which continuity in such self-categorization is characteristic of the respondents of 2000, who lived about half of their lives in conditions of the USSR and among respondents in 2019 who were born in independent Latvia. In 2000, 68 respondents were interviewed, in 2019–2025. The gender characteristics of the respondents, citizenship, self-assessment of the level of knowledge of the Latvian language, as well as their attitude towards the prospects of linking their future life with Latvia are presented in **Table 1**.

The students were asked to answer one question in free written form “How do you imagine the future of ethnic minorities and languages in Latvia?”. The very wording of the question for the respondents did not at all imply the need to directly categorize

Characteristics of respondents	2000	2019
Citizenship		
Citizens of the Republic of Latvia	29	65
Permanent resident of the Republic of Latvia	37	5
Citizens of other states	1	5
No answer	1	—
Self-assessment of the level of knowledge of the Latvian language		
Excellent level	8	9
Intermediate level	27	46
Weak level	31	17
I do not speak Latvian language	—	3
No answer	2	—
The desire to connect their future life with Latvia		
“I certainly do” and “most likely I do”	20	44
“Most likely I do not” and “I do not”	7	21
Have not yet decided whether they will continue to live in Latvia	40	10
	1	—

**Table 1.**  
*Some objective and subjective characteristics of the respondents.*

themselves as representatives of various national-political or ethnic communities, for example, with “citizens of Latvia”, “permanent residents of Latvia”, “Latvians”, with representatives of ethnic minorities. However, through the content of the individual discourses of the respondents, one can determine how much the most frequently occurring (normative) descriptions and assessments of the ethno-political and ethno-social reality in Latvia and the place of ethnic minorities in it, which are specific to the consciousness of the Russian and Russian-speaking population of Latvia, turn out to be in demand in them. Given the large volume and diversity of opinions expressed, their content was grouped on a scale of assessments in the range “the future of ethnic minorities and their languages depends mainly on their own individual efforts” to “state ethnic policy and existing political institutions do not imply the full preservation of national minorities and their languages“. In general, the distribution of representations of respondents in 2000 and 2019 is presented in **Table 2**.

The overwhelming majority of descriptions speak of a close connection between the future of ethnic minorities and the current direction of state ethnic policy (primarily policies in the field of citizenship, education, language), as well as with a large proportion of these ethnic groups in the population of Latvia (51 such descriptions in 2000 and 58 - in 2019). The consciousness of the respondents is extremely concentrated on the external, both institutional and demographic circumstances of their self-categorization as ethnic minorities. While the individual and collective capabilities of the ethnic minorities themselves are not considered as the main guarantee to preserve their language and identity, and therefore to preserve themselves as full-fledged ethno-cultural groups in Latvia (16 descriptions in 2000 and 13 in 2019). Respondents are more inclined to consider their reference ethnic

	2000	2019
1. The future of ethnic languages and minorities depends mainly on the individual efforts of representatives of these groups of the Latvian population, on personal needs to preserve their native language, family traditions for preserving the Russian language, on the ability of the person himself to link the preservation of his identity with integration into Latvian society.	16	13
2. The future of national languages and minorities depends mainly on the large proportion of representatives of these groups in the population of Latvia; in addition, a large number of immigrants from other countries arriving in Latvia will objectively lead to an increase in ethno-cultural diversity.	17	10
3. The existing state ethnic policy, established political institutions, as well as poor relations between Russians and Latvians do not imply the full preservation of ethnic minorities and their languages.	34	48
4. Other	1	4
Total	70	75

**Table 2.**

*Assessment of the future of ethnic minorities and their languages in Latvia.*

groups as a subordinate element of the system of ethno-social stratification and the institutionalized system of power. Moreover, in 2019, compared to 2000, the proportion of respondents who were critical of state ethnic policy even increased (48 and 34 descriptions, respectively). In 2000, respondents gave more detailed answers to the proposed question than in 2019. So, the average number of words of the five most voluminous narratives in 2000 was 451 words, while in 2019 it was only 94 words. More detailed essays in 2000 contained a multifaceted description of the conditions for the existence of the Russian population of Latvia, as well as their identity as a multi-layered phenomenon, where ethnic elements are intertwined with general civil ones. In 2019, there is practically no trace of this extended discourse. The main focus is on emphasizing one's identity: "we are national minorities." This is the reserve of group, cultural markers that should determine adaptive strategies for respondents and the construction of civic identity, based on the priority of preserving their ethnic core.

## **7. Categorization of Russians as the "indigenous people" of Latvia**

The marginalization of the collective interests and collective ethno-cultural identity of the Russian population in the dominant socio-political discourse and political practices stimulates the growth of skepticism among a part of this ethnic group to look for alternatives to the categorization of the non-Latvian population as ethnic minorities stated in the legislation. Categorization as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia is seen by some representatives of the Russian public as such an alternative, especially in a situation where international law contains more guarantees for the preservation of ethno-cultural identity than is provided for in international law relating to the interests of ethnic minorities.

It cannot be said that self-categorization of the Russian population of Latvia is recognized as an official term in the programs of political parties focused on protecting the interests of this ethnic group. However, in the program of the "Russian

Union of Latvia” party, one can find a number of terms for categorizing the Russian population, which go beyond the officially accepted concept of “ethnic minority” in relation to the non-Latvian population. This party has a positive attitude towards the categorization of Russians as an ethnic minority of the country, but at the same time stands for “recognition of the existence of two main linguistic communities in the country - Latvian and Russian”, for “the establishment of Russian cultural autonomy in Latvia” [63].

The categorization of Russians as the “indigenous people” of Latvia can be found in the statements of some representatives of Russian public organizations in Latvia, publicists and journalists. A detailed motivation for the legitimacy of using such a categorization of the Russian population was proposed in 2017 by the chairman of the public organization “Union of Citizens and Non-Citizens” Vladimir Sokolov. In his opinion, the use of such a term is possible, since Russians lived on the territory of Latvia even before the formation of Latvian statehood in 1918. And the need to categorize Russians in Latvia as one of its indigenous peoples is dictated by the lack of full-fledged guarantees from the state to preserve the Russian language, whose status in Latvia, according to Sokolov, is “politically repressed” [64].

The idea of Russians as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia is promoted on the current website of the “Association of the Indigenous Russian-Speaking People of Latvia” [65]. At the same time, the most important sign of the categorization of Russians as an indigenous people is seen in the presence in this group of a large number of citizens of Latvia who received such a status not as a result of naturalization, but by their origin, as descendants of citizens of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918–1940 [66].

Representatives of the Association of Indigenous Russian-Speaking People of Latvia (as an organization of indigenous people) regularly participate in significant UN events - the annual sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the annual sessions of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Latvian publicist and public figure Vlad Bogov, speaking at the 7th session of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Geneva, 2014), linked the need to consider the Russian population of Latvia as its indigenous people due to the fact that the Russian language is recognized in Latvia only like a foreign one. Bogov’s speech stated that “the leadership of Latvia, formed mainly from representatives of the Latvian-speaking people and defending only their interests, is consistently implementing plans to build a single nation in Latvia based on a single Latvian language and culture. To this end, a policy of forced assimilation and integration is being pursued” [67]. V. Bogov also made a report at the meeting of the 14th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the United Nations Headquarters (2015). In his opinion, the approximate number of indigenous Russian-speaking people is at least 140,000 people - 8% of the total population of Latvia and 50% of the number of Russian-speaking inhabitants of Latvia who have the right to vote. In this case, the representatives of this people include those Russian-speaking people who received citizenship of Latvia without naturalization, “by blood” (“by inheritance”), which is in fact the recognition by the state (Latvia) of the existence of the indigenous Russian-speaking people inhabiting the territory of this country [68].

Representatives of the Russian public also resort to the self-categorization of “indigenous people” in polemics with representatives of political power. For example, this happened at a rally of many thousands near the Presidential Palace of parents, public activists, teachers, journalists who gathered in response to the approval by

the President of Latvia Raimonds Vejonis (2018) of amendments to the Law on Education, according to which education in public and private schools of national minorities will soon be held only in Latvian, and Russian-speaking students will be allowed to study in their native language only Russian language and literature. At this rally, the mother of one boy compared education in Latvia to a blow to the head with an ax - tough, rude and the strongest survive: "I have nowhere to go, my ancestors have lived on this land for centuries. I do not believe that we can be crushed here. We are a third of the population of Latvia, it is unacceptable to put up with the humiliation and infringement of our rights! If the store refuses to speak Russian with me, I turn around and go to another place. We must force them to reckon with us, we are the same indigenous people of Latvia as the Latvians!" [69]. At the Youth Country Conference of Russian Compatriots in Latvia (2019), Margarita Dragile, representing the international youth organization "Prospects for Russian Youth", said: "We are Russian citizens of Latvia, the same indigenous people as the titular population. My great-grandfather, for example, was the governor-general of the city of Riga! Why should I leave here or have a limited list of rights? But now November 2019 is on the calendar, and there is no more Russian education in our country" [70].

As can be seen from the speeches of some representatives of Russian public organizations, the results of the 2012 referendum on amendments to the Constitution, making Russian the second state language are the immediate stimulus for turning to the categorization "Russian indigenous people of Latvia". The results of the referendum showed that the majority of Latvian citizens - 74.8% were against granting Russian the status of a second state language, only 24.9% of those who participated in the vote supported this initiative [71]. Thus, the referendum demonstrated the split of society along ethno-linguistic lines, because the proportion of people who supported the initiative to grant the Russian language the status of the second state language in Latvia roughly corresponds to the proportion of Russian-speaking citizens in Latvian society.

If we turn to the content of social networks in the Russian-speaking segment of Latvia, we can find the following arguments in favor of self-categorization by Russians as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia:

1. The categorization "national minority" implies a subordinate status in relation to the Latvians as a national majority, which in real life turns into a narrowing of life chances for Russians, their "second-class" character;
2. Categorization of Russians as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia, along with Latvians, will help to institutionalize equal life chances for Latvians and the Russian population.

Here is a characteristic statement of one of the initiators of the discussion on social networks about the value of categorizing Russians as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia: "Well, how long can you mock us, call us some kind of "ethnic minority"? We are not a ethnic minority, but the indigenous inhabitants of Latvia, we have exactly the same rights to this land as the Latvians. Today's Saeima and the government of Latvia have committed a form of genocide against us, forbid us to speak our native language, humiliate and insult us in every possible way, take away our Motherland. And we follow their lead, silently put up with the situation of second-class people. Latvians are not masters in Latvia, they are just one of the peoples living in this territory. We are not an "ethnic minority", but "the indigenous people of Latvia of non-Latvian nationality" [72].



## 8. Conclusion

The Russian population of Latvia is characterized by self-categorization as an ethnic minority of this country. However, as the analysis of the dominant socio-political discourse shows, the formed political practices, such categorization is associated not so much with additional opportunities for the preservation and development of their collective ethno-cultural identity, which is provided for by international law, but with the subordinated status of the Russian population in comparison with the status of ethnic Latvians. It is no coincidence, therefore, that in terms of the consciousness of the Russian population of Latvia, skepticism is spreading in relation to the positive possibilities of the status of an ethnic minority within the framework of the people of Latvia. Such skepticism leads a part of the Russian population to turn to the possibilities of categorization as one of the indigenous peoples of Latvia, given that international law attaches great importance to respecting the rights of these groups of society. However, in the scientific community, such attempts to self-categorize the Russian population of Latvia as its indigenous people do not meet with understanding.

## Author details

Vladislav Volkov<sup>1,2</sup>


1 The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia

2 Baltic International Academy, Riga, Latvia

\*Address all correspondence to: [vladislavs.volkovs@inbox.lv](mailto:vladislavs.volkovs@inbox.lv)

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## Chapter 8

# The Implications of Arab Milieu on Arab-Palestinian Society in Israel

*Yusri Khaizran*

### Abstract

Until recent years, the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel was completely absent from the concerns of their surroundings in the Arab world, despite the fact that the Arab surroundings have maintained a strong presence in forming the political consciousness and intellectual and ideological tendencies in Israeli Arab society for the past 70 years. It can be accurately said that Arab society in Israel considered itself a part of the Arab surroundings in every sense of the word, and it still sees its existence as a social, existential, and cultural extension of these Arab surroundings. This communicative situation, at the level of consciousness and sentiments, has cast a shadow on the relationships and positions of Arab citizens in the state, and there have always been views towards the Arab surroundings as a source of moral strength and intellectual inspiration. All of the intellectual and ideological transformations that the Arab world has experienced have reflected on the conditions of Arabs in Israel, starting with pan-Arabism, following through to the reframing of national identities, and ending with the extension of Islamism and resorting to pre-state frameworks against the backdrop of the logic of fragmentation that was brought about by the Arab Spring.

**Keywords:** Palestinian in Israel, Israel, Arab milieu, ethnic minorities, Middle East

### 1. Introduction

The conflict between the Palestinian national movement and the settlement enterprise that is represented by the Zionist movement led to the Nakba of the Palestinian people, who have been transformed, due to the war, from a majority into a national minority, after approximately 800,000 Palestinians were expelled, forced out, or displaced, turning them into refugees outside of their country of origin. During this war, 531 villages and population centers were destroyed, and their people displaced, in addition to the emptying of 11 cities and towns during the Nakba, which led to an end to Palestinian cities and destruction of urban society that had been characterized by elites and cultural and economic movements.

In addition, the Nakba of the Palestinian people led to the isolation of the Palestinians who remained in their country, from their Arab surroundings and cultural environment. Israel considered communication between Palestinians in the country and the Arab surroundings an imminent risk that could threaten Israel's existence. It is important to mention that, because of the Nakba, the Arab minority in the

country was left without political, intellectual, cultural, and economic elites, and only with a rural minority living in village population centers in the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev. The situation of the Palestinians who became citizens of the state of Israel has been described as being a “body without a head”, as a result of the break-off in development and modernization, the destruction of civic centers, and the displacement of the political leaders and the cultural elite. The Nakba did not stop there, and it has even limited the possibility of getting a higher education in Arab capitals, which was commonplace before the Nakba, and this is due to the conflict between Arab states and the Palestinian national movement on the one hand and with Israel on the other. The number of Palestinian students in universities outside the country has decreased from approximately 1000 students to a few in individuals.

The fact that Palestinians remained in Israel was not accepted by a number of leading forces in the Israeli political community, starting with the founder of the state and its first prime minister, David Ben Gurion. Ben Gurion wanted, it seems, to displace the remaining Palestinians and maintain an exclusively Jewish state, “pure” of non-Jews. On this basis, Ben Gurion considered the Arabs to be a fifth column and dealt with them from a security perspective by imposing military rule on Arab population centers [1].

After the Nakba, Palestinians lived in a state of great contradictions that formulated their consciousness and impacted their political and social behavior. The sense of alienation and besiegement was prominent in their isolation from the surrounding Arab world and they are being cut off from their civilizational and cultural heritage on the one hand and by the policies of military rule on the other. These policies worked in a systematic manner to isolate them in their villages, limiting their movement and trying to paralyze their political and protest movements by persecuting and banning political organizations (like the Ard Movement in 1964 and the Socialist List in 1965).

During that period, contradictory motivations appeared for the political behavior of the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, and they became more prominent with the rise of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who led the pan-Arab national movement and the Arab unity movement. Palestinians lived in a state of anticipation, in addition to the sense of defeat that had taken control of their political behavior. It had become commonplace for them to gather and eagerly listen to the speeches of Abdel Nasser, who breathed hope into them once again, while, on the other hand, they capitulated to the military rule and went out in droves to vote for Zionist parties and the lists of the ruling party, the Mapai Party.

The Arab population who remained within the borders of the State of Israel after the 1948 war went through abnormal developments because they were still a part of the Arab world and the Palestinian people nationally, culturally, and religiously. But at the same time, they were a part of the citizenry of the State of Israel, which was built upon the ruins of the Palestinian people and was still engaged in a bloody conflict with the Palestinian national movement and Arab states. This can be seen in the crises, the obstacles, and the difficulties facing Arab Palestinians in adapting and integrating inside the state of Israel, which defines itself as being a Jewish state. The political reality derived from the Zionist and Jewish nature of the state is prominent in the lack of equality between Jews and Arabs on all levels of their lives because of distribution mechanisms that are in the interests of the Jewish majority and discriminate against the Arab citizens. As a result, the exclusion and marginalization of Arab citizens continue, and they continue their lives on the margins of Israeli society, unable to achieve full citizenship because of the exclusivity of the state. At the same time, the state has



reinforced policies of removing Arabization and eliminating the Palestinian character, which impacts the status of Arab population and their national and cultural identities [1]. This dilemma has led to an acute crisis among Palestinian citizens of Israel, and this had been reflected at three levels. The first level is the internal level, which assumes that there is no consensus among the Arab population on a national agenda and political demands as a national minority inside Israel, a country that defines itself as a state for the Jewish people. The second level is the Israeli level, which assumes that the definition of the state of Israel as a Jewish state gives priority to Jews, and this definition has paved the way for increased marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination against Arab citizens in the distribution of financial and in-kind resources. The third is the Palestinian level, which assumes that the Arab minority has remained on the margins of the Palestinian national movement and has been excluded from its agenda, not receiving enough attention from the Palestinian leadership, some of whom believed that Arabs were an internal Israeli matter. The aggravated development has led the civil identity (Israeli) and the national identity (Arab Palestinian) of the Arabs to be partial and created a hybrid of a national minority belonging to the Arab world and the Palestinian people while, at the same time, being a part of Israeli society because of its Israeli citizenship [2, 3].

In Majid Al Haj's analysis of the reality of identity and its transformation in Arab society in Israel, Al Haj believes that the identity of Arabs in Israel is dynamic and changing and that it is in a constant process of evolution and development. Based on this approach, the changes in the identity of Arab citizens in Israel are influenced by four main spheres. The first is the local sphere, and it is linked to the internal structure and benefits of the Arab population, as well as the changes that have occurred over time in the value systems and ways of life. The second sphere is related to the national dimension of the condition of Arabs in the Jewish state and its policies towards them, in addition to their relationship with the Jewish majority. The third sphere is the topic of this study, which has not been given enough attention in past studies, and it is linked to the regional dimension and political developments in the Arab region. Finally, the fourth sphere is linked to the religious dimension referring to the ethnic and religious identity of Muslims, Christians, and Druze [2]. Another theory believes that the identity of Arabs in Israel is affected by changes in and interaction with the three main spheres. In this theory, the spheres are the internal sphere, or the changes inside Palestinian society in Israel itself and the political consensus that has been formulated, the Israeli sphere, confirms the system of relationships that provides preferential treatment to the Jewish majority over the Arab Palestinian minority, and the general Palestinian and Arab sphere, which reiterates the political development in the Palestinian field, in addition to changes and transformations in the Arab world, especially Israel's neighboring countries. It should be noted that this theory has ignored the international sphere, which has impacted the formation of a civil society that focuses on the rights of national minorities and indigenous peoples.<sup>1</sup>

The analytical framework that this study is based on confirms that the identity, consciousness, and political behavior of Palestinian citizens of Israel carry different forms of content. Their identity has been affected for years by the wider Arab-Israeli conflict, and it has been fed by it. It has not been insulated from being affected by

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<sup>1</sup> In 1992, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the "Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities", see: United Nations General Assembly [4].

various changes and events in the Arab world, and it is still subjected to the influence of various changes and fluctuations in the Arab world, despite the fact that the level of this influence has changed from one time to another, as we can see in this section. The political reality of the Arab minority in Israel is described as being a reflection of a “dual consciousness”. The Arab minority is developing a national and emotional link with the Palestinian people and the Arab surroundings, but, at the same time, it is practically and rationally linked with the Israeli reality [5]. This assertion by Amal Jamal is supported by the main hypothesis of this study, which is summarized that the Arab minority in Israel is greatly aligned with the Arab world, despite its rational link with the Israeli sphere. In addition, the Strategic Report that was recently published by the Ilam Center, which was drafted by a number of Arab researchers and academics, confirms the organic link between Arab society in Israel and the regional surroundings, even considering it a national and rational phenomenon. It also considers this link vital to Arab society, as the sense of belonging in their surroundings is part and parcel of the Arab minority’s political, cultural, and social identity. In addition, there is a rational explanation for adherence to affiliation with the Arab surroundings, and this is the relentless pursuit by the Arab minority to be rid of the shackles of structural weakness that are created by its status as only a national minority in a Jewish national state. In this definition, the report states: “The Arab Palestinians in Israel have a political, cultural, and civilization link with the Arab and Islamic surroundings of Israel, which, at times, removes the label of minority from them and includes them with the majority within the Middle East in general and the cultures, history, and affiliations in it” ([6], p. 19). Identifying with the surroundings, that is, the Arab world, or reiterating affiliation to them, is an attempt to break the shackles and the feelings of inferiority resulting from discriminatory politics and exclusion created by the state of Israel against the Arab minority. This model will be a starting point to attempt, in this regard, to study the impact of the “Arab Spring” on the Arab society in Israel.

The socio-political history of Arab society shows consistent progress, and there is historical continuity for the harmony of Arab society with its surroundings, not only in everything relating to forms of political behavior and identity politics but also at the level of political rhetoric and intellectual and ideological discourse. In all of these aspects, Arab society in Israel responds and is impacted by its Arab surroundings and practically embodies the fact that it considers itself a part of these surroundings. The political world of the Arab citizens is not limited to the towns that they live in or the borders of the state, and they are affected by developments taking place in the Arab world, which is considered a part of the “broader self-identity” that they have. This is contrary to what some research in this field have argued, which is that the nature of the state as a factor forms the political reality of Arab citizens in Israel, while they ignore the impact of the Arab surroundings on their forms of political behavior.<sup>2</sup>

The Arab minority, as is the case with many minorities around the world, is also impacted by neighboring countries and regional conflicts, even international ones, in addition to internal factors, with regards to political leadership, the relationships between majorities and minorities, the authority of the state, and social and demographic benefits for the minority group.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the academic writings of Ašad Ghanem.

## **2. The political space**

### **2.1 Under Nasserism**

The 1948 war left its mark on Palestinians in Israel and created feelings of fear, isolation, defeat, and humiliation among them. The Palestinians, who had become a minority as a result of the war, found themselves in a new political framework that not only did not recognize them as a group, with their own national rights but also was hostile towards them and tried to dismantle them. In addition, for two decades, they were limited to specific spaces that were mentioned by a strict system. The shock of defeat was a decisive factor in the formation of the political behavior of Arab citizens during the first decades. At the same time, the ruling elites in Israel were successful in implanting a state of existential fear among the Jewish majority for the purpose of external propaganda and internal recruitment and mobilization.

The feeling of fear and defeat among the Palestinians in Israel led to the adoption of reconciliatory politics with regard to the state of Israel and finding a balance between their political, social, and economic survival in the Jewish state and the attempt to maintain the features and characteristics of their collective identity. As an expression of the balance between their integration in the new political framework and preserving their individual identity, they participated in the Knesset elections of 1949 and voted for Zionist parties and parties affiliated with them, which were extensions of the Mapai Party (during that period, the ruling and dominant party) and were following its orders. At the same time, they maintained an emotional and rational relationship with the Arab space, not withdrawing from it, despite the formation of a new reality that was hostile to this space. The Arab public lived with the feeling of being in a temporary situation that could change at any moment, as it hoped that the Arab armies would mobilize in a new campaign that would curb the new political system. The pan-Arab ideology of the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was dominant in the Middle East, and its impact did not exclude The Arab citizens of Israel. At the time, Palestinians would gather around radios, in their homes, and in cafes, always listening to Radio Cairo, which would broadcast speeches by Nasser, who was a popular and well-loved leader among many in the Palestinian public in Israel [7]. Therefore, on the eve of the elections to the Fourth Knesset in 1959, the Arab media encouraged Arab citizens to boycott them and not grant legitimacy to the ruling system in Israel.

As part of the desire to survive and avoid the fate of Palestinian refugees, the Arab public created a “strategy of resilience” (resilience in the homeland). At the core of this strategy, the Arab residents maintained an emotional and symbolic relationship with Arab nationalism, while they strived, at the individual level, to maintain their personal interests and daily needs. Over the years, the Arab minority in Israel embarked on a struggle to survive and exist, and it struggled gradually to integrate into the state on equal footing [8].

The defeat in the 1948 War had a considerable impact on the political behavior of Arab citizens during the first decade of the state’s existence, as this decade was characterized by very limited political protest as a direct result of the 1948 defeat and the fear of Palestinians who remained in Israel from having a fate similar to that of the towns that were destroyed and whose residents were evacuated. In 1956, the relationship between the political developments in the Arab world and political developments among Arabs in Israel was strengthened. The modest protest movement that followed the Kafr Qasim massacre might be the best illustration of the feeling of defeat and fear

that dominated the political consciousness of Arab citizens in Israel. Here, it should be noted that the massacre took place after a curfew was imposed on the residents of Kafr Qasim, and the town was declared a closed area, while some of the residents were still working outside of the village. Upon their return from work, security forces opened fire, killing 49 of them.

As is the case in other parts of the Arab world, the Arab minority in Israel did not remain indifferent to the Arab nationalist ideology that was launched by the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser. As noted above, Abdel Nasser's speeches were received with great emotion among the Palestinian citizens in Israel. His words also aroused national pride among them, and they were a counterbalance to the political and military defeat that the Arab armies had sustained during the 1948 War. There is a lot of evidence that Abdel Nasser's speeches gained special popularity and attention, and that he was considered an undisputed leader who would be able to curb divisions among the Arabs and achieve the dream of pan-Arab unity, helping Arabs overcome the crisis-filled reality that they had experienced since the establishment of the Jewish state [9].

At the end of the 1950s, it became clear that pan-Arab ideology had become dominant in the Arab Middle East. The Arab unity project was achieved for the first time at the beginning of February 1958, when Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian President, and Shukri al-Quwatli, the President of the Syrian Republic, announced the establishment of the United Arab Republic. The unification of Egypt and Syria, as a reflection of Arab nationalism and a revival of Arab nationalism and unity, affected the identity, consciousness, and political behavior of the Palestinian minority in the state of Israel. The establishment of the Popular Front in 1958, and the Al Ard Movement a year later, was, to a large extent, a direct reflection of the intensified resolve of revolutionary pan-Arabism in the region. One way or another, the Israeli establishment compared the "Al Ard Family" with the expansion of revolutionary pan-Arabism and it was thus proclaimed an illegal movement, and at the end of 1964, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Levi Eshkol, signed an official decree banning its activities [10].

The establishment of the "Al Ard Family" movement in 1959 had come as a clear response to the expanding pan-Arab revolutionary movement after the rise of Nasserism following the Suez War in 1956. Among the effects of this transformation was the emergence of the national hero, Abdel Nasser, who was able to challenge the will of the traditional-colonial powers and their aggression and realized the latent potential of pan-Arab emotions, seen during the aggression by the overwhelming protest of all over the Arab world in solidarity with Egypt. Despite the state of isolation and separation that had been imposed by realities and reinforced by the Hebrew state, Arab society did not remain indifferent to the transformations happening around it during the 1950s, characterized by the Suez War, the rise of Nasserism, and the first attempt at unification in modern Arab society when Syria joined the unification project with Egypt under the leadership of Abdel Nasser. This was also the period of the first Lebanese civil war and the fall of the Hashemite monarchy (in Iraq) which had been allied with the West and had been a founding member of the Baghdad Pact. The establishment of the Al Ard Movement cannot be viewed separately from the revolutionary spirit in the Arab Mashreq region at the time [11]. What also confirms this is the resolute and non-lenient response by the Israeli authorities, as Israel considered, at the time, that the rise of this entity was a threat to national security and dealt with it on this basis. As mentioned, the government did not hesitate to declare it an illegal organization and prohibit its activities as it was considered an extension of

Nasserism, which Israel considered an existential threat that had to be dealt with in any way possible.

The influence of the Arab space on the Arab public in Israel became prominent during the Six-Day War in 1967 as well, the war that ended with Israel's victory and the defeat of the Arab armies. That defeat led to Israel occupying what remained of Mandatory Palestine, in addition to territories of other Arab countries, like the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. As a result, communication between Palestinians in the occupied territories and Palestinian citizens in Israel resumed after two decades of disconnection.

## **2.2 The renewed start of the Palestinian national movement and its internal implications**

The resumption of meetings between Palestinians in Israel and Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had important effects on the Arab Palestinian public in the state of Israel. The meetings between Palestinians in Israel and Palestinians in the West Bank took place at the same time as the rise in the profile of the Palestinian resistance and the strengthening position of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which led to momentum in expressing the latent Palestinian identity among the Palestinians in Israel. This also took place at the time of the decline of pan-Arab expansion in the Arab context, and renewed legitimacy for the existence of a national state. As a response to the political developments in the Arab sphere, Palestinians in Israel developed, during those years, "resistance poetry", whose pioneers were members of the Communist Party in Israel. The most prominent of these were Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq Ziad, and Samih al-Qasim. The poetry reiterates the resilience of the Arabs in their homeland and that they are a part of the Palestinian people and the Arab world. The resistance poetry reflected the culture of the Arab and Palestinian struggle, and, through it, these poets resisted the domination and high-handed actions of the Jewish majority [12]. In addition, the October (Yom Kippur) War, in 1973, came to somewhat change the feeling of defeat and humiliation that the Arab armies had suffered during the Six-Day War. These changes, from defeat to destroying the myth of the invincible army, breathed renewed hope among the Arab citizens in the state of Israel and rehabilitated their self-image. It also quickened the process of creating their Arab and Palestinian sense of belonging, which had been decreasing after the 1948 War.

The sequence of events and trends from 1948 shows a clear harmony between political developments and transformations in the Arab space and political developments among the Palestinian citizens in the state of Israel. It is no exaggerating to say that the rising status of the Palestinian resistance after the 1967 War, and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, formed a background for the changes that characterized national politics of Arab society at the beginning of the 1970s, especially the establishment of the national organizations in 1974 and 1975. We can clearly see the process of resurrection of Palestinian nationalism, which also led to the establishment of national institutions for the Arabs in the state of Israel. For example, in 1974, a national committee was established for Arab local authorities. In 1975, communist student councils were formed in secondary schools, Arab student committees in Israeli universities, and the Land Defense Committee, led the protests of Palestinian citizens of Israel against government policies [13].

During the period between the establishment of the National Committee for Arab Local Authorities in 1974 and the events of Land Day in 1976, there was a significant increase in the importance and status of the national committee,

despite the political coup that took place in Nazareth in 1975. The Communist Party was able, in that same year, to create real change in Arab politics in general, and the politics related to the local authorities specifically. This was done through the establishment of the Democratic Front in Nazareth, a local coalition with the Communist Party at its core, in addition to other local national forces. The Front achieved a landslide victory against the nominee of the “ruling party” and other traditional forces in Nazareth. During these elections, more than 75% of electors in Nazareth voted for the Communist Party, which captured 11 of 17 possible seats, in addition to winning the leadership of the municipality. The victory of the Front in Nazareth in 1975 was considered a transformation in local and national politics, and this victory was a representation of the renewed national uprising and the collapse of the old traditional leadership, with new national leaders appearing. The victory of the Front was also affected by the transformations and changes that were having an impact on both the Palestinian and Arab spheres. The fall of the traditional leadership, which was considered linked to the authorities, and the victory of national political leadership, was seen as a real change in the work of the National Committee of Heads of Arab Local Authorities. It went from an entity that exclusively dealt with local issues into a representative organization involved in national issues towards Land Day and the establishment of the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel [14].

The events of March 30, 1976, which was known as Land Day, had a clear effect on strengthening national sentiments among Arab citizens in the state of Israel. The impact of both the rise of the National Palestinian Movement, which was positioned outside the Arab sphere and the crisis in Israeli self-confidence after the Yom Kippur War, enabled the Arab citizens to face the Jewish majority on the issue of land. The main cause of the events of Land Day was a state plan to confiscate around 21,000 dunams of land in the area of Al-Batuf, considering it part and parcel of the policy of Judaization which had targeted the Galilee after the establishment of two Jewish cities, Nazareth Illit and Karmiel. The involved confiscation of the lands of Arab citizens in these areas. The purpose of the plan to confiscate Galilee lands was to change the demographic makeup by increasing the Jewish population in the area, and at the same time, putting a Jewish wedge into the heart of the geographic expanse of Arab towns in Galilee [15]. In response to the government action and thanks to the increased influence of the Communist Party and its political leadership and the reinforcement of Arab nationalist and Palestinian elements in the identity of Palestinian citizens in Israel, a general strike was announced on March 30, 1976, to protest the land confiscation policy. At the same time, the government tried to break the Arab protest by recruiting local authority heads to defeat the general strike and pressure other heads of local authorities to isolate the Israeli Communist Party and its local authority allies. When this step failed, security agencies moved in to break up the strike by force, with units of the police, the border police, and the army being stationed in the middle of the Arab towns. As a result, six Palestinian civilians were killed, around 50 were injured, while 300 were detained [16]. This event was a point of transformation in the image of Arabs in the eyes of the state and the Jewish majority, as, for the first time, the Arab public had clashed with Israeli security agencies without fear or regret. This was the first time in history that Arabs in Israel had influenced the general Palestinian sphere and “exported” it as an ideology of resistance. This shows that the events on Land Day changed the self-image of the Arab public in Israel, from a small and weak minority that had lost the ability to do anything, to the self-image of a strong public with influence. Therefore, Land Day became a national holiday in different countries,

including many Arab states, among the Palestinians in occupied areas, and in the Palestinian refugee camps [15].

In addition, the victory of the Democratic Front of Nazareth in the local elections in 1975 had implications for other political arenas. The Communist Party adopted the local model in Nazareth, establishing the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) as a national political movement in order to expand its support base, and it included new activists in its ranks. The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality became the most prominent party among the Arab public in national and local elections in the 1970s and 1980s, as it succeeded, in 1977, in winning the support of 51% of Arab voters in the Knesset elections. Furthermore, the local elections that were conducted in 1978 witnessed a noticeable change in local politics in Arab communities after the success of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality in establishing local coalitions and winning the leadership of some local authorities in Arab population centers in the state of Israel. Moreover, there was, at the same time, a great change in the discussions of the local councils, which went from relating to local issues of service provision by local authorities and the basic needs of the population, to discussions that were clearly political and national in nature. At the same time as the national revival among local authorities in Israel, the elections in 1976 in the West Bank brought to power a large number of municipality heads affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization and supporters of the Palestinian struggle, over candidates affiliated with Israel. After their victory, they started to strengthen the relationship with the national Arab leadership in Israel, especially the leadership of the Communist Party [2].

Alongside the national uprising in Palestinian lands, which led to reinforcing the national identity among the Arab population, and which reached its peak from the 1970s until the mid-1980s, there was also a steady increase in the importance of the religious dimension in the self-identity. Studies that tried to follow the renewed rise and institutionalization of the Islamic identity confirm that the meeting between Palestinian citizens in Israel and Palestinians in the occupied territories in 1967 was an important factor in strengthening the Islamic orientation among the Arab citizens in Israel. This is partially attributed to young Arab men going to study in religious institutes in the West Bank and Hebron, where they received a religious and political education. Upon their return to their local communities at the beginning of the 1970s, they moved on to religious activities (dawah). The rise of political Islam as an ideological alternative to revolutionary pan-Arabism started to find a foothold among the Arab and the Muslim public in the 1970s [17], that is if we look into the Palestinian aspect. However, the rise of the local Islamist movements came in the context of the rise of the Islamist movement in the Arab world as a whole. Therefore, reaction to the Arab surrounding states has also been reflected in the rise of the Islamist movements and the Islamic expansion in the Arab world since the beginning of the 1970s. The establishment of the "Family of Jihad" at the beginning of the 1970s was a preliminary indicator of the effect on local Arab society that the transformation taking place in the Arab surroundings was having and the shift from revolutionary pan-Arabism to Islamist protest, which considered itself an alternative for all that came before it. It based its legitimacy on what was considered the failure of all the ideologies and political behaviors that had preceded it in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1972, Sheikh Abdullah Nimar Darwish took action by establishing the first form of the Islamic Movement in Israel. Under the leadership of Sheikh Darwish, the "Family of Jihad" worked in secret to gather weapons and military equipment and became a secret religious organization whose immediate objective was to strike at

Israeli targets, while its overarching aim was a struggle that would culminate in the creation of an Islamic state in historic Palestine. Sheikh Darwish was detained, along with a number of youths, in 1981, and they were convicted. After their release from prison, they underwent a paradigm shift that made them more pragmatic, and they started their religious activities. They expanded their fields of activities, especially at the local and municipal levels.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the movement established a number of branches in Arab towns, especially in the Triangle. The transformation from religious and social preaching to political activities was a response to the loss of hope by the Arab citizens in the Arab nationalist movement, and reservations about its ultimate ability to lead real change in the fates of Palestinian citizens of Israel. Adding to that, the Camp David Peace Agreement between Egypt and Israel, which was signed in 1978, had taken Egypt out of the circle of the Arab-Israeli conflict and only reinforced the feeling of Arab society moving farther away from secular pan-Arabism. The increasing Islamization in Arab society in Israel was an extension of the spread of political Islamization in the wider Arab surroundings, which was represented by the transformation from religious preaching to political and social activities. It gained clear momentum after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, which reiterated Islamic identity as a motivator and creator of the revolution in Iran and was a source of inspiration to many Islamic movements. In addition to the impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, it should be mentioned that the Hajj (pilgrimage) agreement in 1978 enabled Arab citizens, for the first time, to carry out the requirement of Hajj and Umrah to Mecca based on Islamic laws [18].

The first Intifada, which broke out in 1987, was further proof of the relationship between political events and developments in the Arab world in general, and the Palestinian space specifically, and as affecting the political behavior of Palestinian citizens of Israel. The outbreak of the First Intifada in occupied lands led to increased protest activities among the Arabs in Israel through peaceful demonstrations in which they expressed their deep solidarity with the Palestinian people, and also collected donations and basic needs for the Palestinian people. At the same time, the escalation in the occupied lands led MK Abdulwahab Darawshe to resign from the Labor Party, which had, along with the Likud Party, formed a national unity government during the period from 1984 to 1988. Darawshe formed his own party, called the Arab Democratic Party, through which he entered elections and was elected as political representative in 1999. Moreover, during the elections to the 12th Knesset, the political parties that represented the Arab public, including the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, reiterated their solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people, and they accused the activists of Zionist parties of cooperating, being lackeys of the authorities, and believing in fantasies that only served their own personal interests.

At the height of the First Intifada, which deepened the renewed revival of the national Palestinian identity among Palestinian citizens of Israel, the regional and international communities witnessed two main events that had important implications for the Arab society in Israel. The first was the Second Gulf War, which transformed the confrontation between the Arab world and Israel into an internal conflict between the Arab states and showed the limitations and weaknesses of pan-Arab ideologies. The second was the collapse in the balance of world powers. These two events had a decisive impact on Arab citizens in Israel and created a sense of frustration among them. Therefore, it can be said that the events had a destructive impact on Arab society in Israel, and even increased the fragmentation and internal conflicts



in society, by renouncing the national direction that had characterized the previous two decades and weakening its political activity. We can see an embodiment of this in the Knesset elections in 1992, which reflected the political changes in the world and the region on Palestinian citizens in Israel through the clear decrease in voter turnout, in addition to the noticeable decrease in voter turnout for non-Zionist parties and an increase in voting for Jewish and Zionist parties. There is no need to mention that regional developments deepened the crisis among Arab citizens and clearly showed their state of “compounded marginalization” as expressed by Majid Al Haj.

The Oslo Agreements ignored the Palestinian citizens of Israel and reinforced their place on the margins of the Palestinian national movement agenda and the Palestinian and Israeli leadership. Practically, the Oslo Accords increased the exclusion, isolation, and alienation of the Arab citizens in light of their elimination from the Israeli agenda and the agenda of the Palestinian national movement at the same time. The Islamic Movement went through a political crisis and was divided into two parts: one part in the north and one in the south. It is true that, before the division of the Islamic Movement in the middle of 1990s, there had been disputes over a number of issues and topics, but it was clear that the main and core conflict was around the peace process between the PLO and Israel. At the time when the leadership of the southern branch, led by Sheikh Abdullah Nimar Darwish, had supported the Oslo process, the leadership of the northern branch had rejected the principle of settlement, and had considered the agreement to be a “betrayal”. Practically, the issue of participating in the Knesset elections in 1996 led to a clear division within the movement, leaving it in two parts. The Islamic Movement moved towards Egyptian Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi, who was considered one of the most important scholars on Islam in the second half of the twentieth century and was a jurisprudential reference for many Islamic movements as well as tens, or maybe hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. Al Qaradawi issued a fatwa that stated that, according to Islamic sharia, it was prohibited for Muslims to participate in Knesset elections because voting, or being nominated, meant recognizing Israel’s right to exist or remain on invaded lands. Sheikh Darwish refused to accept the fatwa, but the two leaders of the radical branch, Sheikh Raed Salah, and Sheikh Kamal Al-Khatib, vehemently opposed participation in the Knesset elections based on this fatwa. They claimed that the mere participation was a recognition of the legitimacy of Zionism [19].

The impact of the surrounding Arab countries was clear in the case of the Islamic Movement, as its political ideology is based on belonging to Islam, as a cultural, religious, and political space, and the Islamic Movement, in both of its branches, could be considered an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt, just like many other Islamic movements in the Arab world. The division that the local movement experienced was, at its core, related to a purely regional issue involving the political process and the resolution of the Palestinian problem. However, the division itself was based on the background of the intervention of the Arab world into the conflicts within the movement, with the fatwa by Sheikh Al Qaradawi being the decisive factor in this division.

The presence of the wider Arab surroundings was also clear in the behavior of the Islamic Movement following the Arab Spring and the political developments in its wake, as it led to the victory of Islamists in elections in Tunisia and Egypt, which aroused motivation for the movement at the local level. In the same context, the military coup that led to the fall of the elected president of Egypt and brought Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to power sparked a campaign of solidarity with the deposed president, Mohamed Morsi. It is clear that the solidarity campaign with deposed President

Morsi was a clear indicator of the harmony between the local Arab minority and its wider Arab surroundings because the Islamic Movement in Israel (especially the Northern Branch, which is more ideological) considered the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in the presidential and parliamentary elections in Egypt a factor that would strengthen its position in Arab society, even at the rational level. By the same measure, the deposition of Morsi and the fall of Muslim Brotherhood rule led to a wave of solidarity and sympathy, especially in the Northern Branch [20].

### **3. What exceeds the purely national space**

#### **3.1 Settlement and exception projections**

The political and intellectual elites of Arab society in Israel considered the process in Oslo, and the historic decision of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to accept the principle of dividing Palestine, as excluding the Arab minority in Israel from the framework of a future solution. In this regard, the establishment of the National Democratic Alliance, and the appearance of a discourse of civil and political nationhood that was drafted by Azmi Bishara, along with the later documents of the Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel, were a sort of response to the increasing feelings of besiegement among the Arab minority in Israel and its growing sense that the future settlement of the Palestinian problem would not include them. In other words, the response of the Arab minority to Oslo was to develop a political discourse that challenged the domination of Zionist ideas in Israel and that looked for intellectual and ideological alternatives that would break down Zionist rhetoric and challenge its moral and political legitimacy. The Arabs had reached the conclusion that they must focus on improving their civil status in the state of Israel and managing their struggle in Israeli society within the framework of the law and the Israeli political realities. Any consideration of the surrounding Arab countries as factors that could be relied on to change the political situation of Arabs in Israel had ended. This had become prominent as Arab countries had signed peace agreements with Israel, at the same time as negotiations were being conducted, directly or indirectly, by other Arab countries with Israel. These events showed the severity of the Arab crisis and sped up the process of focusing on the local aspect among Arabs in Israel [9]. In this regard, it should be noted that channels of communication were created by some Arab members of the Knesset after the signing of the Oslo Accords with a number of Arab countries, especially Jordan, Syria, and some of the Gulf countries. These relationships, despite being modest and of limited impact, have brought about mobilization in these countries to support local projects, like the building of the Doha Stadium in Sakhnin, for example, or the establishment of scholarships for Arab students. In addition, some Arab capitals have become destinations for visits by some of the Arab members of the Knesset. In 2010, Libya was visited by a large delegation that included dozens of political, social, and academic figures, where they met with Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi. Likewise, a former member of parliament, Azmi Bishara, was successful in building stable channels for communication with the ruling regime in Syria, and was received by the heads of the regime, Hafez and Bashar Al Assad. Recently, current MK Ahmad Tibi and former MK Jamal Zahalka carried out a historic visit to the Arab League to present a vision of the position of Arabs in Israel regarding the Jewish nation-state law recently adopted by the Israeli Knesset (Statement by the Knesset member Jamal Zahalka, September 11, 2018: <http://www.alarab.com/Article/871212>).

All of these and others represent continued attempts by the political elites to achieve a breakthrough in their isolation in a clear attempt to use Arab diplomacy to pressure Israel. It seems as though the Arab political leadership in Israel has started to realize that even though some Arab countries are becoming more open to Israel, this is not necessarily completely in the interests of Israel, and it could be used to achieve some gains, even if partial ones.

### **3.2 Cultural and social communication in light of forced isolation**

If the Oslo Accords were seen as being an abandonment of the Arab minority in Israel by the Palestinian national movement, leaving this minority alone to face its fate against Israel, the peace agreements that were signed with Egypt and Jordan specifically had, without a doubt, a positive impact on Arab society, and provided a small possibility to vent that cannot be taken lightly in the cultural, economic, and tourism contexts. Among the clearest examples of the positive effects might be the steady increase in the number of college students who study in Jordanian universities, especially in fields and majors that they cannot, or find it difficult to, study in Israeli universities, especially in the field of medicine [21]. In addition, peace with Jordan provided Arab citizens in Israel with an opportunity to take tourist trips to Jordanian hotels at prices that are affordable for them. The same applies to the situation in Egypt, and it is enough to go to travel and tourism offices during holidays and vacations to see the amount of Arab tourism from Israel to Egyptian resorts in Sharm El Sheikh and Taba, or to Jordanian resorts in Aqaba and the Dead Sea.

There is a clear cultural dimension to the interaction of the Arab citizens with the openness to the Arab world through Jordan and Egypt, and it is represented by the hunger of Arab citizens in Israel to communicate directly with the art scene in the Arab world. Moreover, there has been a recent rise in the phenomenon of organizing musical concerts for famous artists, that are primarily directed toward Arab citizens in Israel. There is also the matter of the social communication that is taking place through Jordan, between those inside Israel and those in the Palestinian diaspora, and Jordan has become something of a meeting point for relatives and families that were separated in the aftermath of the 1948 War. It is implicitly understood that the geographical proximity of Jordan is an important factor in this rush toward the surrounding Arab world, as the Arab citizens in Israel see Jordan as a place to vent and escape their state of isolation, suffocation, discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion that follow Arabs inside the Hebrew state [22]. Cultural communication with Arab states in the Persian Gulf is another benefit stemming from the Oslo Accords and the partial normalization of ties between Israel and a number of monarchies in the Gulf, especially Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

As mentioned above, relationships between Palestinians in Israel and the Arab world can be seen, in recent years, in the cultural and artistic milieu. Beirut has become a destination for youth, artists, intellectuals, and academics who travel to the city to attend conferences, programs, and various cultural events. Arab society in Israel does not hesitate to use the means available to them to break through the siege and isolation that they were thrown into in 1948. Arab citizens in Israel are trying to breach the cultural barrier in an attempt to enter an alternative cultural space that expresses their identity and internal and cultural worlds, considering their exclusion from the Israeli agenda. They are doing this through the development of cultural, technical, and media relations. Many Arab academics are fellows in various research centers in the Arab world, and many journalists regularly write columns in important

and prestigious newspapers that are published in the Arab world. In the past 2 years, a number of young men have participated in television programs that are broadcast from Beirut. The attempts by Arab intellectuals and artists inside Israel to communicate with the Arab world are further evidence of the engagement between local Arab society and its Arab surroundings, and it is also evidence of the Arab society's diligent attempts to break through the wall of isolation and alienation and become engaged with the larger Arab world.

The political and cultural changes in the Arab region have affected, and are still affecting, the mood, attitudes, perceptions, awareness, and political behavior of Arab citizens in Israel, as they are influenced by and responding to changes and transformations in the Arab space and translating them into political activity. It has also been possible to use the Arab surroundings to create changes in the realities of Arabs inside Israel, as has been the case with the Arab Druze.

The social communications project was launched by the intellectual, Dr. Azmi Bishara, at the beginning of the 2000s, and it made a unique effort to break through the political isolation that had been imposed by Israel on the Druze over previous decades since the link between Druze and other Druze in Syria and Lebanon had been cut off since the Nakba in 1948. Even though some links had developed after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, these had been limited to the social, familial, and religious aspects, with the exclusion (to the point of prohibiting) of discussion of political issues. The official religious leadership of the Druze in Israel had politicized religion to adapt the members of the Druze community to Israeli politics, and in the name of religion, they prohibited any discussion of politics. What was new in the social communications project was that it was a creative effort to dismantle the walls of isolation by creating a state of social and political communications with Druze in Syria and Lebanon, who were always known for their nationalistic and pan-Arab tendencies. What was more important than this, however, was that, for the first time, a large number of Druze religious men were involved in the social communications project under the umbrella of resisting forced conscription and returning the Druze to their Arab affiliations, an affiliation that Israel has always tried to discourage with the compliance of Druze leaders, military conscription, and finally, with the education program of Druzification that inspired animosity towards the surrounding area. The tangible presence of religious men in the social communications project caused a breakthrough in the monopoly of official religious leaders, who were always in line with the politics of the authorities as they had always expressed their loyalty as a way to avoid participating in politics, service to the group's civic interests, and an embodiment of the position of the religious community. The social communications project proved that there was no consensus among religious leaders and scholars about taking a position of blind loyalty and that there was a sizeable component who was ready to take up positions that were different from those taken by the authorities. Additionally, there was the fear by the official religious leadership, it seems, of the appearance of alternative leadership under the umbrella of a national project, especially since the communications committee did not conceal its resentment of the fact that the Druze had remained "a tribe at the disposal of the tribal leader." (Statement issued by the Druze Communication Committee, October 2005. Contained in the author's archives).

The warm relations that were widespread during this stage, between the Lebanese Druze leader, Waleed Jumblatt, and the Baathist regime in Syria, contributed to support for the communications project. In 2001, in Amman, Jordan, a conference was held and Druze figures and groups from Lebanon that were affiliated with the

pan-Arab line also attended. This conference was sponsored by Jumblatt, and there were also Druze delegations from Galilee and Carmel, and the conference resulted in national-minded decisions being made that were not limited to just a rejection of mandatory army service imposed on the Druze. The conference also denounced the phenomenon of non-Druze Arabs volunteering in the Israeli Army (Al Wasat, 514th Edition, December 3, 2001, pg. 26).

The social communications project created a new dynamic for the organization of a protest movement among the Druze, and its most prominent features were the appearance of protest organizations that reiterated the national and Arab identities of the Druze and tried to uncover the injustices that were affecting the Druze despite their service in the military and security agencies. The first of these organizations was the Mithaq al-Marufiyen al-Ahrar (The Charter of the Free Druze). Which as organically linked with the National Democratic Alliance (the Balad Party) and the communications project.

### 3.3 The “Arab Spring”

The “Arab Spring” revived the debate on the impact of the surrounding Arab states, and this became clear with the appearance of political and intellectual divisions in local Arab society at the level of intellectuals, the political parties, and the public. Specifically, this division has referred to the ongoing war in Syria. Despite the fact that this rhetoric has not had an impact on what was happening in the Arab region, its existence represents the ultimate harmony between the two sides. What is more important is that it shows the significant internalization among the Arab minority of being part and parcel of the Arab surroundings [20].

The “Arab Spring”, at its start and during its first stages, created unrivaled enthusiasm in Arab society in Israel, and this was despite the absence of the Palestinian issue and the conflict against Israel on its agenda. This enthusiasm led to the hopes that it would be the beginning of democracy and liberalism in the Arab world, and what this would mean as a way of taking the air out of democratic-elitist Israeli rhetoric and challenging Zionist rhetoric which compares the conditions of Arabs in Israel and the miserable conditions of Arabs in the surrounding Arab world.

With the expanding revolutionary environment in the Arab world, first moving to Libya and then to Yemen and Syria, hopes were undermined by foreign intervention and the militarization of peaceful protests, turning some into civil wars that are still going on today. Still, Amal Jamal believes that the revolutionary environment in the Arab world inspired the Arab Palestinian minority and affected its positions, and political behavior [20].

It is clear that there are differences in the positions of political parties and different views on the revolutionary situation in the Arab world. At a time when the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) took a position aligned with the Baath regime in Syria, the Islamic Movement and the National Democratic Alliance (Balad) took a stance supporting the revolution. The differing positions towards the “Arab Spring” could be seen clearly among Arab Palestinian intellectuals in Palestine with discussions, and intellectual and political debates in order to understand the political and intellectual dimensions accompanying developments in the Arab world. In addition, the attempt to explore the themes that came up with the “Arab Spring” at the level of political behavior uncovers forms of political activities and behaviors at both the local and national levels and confirms the civil discourse has overcome nationalistic discourse, in a clear return to the fragmentation and collapse that was

widespread in the Arab surroundings. This was a clear expression of the feeling of despair and frustration with these surroundings, meaning that the decrease in nationalistic discourse in the Arab surroundings and the increasing civic discourse had an impact on Arab conditions in Israel. In light of the fragmentation and despair at the “cultural and historical depths” represented by the Arab surroundings, it appeared that the best way to move forward for Arab citizens was to resort to civil discourse and try to oppose the Jewishness of the state through full and equal citizenship. It remains that the state of emphasizing the civil dimension of the public discourse among the Arab public and limiting it to local contexts is a live and constant example of the extent of the effect that the Arab surroundings have on the Arab society in Israel. This surrounding has been always seen by Arab society in Israel as deeper cultural and existential anchor. When this surrounding area relapsed, the response of the Arab society in Israel was identical to its surroundings in its discourse and behavior towards the state.

#### **4. The institutionalization of the clans in the wake of the “Arab Spring”**

Arab local elections have always carried more importance than national elections in Israel. Local government is not only regarded as a primary economic resource and source of income and employment but also constitutes a pillar of social and political prestige in the local political tradition in light of the exclusion of the political parties from majority Jewish politics.

2013 witnessed the first elections for local authorities, after the eruption of the “Arab Spring”. This may be called the clan-dominated period. Herein, clanism not only held ground but also unapologetically inserted itself into the political arena. The 2013 Arab local authority elections were also marked by great competition, with 610 lists contesting 620 mandates (one list to every mandate) and 228 candidates (four in every community on average). A conspicuous feature of the municipal elections was the strengthening of the coalition and clan frameworks and the waning of the ideological frameworks. The latter was exemplified in the Islamic movement’s participation in the elections in Um Al-Fahm, its traditional stronghold, and the southern faction’s decision to stand on a small scale. Although Balad proposed candidates for the local elections, it allowed them to stand independently; (Haneen Zoabi stood in Nazareth on a local list, former MK and Balad chairperson Wasel Taha adopting the same approach, and several other members of the political bureau and Balad’s central committee standing independently). Despite the decline in voting percentages in comparison with earlier local elections, the average general voting rate stood at 85%. The clan lists won 85% of the seats—also greater than in previous elections. 82% of all the local authority heads elected that year, however, were party affiliated. Hadash—traditionally the dominant party—lost some of the central communities it had controlled for a long period, Nazareth (the largest city in Israel and Hadash’s stronghold) standing out in particular, together with other important places, such as Arraba, Deir Hanna. The results of the 2013 elections thus indicate a continuation of the trend towards the strengthening of the clan system and weakening of the power of the party lists and candidates.

The 2013 municipal elections were the first sign of what was happening in the Arab space, the internal arena not witnessing any changes, developments, or constitutive events capable of explaining the abrupt decline in the political parties’ status in the local arena. While the Hadash candidates were defeated in its important

strongholds in the al-Batuf region—Deir Hanna, Araba, Sakhnin, Shefar'am, al-Rina, and the principal municipal stronghold of Nazareth—the Islamic movement barely participated, withdrawing from its traditional bastion of Umm al-Fahm, Kfar Qassem, Kfar Bara, etc. The candidates that stood on behalf of Balad, such as Wasil Taha, could not defeat their rivals in the party and clan stronghold [23]. This trend, of the strengthening of clan and independent at the expense of the party candidates, accords with voting trends. According to a survey conducted by the Mada al-Carmel Center, 68.4% of Arab citizens vote for family relatives in mayoral elections, 72.8% in council elections. This support for clan frameworks and preference of clan and family over all other frameworks corresponds to some extent with the prevailing trend in the Arab Middle East in favor of sub-state over state frameworks.

Despite the decline of the Islamic movement, Hadash was the primary loser in the 2013 elections. Ayman Odeh, Hadash's secretary, openly acknowledged that the party had suffered a serious setback at the expense of what he identified as the Establishment, clanism, and sectarianism. Unsurprisingly, in his opinion this was due to the State and security forces, which he maintains have devoted themselves since the establishment of the State to deepening internal Arab divisions [24]. Odeh regards the downturn in the parties' status as the root of the global political collapse of ideology and weakening of the party framework—a phenomenon Israeli society in general and Arab society in Israel, in particular, have not escaped.

Although Arab scholars in Israel point to a weakening of the parties in favor of clan frameworks, especially over the past two decades, neither academics nor politicians adduce any direct or indirect connection between clan dominance over the internal arena and events in the Arab world ([25], p. 104). The failure of revolutionary ideologies on the one hand and the modern state's inability to solve the chronic Arab civil issues on the other has turned clanism, communality, and ethnicity into realistic alternatives to revolutionary ideologies, institutional politics, political parties, and national discourse.

The clanization characteristic of the 2018 municipal elections assumed four prominent forms:

- a. The first and most obvious was the significant decline in the status of the ideological parties, some of which dropped to 13% in the local councils—that is, 110 seats out of 480 seats across the Arab sector.
- b. The almost complete absence of female representation as council heads—despite close to 22 women being elected to the municipal councils and local authorities.
- c. 24% of all elected heads of authorities identified or were affiliated with a party—although party affiliation does not necessarily negate affiliation or clan background.
- d. The primaries within the family or clan.

The novel feature of the 2018 elections lies in the fact that the candidates saw no need for a modern political or partisan framework, clanization no longer being perceived as an unsustainable political process in and of itself. On the contrary: since the outbreak of the "Arab Spring," clanism has established itself as a viable political structure ([26], pp. 21–23). In this spirit, Said Zeedani published an article entitled "And the Voice of the Tribe remains that of the Hegmon." In the most recent election,

while businessmen and the educated replaced the traditional respected local leaders, this process was primarily channeled through the hamula, which served as both a political framework and a means of political mobilization ([27], p. 25). The establishment of the hamula as an independent political framework reflected a trend that has become increasingly prominent since the outbreak of the “Arab Spring” uprisings. Although the primaries are held before the election, they have become an integral part of local elections in Arab society. While the clans were present and powerful even before the “Arab Spring,” the political parties created mechanisms to come to terms with them, the “Arab Spring”—which *inter alia* prompted the collapse of the ideological party system and the national discourse—highlighted sub-state frameworks as identity foci and a sense of belonging and solidarity for individuals helpless in the face of the State. Against this background, and as part of engagement with the space, clanization intensified in Arab society, channeled by the educated, middle class, and businessmen as an authentic, uncomplicated, accessible phenomenon free of any political discourse. Hereby, the maximalization of the local and accessible became more effective than imported ideologies imposed from above.

There is a consensus among observers and political factors that the 2018 elections knew two greatest trends, which complement each other. The first is the significant retreat of the political and principled-ideological discourse from the internal political arena of Arab society, while the second trend, which complements its predecessor, is the tribalization of the lists running in the elections. According to Adv. Awad Abd al-Fatah, previous secretary general of Balad, the disappearance of the ideological parties from the local arena only feeds the social, tribal, and even ethnic polarization. Morsi Abu Mokh, on the other hand, claims that there are new variations of tribalization, such as two candidates running from the same family. This phenomenon is repeated in a number of locations. Different candidates from the same family are not a development that will weaken the centrality of the extended family, on the contrary, running within the family only further establishes it as a political-normative framework for all intents and purposes. The withdrawal of the ideological parties is not a consequence of the “Arab Spring,” nor is the tribalization of intra-Arab politics in Israel. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the uprisings of the “Arab Spring” undermined the right of all the institutional and normative frameworks in the Arab space to exist, which had parallel echoes in Arab society itself [28].

Despite the modernization of Arab society in Israel, clanism never disappeared from Arab society in Israel—certainly not from the social landscape. Rather than leading to the formation of sub-State frameworks, the “Arab Spring” and its crumbling effect have reinforced the former as sub-States structure in light of the State’s failure to fulfill its central function. It has also signaled the failure of all the collective ideologies and ruling elites. The emergence of these sub-State frameworks has further been regarded as an alternative to official, institutional, and collective State bodies. Its greatest impact has been in the demonstrativeness and independent stance of a political clanism that feels no need to justify itself or accommodate itself to broader, more modern frameworks such as partyism or nationalism. In the wake of the “Arab Spring,” political clanism has begun presenting itself unapologetically on the basis of two moral and public patterns: the failure of the collective frameworks as a whole and in the name of authenticity and connection with social reality. The “Arab Spring” therefore neither gave rise to nor begot clanism. Its biggest impact has rather been clan demonstrativeness and the jettison of any need for accommodation, adaptation, or justification. As the last two elections have demonstrated, the growth in the clans’ power is a consequence of failure and alternativism rather than their inherent inner strength.



## 5. Conclusion

Until recent years, the Arab minority in Israel was completely absent from the concerns of their surroundings in the Arab world, despite the fact that the Arab surroundings have maintained a strong presence in forming the political consciousness and intellectual and ideological tendencies in Israeli Arab society for the past 70 years. During the period of the Arab-Israeli conflict, until the 1980s, Arab states did not try to use the Arab minority in their interest, nor did they consider this minority a trump card in the conflict. Despite this, it can be accurately said that Arab society in Israel considered itself a part of the Arab surroundings in every sense of the word, and it still sees its existence as a social, existential, and cultural extension of these Arab surroundings. This communicative situation, at the level of consciousness and sentiments, has cast a shadow on the relationships and positions of Arab citizens in the state, and there have always been views towards the Arab surroundings as a source of moral strength and intellectual inspiration. All of the intellectual and ideological transformations that the Arab world has experienced have reflected on the conditions of Arabs in Israel, starting with pan-Arabism, following through to the reframing of national identities, and ending with the extension of Islamism and restoring pre-state frameworks against the backdrop of the logic of fragmentation that was brought about by the "Arab Spring". While certain political elites believed, the Oslo process and the continuing conditions of normalization were a blockade against them, local Arab society, through its political elites, and cultural, artistic, and media activities, has viewed normalization as a way for them to vent and an opportunity for them to break through the isolation of Arab society.

There is no doubt that the "Arab Spring" revolutions had negative impacts on morale in the public sphere in Arab society in Israel, but at the same time, they strengthened this society's belief in the importance of developing a new political discourse that did not ignore pan-Arab affiliation and one that actually keeps collective civil rights at its core. Finally, I would like to point out that the relationship between Arab society and the state, and this society's readings into the status of this relationship, have always been connected with the general situation in the Arab surroundings, and this is something that cannot be ignored, as it has become an influencing factor in the behaviors of local Arab society in recent years.

The United Arab List's political campaign and joining of the government coalition undoubtedly signify a watershed in Arab politics in Israel and Arab society's attitude towards the State alike. Giving local interests prominence, the campaign also stressed the need for political realism in regard to the State while putting the national discourse and the Palestinian cause on a back burner. The very fact that an Arab party joined a government coalition set a historical precedent, an Arab party formally becoming an important part of an Israeli government for the first time in Israeli politics. Mansour Abbas' speeches favoring the civil over the national discourse and deliberate downplaying of the Palestinian issue and National Law that led to this circumstance signal a new trend in Arab politics, evincing the entrenchment of the civil school within Arab society in Israel. This is consistent with the public discourse in Arab society in Israel, public opinion polls, the steep rise in the numbers volunteering for national and civic service, recruitment to the police, and government investment in Arab society, etc. In a certain sense, the United Arab List's political direction is far more significant than has been recognized, the very willingness of an Islamic movement in Israel to take such a pioneering step demonstrates the power the civil discourse has gained in Arab society in Israel. Representing the first cracks in the

hegemony of the national protest discourse, this orientation, without doubt, reflects the influence of the “Arab Spring” and its prioritization of civil over ideological issues.

In recent decades, Arab society in Israel has experienced far-reaching contradictory changes. Along with developments in the field of education and the modernization of traditional Arab society, both clanism and crime have burgeoned, making social characterization difficult. The influence of the “Arab Spring” on Arab society in Israel reinforces these conflicting trends: while the Arab public is growing increasingly alienated under the influence of the Jewish nation-state law, the “Arab Spring” has deepened frustration with the Arab space and heightened the sense of loneliness and need to focus on localism. These circumstances call for an integrative theory to describe and explain the political and social existence of Arab society in Israel against the backdrop of the “Arab Spring.”


## **Author details**

Yusri Khaizran  
Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education, Israel

\*Address all correspondence to: [yusri.khaizran@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:yusri.khaizran@mail.huji.ac.il)

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## Chapter 9

# Indigenous Autonomy and Self-Determination in International Forest Financing Strategy: A Case Study from the Indigenous Bribri People of Costa Rica

*Britney Villhauer*

### Abstract

The efforts to protect the global environment, in principle, reflect Indigenous priorities through an appropriate cosmological perspective. However, international forest financing strategies through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are solely negotiated and agreed upon through state powers and governments, with nothing more than a symbolic gesture toward the essentiality of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. The autonomy of Indigenous Peoples to negotiate their own financing models and forest conservation strategies are neglected in these international conventions, and are consequently relegated to the impulse of national governments. Despite Costa Rica's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the ratification of the International Labor Organization's Convention 169, and the passing of the 1977 Indigenous Law legally demarcating Indigenous territories in Costa Rica, the failure to recognize Indigenous autonomy and self-determination is a blight on Costa Rica's record. My research in one of the Indigenous Bribri territories in Costa Rica demonstrates that while international forest financing strategies are a contemporary hot topic and pertinent issue of international diplomacy, it is essential that Costa Rica and other nations codify Indigenous autonomy and self-determination within these strategy developments for climate change mitigation.

**Keywords:** the right to self-determination, indigenous autonomy, international Forest financing strategy, consultation, UNFCCC, Costa Rica, REDD+

### 1. Introduction

Costa Rica has been lauded globally as an example in environmental sustainability and regionally as a leader in the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

However, a fragile legal framework around the rights of Indigenous Peoples has led to neocolonial manipulation and government impunity in several essential areas, including the rights to autonomy and self-determination.

While autonomy is not specifically defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), self-determination is specifically outlined in Article 3, stating that “By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” [1]. However, the UNDRIP is not a legally binding convention that holds Costa Rica accountable to these rights. Subsequently, as Costa Rica negotiates international forest financing strategy, it is defaulting to lower standards of consultation and consent, which Costa Rica is legally required to uphold through the International Labor Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169 [2]. Conversely, Indigenous People throughout the Americas are demanding higher standards of full autonomy for their Peoples.

My research for my 2020 dissertation took place in close collaboration with an Indigenous Bribri community with whom I have sustained a very close relationship of trust for more than a decade. Developing mutuality, reciprocity, and connecting to place are essential in Indigenous research methodologies and were the foundations for my research [3, 4]. Throughout my writing, I will refer to Juanita Sánchez, an Indigenous elder and my main Indigenous research collaborator, but more importantly, someone with whom I have developed a familial relationship of trust. All interviews in the communities were done in collaboration with Juanita to maintain the essential foundation of relationships of trust in Indigenous research methodology.

Combining Indigenous research methodology with scientific method in environmental conservation and international climate change mitigation policies is difficult work, because non-scientific knowledge is often not recognized as robust data and is therefore marginalized or excluded. One of my objectives in my research was to standardize the recognition of alternative Indigenous epistemological approaches in order to decolonize the sphere of international environmental policies. This in itself is an exercise of recognizing Indigenous autonomy within environmental negotiations.

## **2. Case study context**

The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, but specific rights of Indigenous Peoples were not discussed until the 1970s and the UNDRIP was not adopted by the United Nations assembly until 2007. However, despite the progress achieved with the UNDRIP to facilitate Costa Rican recognition of Indigenous rights, the impact of the declaration is still undermined by colonial powers as “the declaration recognises Indigenous Peoples’ inherent sovereign rights to their lands but such rights cannot be exercised if they infringe on the rights of the nation state” [5]. In other words, the manifestation of true Indigenous self-determination is undermined in a thinly disguised colonial rule. And the UNDRIP does not serve as a legally binding document, so accountability to its articles holds no legal consequences for the government of Costa Rica. Costa Rica did, however, ratify the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, in 1993 [2], which is a legally binding agreement. This provides some legal accountability to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples in Article 16 [2], but not to full autonomy.

The Indigenous territories of Costa Rica were legally established by the Indigenous Law in 1977 [6]. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity outlines 3344 square kilometers, made up of 24 Indigenous territories (5.9% of the country), with 8 different Indigenous groups present [7]. The largest of these are the Bribri and Cabécar groups [8]. It is of note, however, that in the 2000 census, only 1 out of every 10 hectares in Indigenous territories was in conformity with the law, with Costa Rica's Office of the Ombudsman noting 5 years later that no steps had been taken to recover Indigenous lands. The Ombudsman stated once again in June 2015 that the government had still not recovered any of the land in the 24 Indigenous territories [9]. Indigenous People have not historically been respected by or represented by the Costa Rican government. The Indigenous People did not even gain the right to vote in Costa Rica until 1994, after they received their national IDs in 1992 [10]. Additionally, the government-instituted Integral Development Associations (ADIs) that are the officially recognized authorities of each territory are also perceived by many as being neocolonial impositions that are not appropriate in the Indigenous communities [9].

It is often the state powers charged with legally guaranteeing Indigenous rights that systematically violate the same rights. The largest and most significant Indigenous contribution to the construction of Indigenous rights in Costa Rica has been the proposition of the Bill for Autonomous Development of Indigenous Peoples [11]. It is very telling, however, that even 20 years after the Bill was originally introduced in Congress, there has been no movement towards constitutional recognition of Indigenous rights [9]. Despite Costa Rica's theoretical commitment to the rights of Indigenous People, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon met with 36 Indigenous leaders in Costa Rica to discuss the state's failure to enforce laws to protect them and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) had to intervene in Costa Rica in 2015 due to violence against the territories [12, 13].

The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses 2011 census estimates an Indigenous population of 48,500 in Costa Rica. There are 8 Indigenous groups in Costa Rica, including the Bribri People, and 24 Indigenous territories, including 4 Bribri territories [14]. Although territories are legally outlined by the Indigenous Law of 1977 [6], an alarming 43% of the territorial lands are in the hands of non-Indigenous People [15]. My research was done in one of the four Bribri territories, the KéköLdi Territory, where non-Indigenous People make up 70.3% of the population of the KéköLdi territory [16]. This is the highest rate of land usurpation of any Indigenous territory in Costa Rica. This governmental impunity and disorder plague the territory in several ways, including in cultural identity, self-determination, and autonomy.

### **3. REDD+**

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) is an international forest financing strategy currently in development in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) through the yearly Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings. In REDD+, countries and private companies pay to conserve forest in their name, as a type of payment for environmental services approach. This method was first proposed by Costa Rica in the COP-11 meeting in 2005 and with the creation of UNDRIP in 2007, discussions of protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples in this strategy were first considered in the COP-13 in 2007 [17].

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility was created in 2008 to help develop policies to implement REDD+, including a grant for the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) to show that a country is ready to implement REDD+, with the consent and participation of all stakeholders, including Indigenous People.

Concerns of abuses of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as aspirations to codify Indigenous Rights in legally binding contracts through REDD+, have been under constant negotiation since then, both on the national and international levels. Social safeguards and guidelines were created in 2010, swiftly followed by the denunciation of REDD+ as “the biggest land grab of all time” in 2011 [18]. The Indigenous advocacy group, Guardians of the Forest, helped to achieve the creation of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples platform in 2017 to advocate for Indigenous rights in the UNFCCC. The regional program of REDD/CCAD/GIZ was created to help improve the participation of Indigenous stakeholders by facilitating intersectional dialog [19]. The Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) and the German Technical Cooperation (GIZ in its German acronym) helped to link important actors in developing the National Strategy for REDD+ in Costa Rica. The Indigenous Peoples’ demands for “legal recognition of their property rights over the land, the recognition of the rights to self-determination and autonomy, and the right to FPIC” are highlighted as concerns [19].

In Costa Rica, specifically, several institutions joined together to create the consultation mechanism with Indigenous cultural mediators [20, 21] to satisfy the R-PP [22]. The protection of Indigenous stakeholders in REDD+ through the safeguards of transparency, respect to traditional Indigenous knowledges, and participation was highlighted as a success by the 2015 report by the Costa Rican National Forestry Financing Fund (FONAFIFO) and Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) [23]. This, however, is contested with the declaration by the Bribri people banning REDD+ from their territories and will be discussed in the next section.

The final stages of negotiating the National REDD+ Strategy continued in July 2017, with Edgar Gutiérrez of MINAE celebrating the success of the design and endorsement by Indigenous leaders. The Indigenous Chapter of the National Strategy addresses five Special Indigenous Themes [24], however the application of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge towards decolonization of REDD+ is still greatly lacking. While the government celebrates a successful REDD+ negotiation process respecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, many Indigenous People decry the neocolonial manipulation in settling on consultation, rather than true autonomy and self-determination [25]. Dine’/Dakota Indigenous leader Tom Goldtooth says that this same logic dominates the notion of carbon trading and REDD+ to justify this “new wave of colonialization and privatization of nature” [26].

#### **4. Indigenous consultation mechanism**

The “Consulta Indígena” is a consultation mechanism developed in Costa Rica to fulfill the requirement of FPIC, as outlined in Article 10 of the UNDRIP [1] and Article 6 Convention 169 [2]. Through a series of local, regional, and national meetings, the official Indigenous Consultation Mechanism was created and eventually signed in March, 2018 [27]. This is a legal framework for officially seeking consent for any public or private projects that would affect Indigenous territories.

My personal observations of the Indigenous Consultation Mechanism in Costa Rica illustrate an inefficient satisfaction of the right to FPIC. While participating



in the consultation mechanism, I have observed clear power differences among the Costa Rican State and Indigenous People. In September, 2017, I had the opportunity to participate in and observe the Consulta Indígena in the KéköLdi territory. The 45 attendees (out of the approximately 300 residents of the territory) were unexpectedly summoned to make a vote for the delegates that would represent the territory at the national meeting in the month to follow. Once the meeting had ended and we had returned to the house, Juanita and I critically discussed the nature of the Consulta Indígena as a mechanism creating the façade of order and due process where in actuality the execution is much more haphazard and destructive.

However, with these consultation workshop meetings instigated in the communities throughout the process of codifying the Executive Order N° 40,932-MP-MJP in 2018 [27], Indigenous Peoples in the territories began to engage the legal system in ways they had never before. To take control and practice their right to self-determination within the sphere of environmental policies, Indigenous Peoples from multiple territories came together to develop their own Indigenous forest financing proposal. Through the over 150 workshops put on by FONAFIFO and MINAE, better organizational understanding was made between the participating groups and many ideas and proposals were shared [28]. This workshop mechanism utilized with FONAFIFO similarly functions as a sort of precursor for the cultural mediators program to be utilized with the REDD+ negotiations (discussed in the next section). This is also a demonstration of an attempt to achieve FPIC through a method of consultation, which also serves as a precursor to the Indigenous Consultation Mechanism, discussed in the next section.

## **5. Cultural mediators program**

Despite significant progress in Costa Rica with developing a national Indigenous Consultation Mechanism, the global concerns over violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the implementation of the REDD+ strategy (outlined in Section 3) led the National REDD+ Strategy in Costa Rica to partner with FONAFIFO to develop its own, more robust, consultation strategy for REDD+ implementation, utilizing a cultural mediators approach [20]. The Cultural Mediators Program (CMP) was developed and piloted by the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center and the Bribri-Cabécar Indigenous Network in the Talamanca region in 2012 and later scaled-up to function on a national level [20]. The standards set in the CMP exceed the eventual Executive Order passed in 2018 [27], with Indigenous leaders in each territory familiar with cultural values, cosmovision, and language as well as scientific understanding of the forest financing strategy in climate change mitigation [29]. These cultural mediators helped members of the communities engage in the policy negotiations in several workshops. In my research, I was able to sit in on these workshops and observe the process of translating not only the language of the REDD+ strategy to Indigenous languages but also applying the Indigenous cosmovision to conceptualize the efforts of this strategy. Participants in the workshops gave feedback and contributed to the development of an entirely separate chapter within the National REDD+ Strategy specifically for Indigenous Peoples.

Through the CMP, Costa Rica eventually arrived at a final draft of an Indigenous Chapter for the National REDD+ Strategy. This chapter highlights the important Special Indigenous Themes of 1. land tenure/healing, 2. Indigenous payments for environmental services, 3. protected areas/Indigenous territories, 4. integration of Indigenous cosmovision, and 5. participatory monitoring [24]. The Costa Rican

government has repeatedly hailed the CMP as a resounding success in The Framework for Environmental and Social Management [30], on a global stage at the Pre-COP side event on October 9, 2019, and finally the presentation of the report Results of the Consultation Process: Systematization of Completion of FPIC [31]. The principal achievements of the CMP being celebrated include the observance of the principles of free, prior and informed consent and self-determination [31].

The CMP was created to comply with the ILO Convention 169 by “respecting the special importance that the culture and spiritual values of the Indigenous People have in relation to their land and territories” and “respecting Indigenous cosmovision” [30]. However, mention of culture and spiritual values and Indigenous cosmovision are notably absent in the above successes of the CMP listed in the Framework for Environmental and Social Management [30] and the Results of the Consultation Process: Systematization of Completion of FPIC [31]. In fact, many Bribri People are still very alarmed at the potential implementation of REDD+ in the territories, despite the public narrative of informed consent through the cultural mediators process.

On July 1st, 2016, the Bribri Indigenous People submitted to their local government a declaration with more than 300 signatures of Bribri people in 15 communities rejecting REDD+ [25]. This is a clear contradiction to the consent that the government claims to be receiving from the Indigenous People, further emphasizing the need to distinguish between consent, consultation, and autonomy. The issues raised in the declaration is that the Bribri People had not been consulted appropriately and that the restrictions placed on forest use through REDD+ would prohibit traditional customary usage of the forest for food, medicine, and other resources. Declaring that the Indigenous Peoples had not been consulted anytime within the 8 years since the beginning of the REDD+ proposal is very problematic if the government touts the success of their innovative consultation mechanism exercised for REDD+ in 2014. It is clear that the Cultural Mediators Program implemented in Costa Rica to develop the Indigenous chapter of the National REDD+ Strategy is not fully successful in achieving consent, much less recognition of Indigenous autonomy and self-determination.

## **6. Indigenous autonomy and self-determination**

I have outlined Costa Rica’s relatively robust legal framework in regards to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the Executive Order for an Indigenous Consultation Mechanism and the Cultural Mediators Program for the development of the REDD+ forest financing strategy. However, failure to uphold these legal standards and rampant government impunity are great cause for concern, causing the IACHR to denounce the situation in Costa Rica in 2015. The Costa Rican government holds longstanding debts to the eight Indigenous People groups of Costa Rica. Having passed the Indigenous law of 1977, signed the rights frameworks of the UNDRIP [1], ratified the Convention 169 [2], and passed an official consultation mechanism to respect the Indigenous right of free, prior, and informed consent in 2018 [27], Costa Rica appears to set an exceptional example of respecting Indigenous rights and identity. However, the lived experience of the Indigenous People, as told to me by Bribri research participants, shines a light on the vast impunity and incompleteness of the aforementioned policies.

Even the consultation mechanisms designed to protect Indigenous rights have been critiqued as mechanisms of manipulation masquerading as Indigenous consent [20]. My conversations in the territory, and with other Indigenous People outside of the territory, held countless denunciations of the Costa Rican institutions to fulfill

their promises. Even institutions created specifically to protect or advocate for the Indigenous People appear to be ineffective in my observations, including the National Commission of Indigenous Affairs (CONAI), the Public Prosecutor for Indigenous Issues, the Rural Development Institute, and in some cases the local ADIs under the National Directorate of Community Development [32, 33]. These legal apparatuses to achieve FPIC from the Indigenous territories to engage in international REDD+ negotiations have been denounced by Indigenous leaders as facades of consultation, rather than true Indigenous autonomy and self-determination.

The systemic lack of accountability of the institutions mentioned above towards the Indigenous populations in Costa Rica represent egregious injustices in their own right, but it is even more concerning for conservationists when we consider the impact these impunities have on the forests that become unprotected when the law is not applied. It has been shown that land tenure rights for Indigenous People support conservation, prevent deforestation, and protect biodiversity [34, 35]. If the goal of REDD+ is to reduce emissions from deforestation, it would appear that Indigenous land tenure rights should be a top priority within the policy. However, REDD+ does not demonstrate any increased institutional accountability to fulfill governmental responsibilities towards Indigenous territories. In fact, the income gained through REDD+ payments are intended to replace the governments' accountability to indemnify land occupied by non-Indigenous People, as the minister of the Environmental Carlos Manuel Rodrigues told me at the Pre-COP 25 [36].

Scholars who seek to contribute to the decolonization of environmental policies typically work through this Western rights framework, and lack a decolonization of their own rights conceptualizations. Many marginalized groups come to the UNFCCC in search of greater equality and representation of their rights in development and self-determination, however, as many scholars note, these rights are often unrecognized [15, 37]. The necessity to decolonize rights conversations as a prerequisite to decolonization of environmental policy becomes evident. Furthermore, it is essential that Costa Rica and other nations respect Indigenous autonomy and self-determination in the development of climate change-mitigation strategies such as REDD+.

## **7. Conclusions**

Without a legally binding commitment to autonomy and self-determination, as with the Bill for Autonomous Development of Indigenous Peoples [11], other consultation mechanisms serve as tokenism or a façade of autonomy while working within a neocolonial framework. Diversity of opinions on whether the government should intervene more on behalf of the well-being of the community or withhold intervention in recognition of Indigenous autonomy is up to the Indigenous Peoples themselves to determine, precisely in recognition of their own self-determination. International forest financing strategies such as REDD+ have the potential to contribute to the legal codification of Indigenous Autonomy and Self-Determination, but as it stands currently in Costa Rica, the REDD+ strategy fails to do so.

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### **Conflict of interests**

There were no financial or non-financial interests directly or indirectly related to this research.

### **Statements/declarations**

I upheld the ethics standards of the University for Peace, National Costa Rican protocols, the Indigenous Ethics Review Board of the KéköLdi territory (ADI), and the traditional customs of Indigenous participants. If and when discrepancies arose, I defaulted to the guidance of my Indigenous family as to what is truly appropriate in protecting the well-being of the Indigenous Peoples. I maintained ongoing informed consent with all research participants and collaborators.


### **Author details**

Britney Villhauer  
University for Peace, San José, Costa Rica

\*Address all correspondence to: [bvillhauer@doctorate.upeace.org](mailto:bvillhauer@doctorate.upeace.org)

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## Chapter 10

# Munduruku Cosmopolitics and the Struggle for Life

*Bárbara do Nascimento Dias*

### Abstract

The mythical narratives of the Munduruku people in the Tapajós region are permeated by metamorphic transformations from humans to nonhuman beings into vegetables, animals, or spirits. Today, while these beings live as other forms in the world they still have an agency in the lives of humans and can intervene directly in the social life of the villages. The Munduruku strategies used to negotiate with these beings undergo ritualized actions that are also part of everyday life. Most of these actions are intended to bring joy to the spirits, who in return provide them with an abundance of food from the fields, hunt, and fish. This cosmopolitical relationship with these beings, however, is today threatened in the face of logging and mining operations that are advancing on indigenous lands. The pursuit of the defense and demarcation of the territory, in this sense, is intrinsically linked to the sacred places and to nonhuman beings that help to direct the strategies of struggle and political resistance. Thus, the war that the Munduruku people face is to protect the multiple worlds or existing plans, the multiple histories and scenarios where they live.

**Keywords:** munduruku, cosmopolitics resistances, territory, construction of the world, struggle for life

### 1. Introduction

For the Munduruku people, as for many Amerindian peoples, the world—or the worlds—is inhabited by various human and nonhuman beings. To relate to the forest, to the rivers, and to the territory also implies relating to these beings, for they are subjects whose agency influences the world of the living. In this same sense, actions carried out in the world of “humans” also have the capacity to interfere in the lives of these other beings, because those are worlds that coexist and intertwine.

Thus, for the Munduruku to be able to relate without noise with the spirits of the ancients, with the mothers of the forest, of the game, and of the fish, they must negotiate conviviality by means of respectful exchanges, based on generosity, with all these beings of distinct forms of existence. It is important to emphasize that the conviviality to which I refer does not mean harmonious coexistence, without conflicts or the possibility of predation. So that the relationship and connection between these diverse worlds, with different materialities and temporalities, do not become chaotic and predatory, the Munduruku trigger ways of doing cosmopolitics through the ability to “articulate the multiple existing worlds” ([1], pp. 446–447).

The Munduruku inhabit the Tapajós river basin, which comprises part of the states of Mato Grosso and western Pará, Brazil, and is the largest tributary of the Amazon river. Known since the eighteenth century as Mundurukânia, the region of the middle and upper Tapajós course is inhabited by at least 14,000 Munduruku and a great diversity of traditional peoples and communities living along its banks and those of its main tributaries, the Jamanxim, Juruena, and Teles Pires rivers.

The Munduruku people live on the banks of the Tapajós and Amazon river basins, between the states of Pará, Mato Grosso, and Amazonas, and are historically known for their warrior character ([2], p. 81). They call themselves *Wuy jujú*, whose meaning is “true people,” and are known and feared for their trophy-head hunting expeditions, which lasted until the nineteenth century ([3], p. 48). The name Munduruku was given to them by their former war enemies who lived in the same region, and means “red ant” ([4], p. 368). This paper will limit itself only to those Munduruku on the banks of the Tapajós River, with emphasis on those who inhabit the middle part of the river course between the municipal areas of Itaituba and Trairão, both in Pará.

## **2. Munduruku cosmopolitics and the struggle for life**

Isabelle Stengers’ cosmopolitical proposition recognizes these other ways of existing in the world, and among the Munduruku the relations between humans and nonhumans are almost always ambivalent: sometimes of estrangement and avoidance, and other times of rapprochement. The strategies with which the Munduruku manage these worlds, however, are confronted by logging and mining invasions in their territories, which often affect places that are sacred to them. The respect for these places, as well as the protection of the dwellings of the mothers of the fish, hunting or mountains where the spirits of the ancients’ dwell, for example, are fundamental so that the connection between the multiverse [5] does not become dangerous. Not to protect these places is to provoke the anger of these other beings, who may respond with violence in the form of accidents or illnesses upon the Munduruku.

Beatriz Perone-Moisés is right when she says that we must take indigenous people seriously, which “means, in this case, to stop treating as metaphor or figure of speech that which appears so to us” ([6], p. 18). One must recognize the specificity in the construction of historical processes and narratives present in Munduruku historicity, for every historicity has a specific temporality ([7], p. 109) and this often differs from the linear and “progressive” temporality of Western society. Given that sacred places are inseparable from the Munduruku way of handling the world, we can see how mythic narratives also direct political and social decisions in the present, for these places fall within what Cayon [8] understands as “shamanic geography.”

*geografía chamánica debe entenderse como un aspecto fundamental que estructura la realidad al vincular metonímicamente a las personas con el espacio en el que viven, reafirmando sus conexiones históricas y con sus ancestros, y relacionándolos con los otros seres que pueblan el mundo ([8], p. 149).*

Thus, the landscapes of the Tapajós region are intrinsically linked to the people’s mythical narratives and their ways of managing the world, that is, the procedures that

ensure the order of their world and allow “the vital processes of the various beings and the succession of the seasons to take place without inconvenience” ([8], p. 17).

The chief of the Sawre Muybu village, Juarez Saw, always travels through the territory with the warriors to find out what has been happening inside the indigenous land. I have sometimes accompanied this type of action, in which the warriors and young people of the Munduruku audiovisual collective<sup>1</sup> would register the presence of mining rafts and tracks opened by loggers. In one of these situations, we passed one of the rafts that, according to the cacique, belonged to the largest illegal mining operation inside the indigenous land, the Chapéu de Sol, whose damage is easily seen by satellite images.

With an ever-watchful eye, cacique Juarez spots the red macaws flying above the forest from afar. It is from the feathers of these macaws that the Munduruku head-pieces are made, and it is these feathers that show their social organization, which is divided into two clans, the white (adorned with yellow and blue feathers) and the red (adorned with red feathers). On our way, we pass near a large raft that has been trying for many years to mine for diamonds out of that place. The cacique points to a mountain in the middle of the vegetation, where there is a large crevice, and says that that is the passage of the pigs, where “they narrowed the river to try to get the son of Karosakaybu,” and went on to tell us that many workers have already died trying to get the diamond out of there. He explains that “they will never succeed because this is a sacred place, there will always be consequences.”

Although there are specific places in the territory to which they refer as sacred sites, usually places where the “mothers” of the animals are, or where there is a concentration of spirits of Munduruku dead or of former Munduruku living on another plane, the territory as a whole and everything that was left out in the administrative demarcation process, although part of their territoriality, is permeated with stories about the people, about the ancestors.

Thus, as the Munduruku themselves point out, the whole territory needs to be protected because there is a multitude of sacred places in it, where their ancestors are. If any destruction happens in these places, the angry spirits may take revenge:

*We hear the sound of reeds, the sound of flutes, these are people that we cannot see because they are on the other side of the world, on the other side of life, but they try to communicate to say that they are alive. These are what we call sacred places. We want to get in touch with them, and they with us, but they are in another world (Chief Jairo Saw, interview held in 2017).*

The sacred places, so important for the Munduruku people, hold ancestral memories of the people, but they are also channels of communication “between worlds,” for “sacred places are inscribed within people, while they connect them with their ancestors and with other dimensions of the world” ([8], p. 218). In this sense, a place that was once occupied by Munduruku will always be a Munduruku’s place, in which one of the marks is the black land, *Katomp*, in the Munduruku language, it even is responsible for legitimizing reoccupations in the forms of new villages.

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<sup>1</sup> The Munduruku audiovisual collective is formed by young women, who accompany the actions of resistance inside and outside the territory. See more at: <<https://www.facebook.com/audiovisualmunduruku/>> [Accessed: March 25, 2021].

### **3. The Munduruku people and the construction of the world scenario**

In the history of the Munduruku people, the Tapajós River, or *Idixidi* in their language, was created by a very powerful warrior of ancient times from the juice of three tucumã seeds. During the paths taken by Karosakuybu, the great demiurge, several places important to the Munduruku cosmology and cosmography appeared, many of which are still considered sacred. With superhuman powers, the great warrior also brought the Munduruku themselves into the world, who in turn “helped to build the scenario of the world, had this participation because the Munduruku were transformed into trees, fish, animals, so for us, they are also beings like us” (cacique Jairo Saw, 2017).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the landscapes of the Tapajós region are intrinsically linked to their mythical narratives and their ways of managing the world. For the Munduruku people exist specific places in the territory to which they refer as sacred sites, which are usually places where the “mothers” of the animals are, where there is a concentration of spirits of the dead Munduruku and of the “old ones” living in another world. But the territory as a whole, and also everything that was left out in the administrative demarcation process is permeated with stories about the people, about the ancestors, and contains some degree of “sacredness.”

According to Munduruku narratives, the spirits of the ancients are those who, during the time when the Munduruku had the power to metamorphose, became animals, vegetables, turned into streams, or simply chose to live in another world. The elders say that at that time their bodies were made of tapir lard, which is why they had such transformative powers. As for the spirits of the dead, they are all those who “lost their human life” and their spirits went to the forest, because, as the Munduruku teacher Hiléia Poxo told me: “when we die our spirits go to the animals, they go walking with the spirits of the ancestors” (Hiléia Poxo, Poxo Muybu Village, interview held in 2020).

Sacred places not only nurture a relationship of identification with the Munduruku, but also relationships of reciprocity, through the exchange of gifts with the various beings that exist in the territory. In line with Cayon and Chacon [9]: “los lugares no están sólo conectados con las narrativas míticas sino con otros elementos como las curaciones chamánicas, los cantos, la música y los objetos, donde todos sirven como vehículos o manifestaciones de conocimiento” (2014, p. 216).

In the myth about Karosakaybu, the great warrior metamorphoses some Munduruku into pigs as punishment for having denied his son food, even coming across the abundance of a great hunt. By turning those who did not share the food into pigs, Karosakaybu established a way of acting, a parameter for what is or is not a “social being.” Thus, not sharing the game is considered an act that breaks Munduruku rules of sociability and can even interfere with the availability and diversity of such game, which is released by the mother of these groups of animals. The spirits of these animals can come through dreams to rebuke those who are stingy and, in addition, the act of eating game can also be considered a ritual. The sharing of the game is still reflected today in the way the Munduruku deal with this type of food. Even though being composed of small animals, the game must be shared among all the inhabitants of the village.

The Munduruku who were turned into pigs were confined in a kind of enclosure inside the village. The armadillo Daydu, another mythical character, went to

<sup>2</sup> Chief of Sawre Aboy village, interview conducted in 2017.

Karosakuybu's son to urge him to leave the hammock his father had ordered him to stay in while he went hunting, and persuaded him to open the enclosure where the pigs were and feed them tucumã. When the pigs realized who had opened the enclosure, they wanted to take revenge on Karosakaybu and set out in pursuit of his son. To try to reach him, the pigs, who also had superhuman powers, narrowed the banks of the Tapajós, but according to some narratives, never managed to catch the descendant of the great warrior.<sup>3</sup>

They left marks on the mountain the trail they had passed through, as well as Karosakuybu's footprint on the stones by the river. For the Munduruku, this place, called *Daje Kapap Eipi* (sacred passage of the pigs), which today gives its name to the territory, cannot be disturbed, otherwise, they may suffer from various types of "accidents" and diseases that the angry spirits may cause, such as scorpion and snake bites. The constant invasions of miners in the area, however, negatively interfere with the dialog that maintains the coexistence between various worlds. The chief of Sawre Aboy village, Jairo Saw, told me this story:

*karosakaybu said that he was going to turn some of his relatives into food because if they are being denied food, then they will serve as food for future generations. So he turned these Munduruku into pigs when the karosakaybu's son was deceived by the boy Daydo. The pigs recognized the karosakaybu's son and then said, "it was his father who turned us this way, so we will also punish his son!" "Then he was chased, but they could never find him because he turned into everything: fruit, scorpion, snake, bee, all sorts, but the others could still identify him, smell him. They never caught him [...] In our Sawre Muybu territory there is the sacred place where the son of karosakaybu was persecuted. It also has the path of karosakaybu that is under the earth that is called the path of the worm, which is like a tunnel, a secret passage under the earth. So they had the mastery of space and could shorten the path to be there anywhere. We call it noma, (underground paths) (Jairo Saw, Itaituba, 2017).*

Jairo tells another part of the myth: After losing his first son, who had never been seen again, Karosakaybu carved a wooden doll and, in one breath, gave him life. When his son grew up, the women began to have sex with him, until one day the men of the village found out about it. They then went to talk to Karosakaybu, who decided to transform his son into a tapir, which did not stop the women from continuing their relations with him. In retaliation, the husbands gathered to kill him, and, after it was done, cooked him for the whole village to eat. When the women found out what they had done, they decided to take revenge: "so, they told the men, 'tomorrow everyone goes hunting!' When they went, the women lined up, performed a ritual, and, singing, fell into the water to turn into fish" (Jairo Saw, personal communication).

Today, in order for them to score the big catch with timbó<sup>4</sup> they have to do the Tinguejada ritual to ask permission from the mother of fish, "which is Xiquiridá, Karosakaybu's wife—I will talk about this ritual in more detail later. She is the one who pulled the woman to transform into fish, this ritual is to make her happy. If she is happy, we can make the big catch" (Jairo Saw, personal communication). Taking care

<sup>3</sup> In another version of this story, Karosakaybu managed to trap the pigs between some mountains, but his son ended up staying with them and no longer seen by the demiurge.

<sup>4</sup> The timbó is part of a group of plants in the leguminous and sapindaceous families, and is used by the Munduruku, as for several other indigenous peoples, to stun fish, making them float and facilitating fishing.

of the mother of the forest, the fish, and the game, as well as protecting the sacred places and objects, are all part of a cosmopolitical relationship, for they are agencies that operate and articulate themselves both in the earthly world of the living and in the worlds of other beings.

The Tinguejada ritual takes place between the two moieties of the social organization.<sup>5</sup> During the ritual, the women and men from opposite moieties try to pass sorva on each other. This ritual aims to bring joy to Xiquiridá, the mother of the fish. When approaching the dono-maestria-maternity theme, Carlos Fausto [10] understands that this relationship is constitutive of sociality and “characterizes interaction between humans and nonhumans” ([10], p. 16). About Tinguejada, the mother tongue teacher, Hiléia Poxo, clarifies:

*The fish were also transformed by human beings, that's why when we have a tinguejada it's like a party for them. That is why when we go to a tinguejada and start to play, and do the game very well, then those pretty fish die. When we do not do it right, the pretty fish do not die, only some, because the game wasn't done right, the prettier fish hide, that's why they do not die. When we do it right, respecting them, they die happy, because it is like a party for them. (Teacher Hiléia Poxo, Poxo Mubybu village, 2020).*

On the day of the Tinguejada, women may not be menstruating and no one should have sexual intercourse the day before, otherwise, the fish that we cannot see in this dimension will climb trees and throw dry leaves in their place, thus preventing them from being caught. Trophy headhunts, performed by the Munduruku until the eighteenth century, also fulfilled functions similar to the ritual performed to make the mother of the fish happy. Comprising three parts, the ritual lasted from one and a half up to two years, and the warrior involved had to comply with a series of interdictions. The first part of the ritual was the *Inyenborotaptan*, (ear adornment), where the ears of such heads were adorned according to the clan of the warrior who conquered it (white or red clan). The second part of the ritual, the *yashegon*, as described by Murphy [11], consisted of shaving the head, and the third and last part was pulling the teeth out of the head and hanging them on belts or necklaces. Once a Munduruku told me that during the process in which the teeth were being pulled, it was necessary to put them inside the mouth of the one doing it, so that they would not be stolen by the spirits.

Headhunting was a way to please the mother of the peccaries, *daje ixé yu*, so that she could maintain the reproductive power and abundance of the peccaries. In addition, the heads also aided in the people's own physical reproduction, as well as the “renewal of the warrior movement, since it was assumed that the belt of teeth increased the bearer's chances of getting new victims” ([10], p. 459). In this sense, the heads of war enemies went through what Fausto (2014) calls familiarizing predation, since, from the beginning of the ritual, these heads were introduced “into a segment of that society” ([10], p. 458) by being adorned with the same colors as the clan of its hunter, transforming an enemy, whose spirit might come to take revenge, into something allied, or belonging to the hunter's group.

About Munduruku headhunts, the chief of Sawre Mubybu village, Juarez Saw, told me that there were two types of headhunts: those of other Munduruku, from other

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<sup>5</sup> The Munduruku organize themselves into two exogamous halves: white and red. On the social and kinship relationship, return to the introduction.

villages, whose heads had great power of attracting the hunted, and were also very desired by the spirits because they also wanted this hunting facility; and the other is the hunting of heads of other ethnicities, which gave the warrior value and status.

Maintaining the tranquility of multiple worlds, with sacred places protected, while the hunts continue to be released to feed the villages, is part of a set of agencies that are being negotiated all the time in order to maintain conviviality among the Munduruku multiverse, controlling alterities in a “constant *lucha contra el carácter disruptivo del caos*” ([12], p. 53) so that, in this way, it can also maintain social reproduction. This kind of negotiation that “articulates multiple worlds” is, in Stengers’ terms ([1], pp. 446–447):

*The cosmos, here, must therefore be distinguished from every particular cosmos, or every particular world, as a particular tradition may think of it. And it does not designate a project that would aim to encompass them all, because it is always a bad idea to designate an encompassing for those who refuse to be encompassed by anything else. The cosmos, as it appears in this term, cosmopolitical, designates the unknown that constitutes these multiple, divergent worlds, articulations of which they could become capable, against the temptation of a peace that would claim to be final, ecumenical, in the sense that a transcendence would have the power to require of that which is divergent that it recognize itself as only a particular expression of that which constitutes the point of convergence of all.*

Myths end up giving guidelines on ways of acting that guarantee people’s sociability. Santos-Graneiro [13] emphasizes the importance of thinking of myths as “sacred truths,” literal and conscious manifestations that are present in all spheres of life and “provide guidelines for social action” ([12], p. 18). Thus, the Munduruku participation in the construction of this landscape of the world described by the cacique Jairo Saw must be taken seriously, because not only are they producing the history of these landscapes, they are also “producing knowledge and reality, confronting the reality created by Western science” ([14], p. 599). They thus tension the production of the Western “single world” that has the extinguishing of multiple worlds as its *modus operandi*.

The pursuit for the defense and demarcation of the territory is intrinsically linked to sacred places and nonhuman beings that help directing strategies of struggle and political resistance, as contemporary works on the people have been demonstrating. In her work with the Munduruku resistance movement *Iperég Ayu*, for example, Rosamaria Loures [15] highlighted the presence and importance of shamans in Munduruku movements and occupations against hydroelectric dams and in other resistance actions. The shamans are subjects who possess “two visions” ([15], p. 206), that of the world of the living and that of the spirits, and it is through them that the guidelines and strategies of struggle are revealed, so their presence, in these moments, is indispensable. The shamans, however, are responsible for both the good things that happen in the village and the bad things that also might happen. There is an ambivalence that marks the life of these pajés, as well as the Tapirapé pajés:

*They are essential for social reproduction and, at the same time, they are feared and dangerous, that is, they seem to have a threatening power for society. In the figure of the shaman there is a combination of the figure of the enemy and that of the whole person. The tapirapé imagine that every death is caused by the witchcraft of one of them. Thus, the shamans must live in strong family groups that are able to protect them ([14], p. 38).*

Even with their ambivalent power, the shamans access the multiple worlds and mediate relations with them. They are important figures in the struggle for land the Munduruku people face. This struggle is for the existent different worlds or planes, for the multiple histories and scenarios they inhabit. When analyzing the paths and territories trodden and lived by the Mbyá indigenous people, Guimarães [14] analyzes how indigenous peoples understand that territories are made of human and nonhuman beings as subjects identified in narratives, situated in histories, and with whom they establish social relationships. He goes on to argue that territories are space-time of social interactions, where there are beings with whom they weave social relations of both peaceful and bellicose reciprocity. In these interactions, several plans are made and the Munduruku need to deal with them. They make themselves Munduruku and make their world through this careful interaction.

In all elaborations of resistance that I followed from the Munduruku, where chiefs, leaders, shamans, and warriors were present, the songs were always present, sung before or during the occupations and demonstrations held by them. These songs evoke the presence and wisdom of the ancients, telling their trajectories and strategies of fighting in the wars they took part in. According to Hiléia Poxo (2020): “whenever a person goes to the movement, the spirits of the old people who died are always close by, that is why they sing so that they can hear our songs and let them know that we have our living culture. The living culture, as described by the teacher, can be interpreted as what the Munduruku recurrently refer to, not without a certain pride, about the ‘warrior spirit,’ reaffirmed by the odysseys played by the ancients, the head cutters of the Brazilian Amazon.”

The Munduruku war against invaders and development projects that presuppose the destruction of these sacred places has the “purpose” to maintain the life of different beings that inhabit the multiverse, keeping them within a relationship of coexistence, not one of chaos. They think, feel, and live this multiverse differently from the State’s war, and its territorial occupation, which is against all forms of multiplicity. The relationship between the Munduruku and these beings can be read from the concept of gift in Marcel Mauss [16], as conviviality and predation are not always opposed. In the Munduruku case, they go together, and are not rarely mediated by gift exchanges. To understand how conviviality, predation, and gift are connected, we will see how the gift is defined by anthropology.

#### **4. Giving, receiving, and giving back: the spirit of giving**

Starting from the assumption that gift exchanges can exist universally, Marcel Mauss [16] makes a series of comparisons between the various regions and continents where the exchange of gifts are present. According to the author, they generate alliances and sociability and can occur through matrimonial, political, economic, legal, etc. Exchanges materialize in different ways, whether through parties, gifts, visits, or the circulation of goods and people. In many societies, gift exchanges are present throughout daily life, as well as in cosmopolitical relations, that is, between humans and nonhuman beings.

In said gift exchanges, unlike mercantile exchanges, whose relationship is between subject and object, the exchange of “objects” is constituted as a relationship between subjects [17]. When one exchanges something, one also exchanges part of oneself, for that which goes, is embedded with spirituality, soul. That which is given must be received and reciprocated, but this obligation is, at the same time, “performed”



as spontaneous. The gift differs from other types of exchange because its exchange, in most cases, is not immediate, and can even occur between generations, between peoples, and between beings of different forms of existence. Its specificity, however, is in what “transcends” what is exchanged, because it is not a relationship between subject and “object”—in the Western way of understanding the latter—it is a relationship between subjects. It is a long-term relationship, not one an immediate exchange such as defined by the edges of capitalism. To give, receive, and reciprocate is a continuum that is constituted and constitutes social life, and it is also the triad that makes up the gift.

The refusal to give or receive something can mean war or the path of enmity, as described by Davi Kopenawa about the ethics of exchange among the Yanomami. By bartering, on the other hand, collectives are linked, and alliances are consolidated:

*When the road that leads to another house is not for us a path of goods, we say that it has the value of enmity. In that case, we can wage war against the people to whom it leads, [...] on the contrary, when we first come into contact with the inhabitants of an unknown house to make friends, we exchange with them everything we have. ([18], p. 414).*

In the Munduruku myth of Karosakuybu turning his relatives into pigs for having denied food to his son, we can see that by denying something to someone one also denies what guarantees the sociability of the group. In the case of the myth, by denying hunting, a behavior that is considered unsocial, one loses the status of “humanity,” culminating in the transformation of people into game animals. In the Munduruku villages, games or fish must be shared, as mentioned before, even if they are only available in small quantities. If this food is not distributed among the families in the village, the mother of the fish and game may appear in dreams to “scold” the Munduruku or even limit and exhaust the possibilities of being able to access said food.

Also, according to Mauss, in the exchange of gifts “souls are mixed into things, things are mixed into souls. Lives are mixed, and thus the mixed persons leave each one of their own spheres and mix together: which is precisely the contract and the exchange” ([16], p. 213). If by exchanging something the receiver feels morally obliged to reciprocate, Mauss questions, it is because there is something more to this relationship than goods going, coming, or being passed on. For the author, “if things are given and reciprocated, it is because ‘respects’ are given and reciprocated—we can also say ‘courtesies.’ But it is also because people give themselves by giving, and, if people give themselves, it is because they ‘owe’ themselves—themselves and their goods—to others” ([16], p. 263).

To reflect on Munduruku sociability, like Yanomami sociability, would require thinking about the exchanges established in interethnic contact between indigenous and white people, but also about the exchanges within the group itself and with other nonhuman beings. Among the Munduruku, contact with non-Indians peoples occurred most intensively through the SPI (Serviço de Proteção ao Índio—Indian Protection Service) and later through the regatões<sup>6</sup>, for while the Munduruku worked in latex harvesting and made rubber for exchange, the regatiros took drugs from the sertão, “luring” them to the riverbanks. According to Dias-Scopel, “to some extent,

<sup>6</sup> The regatões traveled the rivers of the Amazon in small boats to exchange products from the city for products from the forest.

the rubber enterprise eventually placed the Munduruku in a circuit of the local and global economy, in which they inserted themselves as part of an extensive network of production and circulation of commodities.” Chief Juarez Saw, who also worked in latex and sorghum milk collection as a young man, SPI agents also took goods to trade with rubber,

*“They started to buy rubber first. It was the SPI people, there were two guys [SPI agents] who took the goods directly to the Munduruku post to exchange them for rubber. Then, after them, the regatons came in. Then a bunch of regatão went up by boat to take goods” (Juarez Saw, 2020).*

Exchanges with nonindigenous peoples, however, had been taking place since the nineteenth century, when travelers, mainly foreigners, traded Western items for trophy heads that were no longer useful to the Munduruku. Soon after, the gatekeepers, as the buyers of animal skins are called, such as maracajá cats, bush cats, and jaguars, also began to trade with the indigenous people.

Although these are the most obvious forms of exchange, and which undoubtedly generated significant changes in Munduruku ways of life and sociability, this is not the only exchange relationship between them. Between the spirits of the ancients, with the mothers of the forest, the pigs, or the fish, gift exchanges mediate the good (or bad) communication between them. That can also occur between hunters and hunted, between shamans and spirits, and between humans and nonhuman beings.

An example of this is the relationship between hunter and hunted among the Munduruku and Yanomami. In Yanomami cosmology, the hunted give themselves to the hunter, attracted by objects given by the shamans to be used in the hunt. The hunted give themselves, and the hunters receive and take them back to the village. This hunter, however, cannot consume the game he has taken, he has to make it go further. It is the logic of the gift that is at work: giving, receiving, and giving back. Thus, other hunters will have to do the same and this hunter will feed on the game of another, creating a relationship of interdependence among the group. If this triad is broken and the hunter consumes his own game, the animals of the forest will respond by no longer giving themselves to him, and this hunter will become panema.<sup>7</sup> Without being able to bring food to the village, social relations between him and the group may be damaged.

In the Munduruku case, the hunter and hunted relationship are also complex. In one of the many dialogs, I had with a great sage and leader of Sawre Muybu, the chief Juarez Saw, one of them seemed especially interesting. Instigated by the fact that many Munduruku had been transformed into animals, as the myths tell, I asked him about his relationship with the animals they hunted. The chief told me that when the Munduruku found a group of peccaries or other animals, it was because the mother of those animals—who for some peoples are called chiefs of the hunt, as occurs in the Runa ([19], p. 106)—set them free to be hunted by them. The animals, Juarez Saw told me, “walk all around here, they know where we are, they know who we are, if we can hunt them, it is because they gave us permission. They are the ones who find us.”

According to him, the game, in their worlds, think that Munduruku humans are shamans. “When, in their world, these animals get sick, they go to meet the ‘shamans’ to be cured” (Juarez Saw, 2020), and the number of sick ones in the animal world is

<sup>7</sup> Panema is a term used for hunters who can no longer catch game or fish. Either because a spell has been cast on them, because he has transgressed some interdiction, or because he has disrespected the hunts.

exactly the same amount that goes in flocks to meet the Munduruku in their human form. This encounter is the hunt, which functions as the beginning of a healing ritual whose last act is the meal. According to the chief Juarez Saw:

*We dream about these people when they give themselves up. And when they are in the bush, it's not just any game that they will offer to the village. Because, for example, it will be night, right, and then we will dream about them, but they have also joined together in the bush, for example the pig, and then he says: "How many sick people are there in our midst? "Who wants to consult with the Pajé?" And we are Pajé to them. This is how they give themselves to us. Then they will indicate themselves: "Me! "I am also going! Then it will be a woman, "I am also going", I am sick. If it's two, it's two, if it's four, it doesn't go beyond their indication. You only see the one who is going to die, you don't see the others. Then you shoot him, "pow", then he comes back here, when we finish eating his meat he goes back to the bush. (Juarez Saw, Sawre Muybu village, 2020).*

After the game is eaten, the skulls of the hunted are placed under trees near the houses. Their spirits return to other animal bodies, now in good health. Murphy [11], during his work with the Munduruku of the upper Tapajós in the 1950s, had already described rituals for pacifying the mothers of the hunted using animal skulls.

*Before the skulls were placed in order, they were washed with a fragrant solution made from the envira cherosa and then with miirt, a sweet manioc gruel. Miri is thought to be especially pleasing to the spirit mothers, and a bowl was kept near the skulls so that the spirits could eat after answering the summons. ([11], p. 60).*

In the middle Tapajós, it is still possible today to perceive this ritual operating in the daily life of the village, where around the houses these skulls are, to unsuspecting eyes, "thrown" randomly. Although the ritual does not happen the way it was described by Murphy in "Mundurucu religion" (1958), one can see how it still occurs, with few modifications. Children are even told from a very young age not to play with those skulls, because the spirits may cause them harm. According to Professor Deusiano Saw

*There are some rules that we have to tell our children, so that they do not play with that, because we might suffer something. When you separate a jabuti's shell you should not play with it, too, so it's everything... there are rules too, with the mother in the river too, it's the same way, when I catch animals, you should not play with their spines, I may have an accident and have serious consequences too, because they penalize us too, right, so we catch them and should not play with them (Deusiano Saw, interview conducted in Sawre Muybu village, 2020).*

Viveiros de Castro, in *Os deuses canibais: a morte e o destino da alma entre os Araweté* (1982), brings a perspective on the understanding of sacrifice between humans and nonhumans that can corroborate the analysis of the Munduruku's relation to hunting. According to him, in the Awaweté cosmology, humans, when dying, will meet the *Mai*, who will go through a ritual of cannibalism that will transform these dead into gods. When eating the hunted, the Munduruku also perform a kind of ritual sacrifice. The body is eaten so that the spirit can be healed and return to the forest, thus obtaining new ways of existence.

Among the Munduruku, it is recurrent to hear that the older men, for example, have more experience with otherness, because they have already gotten lost in the forest during days of hunting, and have seen and gone through things that the younger ones are yet to go through. Getting lost in the forest is not something casual or an accident, because according to what they told me when this is not the result of some *cauxi* (spell) that was cast on the hunter, it is because the spirits of the forest did this to teach the hunter to respect the game animals, not to be playing around and making jokes during meals because those hunts have spirits, they are his relatives from the time of the ancients. The forest is a place to be taken seriously.

After the Munduruku goes through such situations several times, which can also be of sickness, they become “intimate” and “friends” with these spirits, after which they are allowed to play around during meals or afterward, when the skulls of the hunts are still around the houses ([11], pp. 59–60). Juarez Saw clarifies how this approach to the spirits happens:

*She shows up to fight with us, because we say a lot of things. He is not a person to play with, we can, but we have to go through a lot of process. For example, if I play with a pig's head, then I can get injured. Then I spend a week sick, really sick, I'm no longer in this world here, I'm already in their world. Why do I go there? because it's for me to know what they do. they take me there, with my spirit, just for me to know. Just for them to say: look, we are no joke. Then I walk with them, and then they send my spirit back, then I get better. From there you already bring back a lot of stories from this trip that you went with them. Then again, about five times, then you can be their friend, then you can do whatever you want with your head, with your meat, with everything. Then we play with them and they smile too, but not yet. (Juarez Saw, Sawre Muybu village, 2020).*

For the Munduruku, most illnesses are occasioned by *cauxi* or because the mothers of the hunts and spirits of the forest want to teach them something. On certain occasions, as cacique Juarez Saw reported to me, if the spirits of the animals take someone to teach them a lesson, their spirit will walk with their spirits in the forest, as their body in the world of the “living” gets sick, suggesting that consciousness and spirit are not umbilically linked. Sometimes the spirits of these animals are very pleased with this person and do not want to return his spirit anymore, and it is up to the shaman to do the negotiation to recover the subject's spirit.

*When the person's spirit goes to the forest, then the people from the community ask the shaman to consult that person that has been sick for more than a month, then he goes there and says: no, this person already has no spirit, he is already going to the forest to stay with the spirit of the animals, of the pig, of all the animals... he goes... first he goes to an animal, then he gets sick because of how much he stayed with this animal, then some time goes by and he goes to another animal. Then he spends some time with them, then he gets sick, then he goes to another animal and keeps going. Then the one... said that he will leave when he leaves when he walks with all the spirits of all the game of all the animals of the forest, then he passes to the spirit of the monkey. Then it becomes more difficult to bring. And so they do. Then they call the community to make a porridge to call the spirits of all the animals of the forest, then they call three Pajé or four Pajé, but good ones. Then they make it for almost a week, and then they stay inside the village and start to sing near the patient, the Pajé. There, each one has his or her own chant, every animal. Then the pajés sing, not only the pajé, but the*

*singers themselves, who are specific just to call the spirit that knows the dance of all the animals, then they start with one, and if there is not one, they say: “it’s not with us, no”, but the pajé keeps an eye on it, and then moves on to another one, for almost a day singing only one animal’s song. And the mingauzão is going on. Every day that goes by, spirits are arriving there, and they go looking for them in every corner, until sometimes they find the spirits of the deer, of the pig. With this ceremony there comes both good and evil spirits, and the shaman is for this, so that the evil spirit does not touch them. When they manage to do so, they put the head of the dried tapir, like we find pigs’ heads, and they keep it, and when it is during these ceremonies they take it and put it inside the house, around the corners. Then when the spirits of the forest come, with the spirit of that person comes a lot, then it enters in the place of the tapir’s brain. Do not you have that hole that stays just inside? Then they go in all the way. He says that when they arrive there is a lot of noise, a lot of people come. Then the shamans stay outside the house too, to keep the evil people out. They are like their guardians, and there are others inside the house and some at the door. Back in the Sai cinza we participated a lot in this kind of ceremony, now it is difficult, it is very difficult for us to see. (Juarez Saw, Sawre Muybu village, 2020).*

Death in this sense is not the definitive rupture of life. It is related to the change of corporality, which, as said by Aparecida Vilaça about the Wari in *Eating like people* [20], is connected with the change of relatives, because when the doubles of these subjects are taken by the doubles of the animals, he continues to perceive himself as human in the forest, but inserted into other sociocosmic networks [10] in view of the fact that his former relatives will no longer see him as human but as a game. Death for the Munduruku as much as for the Wari is a relational rupture [21]. The moment when the spirit of the sick person will walk with the forest animals, and the shaman tries to return him to his human relatives, is a liminal space/time/condition [22] in which changes and transformations can happen or simply return to what was before. That is, either that sick person will change his corporality, relatives, and dimension, or he will return to his relatives and “human” corporality.

## 5. Concluding remarks

For the Munduruku, the territory is not only where their ancestors lived and where they continue their occupation process. The dead are not framed in a picture depicting the past, are not static in a time gone by, or are alive only in the memory of the people. These dead, their ancestors, are also in the present, they have agency, personality, and rationality in the same way as the spirits, the peccaries, the açai trees, and the mothers of the animals. The way reality and time are constituted for the Munduruku people confronts our own perceptions of time and of what we so pretentiously call reality.

Nevertheless, the indigenous people lead us to conclude that our conception of politics is not sufficient to understand the complex relationships in which these people are inserted. As well put by Cadena [23] and Stengers [1], we need to “pluralize” politics: not limit the concept to power disputes between opposing forces, but rather make it pluriversal, involving all human and nonhuman beings who seek conviviality.

The Munduruku are fighting for territory, but this territory cannot be read as a space without any kind of agency. The Western way of understanding the world often

establishes dualisms and dichotomies to explain the social, such as subject/object, nature/culture, male/female, and the idea that one must dominate the other. But these dualisms do not make sense to these people, being that too many Amerindian peoples here the idea of a continuum makes sense, which sometimes brings subjects together and sometimes distances them depending on the relational play.


## **Author details**

Bárbara do Nascimento Dias  
Social Anthropology at the National Museum, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Brazil

\*Address all correspondence to: barbaradiasuft@gmail.com

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Section 3

# Epistemological Perspectives





# Utilizing Environmental Analytical Chemistry to Establish Culturally Appropriate Community Partnerships

*Jonathan Credo, Jani C. Ingram, Margaret Briehl  
and Francine C. Gachupin*

## Abstract

In the United States, minority communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental contaminants due to a combination of historically discriminatory based racial policies and a lack of social political capital. American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities have additional factors that increase the likelihood of contaminant exposure. Some of these factors include the disparity of social, cultural, and political representation, differences in cultural understandings between AI/AN communities and western populations, and the unique history of tribal sovereignty in the US. Since the 1990s, research from both private and federal organizations have sought to increase research with AI/AN communities. However, although rooted in beneficence, the rift in cultural upbringing can lead to negative outcomes as well as further isolation and misrepresentation of AI/AN communities. Environmental analytical chemistry (EAC) is one approach that provides a means to establish productive and culturally appropriate collaborations with AI/AN populations. EAC is a more holistic approach that incorporates numerous elements and disciplines to understand underlying environmental questions, while allowing direct input from AI/AN communities. Additionally, EAC allows for a myriad of experimental approaches that can be designed for each unique tribal community, to maintain cultural respect and probe individual nuanced questions.

**Keywords:** American Indian/Alaska Native, analytical chemistry, environmental science, tribal sovereignty, environmental justice, cultural competency

## 1. Introduction

The tumult of the 1960s saw the rise of various social rights movements (e.g., civil rights, Native American activism, the environmental movement, etc.) and established the foundation for a change in ideology that sought justice for disenfranchised populations and issues [1, 2]. When focusing on just the environmental

movement, arguably its greatest success was the establishment of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 1970 [3]. The purpose of President Nixon's presidential directive that created these agencies was to address the rising public concern about air and water quality, as well as the implications to ecosystem and human health from a contaminated environment. The establishment of these two federal agencies also gave the American public a federal outlet to argue for the rights of nature and human health.

The 1970s would see the application of the environmental argument for human health, the coining of the term "environmental justice," and the birth of the environmental and economic justice movement. In 1978, African American residents in Houston, Texas formed the Northeast Community Action Group (NECAG) to fight against the placement of a "sanitary landfill" in their suburban neighborhood [4, 5]. With the help of their attorney, Linda McKeever Bullard, NECAG filed a class action lawsuit in 1979 against Southwestern Waste Management, Inc. [4, 5]. The 1979 lawsuit would be the first of its kind to use a civil rights argument to propose environmental discrimination, highlighting the "economic, political, psychological, and social advantages for whites at the expense of blacks and other people of color" [4]. The lawsuit would ultimately fail, but it set a legal precedent to argue environmental justice and set the stage for the first environmental justice incident that would captivate the nation. In 1978, oil containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were illegally dumped along the roads in fourteen North Carolina counties. In 1982 the roadways were cleaned, but the state needed a disposal site for the contaminated soil. It was decided that the disposal site would be constructed in Warren County, a predominantly black community in North Carolina. Like the scenario in Houston, Texas that led to the formation of the NECAG, the PCBs disposal site would be built in Warren County. Though the State of North Carolina would eventually spend more than \$25 million to cleanup and detoxify Warren County, the decision to build the PCBs disposal site would galvanize grassroots organizations around issues of environmental discrimination nationwide [5–7].

## **2. Disproportionate impact to minority communities**

The late 1970s, through the 1980s, saw many environmental issues across the United States (U.S.) that demonstrated environmental justice was applicable to more than just African American communities (e.g., Love Canal and creation of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act [CERCLA—aka "Superfund"] 1977–1980, the Church Rock uranium mill tailings accident—the largest uranium mill tailings accident in U.S. history—in 1979, pesticide reform and justice for agricultural workers led by Cesar Chavez in 1988, etc.) [5, 8–10]. In 1987 the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice released the first report in U.S. history that examined the relationship between race, class, and the environment at a national level [6]. The report found that millions of minority Americans (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indians/Alaska Natives [AI/AN]) were exposed to abandoned or uncontrolled toxic waste sites within their community.

The creation of the USEPA in 1970 gave the American public a means for environmental issues to be addressed by the federal government. This was expanded and strengthened following the enactment of CERCLA by Congress in 1980 following the

events of Love Canal in New York state [9]. Through CERCLA, sites across the U.S. that were deemed hazardous to human health, or the environment, were ranked on the national priorities list. CERCLA also served as a mechanism to provide funding for clean-up and remediation efforts of polluted sites. As of May 2021, there are 1322 sites on the national priorities list [11]. For a site to be placed on the list it requires a minimum hazard ranking system (HRS) score of 28.5 [12]. HRS is a scoring system developed by the USEPA that uses information from a variety of reports and site inspections that gather information about one of four pathways: “ground water migration (drinking water); surface water migration (drinking water, human food chain, sensitive environments); soil exposure and subsurface intrusion (population, sensitive environments); and air migration (population, sensitive environments)” [12]. Each of these four pathways are then compared to a rubric that is broken into three categories and then tallied for a final score: likelihood that a site has released or has the potential to release hazardous substances into the environment; characteristics of the waste (e.g., toxicity and waste quantity); and people or sensitive environments (targets) affected by the release [12].

Despite these defined criteria and the intent of CERCLA to address the disparity of the existence of environmental contaminants in vulnerable communities, both CERCLA and the HRS have been criticized for failing to address these inequalities of exposure [9, 13, 14]. Specifically looking at AI/AN communities, 532 sites, approximately 40%, are found on AI/AN lands, with the possibility of additional sites requiring clean-up that do not meet the criteria to be placed on the national priorities list [11, 14]. CERCLA and HRS do not address the underlying reasons why minority communities are disproportionately at risk for exposure, specifically the historical based discriminatory policies (e.g., land value, population density assessment, administrative resource management, etc.) [9, 14]. Tribal populations are additionally at a disadvantage due to the confusion on which regulatory agency (e.g., local, state, federal, or tribal) has oversight and which agency will contribute resources to either clean-up or seeking legal action against polluting enterprises [14]. An additional limitation of CERCLA and the HRS is that both are designed on historical pollutants (e.g., inorganic elements, metals, respiratory toxins, etc.), leading to a lack of evaluation for modern chemicals, especially emerging contaminants of concern such as organic pollutants [9, 15, 16].

During the 2000s there was a rise in studies that sought to understand and investigate the root causes of environmental injustice, including official recognition in 2002 by former USEPA Director of Environmental Justice, Barry Hill, confirming that minority communities are disproportionately impacted [17]. While there are many nuances to what causes environmental injustice, one of the unifying themes is the lack of political representation and influence of minority and low-income communities. Perhaps best summarized by the Cerrell Report in 1984, the report stated that although every community resents the building of a waste or toxic disposal site in their community “middle and upper socioeconomic strata possess better resources to effectuate their opposition” [18]. The report also identified the factors that make a community either more or less likely to resist placement of contaminating sites, including rural versus urban, political leaning, education, income-status, etc. [18]. At the core of this report, as well as many studies that have come after, the inability for vulnerable communities to exercise political influence is one of the most significant factors determining environmental injustice [19–24]. For this reason, it is understandable why minority communities tend to have a higher incidence of environmental exposure from contaminating

industries as they tend to lack political representation and do not have the social capital associated with the majority.

An additional compounding factor is that existing regulation and enforcement tend to favor majority communities over minority communities. As an example, existing regulation considers population density as a marker for public health and as a factor for placement of noxious facilities: the higher density a population, the less likely the placement [22, 25, 26]. This means that lower density areas, such as rural communities/counties, have a higher likelihood of placement for contaminating facilities. Unfortunately, because these facilities need power, water, and other infrastructure they are placed near access points which tend to be adjacent to higher concentrations of residential areas in rural communities. Sites on the national priorities list, a list of sites marked for environmental remediation by the USEPA, also use population density as a significant factor in evaluating which sites receive financial support and clean-up [27, 28]. The continued existence of contaminating sites in certain communities also impacts enforcement. Placement of contaminating sites result in a decrease in land-value as well as an exodus of individuals that can afford to leave the community [7, 22, 29, 30]. These two factors synergize to move a site even lower on the priorities list because the land is cheap and less well-populated. Even once these sites are evaluated, the cost of any infractions or potential harm to the community is less expensive to the polluting enterprise than if it was placed in a non-minority community, in some cases as much as 500% less expensive [22, 31]. The reason for this price discrepancy is based on the inherent economic value of the community, which further perpetuates the vulnerability of minority communities versus majority communities.

Perhaps the path of least resistance to address this discrepancy is to understand how to give minority communities greater political influence. Unfortunately, studies undertaken in the name of environmental justice uncovered that this potential solution is mired in the root causes that created minority communities in the first place. Historically, minority communities were established by blatant racial segregation practices and policies that separated the majority (i.e., whites) from the minority (i.e., blacks, Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islanders, AI/AN) [22, 26]. Following legislative changes after the Civil Rights movement, the basis for segregation switched to concepts of economics (e.g., land value) and spatial separation (e.g., rural versus urban) [22, 32, 33]. Despite this change, the legacy of racial segregation practices and policies would still be apparent under the new paradigm. As an example, historically white neighborhoods had a higher level of infrastructure (e.g., internet access, renewable power, clean water, etc.) and luxuries (e.g., schools, green-spaces, health care access, etc.) that conferred a higher intrinsic land value and tended to be in urban centers which made them less likely to be targeted for placement of polluting sources [22, 34, 35]. An additional lasting impact of racial segregation practices was that of social homophily, which predicts that individuals are more likely to interact and live in communities with others they considered like them (e.g., similar ethnicity, culture, appearance, beliefs, etc.) [36]. While social homophily confers certain benefits (e.g., social protection, cultural connection, etc.), it does stymie an individual's ability to escape environmental injustice situations by limiting their network capabilities or limiting their ability for social advancement [36–39]. As an example, areas with lower land value attract both minority populations as well as noxious facilities (e.g., waste disposal sites, polluting industries, etc.).

Interestingly, one of the concerns for environmental injustice also provides a means to increase social political influence. Health disparities, or social determinants of health, is the difference in health equity between populations resulting from a

variety of extrinsic factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, access to healthcare and education, lack of infrastructure, etc.) [40, 41]. While it may be morally and ethically unjust for there to be environmental exposure inequalities between communities, that approach can be ephemeral as it is vulnerable to sways in public opinion and media coverage [42, 43]. Relating environmental injustice and contaminant exposure to human health provides a stronger basis for public concern as well as being associated with political influence [44–46]. Not only this but using health outcomes as a quantifiable measure allows conceptualization of a goal. For example, air quality can be evaluated by the presence or absence of certain airborne factors (e.g., particulate matter, carbon emissions, ozone, etc.) [47]. Individuals that live in areas with “poor air quality” are at risk for measurable detrimental health outcomes (e.g., headaches, asthma, cancer, etc.). Removal of the factors that contribute to “poor air quality” result in an improvement in health outcomes. This example was one of the clarion calls of the environmental movement that would establish the USEPA in 1970, as it not only provided the public a means to understand the problem but also motivated political action. It is well documented that minority communities, specifically those of lower income and ethnic minority backgrounds, experience higher rates of asthma, cancer, mortality, and overall poorer health than majority communities and that these differences, in some cases, are associated with differences in environmental exposure [19–21, 41, 48, 49]. Establishing the link between environmental exposure and health equity has been the approach for many governmental agencies, most notably the National Institutes of Health (NIH). More recently, President Joe Biden announced environmental justice linked to public health as one of his presidential goals under “Justice40” [50].

## **2.1 Tribal communities and environmental justice**

Although across the U.S. minority communities are at a higher risk of disproportionate exposure to environmental contamination, it is important to understand that every minority community is nuanced in the variables that impact severity of the exposure. AI/AN communities frequently are recognized as one of the greatest under-represented populations for demographical reporting of any kind in the U.S., and this has been known for decades [25, 51–59]. Federal demographic information is collected through the decennial U.S. Census, arguably the largest, most extensive, and possessing the greatest resources of any demographical study in the U.S. An initial evaluation and interpretation of the decennial U.S. Census would suggest that the cause for this under-representation is simply due to the population of AI/AN peoples either remaining stagnant or not growing at the same rate as other populations in the USA [25]. However, a closer evaluation of the methodologies for the census reveals a more complex story. One explanation is because AI/AN communities are considered “hard-to-count” populations, meaning that they are either “hard to locate,” “hard to contact,” “hard to persuade,” “hard to interview,” or a mixture of these reasons [51, 54, 58]. To demonstrate this point, imagine a scenario of an AI/AN community on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation is the largest contiguous Native American sovereign nation in the U.S. and is spread across the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah with the land mass of approximately the state of West Virginia (71,000 km<sup>2</sup>) [60]. Complicating this matter, some families on the Navajo Nation may travel to different homes within the Nation depending on family situations, work availability, possession of livestock, etc. Even once a community is located, the Navajo Nation is largely rural with only one interstate (I-40) and six state roads (64, 89, 160, 163, 191,

and 491); by comparison the state of Rhode Island, the smallest state in the union and 183 times smaller than the Navajo Nation, has eight interstates, five U.S. highways, and 74 state roads [61, 62]. The lack of maintained roads means that many communities utilize unmarked dirt roads that are subject to varying degrees of travel. A precipitation event may make a road impassable or may even obfuscate its location or route entirely. Next, outside of American English, Navajo, or Diné Bizaad, is the most common language spoken on the Navajo Nation [63]. Famously, the language is so obscure as well as difficult to speak and understand yet shared by a significant number of people that it was used by the Americans as a code language during World War II and not declassified until 1968, 13 years after the end of the war [64]. Finally, if a census volunteer has been able to locate, contact, and can communicate with this hypothetical community on the Navajo Nation, as with most AI/AN communities, the Navajo people have a long history of distrust towards the US Government and outsiders due to treaty violations, inhumane practices, economic exploitation, etc. [65–69]. While this is a hypothetical situation, it demonstrates the challenges that qualify AI/AN populations as “hard-to-count” and simply because these communities may be congregated on reservations does not mean they will be adequately represented.

The lack of standardized methodologies and methodological protocols also present difficulties when trying to obtain accurate population information for AI/AN communities. Although Tribes may collect their own demographical information through health forms, registration for utility services, blood quantum, etc., these forms may not use the same methodologies to prevent miscounting or representation or may not collect enough usable information to qualify them to count as an individual on the census [54, 55, 59]. Many AI/AN individuals also identify as multi-racial/ethnic. Unfortunately, disaggregating this data is difficult, hard to interpret, and hard to discuss, all resulting in potential inaccurate representation. There are approaches that can be taken to attempt to address these inaccuracies, but all represent their own challenges and typically result in an over-simplification of the dataset and analysis. One approach assumes that multiracial people are the same as single-race individuals and does not bias the result significantly [55]. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and, for example, multi-racial AI/AN individuals tend to have greater income, education, and live in different environments than single-raced AI/AN individuals [55, 70]. A different approach groups all multi-racial responses into a single category and interprets this new group as an individual category [55]. This presents difficulties because not all multi-racial individuals are similar and subtleties like culture, language, behavior patterns, and health statistics are lost, which invalidates the usefulness of the survey/data [53, 55, 71, 72]. An added difficulty was the previous approach by the US and state governments that disallowed disaggregating data as well as many federal and state guidelines only allowing or using single race responses [25, 53]. While this approach may provide some protection against demographical fraud, it disregards the polyethnic nature of the US resulting in an inaccurate enumeration of its citizens. There have been attempts by various organizations, including the National Congress of American Indians, to institute a re-evaluation of the methodologies used by the US Census and other demographical surveys, and it remains to be seen if these attempts proved successful [51, 52, 54].

Separate to the under-representation of AI/AN communities that contribute to a lack of political and social influence, western colonization of AI/AN communities have left a legacy of environmental injustice [57, 73–75]. White Americans used the doctrine of “manifest destiny” in the 1800s to justify the westward expansion and colonizing of lands under control of AI/AN communities [76, 77]. This doctrine



elevated white Americans as superior, portrayed the AI/AN in a negative light, and emphasized that the land was being underutilized by AI/AN people and under American control the land could be developed for maximum economic value. For more than 100 years, various laws, treaties, and other policies were adopted that favored American interests over AI/AN interests [57, 76–79]. Because the land was under the auspices of the American government or private entities, there was no need for consent from AI/AN people. This opened the land to the construction of various industries that either harvested the land for natural resources (e.g., minerals/ores, oil, natural gas, etc.) or developed the land for economic growth (e.g., agriculture, cities, utilities, etc.). Looking at mining and natural resource extraction as an example, this period of American development has left more than 160,000 abandoned mines in the western U.S. (defined as Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming), the location of the majority of Native American lands [75]. In addition to land development, the policies of the time saw the exile of AI/AN communities from their traditional boundaries and confinement on reservations, small allotments of land that were deemed harsh or of low-economic value therefore undesirable for development. The reservation system also contributed to severely limiting AI/AN autonomy and produced a system of dependence on the federal government. Though the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act appeared to give AI/AN communities autonomy back through tribal sovereignty, there were caveats to consider [78, 79]. As mentioned, many AI/AN communities were located on lands that were undesirable and still greatly relied on federal aid for survival. To this day, many reservations lands are under-developed and lack significant infrastructure; as an example, approximately 30% of the people on the Navajo Nation lack access to running water and are required to haul water from unregulated sources [80, 81]. Another condition lies in the meaning of “sovereignty” outlined by the 1934 act. A better definition is that tribes that met the qualification to be considered “sovereign” gained *limited sovereignty*; the US government retained “plenary power” meaning Congress still has authority to regulate AI/AN affairs [78, 79]. This dichotomy created by the Indian Reorganization Act has been the basis for numerous legislative issues for AI/AN people since the 1960s. An example that demonstrates this fact and how environmental injustices persist is the case of uranium mining on the Navajo Nation.

Previous hard rock mining ventures and surveys from the late 1800s through the 1940s revealed large amounts of uranium in the American Southwest, much of it within the boundaries of what would be the Navajo Nation [69, 75, 82, 83]. In attempts to establish a strategic source of domestic uranium for the US military, uranium extraction and refinement began on the Navajo Nation in 1944 [69, 75, 82]. Following the start of the Cold War with the former USSR, in 1946 the US military seceded control of the atomic science and technology sector to the US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) [69, 82]. To ensure continued availability of refined uranium for atomic munitions and remove the dependency on foreign uranium, the AEC set a guaranteed price for uranium in 1948 and established itself as the sole purchaser of uranium mined in the US [69, 82]. This policy directive led to a uranium boom, attracting dozens of private entities to the American Southwest and the Navajo Nation. These companies employed thousands of Navajos to work in the uranium industry: uranium extraction, refinement, and transport.

At the time, little was known about the occupational hazards of uranium exposure, so the Navajos worked in conditions without any engineering controls (e.g., mine ventilation) and minimal personal protective equipment, often limited to

helmets and flashlights [69, 82]. In 1951 the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) began conducting health evaluations and surveys on the Navajo miners. By 1952, preliminary data from the PHS study suggested detrimental health outcomes from uranium exposure. These findings were confirmed in 1962 when PHS released its first report that documented significant occupational health hazards from the uranium industry being experienced by the Navajos, including respiratory distress, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, and cancer [69, 82]. Citing national security concerns, the AEC and federal government kept the results and findings of these studies as well as the hazards of uranium exposure from the Navajo people through the mid-1960s [69, 82]. The federal government did respond by instituting recommendations for limiting exposure, including the need for ventilation and limits an individual could work, but these were weakly enforced, and few companies invested in these safeguards.

The uranium industry on the Navajo Nation would continue until 1989. During this 45-year period almost 4.0 million tons of uranium ore was extracted, and thousands of Navajos were exposed from either directly working in the uranium industry or indirectly due to the proximity of communities to uranium features [65, 68, 69, 73, 82]. While over the years there have been legislative successes to reconcile the injustices committed against the Navajo people, more than 1000 abandoned uranium mine features still exist on the Navajo Nation today and hundreds of families have likely been impacted by the uranium legacy [69, 82]. The plight of the Navajo people and uranium mining is just one example of how historic policies towards natural resource extraction and land rights for AI/AN communities have contributed to their disproportionate exposure to environmental contaminants and persistent environmental injustice. Across Alaska, Alaska Native communities have been displaced since the 1940s for military and economic reasons [57, 84–86]. Many of these sites, abandoned or otherwise, are still polluted with industrial chemicals such as PCBs and flame retardants that are associated with cancers, developmental conditions, and chronic health diseases [73, 86]. Along the Colorado River corridor on the Arizona and California border is a large agricultural sector that applies year-round agrichemicals to support crop production. These lands are also home to Native American Tribes, such as the Chemehuevi, Cocopah, and Quechan, that face daily exposure with an unknown impact to their health [87, 88].

Both previous points demonstrate the subtlety in the shared factors of environmental injustice to minorities; however, AI/AN communities possess a unique dimension that requires redefining what environmental injustice means to them. Unlike other minority communities, though AI/AN people are US citizens they are also the original inhabitants of North America, and most tribes have a cultural and spiritual element wholly different to western conventions [66, 89–93]. A recent survey funded by the First Nations Development Institute, the leading American Indian non-profit in the US, found that 40% of respondents believed that AI/AN people no longer existed [94]. Respondents also held a dual-nature belief about AI/AN people: AI/AN people live in abject poverty yet are wealthy due to “casino money” and “government handouts” or AI/AN people are cultural and spiritual leaders/protectors of the environment, but their communities are polluted [94]. These cultural misunderstandings may exist given the inaccurate depiction of AI/AN people in US culture. These inaccuracies have created a mystique about AI/AN people that has persisted since the first European settlers arrived in North America, through westward expansion, to application of the AI/AN image for social licensing and marketing [94]. The survey found this misunderstanding of AI/AN communities extended to elected officials

as well, many of whom did not know there were distinctly different AI/AN tribes, some tribes possessed “sovereignty,” or what “tribal sovereignty” entailed [94]. As of January 2022, the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs federally recognize 574 tribes in 35 states and within the 15 states (Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia) that lack a federally recognized tribe, some possess distinct tribal communities lacking the qualifications for federal recognition [95]. The number of distinct federally recognized tribes in the US across a diverse landscape demonstrates that these communities cannot be lumped together when thinking about AI/AN populations, especially when trying to address environmental injustice. Additionally, the degree of sovereignty and the wording of the tribal constitutions for each tribe poses a significant challenge for all federal-tribal relations and regulations. These differences have been highlighted throughout the USEPA’s and NIH’s long history of attempting to rectify injustices committed against AI/AN communities or both agencies’ various resources for individuals and organizations seeking to partner with AI/AN populations [89, 91, 96, 97]. Unfortunately, many of these problems arise from cultural differences and understanding between outsiders (e.g., federal agents, scientists, activist, academics, etc.) and tribes. Perhaps one of the most significant examples of this is the unethical collection and use of biological specimens from the Havasupai Tribe in Arizona collected by Arizona State University scientists [98, 99].

## **2.2 Case study: Havasupai blood case**

In 1989, Dr. John Martin, an anthropologist at Arizona State University (ASU), was approached by members of the Havasupai tribe, a tribe located within the Grand Canyon and 1 of 21 federally recognized tribes in Arizona. The tribe hoped Dr. Martin could provide insight on why diabetes was increasing in their community and, if possible, help combat the chronic disease. As there had been other genetic links to diabetes in a different tribe, Dr. Martin enlisted the help of Dr. Therese Markow, a geneticist at ASU whose research involved genetic causes of disease.

From 1990 to 1994, samples of blood and medical records were collected from approximately 400 members of the Havasupai Tribe, all of whom signed a broadly worded consent form that allowed the researchers to “study the causes of behavioral/medical disorders” [98, 100]. The Havasupai members who consented in the study believed their samples would solely be used for the purpose of diabetes research and would help their tribe fight the disease. The ASU team discovered that the previous genetic link to diabetes was not present in the Havasupai. However, research utilizing the Havasupai samples continued in other pursuits, including studies on tribal migration and origination, mental health, and alcoholism, all conducted without the Havasupai’s knowledge.

While attending a dissertation presentation in 2003, Carletta Tilousi, a member of the Havasupai Tribe, learned her sample and those of her tribe had been used in studies that she viewed were never consented, including some studies centered on controversial and taboo topics in the Havasupai culture. In 2004, the Havasupai Tribe filed a case against the Arizona Board of Regents and Dr. Markow about the misuse of the samples [98, 100]. The case would be settled out of court in 2010 with the tribe receiving USD 700,000 in direct compensation, funds for a tribal clinic and school, and the return of the collected samples [98, 100].

As a result of the Havasupai case, the Havasupai tribe passed a “Banishment Order” that barred all ASU researchers and employees from the Havasupai lands and stopped all ongoing research with the tribe. In addition, the case exemplified the concerns other Native American tribes had of working with outside researchers. To this day, many tribes are wary of entering research partnerships with outside entities and many continue to refuse to participate in genetic research studies. The effect in the scientific community has not been as widespread. While the Havasupai case serves as an example of the importance of communication and how “informed consent” can be misused, many researchers and institutional review boards still are not aware of the significance of this case or have not internalized any general lessons about tribal ethical considerations or cultural sensitivity [98]. Therefore, it necessitates new approaches and adaptations of existing methodologies to build productive and successful partnerships with tribal Nations to address environmental injustice.

The conflict between western trained scientists and AI/AN communities stems from the prevailing western scientific pedagogy that establishes the researcher in a paternalistic role [99]. In this capacity, regardless of intent, a researchers’ innate training and approach to a situation may come off as disrespectful while the researcher may find the hesitation from the AI/AN community as unfounded, ill-informed, or short-sighted [91, 101, 102]. This can also provide a possible rationale for why cultural diversity trainings do not have the desired effect, as western trained researchers may find it difficult to either understand why certain precautions are taken or to change their behavior when approaching situations [103, 104]. U.S. scientific evaluations (e.g., grants, funding agency reviews, manuscripts, etc.) also contribute to the promotion of the existing paternalistic dogma because their evaluation criteria fail to consider the unique considerations when working with AI/AN communities, such as the amount of time needed for capacity building, requirement to seek tribal approval prior to dissemination or project expansion, etc. [91, 105].

However, if done appropriately, tribal research collaborations can be incredibly fruitful and productive. Since the mid-2000s, there has been an increased level of discussion for the benefits of approaches that view AI/AN communities as equal stakeholders, most prominent is Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) which has been promoted by the National Institutes of Health [106, 107]. Adoption of culturally appropriate epistemologies, such as TEK, can confer benefits such as facilitating a two-way exchange of knowledge and ideas, ensuring intervention or research approaches are successful, or securing social political capital for AI/AN communities [89, 92, 108]. An example that demonstrates the potential benefits of a tribal community collaborating with an outsider researcher is the case of the 2016 Sanders, Arizona water quality news story [109]. This research collaboration, led by Dr. Tommy Rock, demonstrated that for over a decade the water supplying the Sanders community had uranium concentrations that exceeded the USEPA Clean Water Act guideline, including the water supplying the community center and school. Although the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality had records of this elevation, no action was taken until the work conducted in 2016. Upon further investigation, it was suggested that one of the reasons for the chronic exposure was the size and location of the Sanders community. Sanders is a small community of 575 residents located in eastern Arizona on the border of the Navajo Nation [110]. The community size as well as its location on the border, led to a combination of nebulous administrative oversight and neglect resulting in the decade long water contamination. This collaboration led to changes that addressed the water contamination and provided a voice to a community facing environmental injustice.

### 2.3 Application of environmental analytical chemistry to address environmental justice

Environmental analytical chemistry (EAC) is a subspecialty of analytical and environmental chemistry, with roots in numerous other disciplines, including biology and ecology, focused on quantifying chemicals in environmental samples, using instruments (e.g., inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry) or techniques such as separation and purification. Although technically EAC has been around for hundreds of years, the rise of environmental concerns in the 1970s has led to an increase in EAC application to understand the nature of chemicals within the ecosystem.

Given the diversity and broad application of EAC, it is an excellent model to establish culturally appropriate and successful collaborations with AI/AN populations. At its foundation, EAC is relatable to everyone given that EAC focuses on environmental samples. Everyone on Earth drinks water, eats food, breathes air, and both anthropogenic (e.g., mining, use of chemicals, farming, combustion, etc.) and natural processes (e.g., volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, algal blooms, etc.) can result in fouling of any of these components. From the youngest child to the eldest adult, regardless of our education or upbringing, our innate senses allow us to determine if something smells, tastes, or looks bad or abnormal. Further, dependent on an individual's level of curiosity, there is a transitive property of environmental contamination. If a substance is offensive and known to cause harm it stands to reason that observation of this substance being added to food, water, or air may lead to those being contaminated, even if we are no longer able to perceive the substance. EAC provides a means to investigate if these resources are contaminated and, if so, to what extent and what is the significance. As an example, a lasting question and concern of the Navajo people in relation to the uranium legacy (*vide supra*) is how uranium has impacted the environment (i.e., air, food, soil, water) and how does it impact their health and lifestyle [67, 69, 75, 111].

EAC is also applicable as an educational modality at every level of knowledge and training [112–115]. Primary school children can be introduced to EAC with coffee filters or mesh grating. These barrier devices are implemented to provide varying levels of filtration to water, based on pore size. With this understanding this lesson can be related to the functionality of wastewater treatment plants that filter and test water at various stages within the plant. There are a variety of means high school and college age adults can be introduced to EAC. One example is the application of a barrier device (e.g., white sock or borosilicate glass chamber) to the tailpipe on vehicles that are then driven around a parking lot. Students likely understand that vehicle exhaust smells bad and can leave a residue, but some students may not give it much thought once the exhaust is diluted in the atmosphere as its noxious qualities dissipate. The barrier device acts as a filter and provides visualization of previously unobservable microscopic atmospheric pollutants, such as carbon and sulfur particulates. This lesson could then be pivoted to a discussion of petrol grades and how they impact emissions, the rationale for the institution of the USEPA and air quality, or analysis of benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene via gas chromatography–mass spectrometry, all dependent on the level of education, educational setting, and resource availability.

Outside of formal education, EAC provides a means to involve the public as well with “citizen scientists.” The use of “citizen scientists” is widely recognized as successful for a variety of reasons including motivating the public in STEM disciplines and issues, providing an inexpensive way to gather samples for a study, or early to

long-term surveillance, among many more [116, 117]. An example of the wide-reaching teaching possibilities of EAC is the long-term surveillance of water quality on the Navajo Nation. As part of an ongoing project at Northern Arizona University (NAU) and a cornerstone project of The Partnership for Native American Cancer Prevention (NACP), a collaboration between the University of Arizona Cancer Center and NAU, hundreds of water samples across the Navajo Nation have been collected since 2012 and analyzed for elemental contaminants [67]. Throughout this process, community members have been incorporated from relatively low engagement such as providing directions to a water source or sharing their story of uranium contamination to high engagement such as actively collecting water samples or visiting the laboratories at NAU. This project has also provided opportunities to for hands-on lessons taught to K-12 students on impactful EAC research.

EAC provides a bridge between western thought and AI/AN indigenous knowledge, dissolving the barrier that can prevent meaningful collaborations from forming. Many AI/AN cultures place a significance and respect for the environment in their cultural practices and teaching, imparting an understanding that nature is equally as important as living creatures [66, 89–93]. This teaching imparts a holistic worldview that describes everything as having a purpose and a level of interconnectedness, so if the natural world is impacted it necessitates an understanding of how all aspects of life may be affected [66, 89–93].

Previous western endeavors tended to be interested in a singular aspect of an event, such as how to maximize profits from a mine. In this approach, no forethought was given to how the mine may impact human or ecosystem health. This singular thought process is also evident in the dogmatic application of the scientific method. The scientific method teaches us that a “good” experiment/experimenter will *control* all possible variables in each system to understand the effect of a singular variable. The benefit of this approach is that it gives the impression that we understand how this variable will act, once we know how it behaves, we can predict future outcomes. Unfortunately, the world does not exist in a vacuum, and we are unable to control all variables.

As an example of the limitation of a singular thought process, consider the numerous inventions from Thomas Midgley Jr., a chemical and mechanical engineer in the early twentieth century. Two of his most infamous inventions would be tetraethyl lead, a fuel additive in gasoline as an “anti-knocking” agent and protection for valves, and chlorofluorocarbons that saw a wide array of applications from refrigeration to aerosol propellants [118, 119]. While both inventions were excellent at accomplishing their designed purpose, humanity would learn dozens of years later that both pose significant danger to the health of the environment and humans [118, 119].

The application of EAC seeks to understand the environment through a multifaceted lens, often relating quantified measurements to a regulatory standard or mechanistic study to describe the impact of the chemical concentration. While EAC may not elevate the environment to the same cultural significance as some AI/AN tribes, it does acknowledge the ecosystem as a web of interconnected interactions and provides a modicum of the same holistic worldview shared by some AI/AN tribes. An additional benefit to EAC is its ability to provide quantifiable numbers and objective evidence that allows regulatory science and standards to compare the content of the environmental sample. As an example, while a direct emotional, ethical and even spiritual appeal has been used to address the controversy of the lasting impact of uranium contamination on the Navajo Nation, these approaches do not provide quantifiable data for federal agencies to assess regulatory standards [89, 91, 93, 120].

Further, without objective data any possible detrimental health effects experienced may be related to other possible variables such as lifestyle choices (e.g., diet, smoking habits, etc.), occupational exposure, or family history.

As the goal of EAC is to make measurements of environmental samples, this approach can provide hard numbers to determine if there is any actual threat from exposure. The adaptability of EAC also allows its methodologies to be applied to the quantitation of contaminants in a variety of matrices, both abiotic and biotic. This versatility is beneficial because EAC practitioners can track a contaminant throughout an ecosystem to understand the mobility and characteristic of the contaminant. As it pertains to AI/AN communities, this versatility is beneficial because it offers AI/AN communities the option to donate biological samples that are not considered sacred or taboo while still providing a means to quantitate contaminants in humans. If an AI/AN community, or any community, is hesitant about providing biological samples, but is concerned about the impact a contaminant has on living organisms, EAC methodologies can utilize animal models or other biological proxies that circumvent this controversial sample collection.

### **3. Conclusions**

Both minority and tribal communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental contaminants and tribal communities have additional factors that exacerbate this inequity. This disparity creates an environment in which government agencies, academic institutions, and other research driven organizations may want to partner with AI/AN communities to address these concerns [121]. However, this desire, while potentially rooted in beneficence, can result in unintentional disastrous outcomes if not approached in a culturally appropriate manner. The prototypic example is that of the ASU and Havasupai blood case [98, 99, 122]. In that case, the initial intent of the study was not only to help the tribe but was also instituted at the request of the Havasupai people. In the end, the study was a failure as not only did the original purpose of the study not produce fruitful results, but the biological samples collected were used in research endeavors that went beyond the consent of the Havasupai Tribe. Outside of Arizona and indigenous research networks, the case of the Havasupai study has produced mixed interpretations within the U.S. [98, 105]. In general, researchers and institutional review board (IRB) members that have either previously worked with indigenous individuals or identify as a minority themselves, especially AI/AN, saw the Havasupai case as a clear violation of human rights and one that necessitates expansion of cultural understanding [98, 102]. On the opposite side, IRB members and researchers that did not have these shared experiences broadly had a difficult time understanding why the case was controversial, citing that the language of the informed consent covered the expanded research projects and the potential for research may have ultimately benefited not only the Havasupai people but other populations [98]. This rift in understanding of the significance of the case demonstrates that there is still an underlying need for western trained scientists to appreciate cultural nuances that exist in non-majority communities.

Environmental analytical chemistry [EAC] provides a means that may help establish research collaborations with tribal communities. The inherent hybrid nature of EAC provides a foundation for the spirit of collaboration. Practitioners recognize that their training represents a component of the project and to address the underlying question necessitates teamwork from a variety of experts, including community members. As

EAC focuses on the quantification of contaminants in the environment, this approach is also apt for assessing both the existence and the potential impact of contaminants an AI/AN community may be exposed. In addition, the versatility of sampling modalities for EAC provides an anodynic pathway that affords the time for trust and collaboration to build between the AI/AN community and the researcher. As an example, had the community of Sanders wished to pursue quantifying biological availability and uptake of uranium from the water, EAC provides a means to do so with a wide range of approaches: using biological samples (e.g., blood, hair, serum, etc.), animal models, or even environmental sampling (e.g., soil, water, plants, etc.) [123, 124].

Environmental exposure to contaminating industries is a problem that plagues all individuals across the globe, regardless of race, gender, economic status, political affiliations, etc. The environmental movement that captivated the U.S. in the 1960s–1980s shed light on these concerns. Unfortunately, since modernization and industrialization, there have been communities that face an increased risk of exposure to these contaminants. Compounding these issues, historical policies have made minority communities additionally vulnerable to exposure, and AI/AN communities have a further set of unique considerations that change the definition of environmental injustice. The diverse nature of EAC, including approaches that analyze environmental contamination from a variety of perspectives as well as the ability to provide regulators objective evidence, makes it a great model for addressing environmental concerns in minority and AI/AN communities.

Within the NACP, EAC has helped to destigmatize science and STEM for many AI/AN and minority individuals, one of the commonly cited barriers to STEM [125]. Dozens of students have been mentored through the NACP partnership using the lens of EAC methodologies to understand how environmental contaminants effect human and ecosystem health. Many students, both minority and majority, as well as community members have commented how the research is not only relatable, but it demonstrates that even they are able to contribute to science in a meaningful way. This normalization of science and STEM is greatly important for both students and communities. For students, it breeds curiosity for the next generation and demonstrates that science is not an unobtainable art, but rather a functional process that occurs every day of our lives all around us. For communities, it helps to empower these communities because it provides a means for them to come to the table as equals with scientists, policy makers, politicians, businesses, and other stakeholders and contribute to a two-way exchange of knowledge. Increasingly, research is demonstrating that science, especially disciplines and fields concerning the environment, requires a network of approaches to understand how a contaminant or system functions. Our world is one of mixtures and our antiquated approaches to evaluating individual variables is ill-equipped to answer the questions we have today.

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## **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## **Author details**

Jonathan Credo<sup>1\*</sup>, Jani C. Ingram<sup>2</sup>, Margaret Briehl<sup>3</sup> and Francine C. Gachupin<sup>3</sup>

1 University of Arizona College of Medicine, Tucson, AZ, USA


2 Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, USA

3 University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA

\*Address all correspondence to: [jmcredo@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jmcredo@email.arizona.edu)

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## Chapter 12

# A Decolonial Approach of Indigenous Identity in Africa

Coro J.A. Juanena

### Abstract

European African studies traditionally deny the existence of *indigenous* communities in Africa, even though in the same way as the American continent, Africa was once too a region colonised by Europe. The new social and historical identities created under the *coloniality of power*, endure in the political and academic imagination to the extent of negating the current *indigenous* status of a large proportion of African nations. This issue is of great relevance in contemporary international politics due to the resurgence of the idea of indigenous identity on a global scale and as a response to modern capitalism. Particularly, following the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. My objective of this article is to deconstruct the historical processes that have resulted in the current denial of the existence of indigenous peoples on the African continent as part of a decolonial project.

**Keywords:** African indigenous people, political identity, decolonial, coloniality of power, ideology of representation, social engineering, indigenous, postcolonial, formal legal rationality

### 1. Introduction

In traditional African European studies and many African policy areas, it is common to deny indigenous status to a large number of African indigenous peoples. However, like the American continent, Africa has been a region colonized by the Europeans; both territories have been subjected to white colonial oppression and their technology of exploitation/domination. Both territories have been geographically and politically constructed by European imperial power. In contrast, only the first peoples of the Americas are recognized as indigenous people questioning the status of most African communities. At present, only the first peoples of the Americas were recognized as indigenous, and very few indigenous peoples in Africa were granted that status, especially in the European imagination of Latin origin. It is even more surprising since the four languages of the colonial forces that acted on both continents—Africa and America—chose the same term to designate the native peoples, i.e., indigenous.

Lastly, in addition to this great paradox, there is the politico-historical context in which the academic discipline has traditionally named and constructed indigenous peoples, that is to say, anthropology. African indigenous peoples played a key role as “object of study” at the beginning of the constitution of anthropology as an area of knowledge and in its process of institutionalization as a scientific speciality. Despite being prominent protagonists as indigenous peoples, especially in the birth of British applied anthropology, ironically, at the end of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century, they will be denied their right to claim their indigenous status, the same condition that they were invested by the “servant of colonialism” like Talad Assad’s reference to anthropology [1].

In this chapter, I propose to explore all these contradictions in which a large part of the European Academy is located, especially the Latin-based institutions of knowledge, which like other political actors, barely recognize the identity of Native Americans. I aim to unveil the *ideology of representation* [2] behind these academic positions and the ideas of African and international politicians that hold those postures. In other words, analyze the power of denomination using the construction of knowledge as one of the most powerful tools employed by the imperial apparatus of the representation of the Others colonized.

In the current context of the resurgence of indigenous identity as a political identity of resistance in much of Africa and the international arena, it is particularly urgent to dismantle the genealogy of prejudices of those who reject the existence of indigenous peoples on the African continent. The proclamation of the two International Decades of the World’s Indigenous People, 1995–2004 and 2005–2014, along with the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, has this international space a leading player in this new institutional fact, according to the definition given by Jonh Searle to this term [3].

In order to reach the above purpose, I am going to use different concepts, theories and analyses of the authors who deal with decolonial criticism, making a comparative historical analysis with the aim of deconstructing the processes that have led the current capitalist power pattern to manifest the absence of *indigenous* people in Africa, thereby perpetuating what has very aptly been called Antonio Quijano [4] the *coloniality of power*.

This work is based on participant observation that I have been practising at the United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), in New York, since 2005 and at the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) UN, in Geneva, since 2008. In addition, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of statements made in these spaces by *African indigenous peoples*, states, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and experts has been carried out. To this must be added the review of abundant literature on the subject.

## **2. Re-conceptualizing the reality: the first contact of the “colonial disencounter”**

Considering that the primary function of theory is to “conceptualise reality”, as mentioned in Ezequiel Ander-Egg’s famous book on social research [5], it is essential to explain and understand the socio-historical-theoretical framework in which this expression of reality is formulated. In our case, it is particularly relevant because our goal is to demolish the social representations that have been constructed for more

than five hundred years around the term “Indigenous”. Even though this voice existed before the colonial encounter between Europe and America, it is from this point on that the concept of “indigenous” acquires the modern meanings that persist in the current collective imaginary. That is why our analysis takes this historic moment as its starting point.

In order to help understand the different factors that have contributed to the construction of the paradox I am trying to resolve; I will structure the discourse in three narrative threads that are historically consistent: (1) I will begin by analysing the terms given by the colonisers to the Others colonised in the first contact of the “colonial encounter”, (2) Next, I will examine how different models of colonial administration have affected the naming of colonised Otherness: two Europes, two continents, two historical moments and finally, (3) I will explore the effects of the processes of independence on the construction of the new devalued identities. Along the way, we will be accompanied by the thesis of Aníbal Quijano and other post- and de-colonial authors.

Before I begin, I would like to point out that these three historical causes are not the only ones that have influenced the current recognition of the existence of *indigenous peoples* in Africa. Factors of political conjuncture in each case have a direct bearing on the issue. Nonetheless, in this paper, I have focused on the importance that historical events have had in the construction of the current Western imaginary that weighs on the indigenous African identity.

The socio-cultural conditions in which the modern identity of the Other so-called *indigenous* began to be constructed under the “modern/colonial world system” [6]. The capitalist world-system has produced and reproduced the *coloniality of power*, according to what Anibal Quijano said, creating new historical and social identities—whites, Indians, blacks, mestizos, olives—which, combined with a racist distribution of labour and forms of exploitation of colonial/modern capitalism, articulated a new Eurocentric hegemony based on naturalised identities [7]. Let me take a moment to go through Quijano’s concept of *coloniality of power* in detail since, although I share the essence of this concept, I differ in some critical nuances that emerge when we apply it to the African case.

Aníbal Quijano distinguishes between “colonialism” and “coloniality”. According to this, there have been many kinds of colonialism, but only one coloniality is understood as “a pattern of power”. The “coloniality” was born with the constitution of America and reached our days expressed in what we usually call globalization. So, globalization was based on the imposition of racial/ethnic classification on the world’s population as a cornerstone of the pattern of power and operates in each of the planes, spheres and dimensions, material and subjective, of everyday social existence and societal level. In his own words, this pattern of power: “It originates and globalizes from America”... With America (Latin), capitalism becomes a world, eurocentric and coloniality and modernity are installed and associated as the constituent axes of its specific pattern of power.” [4, p. 342].

This “specific pattern of power” originated during colonialism as a formal political system and is a structure that perpetuates the situation of domination created under the colonial relationship. The current hegemonic pattern of power, which is developed within the framework of the Wallerstenian world-system [8], was established on two fundamental axes, namely: First “... the social classification of the world population on the idea of race, a mental construct that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination...” and second “the articulation of all historical forms of control of labour, its resources, and products, around capital and the world market” [4, p. 246].

Quijano's analysis of that "fundamental axis", which is the concept of race, is especially interesting for our work. A modern mental category codifies the phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered and produces historically new identities: Indians and blacks, among other categorizations. These new identities were associated with the hierarchies of the colonial domination pattern that is according to Quijano: race and racial identity were established as instruments of basic social classification of the population. Nevertheless, we are faced with an interesting paradox: while it is true that the original peoples of these two continents were called differently at the beginning of American colonisation—blacks and Indians—which led to two singular institutional facts, it is no less accurate that, both in the bureaucratic administrations of the American colonies in the fifteenth century and in the African colonial governments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the same term was used to refer to the other colonised peoples: Indians. As seen below, this issue goes beyond a mere nominal question and significantly impacts today's reality.

The second axis Quijano writes about is the: constitution of a new structure of control of labour and its resources and products that establishes a new, original and unique structure of relations of production in the world-historical experience, i.e., world capitalism. This world structure was mostly established through the creation of two institutional facts: "(a) native serfs = Americans; (b) black slaves = Africans in early American colonisation". [4, p. 247]. However, centuries later, as Europe has embarked on its modern industrial development, largely thanks to the colonization of the African continent, an African forced labour army that will join its imperial project will also be named "indigenous". The same bureaucratic term used at different historical points will give rise to different contemporary political realities.

### **3. Two different ways of naming the other at the earliest moment of the "colonial disencountre"**

The saying goes: "Who dominates denominates", and behind the different forms of naming are hidden centuries of technology of domination; thus, my discourse begins from the very first moment that the modern meanings of indigenous and black identities have started to be constructed. According to this theory, this time comes when the first modern and global geocultural identity called America is created. Next to it, the first identity of the colonized subject emerges, the indigenous identity. Later, blacks, those Africans brought to the Americas to work as slave labour, will become the second modern identity given to colonized subjects. Up to this point, I share Quijano's thesis and his powerful concept of coloniality of power, but I dissent with his idea that America was the only place where it emerged and globalized the coloniality of power. From where I stand, Africa, like America, participated in the genesis and globalization of the global pattern of capitalist power. The "modern discovery" of the two continents by Europe takes place simultaneously; both are used simultaneously in the new worldwide system in which triangular trade is constituted; although they will indeed play different roles from their peripheral places. Let us go through these roles in detail. Let us reflect on the discursive arguments that colonial power used to differentiate the two racial categories on which the coloniality of power was founded, which Aníbal Quijano finds irrelevant. We will find the different roles played by these two new racial categories and their idiosyncrasies.

Bartolomé de las Casas, in his famous theological, juridical and philosophical defence of the capacity of the native Americans to possess reason and soul, left out the

enslaved black Africans. However, he did indeed dedicate some lines denouncing the situation of the black Africans in America and defending their freedom. These were scarce and very discreet [9]. At no time did the Catholic Church have as its policy the defence of the freedom of black slaves; proof of this can be found in the various papal bulls and decrees of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries against the enslavement of Native Americans and in favour of African natives [9, p. 13]. This allowed for the further dehumanisation of the black African slave in relation to the indigenous American serf. Above all, it gave wings to the most significant bloody exodus in human history: the Atlantic slave trade.

A few years before Christopher Columbus landed on the American coast, the Portuguese Henri the Navigator landed on the African coast looking for gold and slaves. The voyages made by the Portuguese during the “Age of Discovery” during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries not only served to expand European knowledge of Africa but also initiated a process that would transform European thinking about Africans. As with the Americans, the background to this transformation of African people was the transatlantic slave trade. Africa, along with America, is “discovered” by Europe. Relations between Africa and Europe existed in the past, but there was still no coloniality of power. They were not “modern” relations, as they were later constructed by Europe.

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The context for this transformation in the image of the African people was the transatlantic slave trade. Slavery had been a prominent feature of classical Mediterranean culture and continued in various forms in medieval Europe. It also existed in the Muslim world, including North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. However, the Atlantic slave trade during the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries caused the forced migration of 12 million Africans to the Americas, which forged an explicit link in European minds between racial inferiority, slavery, blackness, and Africa in many ways, the modern idea of Africa emerged from the crucible of dehumanisation of Atlantic slavery, and this had different consequences from what A. Quijano points out about American indigeneity.

This difference between African blackness and American indigeneity was created and perpetuated institutionally until the beginning of Europeans’ penetration of the African continent. That was at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then, the effective colonization of African lands required the abolition of slavery and the official end of their Atlantic trade, which has been replaced by the exploitation of forced labour on the black continent. Africa moved from a slave-producing continent into a quasi-slave mode of production continent, what it meant to move from slavery to servitude. Servitude under slave conditions in most cases, but servitude after all.

Quijano indeed reported that Castilla’s crown decided early on the cessation the slavery of the Indians, as he argues: “to prevent their total extermination” [7, p. 249].

Nonetheless, this author does not value the arguments used in constructing these two distinct identities created by the coloniality of power. From the very beginning, these arguments helped construct the collective imaginary that would emerge around these two subaltern identities of the colonized Others: indigenous and black. For the subject under study, I consider the reasoning used to distinguish between the African black slave and the American Indian servant is particularly relevant because those arguments were the cornerstone upon which the “ideology of representation” was based. This “ideology of representation” was imposed by the colonial power with the emergence of the capitalist mode of production. As a result, the boundaries between these two modern identities—black and indigenous—were marked, and the constructed pre-judices persist in the European collective imagination, especially in the Latin one. Currently, we can clearly hear the echoes of this “ideology of representation” that persist in the pre-judices of many of the political and academic discourses about these two racial categories: indigenous versus black.

Less relevant but no less curious is the erroneous assertion of Quijano when he states that “only the Spanish and the Portuguese, as the dominant race, could receive wages, be independent traders, independent artisans or independent farmers, in short, independent producers of goods” [7, p. 249]. In Africa, certain native elites played a role that cannot be ignored. A few black Africans engaged in the slave trade, trading with European slaveholders in exchange for manufactured goods. Therefore, whereas black Africans in America certainly did not act as independent traders, the same cannot be said of Africa at the time. An Africa that was still unexplored and much less colonized.

To sum up: under the original designation in the American colonial encounter of differentiating between Indigenous and Blacks, it hides the need to maintain slave labour—black Africans—for the exploitation of the American colonies, without which there would have been no possibility, or it would have been quite different. In the same historical period, Africa was initially conceived by the Iberians and later by the rest of the Europeans as a breeding ground for slave labour. The subaltern status of African identity surpassed in time and status the indigenous category given to the natives Americans. As a modern geo-cultural identity, Africa was constructed based on the greatest contempt for the human condition, a mental structure that would leave an indelible mark on the Western imaginary. From the nineteenth century onwards, with the penetration of the African continent and its resulting effective occupation, the colonial administrations named “indigenous” all the colonised subjects of the territory. However, Africans have been living their blackness for centuries on the American continent and the coasts of their own continent.

#### **4. The significance of the colonial administration model and its impact on the denomination of colonized otherness. Two continents: Africa and America; two Europe: Iberia and Western Europe**

European explorers, more precisely the Iberian ones, landed on the African and American coasts around the same decade, but the African continent’s penetration took place many years later, well into the nineteenth century, as the Berlin conference met in 1884–1885. Let us not forget that the Berlin conference was held in 1884–1885; by then, the Americas had nearly four centuries of colonial administration behind them. However, African colonisation had not started. During that time, Africa suffered the drain of the Atlantic Trade, but we cannot speak of colonial administration



until the nineteenth-twentieth century. The Europe of the “scramble of Africa” was a very different Europe from the pre-modern Iberian Europe of the early American colonisation. Even though global capitalism was colonial/modern and Eurocentric from the very beginning, as defended by the authors of the modern global system [8].

According to A. Quijano, with the creation of America, a second geo-cultural identity called *Europe* was created: a historically new region that emerged “as the central seat of world market control”. Although, he also recognises that “in the same historical movement there was also the relocation of the hegemony the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the Iberian coasts to those of the north-west Atlantic” [7, p. 249]. So, geographically and temporarily speaking, two different Europes dominate the other colonised one by naming it. Both use a single term in their colonial administrations: indigenous.

However, despite the coincidence in using the same signifier, the imaginary constructed on the signified differs substantially. The Mediterranean Europe of the first colonial encounter with America is an agricultural Europe, where traditional or charismatic Weberian rationality predominates more in its colonising logic, far from the modern rationality of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries that will dominate the colonisation of the African continent. In the course of this “second colonial encounter”, the development and importance of bureaucracy as a *dispositive of power*, understood in Foucault’s terms [10], imposed on the administration of the colonies, will play a transcendental role. In contrast, the church was the central *dispositive of power* during the first encounter in Mediterranean Europe with the Americas was the church. On the contrary, the colonising Europe of Africa is the Europe of the thoroughly modern industrial revolution, whose *logically formal legal rationality* and patriarchal and heterosexual of its bureaucracy were fully developed. Of course, the brutality and violence of the invasion of the territory are common to the “two Europes”. The three Weberian logics of domination are present Even in both imperialist processes. By contrast, the development of formal legal instrumental power achieved during the nineteenth to twentieth century is far from what was realised on the Iberian Peninsula during the fifteenth to sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

This last feature is highly relevant, particularly when it is a question of creating what Quijano calls a new global intersubjectivity as part of that “pattern of world power” [4, 251 p.]. Though it is true that “with America, a whole universe of new material and intersubjective relations begins” in Quijano’s words, I consider that this new “intersubjectivity” will not fully develop before the development of this typically western mode of rationalization that Max Weber described in his work [11]. The application of the *formal legal logic* that governs the new hegemonic centre of power constituted in Western Europe will be the one that governs and helps “the control of all forms of control of subjectivity, of culture, and especially of knowledge, of the production of knowledge.” [4, 251 p.] and will be applied in all its glory during the African colonization.

I believe that Quijano’s analysis of how modernity and rationality were imagined as European products is far from satisfactory. Much more detailed and accurate seems to me the one elaborated by Max Weber [11].

Let us remember Weber’s four ideal types of social action and his three types of domination; only *formal legal rationality* occurred in the West with its industrialization. Formal rationality involves the rational calculation of means to ends based on universally applied rules, regulations, and laws [12], especially in economic, legal, and scientific institutions, as well as in bureaucratic forms of domination. Formal rationality is institutionalized in such large-scale structures as the bureaucracy,

modern law, and the capitalist economy. The choice of means to ends is determined by these macro structures and their rules and laws. It was the same rationality that reigned in the administration of Western Europe, prevailed in the academic world, and dominated the capitalist system. We must keep in mind that Weber thought that in social reality, both forms of domination and types of rationality were not given purely but that elements of one or the other were found even if one dominated. Weber is talking about ideal types that are models or the type of social action that dominates society. Even so, *formal legal rationality* could only be found in the West and along with the birth of modern capitalism.

The modern scientific disciplines born in the heat of the new rationality originated will collaborate, constructing the imperial power and dominion over the Other cultures arming arguments to the epistemicide they will carry out. Anthropology played a crucial role, a product of this particular form of rationalization that contributed to constructing the ideology of representation of this colonized Other. Alongside the other “sciences” which supported it, anthropology occupied the *epistemic place of the enunciation of colonial power*, that is, as the space where the knowledge of colonial power is created and expressed: Its place of enunciation. Under his “universal reason”, he created the regulating fiction of the human/animal, masculine/feminine, here/there, rational/irrational and many other representations of his modern/colonial world-system, including that non-rational otherness which their/he called *indigenous* or *black*. They relegated subjects categorized as indigenous or blacks to the corner of the primitive, savage and barbaric, invalidating them as gnoseological subjects. En ocasiones, la antropología fue más allá y colaboró con los gobiernos coloniales. Specifically, applied anthropology, in hits consolidation as a Scientific discipline, received the British Government’s support for hits service in the overseas colonies [1]. From India to Africa, anthropology served to power to “solve the problems” to which indigenous societies were affected by the new influences due to the modern colonial encounter [13]. Now, as a university discipline, anthropology did not consolidate its status until the Second World War; but that was not an obstacle that prevented it from participating in the creation of the rules of imperial representation of the Others African indigenous. To the imaginary constructed on the devalued native American alterity is added the weight of being underdeveloped of the industrial era, more primitive if it fits in the scale of western evolution [14].

This typically Weberian legal rationality also existed in all fields of the new colonial administrations. French direct *governments* and British indirect *governments* named the other colonised African: indigenous. All the fully capitalistic colonial authorities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries used formal legal domination to exercise their rule, which led to structural changes in African societies. This typically Weberian legal rationality also existed in all fields of the new colonial administrations. French direct *governments* and British indirect *governments* named the other colonised African: indigenous. All the fully capitalistic colonial authorities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries used formal legal domination to exercise their rule, which led to structural changes in African societies. The creation of local “tribal leaders” [15] and forced internal migrations where there was not enough labour to exploit the resources of a wealth-hungry Europe completely altered community life. Colonial authorities used customary laws to enforce *native policy* [16], making their *social engineering* a true example of typically Western Weberian rationality and often with the assistance of applied anthropology. Not only were ethnic groups or political leaders created, but the link between authority and power possessed by traditional African leaders was broken.

These “new traditional leaders” chosen by the colonial government will acquire a power that did not exist until then, while local authority will continue to be exercised by religious or other leaders. In this regard, I would like to clarify that before European colonisation, the political organisation of African societies was not only in the hands of tribal leaders. Far from it, political power as a social concept reaches subtleties that are difficult to measure, and African societies are as diverse as their territory is vast. I only want to highlight the colonial administration’s disruption of the “traditional” social organisation of African communities and the changes related to authority and power. This disconnection between power and authority will go crescendo, and the consequences will be difficult to foresee in contemporary Africa. For example, Patrick Chabal writing about “the politics of being” in Africa, talks about the need for “modern” politicians to use “traditional” authority in order to satisfy the demands of the “traditional” world in which the political leaders themselves also belong [17], 65–68 pp.

Summing up: A Western Europe that started its industrial revolution creates and applies the technology of domination—the formal legal rational bureaucratic apparatus—more complex and sophisticated than the one constructed by Iberian Europe, agricultural and far behind the modernity of the north. The representation of this colonised indigenous Other in both Europe differs significantly, to the point of denying indigenous status to the African due to comparative offence with that “first” image created under the colonisation of Mediterranean Europe about “the indigenous” in America. To this subtle difference, which Quijano does not include in his analysis, between the two Europes—agricultural and industrial—we could add the effects they have had and continue to have on the recognition of the indigenous African identity, depending on how this *formal legal-rational domination* was applied in the different models of European colonial administration. What we call *direct* or *indirect governments*, and their variations have had an impact on the prevalence of an *indigenous* African identity up to the present day. This other historical condition will result in a greater or lesser obstacle on the road to recognising their political identity.

For example, it is interesting to note that most African indigenous peoples from British colonial administration tend to have less difficulty in recognising their indigenous identities, such as the Maasai (Kenya, Tanzania), the Ogiek, the Samburu, the Turkana (Kenya), the Cushite, the Nio-Hamite, the San (Tanzania), the Himba (Namibia) or the Khoekhoe (South Africa). On the other hand, fewer cases of indigenous identity are recognised in African countries under the French administration. However, the forms of colonial domination were more complex than the simple classification of “direct” or “indirect rule”, so a case-by-case study is mandatory. The variability of the cases and their historical particularities make it difficult to elaborate a universal proposition on this question, which also goes beyond the purpose of the present chapter. In this paper, I only want to point out the need for a historical analysis of colonial administrations if we are to understand better current attitudes to the recognition of indigenous identities in Africa.

## **5. Independent processes and reconstruction of postcolonial identities**

We move on to the third narrative thread: how new contemporary subaltern identities have been influenced by how colonial subjects were named and named themselves during the processes of independence. The leaders who participated in the new nation-states and their nationalist discourses have had, and continue to have,

a notable influence on the construction of the identities currently claimed by the collectives living within their national borders. While on the American continent, it was the white elites, mainly the colonists themselves, who led the process of independence from the metropolis in Africa, it was the African elites—albeit *occidentalised* ones—who led the process. *Occidentalised* or the new *occidentalised* class refers to the acculturated African social group, knowledgeable in the colonisers' languages and prepared for the tasks of administration or economic management. Introduced to Western logic and behaviour, this social group was a necessity of the coloniser who had the collaboration of African sectors who saw in their rapprochement with European power the possibility of improving their social positions. From this group came conformists and Protestants, but for all of them, nationalism would be the theoretical expression of the *occidentalised*, as Ferran Iniestas rightly points out [18].

As a consequence of this, the white American pro-independence elites had the need to preserve in their nationalist discourse the distinction between a differentiated white “we” and an indigenous “they”. An indigenous “they” was used as a national symbol, although not included in the emancipatory project. In the African case, the “we” of the African independence elite is constructed by the *occidentalised* black African, where there is no place for a “we” other than the *indigenous* “they”. The elites of the new national governments will declare: “In Africa, we are all indigenous”.

By the 1950s and 1960s, most African countries had become independent, resulting in a new change in the internal organisation of African societies. The gap between authority and power created under the colonial rule will widen with the creation of nation-states with complex and unpredictable consequences for contemporary Africa. Previously exercised by colonial “tribal leaders”, Political power will be replaced by modern nationalist bourgeois leaders, the so-called *occidentalised*. Whether rebellious or conformist, this black elite will be educated under the modern rational eurocentric hegemonic model and will constitute a qualitative and transcendent change in the interpretation of power in the “new” African national societies. Many of them educated in Western universities, this new social elite—the *occidentalised*—led the struggles for independence in Africa.

Over the years and with the birth of nation-states, *indigenism* became an instrument at the service of the new national identity, a tool to destroy the multiple local identities. Korsbaek and Sámano have referred to this political instrument as *state indigenism* that hides or shows integrationist, assimilationist, paternalistic policies [19], that is, the use of indigeneity to integrate them into a single national identity. That will be the same *state indigenism* that will lead most African states NOT to recognise *Indigenous Peoples* in their territories under the claim that “we are all indigenous in Africa”.

The Western-educated male elites will lead this national integrationist discourse, while millions of subalterns will continue their silent resistance. Their voices remain silenced until they encounter new transnational spaces of demands in which they can once again raise their voices. The years of oppression by the old and now new economic, political and cultural powers, together with the disillusionment with the grand narratives of modernity—Marxism and nationalism—that were at the centre of the first anti-colonial struggle, began to take root in the social consciousness of the natives.

New post-colonial identities and the re-signification of the “old” ones that had been dormant or manipulated up to that point are emerging. A qualitative change has occurred in the meaning of identity, in the meaning of “being indigenous”. Colonial history and the processes of independence of the new states will play a transcendental

role in recognition of this collective subject called indigenous in what some authors have called the Second-wave indigeneity [20]

## 6. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tried to unravel the historical ideological and political burden that hides the denial of the existence of indigenous people in Africa. *African indigenous peoples* have been adapting to the harsh circumstances that have come their way: first to European colonisation and later to nationalist policies of integration and assimilation. As indigenous peoples, they are confronted with the forms of domination brought about by developing the *global pattern of capitalist power*. However, new spaces of resistance are opening up in the complex pattern of power.

Nevertheless, new spaces of resistance are opening up in the complex pattern of power. At the end of 1993, and following the recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights, the General Assembly proclaimed the first International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995–2004) to be followed by the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005–2014). During this time, spaces of global confluence have been created where Indigenous Peoples from all parts of the world come to express their demands and their subordinate situation. The result of the joint work between them and other institutions is the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved by the General Assembly in 2007. In the meantime, significant linguistic changes will also occur as a result of the confluence of the various forms of resistance of peoples that remain under the yoke of colonisation. This second wave of indigeneity assumes that decolonisation is an unfinished process and indigeneity is a politics of resistance [20], 2 p.

The most serious error in which those who deny the *indigenous* status of Africans is to interpret identity from an essentialist perspective. To consider any identity as an immanent being is to continue reproducing the *coloniality of power*. It is as foolish to understand indigenous identity in an essentialist way as it is to conceive of Western identity in the same way.

Like all current *indigenous* identities, *indigenous African* identity is a political, post-colonial, contemporary, and global identity [14] that forces us to take a constructivist approach. *Indigenous* identity is political because it is constructed under and through social conflict. As such, it can only be explained within the socio-political contexts in which it emerges. We must consider the struggles and the power that constitute them. As a collective identity, it generates consciousness in and for itself, expressed in a differentiated “we”.

On the other hand, the adjective postcolonial is particularly significant in our case, as it places us in the geographical and historical context. Geographically, it places us in the territories conquered by the colonial power and historically, it places us in the process of colonisation [21]; this adjective is relevant because of the centrality that the immaterial social fact of colonisation acquires.

Also, being a contemporary identity means that it could adapt to current political conditions. The term indigenous has travelled through time, acquiring different meanings. While for centuries, marked by colonialism, “*the Indian*” in its subaltern condition has undergone a *process of pejorativisation*, today it is being re-evaluated. In the process of exaltation, the new Planetary Indigenous Social Movement has re-semantized the old *indigenous* category positively, endowing it with *identity pride* and directing it towards the conquest of cultural and political self-determination.

A struggle strengthened after the approval of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 by the UN.

Furthermore, it is a global identity since it has suffered and suffered with different collective subjects around the globe the experience of colonisation. From their different realities, they agree on a different way of *being in the world*, cooperating with other counter-hegemonic actors of the organised global resistance, whose objective is to respond to the global hegemonic power. The new *Indigenous* being emerged from the dialectic of colonisation. They claim their right to relate, imagine and think of themselves as a collective subject that puts into practice its own mode of representation after centuries of colonial repression and in response to the collective identities invented by the West.

The integrative function that nation-states were intended to fulfil is diluted in the new globalised world. "New" imagined communities are re-emerging in the international arena with new conceptualisations of the world that are more transnational than Western [21]. As part of this so-called Fourth World, the indigenous cultural minorities reappear on the global stage. Devalued Otherness during years of equalitarianism is now re-signified in the identity process, and it becomes the ontological desire, the desire "to be" at the "Age of difference". It is not simply that postcolonial critique denounces the new material and cultural conditions to which the subalterns are subjected, but also that those marginalised, subjugated memories of colonisation, those memories of minorities, alter-native counter-memories [22], are now re-written by the colonised subaltern subjects helping them to re-establish macerated pride. Postcolonial "new" political identities sprout re-constructed through new identitarian pride [14].

The imperialist social engineering used under African colonisation, based on a more complex formal legal logic than that which initiated the colonality of power in the Americas, makes the cases of African Indigenous Peoples particularly difficult. The imperial social order of European colonialism has left an inheritance to African indigenous peoples that overshadow and further obstructs the tortuous path that can lead them out of the subaltern place to which they have been relegated. To reveal the condition of subjugation in which they have been displaced, we have to study the historical context and the processes of domination. To this must be added the complex reality that dominates the ongoing globalisation: aided by today's economic powers, new actors reproduce the global pattern of capitalist power more strongly.

Moreover, nevertheless, in the heat of the new social movements of resistance, *African Indigenous* Peoples are breaking through, staging the history of the West entangled in the webs of their own language. A terminology that talks about the structure of capitalist power, they were told they were slaves; they were told they were black; they were told they were subjects of kings they did not know; they were told they were indigenous, without knowing what it meant; they were told they belonged to a state and had to comply with its borders and its laws, laws they ignored; now they say "we are", in a struggle they never gave up.


## **Author details**

Coro J.A. Juanena  
Center for Postcolonial Studies, KOIZ, Mendexa, Spain

\*Address all correspondence to: [koro@postcolonialstudies.org](mailto:koro@postcolonialstudies.org)

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# Researching African Indigenous Population in Contemporary Times: What Scholars and Practitioners Need to Know

*Eucharia Chinwe Igbafe*

## Abstract

Researching indigenous people has been characterized by debate on what indigenous knowledge systems and epistemologies should guide the research. This debate is a result of limited knowledge of who indigenous people are, and what epistemologies, philosophies, cultural values and practices that inform their physical and spiritual beliefs. There are questions on how the indigenous research paradigm and research methodology can help to provide quality research outcomes. However, these questions have deterred emerging scholars and practitioners who are interested in researching indigenous people. This chapter aimed to advance awareness of what scholars and practitioners need to know about researching indigenous people in contemporary times. An exploratory approach was used to identify, describe and discuss information from diverse publishing sites to build holistic knowledge for scholars and practitioners. The concepts that the scholars and practitioners can refer to, for an appropriate understanding of indigenous people were defined. Then, considered why the research on the indigenous population by scholars and practitioners matters. The chapter presented and discussed the indigenous research paradigm and research methodology suitable for the indigenous setting. The chapter also explored relevant human rights frameworks and the competency to guide scholars and practitioners in an indigenous setting.

**Keywords:** African indigenous population, indigenous epistemologies, indigenous knowledge systems, indigenous paradigm, scholars and practitioners

## 1. Introduction

Research plays a vital role in developing, protecting, and preserving human life. Scholars and practitioners engage in research for personal promotion and professional development. Researching is a methodical examination of life-associated challenges by gathering reliable information with different designs, methods, and analytical approaches for better understanding and solutions [1]. Researching the indigenous population or people by scholars and practitioners in contemporary times demands an

understanding of indigenous knowledge and epistemologies embedded in their cultural philosophies to assure right-based practices that recognize and promote respect for indigenous peoples' heritage. This implies that research targets new information and seeks to add or verify existing knowledge to make decisions and inspire action.

Researching the indigenous population contributes to understanding their social and cultural identities, natural environment, and spiritualities [2]. Researching indigenous people in the indigenous setting seeks to obtain information about 'who they are, their pattern of knowledge construction (epistemologies), realities (ontologies), and moralities (axiology) [3, 4]. Researching indigenous populations with a relevant human rights framework promotes approaches that do not impinge on the rights of the participants ethically or legally, whether in research methodology or publication of the research results [5]. The human rights framework for indigenous people advances sustainable interaction and relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people [researcher].

According to Igbafe [1], reciprocal interaction is a two-way communication relevant to authentic relationships vital for gathering information required for the betterment of the people. Reciprocal interaction is rooted in the indigenous people's way of life, in which relationships are promoted as the essence of life. The indigenous people describe a distinct social and cultural group that shares collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy, or from which they have been displaced. The land and natural resources are inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, and physical and spiritual well-being ([6], p. 1). A more inclusive definition described indigenous peoples as:

'People with self-identification at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; historical continuity with pre-colonial or pre-settler societies; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic, or political systems; distinct language, culture, and beliefs; form non-dominant groups of society; resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities ([7], pp. 1–2).

The definitions identify indigenous people as a group passionate about their indigenous identities, cultures, philosophies and spiritual practices and self-determination as an individual or collective group for the betterment of their lives. Hodgson [8], went on to explain that African indigenous people are often identified as marginalized and discriminated against by diverse organizations. Hodgson [8], elaborates that African indigenous people could be identified with the following characteristics:

- political and economic marginalization rooted in colonialism;
- de facto discrimination is based often on the dominance of agricultural peoples in the State system (e.g., lack of access to education and health care by hunters and herders);
- the particularities of culture, identity, economy and territoriality that link hunting and herding peoples to their home environments in deserts and forests (e.g., nomadism, diet, knowledge systems);
- some indigenous peoples... are physically distinct, which makes them subject to specific forms of discrimination.

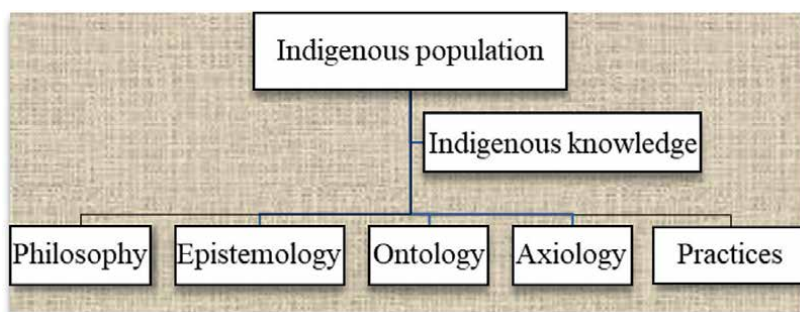
Researching indigenous peoples in an African setting aims to advance a right-based approach that recognizes and respects indigenous identities, cultures,

philosophies and spiritual practices and self-determination fundamental for developing and strengthening knowledge systems. Researching indigenous people is vital to understanding these concepts, giving meaning to information gathered and giving voice to indigenous people stated in the United Nations Human Rights framework [9]. To increase the quality of the information in this chapter, an exploratory approach was used to identify what scholars and practitioners need to know about researching indigenous peoples. The exploratory research contributes new insights into the understanding of a domain with scant information by describing and discussing different perspectives [10, 11]. The use of the exploratory approach is on gathering relevant information and explaining, rather than investigating or interpreting the concepts in a particular context.

In this chapter, I explain relevant terms and terminologies to promote conscious awareness of the indigenous population, the goals, and the importance of researching the indigenous population to indigenous people, researchers, and research institutions. This chapter discussed the relevant human rights framework for studying indigenous peoples, the indigenous research paradigm, and the research methodology.

## 2. Concepts vital in researching indigenous population

Researching indigenous populations requires clarification of some terms to enhance an understanding of the meaning and how are applied in this chapter (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1.**  
*Concept vital for researching indigenous people.*

### 2.1 Indigenous knowledge

The Indigenous knowledge system is generational knowledge developed from experiences, tested in practices, and affirmed by results, transferred from generation to generation to ensure indigenous people's sustainable growth. Hodgson ([8], p. 8) is of the view that African Indigenous Knowledge is shaped by the development of wisdom and communal values—it is the application of knowledge in a moral, cultural and environmental framework which makes African knowledge so important for sustainability...” Indigenous knowledge has been defined as the understandings, skills, and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings...including cultural life...systems of classification, resources, practices,

social interactions, rituals, and spirituality” ([12], p. 8). The definition presents the understandings, skills, and philosophies as a vital set of theoretical frameworks in the indigenous people’s conceptions about life which form the foundation for knowledge development, verification, and sharing. Kaya and Seleti ([13], p. 31) affirms that African indigenous knowledge incorporates indigenous beliefs, practices, customs, worldviews, and informal forms of education. Kaya and Seleti [13] explained that African indigenous knowledge is developed and strengthened by communal histories, communal thoughts, and indigenous literary and philosophical foundations, which are vital for understanding indigenous people and their epistemology.

## **2.2 Indigenous epistemology**

Epistemology is the philosophical study of the process of gaining knowledge through providing answers to questions that help in knowledge construction. Epistemological questions are: How do we know [search for information] or how can we know [process of searching for the knowledge] or how do we know that we know [process of testing our knowledge], how do we know that what we know is true [affirmation of acquired knowledge [14]. Epistemological questions connect human thoughts to reality and help to identify the acceptable or unacceptable nature [15, 16]. Epistemology reveals the philosophies, thoughts, values, and theories of past and present knowledge [17]. Epistemology presents values and ideas that have been areas of study which are an aspect of a larger body of epistemological work [18, 19]. Epistemologies, therefore, are the core of understanding a set of theoretical plans that is belief-driven to promote and advance the knowledge system of indigenous people.

African indigenous epistemologies describe the indigenous theory of Knowledge, the African conception of the nature of knowledge, the means of gaining the knowledge, the criteria for the assessment of the validity of knowledge, the purpose of the pursuit of knowledge, and the role that knowledge plays in human existence [20]. The pursuit of knowledge with indigenous epistemology advances an African philosophy with a distinctive epistemic identity and unique knowledge [21]. African indigenous philosophy is an intellectual product produced with cultural, historical, and geographic traditional standards and promoted to establish African knowledge order and to direct focus on problems relating to African experiences [22]. The African experiences reveal the critical truth of Africa’s local realities and the different ways they create meaning out of life events [23]. African perception of realities and ways of knowing are developed and strengthened with African indigenous philosophies.

## **2.3 Indigenous philosophies**

Indigenous philosophies refer to philosophical discourses developed by Africans and their descendants [24, 25]. African indigenous philosophies are a set of experiences and explanations relating to the values and practice, which in most circumstances involve the worldview of the local communities, tested and verified by the locals, unlike the assumption from colonialism proposing that African knowledge is not [26]. African indigenous philosophies provide research scholars and practitioners with information on the nature of African realities, and their association with cultural values and practices to enable the researchers to engage in critical thinking about the people and their experiences [27].

## 2.4 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the body of knowledge which studies the concepts like existence (who am I), being (why do I or we exist), becoming (what changes am I going to encounter as I continue to exist) and reality (what is the quality of my existence and how do I face the realities of my existence whether positive or negative) [21, 28]. In this regard, ontology deals with the features of reality, connected with a fundamental question of what indigenous communities regard as what is real or false based on their collective worldview of realities [29]. Ontology in researching indigenous people draws from the knowledge of the community, their ways of life, their common sense and experiences developed from a body of knowledge presented in oral history, proverbs and folktales [30]. Ontology is relevant for the understanding of how African indigenous people view the realities of life through oral stories and proverbs to improve the quality of their existence.

African indigenous ontologies promote and advance African realities inseparable from the culture and histories [31]. The knowledge of the culture, histories, and connectedness with the environment comprising the living and the non-living helps in the understanding of their relationship and duties to everyone in the setting [32–34]. This knowledge develops and strengthens ontological security describes ‘as ... the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity ([35], p. 59). Ontological safety limits the use of western paradigms and epistemologies [29, 36] in researching indigenous people.

## 2.5 Axiology

Axiology refers to the values of a given setting. Values are subdivided into ethics and aesthetics rooted in the recognition of basic human, community and civil rights, as well as the beauty of the natural environment [16]. Ethics recognizes the rights and wrongs within indigenous settings unique to their worldviews and experiences. Axiology reveals the ethical values of the indigenous people such as moral laws that guide their knowledge, attitude and interaction in the setting [37]. Axiology in researching indigenous people is concerned with the standard of conduct expressed in cultural values and practices that Africans are known for or expected to display. African standards of conduct are principles derived from ‘cultural inheritance: identity, history and beliefs that make life worth living ([37], p. 49). Indigenous cultural values encourage respect for everyone, the land, and other resources, the aged, the significant others in charge of the sacred resources, spiritualists, and clans [38]. These cultural principles guide how indigenous people perceive, evaluate, preserve and maintain their cultural behavior [37]. African indigenous cultural values discourage any activity that would demean cultural inheritance and disrespect cultural practices in the indigenous setting.

Scholars and practitioners should recognize and respect the moral standards of indigenous people evidenced in their spirituality, the pattern of communication, interaction, and relationship to assure immediate acceptance. Learning how to display respect for everyone, elders, and significant others to conform to the cultural order of the community is vital in an indigenous setting. Respectful behavior promotes collaboration, reciprocal interaction, and communication patterns characterized by verbal and non-verbal behavior [39]. Knowledge of indigenous ethical standards and practices guides scholars and practitioners to:

- Be responsive to the practice of indigenous people as an individual and collective group.
- Employ flexible approaches that are rigorous but reliable and ethical.
- Consider the indigenous people's concepts of time defined by 'right time' [suitability: meaning the research time should not conflict or interfere with any cultural, spiritual festival or market day].
- The time should be suitable for elders who are the custodian of law and traditional orders, instead of the schedule by the researcher and their institutions.
- Display a respectful attitude in communication, interactions and relationships throughout research activities.

Knowledge of indigenous ethical standards and practices reduces complex relationship issues and optimizes honesty, respect, and integrity in collaborating for the quality of data. In the chapter, it is essential to identify the objectives and importance of researching indigenous peoples.

### **3. Why does research on the indigenous population by scholars and practitioners matter**

Indigenous people play a vital role in the preservation and protection of traditional beliefs and practices in the field of indigenous knowledge systems. The principal aim of researching indigenous is to promote the study of indigenous people and share the information with the general public, and policymakers and produce an evidence-based document for future practice. Recognition and giving a voice to indigenous people have become the rationale for the increase in research on them. There is evidence that researching indigenous people reveals their unique knowledge, epistemologies and relationships between cultural values, practice and rationality of knowledge construction [23].

Researching indigenous people is critical to the development and preservation of indigenous worldviews addressing multiple perspectives and providing information for the understanding of differences in indigenous people, contributing to human diversity, and rich cultures and respecting spiritual, traditional and philosophies to achieve sustainable and equitable development [9]. Hence, researching indigenous people has the following benefits:

#### **3.1 Multiple perspectives**

African indigenous people's lives describe as "a part of a scientific tradition that advocates multiple perspectives in the understanding of indigenous peoples ([40], pp. xvi–xviii). Researchers understanding the different perspectives of African realities situate the data analysis to effectively identify and understand how the indigenous population perceives, thinks, and seeks to address issues confronting them [41].

The rationale for this goal is from the assumption that African indigenous people have diverse perspectives because of differences in ethnic groups. The ethnic groups within larger indigenous populations have cultural values and practices informing



their lifestyle and ways of handling challenges. In studying indigenous people, most of these perspectives are either grouped or undermined, which produces misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation in research interpretations, findings, and reporting of the results. Understanding the different perspectives from indigenous epistemologies would enable scholars and practitioners to approach researching the indigenous population unbiased.

### **3.2 Interpret and align complex information**

Interpreting information about the indigenous population could be complex without knowledge of indigenous epistemology. Indigenous peoples' epistemologies promote critical thinking to ensure that meaning creation integrates indigenous people's ways of perception of realities with limited bias [30]. Bias reduction is by analyzing data gathered from indigenous people with cultural, spiritual, and natural environment principles.

### **3.3 Developing human capital for indigenous research**

Human capital development is about developing and improving knowledge, skills, and attitude. The development of human capital is required to meet demands of well-trained and well-prepared researchers and a growing commitment to study indigenous peoples. Well-trained refers to having the best education of indigenous people and their epistemologies and how to transfer the training in the research field. Well-prepared refers to having the skills to relate, interact and obtain in-depth data on the problem under study. Researching the indigenous population would drive the motivation and determination among emerging scholars and practitioners in tertiary education, and increase inclusion in the curriculum or courses on research methodology.

### **3.4 Improving experiences of researchers of indigenous people**

The goal of tertiary education is to solve human problems. Researching the life of indigenous people helps in better understanding of ways to interact, relate and protect their rights to existence. A lack of funding for extensive study has demotivated emerging researchers and increased experiences of frustration for existing scholars and practitioners [1]. Researching indigenous people would increase the possibility of funding support across funding agencies and improve the experiences of researchers.

### **3.5 Increasing skills to work with indigenous people**

Researching the indigenous population would expose emerging scholars and practitioners to unfamiliar cultures and practices. Equipping academics with skills to work with indigenous people would increase the understanding of African perspectives, promote better acceptance of these perspectives and build better relationships between researchers and indigenous people. It would advance trust, partnership in decision making, and information sharing and improve working with indigenous people. Working with indigenous people would increase documentation of research outcomes for better sustainable development of indigenous communities.

#### 4. Differences in indigenous and Western thinking in research

There is a recognizable difference between African and Western thinking in research. African indigenous thinking in research is concerned about human beings and their environment as co-creator of knowledge, thus experiences, intuition and supernatural power are means of knowing to address human problems. Intuitive knowledge is derived from personal perceptions and experiences. Africans also think knowledge is a product of supernatural revelation. While western thinking is that knowledge is an outcome of a scientific or empirical process. Knowledge without scientific backing is not authentic and human problems should be addressed with the outcome of scientific evidence. There are other sources of differences in thinking as relates to western and African indigenous research. **Table 1** compares the differences between African indigenous and western thinking in research. It ties the section together and provides a nice simplification of everything discussed so far.

Construct	Definition	African indigenous thinking	Western thinking
The family, clan or community system	A family comprises people related by blood, A clan/community comprises different families and ancestors	Africans place value on collaboration, interdependence and shared responsibilities. Collaboration encourages the formation of a connection, communication and alignment with other people to increase the communal sense of belonging.	Western thinking promotes a nuclear family system, where individuality is preferred instead of extended family orientation.

Source: [42], p. 299.

The concept of “we/us” versus “I”	We/us refers to collectivism through the establishment of a connection with others in solving or preventing problems as against “I” The ‘I’ concept encourages individuality in problem-solving leaving the individual alone, stressed and confused.	The notion of we/us is achieved by looking at life and death situations through the effects on families and communities. This help to search for causes for the occurrence to establish the fundamental relations that eventually produce a framework to address the body, which in complete terms means “collective frameworks or body of solution.” The individual can only say: ‘I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am. This is the cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.	The notion of “I” focused on individuality in problem identification and intervention. The idea of “I” detaches solutions from other members of the community who may be directly or indirectly affected.
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Sources: [43], p. 51.

Spirituality	The establishment supernatural domain of human existence	Africans acknowledge the existence of a supreme being called God and the existence of their ancestors. God or the ancestors can prevent, protect or allow humans to suffer for their disobedience and sins.	Science produces the ultimate solution to human problems.
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Source: [44].

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>African indigenous thinking</b>	<b>Western thinking</b>
Therapy emphasizing the focus on practical applications of education.	The healing approaches by the African healer and western therapists	African sangomas/healers use verbal and expressed communication in dancing, songs and music to promote healing because of the belief that some words cannot be expressed in words but in action.	Western therapists use verbal communication (talking cure) to study and understand clients.
Source: [42], p. 71.			
Diagnose human illness	The search for the root cause of human illness.	Africans think of illness in terms of God, ancestors, pollution and witchcraft. However, African healers use their medium to diagnose and distinguish natural from supernatural causation	Western think of illness as a result of chance, hereditaries or lifestyle,
Source: [45].			
Physical environments	This refers to the natural environment and advances reciprocal (two-way) interaction between humans and nature.	African believe the physical environment is vital for the cognitive, emotional and spiritual development and healing of human beings' positive time relationship with the environment perseveres health and negative Relationships produce such illness and mental disturbance to the people.	The western beliefs in the body, mind and soul. These are the use of medicine and therapy as solutions to mental illness.
Source: [46].			

**Table 1.**  
*Differences between African indigenous and Western thinking in research.*

## 5. Indigenous research paradigm

There are perspectives fundamental in researching the indigenous population that is derived from African indigenous thinking reflected in their epistemologies. These perspectives are entrenched in indigenous people's paradigm recognized in concepts, practices, and values that define their holistic existence. Paradigm involves a dialogic relationship action within the setting in which indigenous people exist ([47], p. 51). An indigenous research paradigm is described as one in which knowledge is shared in the relationship among humans and between humans and the cosmos, and which requires relational accountability, with researchers meeting a few responsibilities to an extended relational network that includes humans, the natural world, and the spirit world ([48], pp. 176–177). Some studies provided an example of indigenous paradigms [49, 50], and are illustrated in **Table 2** below.

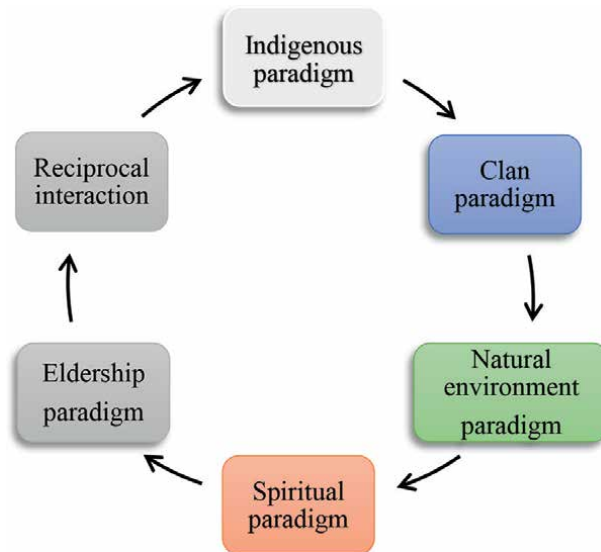
The indigenous paradigm shapes and reshape how indigenous people live and construct knowledge. The indigenous paradigm guides researchers on what is relevant in understanding the processes indigenous people follow in knowledge construction. The section focuses on four paradigm perspectives such as the clan, environment, spirituality, eldership, and reciprocal interaction that determine the epistemology,

Paradigm	Characteristics of indigenous paradigm
Axiology	Valued knowledge comes from many sources including dreams, the ancestors, stories, and experience, and is embedded in the land
Epistemology	Legitimacy is based on connectivity, physical and spiritual nature of life, knowledge, and existence
Ontology	Realities are predicated on being embodied and connected. Reality is not immutable and there are different layers of reality that are contextual and related to being a knowledge holder
Author: [49], pp. 4-5.	
Epistemology	Fluid emplaced learning and the expression of experiential insight through stories, dreams, elders, ancestors, and the natural world
Axiology	Indigenous control of research, respect, reciprocity, safety, non-obtrusiveness, deep listening, non-judgemental reflection, responsibility, holistic logic, self-awareness, and subjectivity
Ontology	Emphasizes spirituality and reciprocity
Author: [50], pp. 1-16.	

**Table 2.**  
*Perspectives underlying indigenous paradigm.*

axiology, and ontology of indigenous people. The concepts establish the standard model for understanding indigenous people. The concepts also guide the activities of the researcher with critical questions such as:

- Who/what is to be researched and analyzed?
- What are the setting and the connection to indigenous people to be studied?



**Figure 2.**  
*Indigenous research paradigms.*

- What are the spiritual beliefs likely to influence the people to be studied and the appropriate question to be asked?
- Who are the elders and what are their essence in the research to be conducted? These paradigms are presented and discussed in **Figure 2**.

### **5.1 Clan as an indigenous research paradigm**

A clan is an organized integrated system, ruled by leaders who are custodians of law and order. In a clan, people are bounded by relatedness such as kinsmen or kindred. The term 'Clans' refers to a group of families related by blood from a shared forefather living together in an area, often considered their community [51]. This suggests that clans are knitted by blood, the descent of families and the extended family system; thus, a clan is a natural life progression from shared ancestors. A clan comprises humans and the natural environment (plants, rivers and animals). In modern African society, a clan is referred to as a community comprising different tribes or ethnic groups. An ethnic group refers to a group of people bonded by common ancestral lineage. Consequently, the fundamental component of human existence is found in the group, not in individuality. In this regard, the clan pursues shared existence, collaboration is respected over rivalry and individuality. Collaboration is important; hence, empathy and support are considered the ways to live and make progress. Collaboration is also a vital part of family existence and organization which is reflected in communal living. For example, the component of an African family may include the parents, children, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles and they cooperatively care for and support each other [52].

Empathy is a principle in action. Empathy acts as a uniting power in connecting families and the community "as social creatures allowing them to know what other people are thinking and feeling, to emotionally engage with them, to share their thoughts and feelings, and to care for their wellbeing ([53], p. 2). Empathy is often used to explain the accommodation of relatives and shared communal care as well as support. Providing care to relatives is an acceptable obligation, since, the purpose of the support is to build a sustainable clan. Accommodating relatives is also a source of connection between family units and the community. The belief in the unified clan and extended family is an important characteristic of African indigenous people that increases support in times of life crisis or death. To achieve a clan-centred and integrated system, the families as a community promote reciprocal relationships and interaction with humans, nature, and the environment for sustainable existence. People are conscientious with the belief that extinction of one element will lead to exposure of others to vulnerabilities. Hence, clan members are also willing to change their thinking and behavior to protect and defend the clan, thus this perspective guided clan welfare and continued existence as an integrated system. Clan plays an important role in the life of the indigenous population as follows:

- Protecting the cultural heritage by ensuring that their members are committed to their values and practices.
- Preserving the indigenous cultural heritage through teaching and encouraging willingness to practice the values in obedience that comes through respect for cultural identity.

- Maintaining the cultural heritage through diligently continuing its restoration and acceptance national and international.

The knowledge of the clan and kindreds that form the major and minor ethnic groups, and the philosophies that influence and determine how data are gathered and interpreted would enhance the quality of the research.

## **5.2 The natural environment as an indigenous research paradigm**

The natural environment is concerned with how the entirety of the clan and natural resources interact to influence the other. The indigenous people have a standard of conduct and relationships that encourage reciprocal interaction in protecting and preserving the natural environment. Reciprocity is in the recognition and respect of the two-way interaction between humans and other elements of the natural environment [1, 54]. The reciprocal interaction is derived from the assumption that humans and the natural environment contribute to each other's progress [1, 55]. Some studies affirmed the natural environment as indigenous paradigm research [56, 57]. Given that human interaction with the natural environment has been found to shape consciousness and thoughts about issues [58].

The indigenous people's interaction with the natural environment is sacred, spiritual and rooted in cultural practices and traditional customs aimed to improve living. Researchers need to identify and understand the sets of assumptions guiding indigenous people and their natural environment helps in framing the research problem, methods and approaches to data interpretation.

## **5.3 Spirituality as an indigenous research paradigm**

Spirituality cannot be separated from indigenous people because it is informing every aspect of indigenous society, like agriculture, death, diet, dress, economics, health, marriage, and political art [59]. African indigenous spirituality recognizes that beliefs and practices are important for human survival. Sickness is often perceived as an outcome of a breakdown in the health practice or relationship between the individual and nature, people, or ancestors. Ancestors are considered a source of blessing or curse to their living descendants [59]. People who care, respect, and recognize supernatural beings attract blessings from their ancestors and while those who neglect their ancestors receive curses [60]. Indigenous spirituality is a part of the cultural heritage, born out of the experience and deep reflection of African forebearers, it provides answers to the stirring of the human spirit and elaborates on the profundity of the experience of the divine-human encounter based on the resources of Africa's cultural heritage and insight ([61], p. 67).

Understanding spirituality builds the connection between indigenous people and their ancestors for power to protect, prevent and punish. The power to protect and prevent punishment is inherently spiritual. The reverence of the spiritual beings or ancestors with songs and praises is the commonest way to obtain life progress. Thus, spirituality to indigenous people is "shared or participatory, open consciousness of, and exchange of ideas with, the extended interpersonal connection (ancestors, generations to come, and the cosmos). Within this networked relationality, getting guidance or counsel from a relative who has died is considered valuable information to many indigenous scholars ([62], p. 40). Although research methodologies that encourage information gathering from deceased ancestors [63]. The Indigenous

research paradigm recognizes and respects the role and place of spirituality in academic study [64, 65]. Indigenous spirituality contributes to the understanding of ways in which knowledge is influenced, learned, and formed by divine powers [58].

#### 5.4 Eldership as an indigenous research paradigm

The concept of eldership defines the position of authority, power, and leadership in African indigenous society. The elders are the custodians of law and order in the community and are delegated administrative activities. The elders oversee the judicial systems, setting rules and enforcing them. Elders ensure that the indigenous institutional cultures and traditional systems are maintained and protected. Elders have deep knowledge of history, cultural relics and documents, geography, nature and environment, legends, poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, and storytelling. The elders inculcate diverse ways of reasoning deemed appropriate for survival to the younger generation to enable them to continue in protecting and preserving the ancestral shared knowledge for a life of services.

Given elders contribute to intergenerational unity by transmitting knowledge, values, and cultural practices in a holistic approach ([66], p. 667), eldership as an indigenous research paradigm provide researchers with rules and regulations guiding indigenous peoples, the concepts, and belief pattern to guide the study. Elders guide the scholars and practitioners on whom to consult and how to engage in the process of consultation.

### 6. Indigenous research methodology

Indigenous research methodology has been defined as research by and for indigenous people using techniques and methods drawn from the tradition and knowledge of those people [67]. An Indigenous research methodology is an approach that promotes and advances:

*self-determination, social change, cultural maintenance, and revitalization.... It recognizes the values of indigenous people as individual and collective groups rather than objectifying the subject. It is a flexible model that encompasses the diversity of each community, validating their voice, through acknowledging the knowledge passed on to the researcher with respect and oral consistency.*

Indigenous research methodology provides a detailed description and analysis of what constitutes indigenous knowledge transmitted from generation to generation, from various knowledge systems thought through divination, a philosophical concept like *ibuanyidandan*, and storytelling with ethical standards of the indigenous setting.

#### 6.1 Divination and consultation methodology

Divination is concerned with a system of knowledge production across every phase of human life. Ifa divination has been described as a highly tentacular system comprising computer science, mathematics, human evolution, medicine, geography, history, and astronomy are locked up in the numerous Ifa verses ([68], p. 1). Divination is part of indigenous epistemology that attempts to diagnose, analyze, and identify solutions to problems. The approach to consultation differs in many

No	Comparing of terms	Divination [indigenous]	Diagnosis [western]
1	Role	To inquire into the root of the problem	To investigate the cause of the problem
2	Object of investigation	Divination chains, cowries, sticks, or kola nuts	Laboratory tests and radiological tests
3	Interpretation of the results	Provided by the divinator guided by Ifa verses derived from supernatural powers and ancestral knowledge	Provided by the medical professional who analyzed the result.
4	Treatment	Prescribed by the divinator who is also knowledgeable in herbal medicine and ritual practices	Prescribed by a medical professional or any other individual knowledgeable on the tenets of drugs and medication

**Table 3.**  
*Comparison of divination and diagnosis process.*

indigenous settings. The consultant is the person chosen by the gods such as the Ifa priest, the native doctor, and the chief priest. The instrument of consultation includes cowrie, shells, kola nuts and sticks, and a divination chain [69]. Each of these objects carries a message and the language can only be understood by the consultants. The objects consulted connect the individual or group consulting to their roots to diagnose the problem and identify the solution. The Ifa divination is used to provide spiritual guidance to those seeking healing from physical and health concerns. Divination is firmly rooted in traditional spirituality. In divination, mastering the objects of divination, the systems and signs, and the ability to interpret the messages [70] helps indigenous people gain knowledge through supernatural powers.

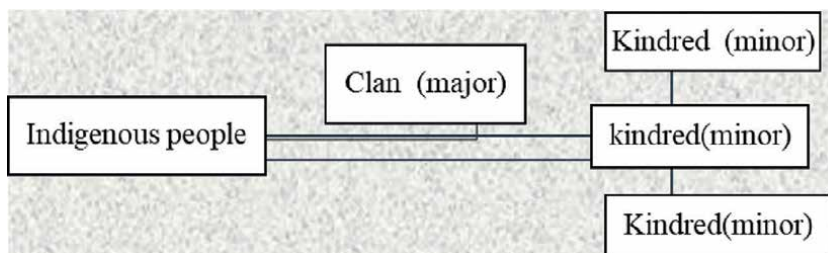
Divination as an indigenous research methodology deal with ‘symbolic, intensive, and diagrammatic ways of reading the world and tapping into forces that compose events to unfold their ramifications and draw lines from the known to the unknown [70]. Divination has been found to share similarities with western diagnosis as the analytical approaches look for signs in human presented problems (Table 3).

## 6.2 Ibuanidandan and collaborative methodology

Ibuanidandan is a philosophy with origin from the Igbo tribe of the southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Ibuanidandan describes the ‘spirit of unity and quality in harmony’ [71]. The ‘Ibuanidandan’ is a product of three indigenous Igbo language terms: (a) Ibu meaning ‘Load or errand’; (b) Anyi meaning ‘insurmountable force’ (c) Danda (ants). The concept of ants ‘danda’ illustrates the power of ants to overcome the greatest troublesome problems if they work in a concordant mutual way [71]. The ant’s uniqueness in teamwork as relates to carrying loads to solve their problems informed these philosophical thoughts. Ibuanidandan is a philosophical stance that promotes harmonious complementation and progressive transformation in knowledge production. Ibuanidandan as a knowledge production approach maintains a stance that a system can only work when the diverse components of which it is constituted serve each other complementarily and authentically as an aspect of its existence [72].

Ibuanidandan’s epistemological stance contributes to the quality of the research by increasing the inclusiveness of different ethnic groups within the research setting.





**Figure 3.**  
*Illustration of major and minor ethnic groups of indigenous people.*

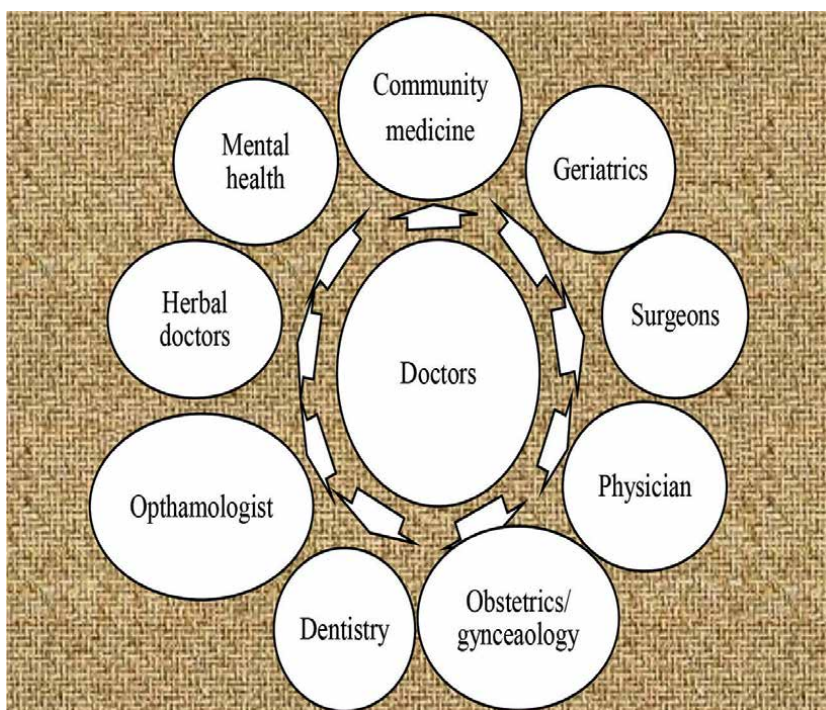
Inclusiveness entails the selection of major and minor ethnic groups within each indigenous community as illustrated in **Figure 3**.

In this context, researching indigenous people with Ibuyandandan begins with the quest to understand the major and minor ethnic groups, and how they relate, interact and collaborate to identify problems and profound solutions. The ibuyandandan approach includes the following:

- Promotes inclusive participation which reduces bias in the selection of research site and research population. The selection approach recognizes and respects the rights of each ethnic group whether major or minor thereby reducing the submersion of the minor ethnic group into the larger clan.
- Promotes the integration of diverse marginalized indigenous groups to build unity, strength, and holistic mutual dependence among all the ethnic groups. This approach to the research site and participant selection promotes an indigenous perspective that states a part makes meaning in the whole, and the whole is a composite of individual units.

The indispensability of complementation in indigenous people's relationships in the selection of research site and size to ensure no group is "overpowered, submerged, toppled and undermined" [72] in sample selection. This approach is premised on the fact that reality exists and is expressed in whole not in part because undermining a part in a group could alter reality. This approach also promotes harmonious collaboration among indigenous people and researchers. For example, researching health issues using ibuyandandan as an approach demands that the relationship to a central idea (e.g., doctors) in a cycle consider all doctors that the patients are likely to visit for a consultation. **Figure 4** below illustrates demonstrates that inclusiveness in numbers eliminates the imbalance that affects all aspects of population sampling.

The analytical approach explores the diversity in the harmonious complementation and progressive transformation in knowledge production and problem-solving instead of muddling up a display of unity and quality in harmony in research interpretation, findings, and report as well as recommendation. The benefit of this approach reduces the exposure of research participants to methodical pressure, dehumanization, and mental suppression [73]. Thus, ibuyandandan as an indigenous research approach increases self-sacrifice, exhaustiveness, and commitment against selfishness, exclusiveness, and a we-them, mentality in research collaboration [72].

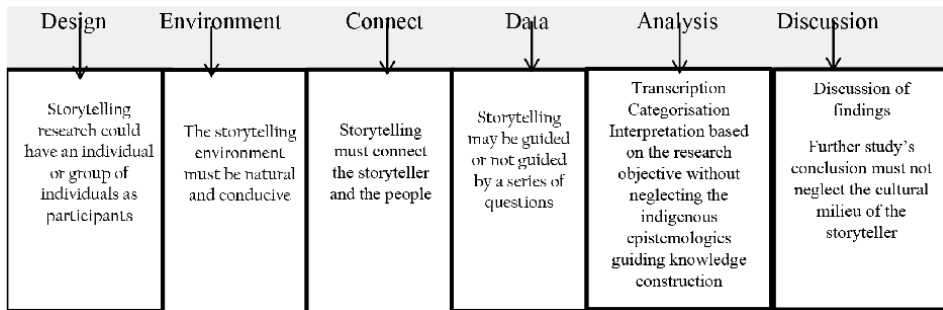


**Figure 4.**  
*Balancing participant selection.*

### **6.3 Storytelling as an indigenous research methodology**

This is narrative research, in which the researcher uses a story(ies) in the collection of qualitative data. The basic assumption is that in narrative research, there must be a storyteller, an individual (the researcher) or a group of individuals (the audience including the researcher) who listens and helps in the identification of important events that may further enable a proper understanding of the influence of the problem in the story under study. Storytelling research is a theoretical structure that guides the process of collecting and analyzing data about activities that is important to the storyteller and the viewers. The storytelling is carried out in any environment the storyteller deemed as natural with limited distraction. The rationale behind the use of the storytelling approach may be premised first because data can be collected from an individual or group of individuals depending on the objective, which helps the researcher to understand the link between the story and the context. Second, is the storytelling-build relationship that helps the people to connect, communicate and interact within their setting. Storytelling can be adapted to any setting. **Figure 5** presents the suggested process for the storytelling approach to researching indigenous people.

**Figure 5** illustration is an example of the storytelling approach and its interrelated nature. The first rectangular shape shows participants for data collection could be an individual or a group of individuals, the storyteller and the researcher. The second



**Figure 5.**  
*The storytelling research approaches.*

rectangular shape shows that the storytelling takes place in a natural and conducive environment. The third rectangular shape shows the researcher developing storytelling activities by connecting to the storyteller and other people involved. The fourth rectangular shape shows that the data can be collected with a series of questions, one question such as using interviews. The fifth rectangular shape shows that data collected be transcribed, coded, categorized and interpreted based on the research objective, and epistemologies of the research communities. The sixth rectangular shape shows that the interpreted data should be discussed with implications for further studies and conclusions.

## 7. Human rights framework relevant to researching indigenous populations

The human rights framework ensures the fundamental rights of an individual and collective group sacred cultural and spiritual resources, life and security, language and cultural identity, self-governance, participation, development, economic and social rights, and resources and knowledge are maintained and protected (9.1). Researching the indigenous population without appropriate information on human rights principles could raise historical issues of abuse; unfair research practices; looting of cultural knowledge, artifacts, and even bodies and genetic material; anthropological recasting of histories, and a situation where the community members become objects to be studied and the knowledge produced fails to reflect indigenous values [50, 74, 75]. The historical issue can replay the picture of hate, disrespect, and misrepresentations of indigenous people's existence. The human rights framework provides guiding principles in research practices as follows.

### 7.1 Recognize and respect indigenous people's rights as an individual and a collective group

The human rights act requires that indigenous people be recognized and respected as individuals and a collective group with the right to freedom of thought within their diverse ethnic group. Indigenous peoples' existence within ethnic groups is characterized as major and minor because of self-identification awareness. Self-identification defines group consciousness, a desire to protect ancestral land, a sense of solidarity against

historical injustices, and struggles to preserve group existence within indigenous populations [76]. Scholars and practitioners should adopt research designs and methods that protect, affirms and preserve the individuality and collective nature of indigenous people.

## **7.2 Recognize and respect indigenous people's rights to their sacred cultural and spiritual resources**

Indigenous people have sacred land reserved for ancestral worship or other spiritual activities. Indigenous people regard actions that abuse these lands and spiritual resources as disrespect for their ancestral position. Researchers should obtain appropriate rites of passage for sacred places, which is often a challenge to modern African scholars and practitioners. Many modern Africans describe those who engage in indigenous practices and rituals as a fetish [38]. Researchers with modern perspectives about indigenous people should be sensitive because their insensitivity can produce disrespectful and harmful effects on their person. The display of disrespect to sacred resources and traditional customs is perceived as an abomination to spiritual rights and could endanger the researcher.

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### **Activity 1: Sacred cultural and spiritual identity: Peter**

Peter is 54 years old. A research scholar in Nigeria tertiary education and has been an employee for the past twenty years. Peter has developed a new research interest in indigenous people and indigenous settings. Peter is a Christian and views traditional practices such as sacred land and spiritual practices as a fetish. Peter views reverence to ancestors as worshipping the dead and evil because he failed to differentiate between reverence and worship. In reverence, indigenous people display deep admiration and respect because ancestors are the closest connection to the spiritual realm governed by divine beings. In worship, reverence is concerning a divine being or supernatural powers. Peter's dilemma is how to engage indigenous people without bias toward the sacred places and cultural views on ancestors and other spiritual rules. Peter's dilemma increased the awareness of the forbidden objects such as cameras, recording equipment, and shoes in entering the sacred land. Peter is contemplating how to engage indigenous people without violating his religious rights.

### **Activity 1: Sacred cultural and spiritual**

- Reflect on Peter's dilemma, place yourself in his position, were you in a situation where you must compromise your religious rights based on researching a population.
- What were your thoughts?
- What was your feeling?
- What action came to your thoughts?
- How would the actions in your thoughts affect your religious rights and the rights of indigenous people?
- Think of an incident anywhere you experienced a dilemma on how to research indigenous people or indigenous settings.
- Evaluate what you think is appropriate for you considering your new interest in indigenous people.
- Considering your passion for researching indigenous, what are four examples of how you would change your attitude or behavior toward indigenous people's right to sacred and spiritual land?

### **Question activity 1: Sacred cultural and religious**

Reflect on Peter's dilemma, and place yourself in his new interest in researching indigenous people.

- What process would you use to ensure that the indigenous people's human right is recognized and respected?
  - Would you as a researcher compromise your religion at the expense of your research interest?
  - Would you as a researcher avoid research areas that question your ability to recognize and respect the rights of indigenous people to maintain, develop and protect their sacred resources and spiritual practices?
- 

**Table 4.**  
*Case study and activities.*

Researchers should be sensitive to the differences and similarities between the indigenous setting and the effects on the research output. Sensitivity is about the degree of risk high, middle, or low involved in researching a particular problem. Insensitivity deals with undermining the degree of risk a phenomena understudy can pose to indigenous people or researchers. For instance, researching spiritual rituals for passage to manhood may compel the researcher to be initiated into the cult group to understand the various processes. This initiation forces indigenous people to reveal forbidden information, impinging on their cultural rights (**Table 4**).

### **7.3 Respect and recognize the ethical rights of indigenous people**

Research ethics define the standard of practice in researching indigenous people to ensure their fundamental rights. Informed consent is an essential part of ethics because it is a written agreement with detailed information about the aims and risk level with principles of integrity and value for indigenous people. Integrity and values advance openness in disclosing the objectives, approaches, and benefits to the researcher, institutions, and the community. Research integrity and values are vital because the indigenous setting is about relationship building and accountability characterized by trust and loyalty. Accountability in studying indigenous people deals with accepting responsibility for mistakes and unbending loyalty to signed informed consent (**Table 5**).

### **7.4 Recognize and respect indigenous people's language and cultural identity**

The indigenous people have the right to engage in research activities that revive, grow and improve their language and cultural identity. The scholars and practitioners should ensure that the research methodology reproduces a diversity of cultures, traditions and languages. The scholars should understand the intricacies of cultural identity among indigenous people to reduce discrimination, marginalization and bias in participant selection.

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#### **Activity 2: Research ethics: Princess**

Princess, a 36-year-old in one of the notable first-generation public universities, is an emerging researcher who has issues with risk disclosure on the level of risk in the research activity to the indigenous people and self. Princess is willing to partake in any cultural activities for information gathering. Princess did not disclose her true intention in obtaining information about the secret cultural rituals is to test the validity of the myths with western epistemologies. Princess argued that she does not need to disclose all her intentions.

#### **Activity 2.1: Research ethics**

- Reflect on the ethical problems Princess will face during and after collecting data.
- What were your thoughts about Princess approaching indigenous people with hidden intentions?
- What ethical principles would affect her approaches to data analysis and reporting?
- Considering Princess is an emerging researcher, what ethical principle does she need to understand and apply in working with indigenous people?

#### **Questions Activity 2: Truly informed consent**

- What will be the ethical issues to the integrity and value of the quality of the information obtained with hidden intention if indigenous people dictate deceit?

How can Princess consider the rights of indigenous people in her research design and methods without ethical problems?

---

**Table 5.**  
*Case study activities and questions.*

### **7.5 Recognize and respect indigenous people's rights to protect their resources and knowledge**

Researchers should avoid designs and methods that negatively affect the manifestations of cultural, intellectual, religious, and spiritual property. Indigenous people have the right to protect their traditional knowledge or instinctual property by preventing or refusing researchers to study a particular area or topic. Indigenous people have the right to determine the level of information they should provide to the researcher. Researchers should seek proper access from significant others before conducting studies in excluded areas. Researchers should enter into a contractual agreement on the extent they will disclose any information during and after research [publications].

### **7.6 Recognize and respect indigenous people's interaction and relationships**

The indigenous people's relationships and interaction patterns extend beyond the selection of appropriate participants. Indigenous people have been aware of the importance of interaction and communication, which hinge on recognizing and respecting cultural, religious, and traditional values. Respect is reciprocal among indigenous people. Researchers should identify and understand who takes the lead in determining the direction of the interaction, communication, and information sharing concerning the phenomenon under study.

## **8. Competency for researching the indigenous population in contemporary times**

Indigenous people experience challenges as they strive to maintain, develop, and protect cultural and traditional lifestyles [77]. Researching indigenous people demands the commitments and skills of scholars and practitioners for cultural intelligence for cultural respect, harmonious collaboration, and reciprocal relationships with a focus on emotional intelligence. Thus, scholars and practitioners researching indigenous people in contemporary times need competencies such as cultural,



**Figure 6.**  
*Competency for the research on indigenous people.*

spiritual, and emotional intelligence to navigate the frontiers of researching the indigenous population. **Figure 6** illustrated the essential competency the researching indigenous people.

### 8.1 Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence is the ability to adapt, interact and relate with people from different cultural settings [78] and recognize and respect their values and practices. The ability to be aware of, understand and apply cultural competence to everyday decisions [79]. Scholars and practitioners should:

- Examine personal cultural knowledge and the ability to adapt to behaviors characterized by cultural values and practices as the researcher relates, and interacts with indigenous people in the research process;
- Examine the influence of personal beliefs and bias on the ability to adapt to indigenous culture;
- Examine individual abilities in handling prejudices, strengths and weaknesses in researching indigenous people;
- Recognize personal needs for training as a scholar and practitioner with an interest in indigenous people.

**Comment:** Scholars and practitioners should attend workshops, seminars and short courses to acquire cultural knowledge related to indigenous people.

### 8.2 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage personal emotions and emotions expressed by other people [80]. Experienced emotions are handled with self-awareness [knowledge of personal strength and weakness in responding to emotional events]; self-management [skill to handle experienced pressuring emotions]; social awareness [knowledge of emotions expressed by other people and how these emotions influence the activities within the social environment] and relationships management [ability to communicate, relate and interact with other people within their environment] [1].

- Assess self-awareness, social-awareness self-management and self-management to ensure the ability to navigate the challenges of the research environment;
- Assess ability to communicate, interact and have relationships responsively with indigenous people with cultural values of indigenous people;
- Assess knowledge of emotions of social environment triggers and management practices to ensure adaptability;
- Assess personal and social-emotional strengths and weaknesses to identify needs for training.

**Comment:** Scholars and practitioners should identify the domain of weakness and strength, and leverage it with workshops and seminars or short courses.

### 8.3 Spiritual intelligence

Spiritual intelligence is “the ability to construct meaning through intuitively seeing interconnectedness between life-world experience and the inner spheres of the individual psyche” ([81], p. 54). Spiritual intelligence enables a researcher to understand the way human being relevance the supernatural beings deeply rooted in culture [82]. Spiritual intelligence contributed to the ability to identify and understand the spiritual beliefs, values, and ritual practices of the indigenous people understudy. The spiritual intelligence will help the researchers to develop deep knowledge of the indigenous religious beliefs and practices, and adopt appropriate attitudes vital in researching the indigenous population.

- Scholars and practitioners need support structures
- identify a belief bias in indigenous peoples’ spirituality;
- examine the biases and influence research;
- examine the risks and impact on indigenous people and scholars and practitioners;
- identify major spiritual activity days, festivals and resources and reschedule research activities outside the events or days.

**Comment:** Scholars and practitioners should obtain information about the spiritual values and practices of the indigenous people to avoid conflicts of interest.

Cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence have important roles to play in the management of behaviors or attitudes of scholars and practitioners. These skills are displayed in the communication, interaction and relationship while researching indigenous people in an indigenous setting.

## 9. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to address the concepts vital in researching indigenous people in contemporary times. The terms like indigenous knowledge, epistemologies, philosophies, cultural values and practice that inform perceptions of realities were discussed and their place in research on indigenous people was presented. The chapter considered the research methodology and paradigm suitable for researching African indigenous people. The chapter contained a few activities to create a better understanding of the issue under discussion.




## **Author details**

Eucharia Chinwe Igbafe  
African Indigenous Sustainability Research Education and Consulting Foundation  
(AiSRECF), Bayelsa State, Nigeria

\*Address all correspondence to: [igbafeeucharia@gmail.com](mailto:igbafeeucharia@gmail.com)

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## Chapter 14

# Framing Indigenous Perspectives through Emic and Etic Approaches

*Clarence St.Hilaire*

### Abstract

This chapter seeks to present indigenous perspectives from emic and etic frameworks to ascertain how cross-cultural studies fit within a new explorative paradigmatic realm. The role of context to understand how the human relationship in all social settings adopts a pluralistic and inclusive mantra is paramount to address. Discussions on specific lenses of the emic and etic approaches, looking at indigenous concepts will be presented to highlight the agency and cultural tentacles deeply rooted in the emic and etic pathways. Nine key pillars are considered: 1) succinct international and indigenous emic and etic perspectives, 2) indigenous perspectives of conflict resolution, 3) shared trends in emic and etic perspectives, 4) clarification of concepts, 5) cross-cultural perspectives and community settings, 6) indigenous population resiliency, 7) social adaptation and affirmation, 8) healthcare disparities, and 9) philosophical and theoretical perspectives.

**Keywords:** shared trends in emic and etic perspectives, cross-cultural perspectives, emic and etic indigenous pathways, healthcare disparities, philosophical and theoretical perspectives

### 1. Introduction

The *emic* and *etic* concepts were first coined by Pike [1] in linguistic terms. The emic view relates to a culture within a particular context and considers the internal useful dealings of only one individual or culture. The *etic* viewpoint looks at behavior from an external perspective [1, 2]. In seemingly simple terms, Buckley et al. ([3], p. 309) defined emic as culture-specific and etic as universal. Additionally, Engler and Whitesides [4] posited:

*Within a religious context, the emic/etic distinction postulates a hierarchical relation. Emic refers to concepts used primarily by members of a particular religion, and the etic concepts are used primarily by scholars of religion and related disciplines (p. 2).*

The emic and etic concepts have been analyzed in cross-cultural replication (from one cultural context to another) in social psychology [5]. Etic traits, using studies from America and Europe explored in deciphering personality and personality disorders among people in the Caribbean, showed serious cultural differences along national and ethnic lines [6].

Framing indigenous perspectives through emic and etic approaches is a worthwhile and difficult endeavor due to the intellectual rigors that one must adhere to, and many misconceptions that are shared, and promoted by some intellectuals considering indigenous peoples as individuals without an advanced way of life. This problem needs to be reframed since we must realize the impracticability of such assertion in this changing, volatile, and uncertain world. In 2002, more than six thousand distinct groups were scattered around the globe with their own culture, the meaning of their culture, lived experiences, and worldviews [7]. According to the United Nations' Chief Executives Boards for Coordination, indigenous peoples represent 6.2% of the world population, with 370 million people in the world identified as indigenous in 2019, and in 2022, 476 millions indigenous peoples worldwide covering 90 countries [8, 9].

It is paramount to argue that a population of this magnitude warrants international efforts, and intellectual insight to comprehend and tackle some of the dire problems indigenous peoples worldwide face, such as health care disparities, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health, non-participation in decision-making, lack of land delineation and titling, climate change, displacement, infant mortality, minimal access to education, human rights violations, harassment, violence, systemic discrimination, and poverty ([10], p.1; [11, 12]).

A core concern elucidated by the UN is the rights of the indigenous peoples to be considered "equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such, that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind, and affirming further that all doctrines, policies, and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust" ([12], pp. 2–3).

While this chapter considers nine components for the indigenous perspectives, it is also critical to recognize the role of culture as an important signifier to frame the perspectives about indigeneity [identity of native, and non-native] Sium et al. [13], in terms of decolonizing the mind, or deconstruction to appreciate indigenous methods of learning, knowing, cultural literacy, conflict resolution, peacemaking, leadership and decision making, social practices, and health disparities.

This type of deconstruction has produced several forms of expressions from indigenous peoples, such as resistance, expressed as art, songs, literature from many indigenous writers, indigenous popular beliefs, and movements around the globe as shared emic perspectives. In Latin America, during the mid-nineteen century, the indigenous movement was represented in political and social ideas, literary and artistic expressions, as a gateway to eliminate racial and ethnic differences among people [14]. Proponents were Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, Espinoza Medrano, Miguel Hidalgo, Jose Maria Luis Mora. For the Latin Americans, it was the American continent that the Creoles considered their true country. For the indigenous peoples, the indigenous person ceased to exist when he or she became a citizen of a particular country they were not considered creoles (belonging to the European race). One is considered either as wealthy or poor [14]. Nonetheless, the Métis was considered a new man having a total conception of nationality. According to Andersen [15], the Métis is an individual with mixed ancestry. Métises were classified as *roto* in Chile, *caboclo* in Brazil, *gaucho* in Argentina, *cholo* in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador ([14], p. 34).

The indigenous perspectives in Latin America did not rely on a monolithic assertion of ethnicity, but on a racialized form of identity, a form of racial legitimacy construed upon historical experiences, a type of *habitus*. The Métis considered himself or herself different from the Indians. According to Haitian historian Thomas Madiou Fils [16], in Haiti, the Métisses were considered “sang-mêlés” (people of mixed ancestry).

In the Caribbean, another concept was espoused by *the Indigenous school* depicted in the Haitian literature during the 1915 era that resisted the American occupation. *The indigenous school* promoted the defense of indigenous cultural values and reasserted that the Haitians are predominantly African, and the ancestral heritage cannot be forgotten. The influential thinkers were Jean- Francois Briere, Jacques Roumain, Leon Laleau, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Roussan Camille, Carl Brouard, Francois Duvalier, and Jean Price-Mars. *The indigenous school's perspectives* are still ideologically vibrant today. The poet Leon Laleau [17] echoed:

*This obsessive heart does not correspond  
not with my language and my costumes  
and on which bite like a crampon  
borrowed sentiments and customs  
from Europe do you feel the pain  
and this despair has no equal  
to tame with words from France  
this heart that came to me from Senegal (p. 239).*

Alfred ([18], as cited in [13]) opined this form of resistance can be achieved through the renaissance of an *indigenous consciousness*.

## 2. Specific lenses of the emic and etic perspectives

The emic perspective considers the indigenous peoples' native point of view. Forms of expression are important. They sometimes manifest as storytelling, cultural and spiritual beliefs, and legends that create awareness to eliminate what Haitian physician, diplomat, educator, historian, and ethnographer Jean Price-Mars considered as “legends' jumble,” and “the corruption of the fables” deriving from the Western civilization ([19], p. 32). Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* added that the outside perspective (external perspective, a Western way of thinking) may destroy a country or continent's heritage and is about the colonial enterprise of “depoetization” and “desacralization” of Africa [20]. It is not surprising that what Avruch [21] termed *cultural bias in the mind* continues to exist. Although the etic approaches offer cross-cultural strategies, there is more that needs to be done because etic schemes developed from a Western standpoint do not always reflect sheer interpretations of cultures, societies, or religious beliefs. One way to establish a clear emic-etic connection is through proper contexts, discursive channels, and cultural discussions that are not easy to establish.

Anna M. Mackowiack considering the Indonesian way of unity in diversity (the *bhinneka, tunggall ika, and agama*) determination during the Lingsar Temple festival, advanced that scholars ought to establish a meta-dialog about how emic perspectives are entrapped with indigenous, national, and religious communications [4]. However, using the etic approach in indigenous communities requires

clear assessments that harm is abated, an assertion that the “non-civilized man or woman” has always been civilized. Claims of the so-called civilized societies claiming privileged humanity from one exclusive race and or culture, exposed by objective tribulations [22] throughout history, appear to be no longer strong because of the world’s global compass, and multicultural embrace. However, for the Heiltsuk Nation in B.C, an indigenous group of the Northwest Territories of the Newfoundland province in Canada, there are unresolved grievances to be settled. A striking discriminatory reality surfaced during Britain’s Prince Charles and his wife’s visit on May 16, 2022. The indigenous groups of Newfoundland and Labrador raised concerns about reconciliation, the impacts of colonization on the residential schools, the displacement of more than 150,000 indigenous children between 1831 and 1966, labeled as cultural genocide, and harsh conditions [23]. In Canada, the Métis concept is not a one-size-fits-all because one who is indigenous may not be a native of Canada ([15], p. 24).

The development of theories about the structure of society failing past integration among oppressors and oppressed individuals has changed. Structural slavery no longer exists on the global world stage. But admonitory measures need to be analyzed as a doubled-edge sword. An important concept to consider was the *trial of colonialism*, a powerful theme in the African literature of the 1960s considered as the “literature of testimony” [Littérature de témoignage] (Letembet-Ambily [24], as cited in [20]). This literature seems to consider the dualism existing between racial category and identity. Damas ([25], as cited in [20]) resisted the Western civilization attempting to assimilate his identity with a clear conscience, and claimed his freedom in the following poem entitled *Solde* (Clearance):

*I have the impression of being ridiculous  
among them accomplice  
among them pimp  
among them cutthroat  
frighteningly with red hands  
of the blood of their civilization (p. 153)*

This poem suggests a diasporic experience rooted in an African indigenous perspective that is strong and provides a proper cultural context that can be respected across nation-states’ boundaries. Indigenous voices from Caribbean poets, authors, and painters echoed a dualism between western civilizations and the *négritude* movement [the recognition of being Black, and the acceptance of Black historical and cultural heritages]. Haitian poet Kiki Wainwright wrote [26]:

*The poet spits his challenge  
in the face of executioners  
called civilizers (p. 31).*

The famous poet Aimé Césaire [27] from Martinique echoed:

*My négritude is not a sheet of dead water on the dead eye of the earth  
my négritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral  
it plunges into the red flesh of the ground,  
it plunges into the fiery flesh of the sky,  
pierces the opaque despondents of his upright patience*

## 2.1 Succinct international and indigenous emic and etic perspectives

Some contradictions created typologies of conflicts that are eclipsed by an international system still considering structural disagreements resulting in contradictions between countries from the center to the ones at the periphery. The center is referred to as wealthy and powerful countries, while for the countries at the periphery we find less powerful and developed ones. The wealthy countries use exploitation and domination of those at the periphery through “economic imperialism social imperialism, and political imperialism” ([28], p. 98). It is a world of political power and societal dominance with deep tentacles of disparities. Indigenous peoples are caught in the middle. They are vulnerable. Sium et al. [13] claimed that the indigenous future will continue to resonate due to internal threats in the home country, and the outside world. Currently, there are 70,000 Maasai people of the Loliondo division of the Ngorongoro district in Tanzania who face eviction by the Tanzania government’s armed forces [29].

Consistent with international laws, and the United Nations’ Article 10 of the UN Declaration “Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior, and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible with the option to return” ([29]. p. 1). The following questions should be raised:

1. what are the solutions?
2. How will family disintegration or displacement be addressed?
3. Is there a future for the Maasai people?
4. How will they strive to maintain their family’s perspective?

The importance of family and well-being has been explored by many researchers who found that Western cultures have appreciated the concept of family cohesion and communication [30]. The Maori group of New Zealand has prioritized family orientation and relationships as deep anchors for their survival. For them, family relations are tied to their well-being. New Zealand is a vibrant country where multiculturalism flourishes. The largest groups consist of White (74% of the population), Maori (15%), and others represented as Pacific, Asian, African, and Middle Eastern (Statistics New Zealand [31], as cited in [30]). There are other relevant cultural concepts prioritizing family.

While the Maasai people of Tanzania face displacement, the Abuja peoples of Nigeria are alienated in their lands by their government, which ensured Abuja land’s exclusive rights to the government [10], thus creating compulsory termination of customary land rights for the indigenous people of Abuja. It is worthwhile to note that the development of exclusive rights to the government through the categorization of customary rights of occupancy, and statutory rights, elucidated by Barnabas [10], creates what Wallerstein’s historical analysis referred to as economic and political power disparities among states. In the case of the Abuja peoples, it is a structural position claimed by the government showing power imbalances. The landowners were classified as farmers, hunter-gatherers, fishermen, and pastoralists. Since there was not a clear definition of indigenous people in Nigeria, what resulted was pure human rights violation. One could make a case for colonialism.

The indigenous Abuja peoples' perspectives, as indigenous peoples highlighted peace, and no conflicts seemed to arise. A further consideration is found in Linda Alcoff's article "*The problem of speaking for others*". The Nigerian government acting as a legitimate authority seems to have spoken for the indigenous peoples of Abuja who were less privileged and had no power. In speaking about the lands in Abuja, three key questions linger:

1. was the government speaking the truth, from a legal standpoint about the land?
2. was it a lie about developing a city reflecting the Nigerian pride at the expense of the voiceless indigenous peoples?
3. Who benefited from the creation of the city of Abuja, the administrative capital?

The above considerations may produce a concept of mutual dependence required for the emic and etic frameworks to work. Cultural factors are critical, and individualism should yield to collectivism within this framework. It is pertinent to address these questions: What would an indigenous emic perspective consider banishing self-interests in a conflictual situation? What would an etic action or group be willing to sacrifice for the common good?

Examples of the Igbo concept of "*Ihe Nkétá*" or "*òkè*" typify the dualism between indigenous perspectives of land, and heritage conservation [32]. Igbos' view of heritage is tied with traditions, cultural norms, and practices held by a group of people about land attachment, a type of indigeneity (Ugwuanyi [33], as cited in [32]). To some extent, heritage offers a symbolic stance for the custodians of the land within the communities who consider themselves attached to it and see the land as tangible and intangible assets (p. 3). This view is shared by the entire community, and any attempt to remove indigenous peoples from the land is deemed to be uprootedness or detachment. The land is also a symbolic living space with communal memories, a known space, Nnebedum ([34], as cited in [32]) noted. It is a form of symbolic interactionism (SI), Blumer [35] would contend.

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory positing that people make sense of things, based on the meaning attached to them, and through social interactions. SI is derived from George Herbert Meade's American pragmatism.

The removal of indigenous peoples in Africa from their lands under the pretext of heritage preservation and restoration is a form of exclusion, isolation, and marginalization, Onyemechalu and Ugwuanyi [32] posited. It is a form of social interaction capable of creating tensions but destroying the meaning of the Abuja peoples' lived experiences who were the first to occupy the lands, before colonial rule ([10], p. 434).

The heritage discourse entails for the Igbo indigenous person, a cultural heritage that encompasses value association, a link to the present with continuity connecting to the past, evidenced by social identity, interactions, and values. Cultural heritage also refers to various traditions, norms, and cultural practices jointly secured by a group of people ([32], p. 7) Corollaries to the heritage discourse are information value, esthetic value, and economic value, asserted Wangkeo ([36], p. 190, as cited in [32]). Information value refers to the historical belief associated with a land that is communicated through generations for future use. The esthetic value expresses a cultural property that provides convenience or satisfaction, and economic value is tied to a land's propensity to generate value [32]. The Igbo peoples in Abuja seem to

have lost this heritage. The Nigerian government-orchestrated land theft and minimized a communicative process that could have generated mutual understanding during social interactions between the indigenous Igbo peoples of Abuja, and the government agents.

Indigenous peoples in protected areas in Nepal, Thailand, and China have had opportunities to retain their protected lands when governments participated in partnerships that promoted land and park planning. The governments of Nepal, Thailand, and China have implemented policies to safeguard indigenous peoples' customary rights, and values [7]. While there are no international comparative perspectives according to the literature, common characteristics of the populations in these countries reveal that subsistence in agriculture and forestry was essential. According to Nepal [7], poverty, lack of education, and low level of infrastructure development are the main characteristics. Contrary to the indigenous Igbos of Abuja, the indigenous peoples of Nepal, Thailand, and China, participate in local communities supporting area management, and various conservation projects. However, there are wildlife conservation violations noted among the Hmong in the Doi Inthanon National Park (DINP) in southern Thailand, resulting in encroachment, and illegal hunting of tigers (p. 754). The DINH was created without the presence and approval of inhabitants of the hill near the parking area.

## **2.2 Indigenous perspectives of conflict resolution**

Cross-cultural perspectives play a vital role in conflict resolutions among indigenous peoples. Culture is at the core of conflict resolution. Thus, recognizing cultural differences is a good start in negotiation. While some positive social and behavioral scientists claim that the cultural concept is too subtle, it is plausible to argue that culture offers a stable platform because it connects with experiences, social actions, although it can also be a source of conflict [21].

Going back to Alcoff's dilemma of speaking for the other, typologies of conflicts cannot only be assessed through the essential philosophical nature and society. Koko [37] also summarized the conflict phenomenon with different dominant variables such as social, political, ethnic, and religious conflicts by considering the agents and the issues. Thus, the views or perspective of the other is highly paramount. To frame this perspective, one needs to eliminate preconceived ideas, biases, and stereotypes about the "other." Alcoff explains that privileged or discursive notions of one group or person speaking for the other are dangerous and may result in the reinforcement of oppression of the "group spoken for" ([38], p. 7).

The western view of conflict resolution, peacemaking, and negotiation has failed to consider the indigenous perspectives and researchers need to learn from them [39]. Practices of peacemaking and conflict resolution are continually active in African societies. The ethnocentric worldview of the West is insufficient to solve conflicts in many worldwide circles. Various case studies show effective mechanisms of conflict resolution in African societies [37, 40–42].

Tusso [41] presented the case of the Oromo society in Ethiopia. The Oromos suffered from colonialism by the Abyssinians during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and were on the verge of extinction by emperor Haile Selassie who attempted to eliminate the vestiges of the Cushitic cultures, including the Oromos (p. 80). The Habesha culture considered "God's chosen people" was imposed on the Oromo society, while the Oromos were referred to as "Gallas," which means "uncivilized, savage, and cruel in the Amharic language. They lacked education,

freedom, and means of transportation, did not participate in national affairs, and the language and cultural aspects of their survival were at stake (p.81). However, in this society, conflicts are resolved through a community of elders known as the *Jarsa biya* whose work encompasses preventing, managing, and solving conflicts through reconciliation, justice, and punishment. Thus, the conflict resolution model is based on the following pillars [42]:

- *Jarsa biya* (the community of elders) makes every effort to prevent conflicts from escalating, and issues decisions.
- *dhuga bassu* (truth), the truth or fact-finding system for the causes of the conflict.
- *Justice*: The goal is to ensure justice is administered.
- *guma*: payment satisfaction of the wrong committed.
- *arara*: the process of reconciliation is considered an act that is necessary to find harmony between the creator and the creatures.

It is incredibly important to appreciate the fact that in the Oromo society, jails, and death do not exist in the administration of justice. These governing conflict resolution principles are aligned with the Oromo political structure called the *Gada system*, religious customs, termed as the *kallu system*: the elaborate apparatus of reconciliation or *arara*. This system of conflict resolution surpasses divisions along regional lines, clans (*gossa*), and governs the political system.

The Oromo society has been described as democratic and collectivist by scholars according to Tusso [41], and their worldview of social justice and conflict is very novel. The Oromos considered that conflicts create imbalances in human relations. There is a public culture that requires investments in human capital in terms of time, energy, and reputation to manage conflicts. This indigenous perspective of conflict resolution offers a viable lens for western scholars to explore conflict resolution beyond the alternative conflict resolution modalities such as arbitration, mediation, negotiation, litigation, and conciliation.

During my undergraduate years at the City University of New York, Bernard M. Baruch College, I took a course titled “Power and conflicts in tribal society.” The textbook: *Europe and the people without history*, captivated my attention and created in me profound cultural shocks, due to the author’s ostensibly bias. I realized then that some Western anthropologists were on a mission or traveling on a different path in history. It took me years during my graduate studies to realize that the perceptions of “the other” is what are rooted in deeply held negative values beyond the veil of cross-cultural perspectives. Indeed, the people without a history have their history, perspectives, and emic views, which negate cultural ignorance and racism. Koko [37], pp. 108–109), brilliantly researching conflict resolution from an African standpoint, exposed the following conflict resolution models:

1. The Fulbe of Guinea-Conakry use negotiation as “*djoodhagol haldaywta*,” or “*yewtu dugol*,” or “*haldi fotti*”. They sit down to resolve conflicts.
2. In Kpèlè of Guinea-Conakry, negotiation signifies “*ki kaa*,” the act of consensus consultation.



3. In southern Senegal, the word “*gabutor*” signifies the exchange of ideas in the Diola-bandial language.
4. The Malinké of Ivory Coast adopt negotiation as “*Dienguigni*,” which means finding a consensus.
5. In The Bambara of Mali, negotiation is translated as “*dje ka fo*,” the act of assembling to talk.
6. The Fons of Benin adopts negotiation as a “*kpon bo do*” practice, suggesting finding a common ground among parties dealing with an issue.
7. The Adjas of Benin perceive negotiation as “*o a le gnon lepo*,” the art of looking at something together.
8. The Igbos of Nigeria see negotiation in the form of “*mchoputa*,” meaning discussion to reach an agreement.
9. The Bangantés of south Cameroon define negotiation as “*napteu*,” as the act of arranging.
10. In Swahili, negotiation is “*shauri*” or “*biashara*” indicating commerce or deliberation.
11. In Lingala of the Democratic Republic of Congo, negotiation corresponds to “*koyokana*,” finding an agreement.
12. In Macua-Lomwe of Mozambique, negotiation signifies “*othukumana*,” whose connotation is discussions aimed at restoring peace.

### 2.2.1 Shared trends in emic and etic perspectives

One quality of an emic perspective is found in native terms selection or institutional buy-in, Avruch [21] contended. A word such as “friendship” in Chinese *you-yi* suggests an interpersonal construct that is pervasive in human relations and infers a mutual obligation, Avruch [21] further elucidated. What is cleverly not enunciated, is the meaning of the linguistic ramification of the emic concept if we consider a person’s communication evolves in a particular context and culture. For example, there can be cultural adaptations, and new meanings of the word friendship in English, Spanish, Japanese, French, Haitian Creole, Igbo language, etc., resulting from social, political, and institutional correctness or pressure as etic elements that may create a new emic phenomenon. Such a line of reasoning propels the following questions:

- a. Are internal/native understanding or views influenced by external forces?

We are living in a pluralistic world promoting the acceptance of one’s “personal” or “group” views, which one may consider as “generalized”, attempting to create a new culture with its own identity.

- b. Is there a path for the emic concept to survive in such a culture?

This is a problematic condition calling for a new cultural anthropology. The important gain of the emic concept is that its roots are individual and deeper in relevant cultural contexts that are changing.

c. What is the future of the emic perspective around the globe?

I would argue that it depends on the values defined by each culture. However, it is difficult to answer such a question due to the influences of the globalization culture affecting indigenous peoples worldwide. There are cultural data from innovative technologies and social media platforms in cultural spheres capable of changing the cultural template for the emic and etic perspectives to evolve. This is not an easy development.

### *2.2.2 Clarification of concepts*

Emic and etic concepts offer a cultural space where different views are explored. There is a possibility to negotiate between actors using both perspectives. They represent speakers seeking collective understanding through a clear communicative process. When there is no room for common ground in unresolved issues, emic and etic perspectives can also be the roots of conflicts. Zartman (1982) explained that communication must be more than a question of the sheer difference in communication types. It is also necessary that actors minimize their inadequate cultural tenets, by not imposing their views on others, but embracing cultural differences.

Avruch ([21], p. 58) opined that a cultural differences continuum must be about the quality of difference when actors or individuals express their perspectives and problems in quest of solutions. Cultural differences are important when the aim is to educate or prepare the other. The notion of contexts in which communication takes place is paramount to an emic and etic scale. In high-context communication, language is expressive, whereas, in low-context communication, it is instrumental (p. 64).

### *2.2.3 Cross-cultural perspectives and community settings*

In this chapter, I addressed the emic and etic perspectives, considered the notion of shared trends, and clarified some concepts. I presented relevant appraisals of indigenous thoughts under an intellectual lens which posits that different ethnic groups establish their own mechanisms to resist forms of alienation, potential or actual harm (or endangerment) from etic judgments ([43], as cited in [22]), or external interventions. It was necessary to do so, due to issues of etic vulnerability that indigenous peoples continually deal with, such as displacement from their lands, lack of education, health-related issues, etc.

In principle, as well as in applied terms, we have seen that there is a framework used by etic agents such as governments using socio-economic policy to disenfranchise many populations (The Maasai people of Tanzania, Igbos in southern Nigeria, the Abuja peoples, indigenous populations in Nepal, Taiwan, China, and indigenous populations in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada). Thus, the vulnerability also exists from both emic and etic perspectives. Emic vulnerabilities represent the experience of exposure to harm by indigenous populations. This section focuses on cross-cultural perspectives, as a model that does not use etic approaches to cross-cultural interpretation because diverse cultural groups have different emic-etic perspectives. As a result, it would be futile to adhere to etic interpretations that are not a one-size-fits-all fix.

At the center of the cross-cultural scheme, culture must be considered and defined. Avruch [21] offers an interesting definition from Theodore Schwartz that fits well within the cross-cultural context:

*Culture consists of derivatives of experiences, organized, learned, or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves (p.37).*

This definition implies culture is connected to experiences, and embraces changes. Considered in this fashion, one may find it reasonable to move away from inadequate definitions implying that culture is homogenous, a thing, uniformed distribution among a group, customs, individuals possessing a single culture, and is timeless [21]. Another definition proposed by Stead [44] highlights culture in the following terms:

*Culture is a social system of shared symbols, meanings, perspectives, and social actions that are mutually negotiated by people in their relationships with others (p. 392).*

Within this frame of clarification, a keen understanding of ethnicity is needed. For instance, colonizers in Africa and America of native and non-native individuals, indigenous, and non-indigenous have used race and ethnicity as tools of containment during slavery. As Sium et al. ([13], p.656) posited, indigeneity came along the race line and ethnicity, although the difference between race and ethnicities was distinct from the division between colonizers and colonized.

It is not surprising, Fetvadjev et al. [30] argued about the necessity to find cross-cultural research emphasizing an emic etic approach relying on empirical and universal models, with much less research done on cross-cultural replicability of indigenous models. An emic or culture-specific perspective requires a cultural context interpreting the occurring phenomena. In the etic case or culture-general, research assumptions usually are made from the outside to inside contexts [45].

A cross-cultural international business research, using emic and etic approaches, provided light on the elimination of a dichotomous focus of the emic and etic concepts, seeing them as complementary [3]. The dichotomy resides in the emic concept being considered culture-specific, and etic is universal. This has led to the view that cross-cultural comparisons have been ethnocentric, Buckley et al. [3] stated. However, one needs to understand the profound differences in culture, and cross-cultural research using emic and etic approaches are vital options to get meaningful results.

Furthermore, in multicultural communities, emic perspectives, and meanings of terms such as family, diversity, loneliness, and self-esteem may have different interpretations than in the English language, although similarities in the meaning of the terms may exist [5, 13, 30]. As a result, an etic approach to cross-cultural understanding and research can be limited, due to diverse cultural contexts. There is a platform to consider cross-cultural emic and etic perspectives, not in terms of universal assumptions. Research in these domains warrants a contextual restraint and an unbiased outside outlook.

Another consideration is to apply the tenets of cultural competence, which consists of developing individual knowledge and skills to allow for effective engagement, and judgments when dealing with other cultures. Cultural competence is a great tool in cross-cultural environments, research, and fosters a better understanding of other cultures. Related terms such as cultural safety, cultural sensitivity, cultural humility, cultural responsiveness, and transcultural care, are commonly used [11].

#### *2.2.4 Indigenous population resiliency*

Indigenous population resiliency is a fascinating concept. Resiliency is the ability to recover after a major struggle, or a crisis. It involves the restoration of a prior state of wellbeing [46]. Several perspectives found in the literature deal with behaviors and attitudes linked with familial and culture-specific issues, cultural resiliency among native Americans in California in Tomales Bay, adversity and resiliency in native Hawaiian elders, the Makushi indigenous peoples in South America, and the Gullah people of South Carolina and Georgia [46–51]. However, there is a void in the literature about an emic-etic approach. Resiliency is a complex concept requiring a clear understanding that can be perceived or defined differently depending on the context, by groups, individuals, and agencies, and there is not a simple continuum [46].

Considering the effects of land displacement or expulsion that many indigenous peoples in the chapter encountered, there are assumptions of psychological harm, stress, and collective trauma, aspects of spirituality, and cultural values as factors of resiliency to be made [52]. In the United States, indigenous peoples such as native Hawaiians, Americans, Indians, and Alaska natives share a history of involuntary assimilation, displacement, and experienced trauma as colonized peoples [47].

What do indigenous peoples consider resiliency?

One can advance that culture is vital for resiliency due to its dynamic characteristics. Resiliency also implies dynamism. There is an interdependence between culture and resiliency. Life misfortunes experienced by the Maasai of Tanzania may create stronger bonds among them due to a traumatic context and psychological effects. But what aspect in their material culture provides relief, and are there intangibles? The answer can be found in the Igbo culture since their cultural heritage preservation is deeply rooted in a knowledge-based system that is transmitted from one generation to another [32].

The Gullah Geechee community, an enclave in South Carolina, shows an example of resiliency. The Gullah Geechee people are descendants of the western coast of Africa who were enslaved in Georgia, and South Carolina. They keep on inhabiting the farm coastal plains and sea Islands since the post abolition of slavery era in 1865. Due to transportation challenges, the Gullah Geechee peoples created their language, which they still use today. They are a marginalized community facing cultural displacements from dangers of development, climate change, and access to natural resources, putting at risk the heritage they contributed to centuries ago. For them, resiliency is a pressing need in shaping and keeping their culture. So, the public must be made aware of the challenges of this minority group. A larger sense of community resiliency is to be created, meaning their capability to foresee solutions for their challenges, learn from past ones, and integrate their understanding to minimize their vulnerability ([48], pp. 1–2). For the Makushi indigenous Carib-speaking people of Guyana and Brazil and the Amerindians, resiliency consists of dependence on cassava farming practices, eating, and preservation of cultural norms [51].

Native Hawaiian Elders (na kupuna) from 1975 to 1984 established a resiliency model consisting of a cultural renaissance, which prioritized language, hula, and spiritual practices. One of the effects of the cultural renaissance was the development the indigenous health services alleviating health risks in this population, Browne et al. [47] reported.

#### *2.2.5 Social adaptation and affirmation*

Additionally, concepts such as social support, and social adaptation in indigenous populations can be relevant regardless of displacement or challenges. In indigenous

Australian communities, and other indigenous Haitian communities in Miami, Florida, community-based participatory research (CBPR) has proven to be an effective intervention [50, 53]. The CBPR is linked with the theory of resilience that recognizes intrinsic power in individuals and communities (Chapin et al. [54], as cited in [47]). The indigenous Haitian community in Miami, Florida is well socially supported, and politically adapted.

### 2.2.6 Healthcare disparities

The literature is scant about healthcare disparities among indigenous peoples. A contextual approach is necessary it seems. The research reviewed showed one key factor of disparity is poverty which creates vulnerability in health [55]. In the indigenous communities of Nigeria, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and indigenous groups in Miami, poverty is considered a key indicator of health disparities. The main tenets of health disparities or healthcare inequalities consist of social and indigenous inequalities, and shortfalls deriving from past experiences of colonization, globalization, acculturation, land displacement, and loss of indigenous languages [49].

Two problems that many indigenous populations are confronted with are good health, and lack of healthcare access. Their daily activities depend on them. While western researchers and the World Health Organization rely on social determinants of health and psychological factors associated with good health, it is noteworthy to consider the role of culture and culture in health belief formation. Social determinants of health are generally seen as responsible factors for the poor state of indigenous health. Policymakers must consider health behaviors, coupled with sociocultural contexts in health care. The impact of ethnomedical beliefs, customs, traditions, knowledge, and intuition about sickness and treatment, in sum traditional medicine should not be underestimated. Notions of health, diseases, and healing are highly paramount [56]. Future research must address the issues of health disparities and vulnerability in healthcare, in an international healthcare system lacking equity.

## 3. Philosophical and theoretical perspectives

The overarching philosophical theory is the human-cultural perspectives in psychology. The human-cultural perspectives are concerned with the nature of personal and cultural rules, meaning systems, and therefore establish the “realm of reasons”, whereas the natural sciences perspective is based on natural laws and the “realm of causes” ([57], p. 113). The dualism of the emic-etic approaches fits well with the human-cultural perspectives. It may also suggest a quest for a new paradigm. Kuhn ([58], p.15) posited that out of crises, new paradigms occur.

Another philosophical concept is John Rawls's [59] *Theory of Justice as fairness*. Rawls developed a theory linking utilitarianism with Kantian theory. For Rawls, governments must preserve and promote the liberty and welfare of their people. Conferring arbitrary rights to one entity, individual, or group, at the expense of others, is unjust. Thus, principles of justice as fairness are crucial.

In Rawls' reasoning, there is a hypothetical position known as “the original position”. The original position invites us to think of ourselves in a position of equality, in which we are unaware of most of the socially significant facts about ourselves: race, sex, religion, economic class, social standing, natural abilities, and even our conception of the good life. He termed such a phenomenon the “veil of ignorance”. Undoubtedly, both

philosophical theories are relevant to the issues indigenous populations face worldwide. The adversities such as displacement, poverty, human rights violations, discrimination, etc., not the mantra of “the good life” the indigenous populations face worldwide should propel rapid interventions, and efficient policies of deterrence, I argue.

The theoretical perspective considered is the cultural/symbolic perspective asserted by Eckensberger [57]. This perspective considers culture vital in understanding human development, perspectives, meaning, and institutions. It requires a pluralistic approach to human systems, and both emic and etic perspectives are captured within this theoretical perspective.

#### **4. Conclusion**

I have examined indigenous perspectives through an emic-etic pathway looking at social, cultural, health, political, and economic challenges, using a cross-cultural portal. Both emic and etic perspectives suggest the need for a progressive indigenous paradigm providing context in which, disparities and unjust practices by agency powers can be lessened. This requires proper interventions, global awareness, and allocation of resources from various actors in this rapidly globalizing world. It is plausible that positive results will follow. This chapter also underscores the need to understand indigenous voices from within (an emic call) because cultural preservation and self-determination values can be effective drivers for the indigenous population around the globe to survive. Further research is needed.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

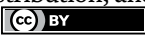
#### **Author details**

Clarence St.Hilaire  
College of Integrative Medicine and Health Sciences, Saybrook University,  
Eureka, CA, United States of America

\*Address all correspondence to: [csthilaire@saybrook.edu](mailto:csthilaire@saybrook.edu)

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Section 4

Culture and Identity

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## Chapter 15

# Marriage Process of the maSubiya: Past and Present

*Fabian S. Kapepiso*

### Abstract

Since many of the traditional practices of the maSubiya have not been documented or recorded, this chapter is an attempt at salvaging the cultural marriage practices of the maSubiya that appears to be disappearing. Contact with Europeans has highly disrupted and changed African family life, especially marriage. Due to Western influence and exertion over African cultures, today many Subiya young people have little regard for their marital procedures and processes. The objectives of this chapter are 1) to explore the process or stages of marriage of the maSubiya people; 2) to compare and contrast the past and present practices of marriage of the maSubiya; 3) to document the unrecorded marriage practices of the maSubiya; and 4) to arouse the intellectual minds to study the subject at hand. The chapter is guided by the dominant paradigm, which assumes that the maSubiya were pressured to abandon their own cultural values to adopt the values embodied in Christian or civil marriages. Data were collected mainly from observations and available literature. The marriage process of the maSubiya includes but is not limited to consultations with one's uncles and aunts, understanding the family background of a potential wife, paying *malobolo* (bridal price), and finally marriage. Throughout the process, metaphorical expressions are used to convey messages.

**Keywords:** maSubiya marriage, dominant paradigm, Nuptial song, Western influence, culture and tradition, family background, *Malobolo*

### 1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the oldest institutions in all societies, and it is still viewed as a fundamental institution of social life today. Marriage customs of the traditional communities in the Caprivi/Zambezi region in Namibia exist mainly in their traditional beliefs and practices. However, since many of these practices have not been documented or recorded, this chapter is an attempt at salvaging the cultural marriage practices of the maSubiya that appear to be disappearing. Namibia has two types of marriage, namely, civil and customary marriages. The emphasis of this chapter is on the customary marriages of the maSubiya; hence, a focus is placed on this to get a clear and better understanding. The maSubiya are being studied in this chapter as a minority ethnic group in Namibia.

According to the Legal Assistance Center [1], a traditional marriage (also called customary marriage) is “a marriage which takes place in terms of the customs of the community.” The customs and traditional practices of the maSubiya have been handed down by oral tradition and treasured in the memories of the maSubiya from generation to generation. In the context of the maSubiya, and perhaps other African cultures, marriage is defined as “a rite of passage toward adulthood and its concomitant responsibilities” [2]. It is a passage toward adulthood because, through it, young people are considered and treated as adults. Those who are not married are rarely given the respect that married people are given. It is through marriage that a person is perceived to be responsible in a community and in life. When young people are married, their responsibilities include demonstrating that they can sustain their family without depending on others. They are also endowed with the responsibilities of dealing with and assisting other family members, especially younger siblings. It is when a young person is married that they are introduced to certain things, such as attending meetings or dispute matters. This affords them the opportunity to learn from the old guard and carry on the button of responsibility when the old people have died. Thus, to demonstrate adulthood and responsibility, young people were expected to have a kraal of their own and they were allocated a piece of land on which they could plough to produce their food. As well as being the head of the household, some of the responsibilities of men included, among other responsibilities, “lighting the traditional fire and performing rituals before hunting, herding the cattle, and milking the cows” [3]. Although this was typical of rural traditional men, these responsibilities have since shifted as more men migrate to urban areas for employment purposes. Meanwhile, men in rural areas assume these responsibilities. Moreover, the responsibility of cattle-herding and milking cows has been relegated to cattle herders, who are employed solely to take care of the cattle. As for women, their responsibilities included, and still include “taking care of the family in terms of health and nutrition, sending children to school, and other domestic chores, such as cleaning the home and attending to visitors. She is regarded as the owner of the house, but not the head of the household” [3]. As a matter of fact, a home is referred to in the name of the woman, for example, *i lapa* or *inzubo iba naNchiti* (a court-yard or house of Mrs. so and so). It is this way because women are essentially managers of the household, running the affairs and day-to-day activities of the home, while men are administrators, ensuring that there is order in the home and food security for the family.

Due to Western influences, most of these customs or traditions are now rarely practiced during Subiya marriages. Especially, under the influence of Christianity and Westernization, the maSubiya tradition processes leading to contracting a marriage have been overlooked if not discarded altogether by the new generations. Kampungu [4] posited that “these phases of marriage may appear unintelligible and meaningless if they are not viewed in their right cultural perspective.” As people view some of the marriage processes to be unintelligible, they meet multiple challenges in their married life. For instance, instead of contracting lifetime lasting marriages a lot of divorces are occurring. This signifies that instead of building homes, many homes have been broken in the name of civilization and social advancement compared to our so-called backward elders.

This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to put together, what the author presumes to be, the process through which young maSubiya men and women went through to get married in the past, and the process that is being followed for marriage during modern times. It is hoped that this chapter will arouse lively discussion among the maSubiya scholars in particular and other Namibians at large. This chapter might not

be a complete discussion on the topic; thus, it is hoped that others will take it further to research comprehensively on the subject matter. This will help in documenting what this author has not been able to record or correct what might be misrepresented by this author. Therefore, it is hoped that this chapter will lay the foundation for further studies and as an addition to the available literature.

## 2. Background

This chapter relies on the traditional practices of the Subiyas and, “if we happen to be members of that tribe or have lived with them, on what we have experienced there” [4]. Some traditional practices in the Zambezi region of Namibia are slowly dying due to certain influences, such as Western knowledge and technological changes. The Zambezi region is inhabited by the Basubiya, Bafwe, Khwe, Bayeyi, and Hambukushu. Most of these tribes share common traditional practices. They also share these practices with their cousins in the southern province of Zambia, commonly known as Barotseland or *Bulozi*. Not only do they share traditional or cultural practices but they also share a language – Silozi, which is a *lingua franca* in the Zambezi region.

Due to the shared cultural practices of the people in the Zambezi region of Namibia, the marriage practices outlined in this chapter also applies to the other tribes within the region though there might be some slight differences and exceptions. Because of differences and exceptions in cultural practices, this chapter mainly focuses on the maSubiya. It is also important to note that marriage practices of all ethnic groups in the Zambezi region have significantly changed since the dawn of colonization or the arrival of white people. The Subiyas are also referred to as *beKuhane* and are spread in different localities, especially Zambezi (formerly Caprivi) in Namibia; Sesheke, Zambia; and the Chobe district, Botswana [5].

The policy of the colonizers was to allow indigenous people to practice their traditions, “until, through intercourse with European commerce and education, the gradual work of civilization shall remove those bad practices which are most objectionable” [6]. Thus, Western influence slowly crept into the fabrics of the African traditional practices. As well as being shared with people in Zambia, common traditional practices of the maSubiya, such as marriage customs, are also shared with those in Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Kruger [7] reported that during his time in the Caprivi Zipfel (now Zambezi Region), “civil or Christian marriages [were] rare.” Forty or more years down the line, the tables have turned as traditional marriages are rare compared to civil or Christian marriages. A customary marriage is not even properly recognized before the law until one has to go through civil or Christian marriage processes [1]. Moreover, “customary marriages are not registered and there is no marriage certificate [issued] to prove that a marriage has taken place” [8]. Therefore, the marriage practices of the Subiya people have significantly changed due to certain factors, such as Western cultural influence, religion, urbanization, and education.

According to Kampungu [4], for the Okavango tribes, “the three principal stages of marriage are betrothal, the conclusion of a marriage contract, and the birth of the first child.” A definition of marriage according to the Subiyas is, as many aspects of their traditions, not written down but rather passed down from generation to generation. Thus, the definition that this author provides is an extension of what has already been discussed. It is based on the views of different readers and the maSubiya themselves, that marriage can be defined as a union between a man and a woman, two

families, and two villages. Similarly, Sinclair [8] and Bennett [9] add that customary marriage is “a contract between two family groups rather than between two individuals, [and] involves payment of bridewealth in the form of lobola.” This definition informs that marriage is not only for husband and wife, but it rather unites or joins two separate families together and their villages. In essence, there are four villages and families involved – the patrilineal and matrilineal families, that is, two families of a man and woman (from the father’s and mother’s sides).

This author also defines marriage in the African context as a “license” for sexual relations and a means through which a family can be built. The process outlined in this chapter may neither follow a sequence, nor is it exhaustive in-depth and context, but it provides a starting point for future studies to expand and consolidate the full process involved in the maSubiya and other Africans.

## **2.1 Problem statement**

Contact with Europeans has highly disrupted and changed African family life, especially marriage. In order to control and govern “natives,” laws that restricted Africans were imposed upon them, and studies were conducted to suit their governance. One such law is the Marriage Act<sup>1</sup> which designates ministers of religion and other persons as marriage officers. Marriage officers, who officiate Christian marriages were at that time foreign to the maSubiya and other ethnic groups in the Zambezi region of Namibia. It is elders and family members who ensure that those who intend to be married follow procedures and processes. Furthermore, “there is no need for the intervention of a state official (via marriage officer or priest) to give the stamp of validity to the marriage” [9]. On the disruption of the African family life, Kayongo-Male and Onyango [10] explicated that native studies depicted the Africans as savages “instead of details of the symbolic and social meaning of family life.” This recorded information was obscured and did not reflect the truth and cultural meaning as well as values cherished by Africans. It was rather a means through which Europeans would exert and impose their knowledge and cultural influence over the Africans. One way in which Westerners imposed their cultural influence on Africans was through the introduction of religion, especially Christianity. Moreover, as education and labor contracts were introduced, more and more marriage customs of the Subiyas were slowly abandoned and frowned upon by those who have been exposed to the so-called civilization, Christianity and education indoctrinated the masses who began to question the principles and establishment of their cultural practices. Thus, it is stressed that “schools founded by the colonialists led to rifts within families as the educated members began to question the authority of the uneducated older members of the family” [10].

African traditions and customs were rarely recorded or documented in the forms known by colonizers. It was, therefore, vulnerable to outside influence to the extent that belief systems already in place were no longer trusted. Due to Western influence and exertion over African cultures, today many Subiya young people have little regard for their marital procedures and processes. More recently, the problem is being impacted by urbanization and technology. These have led our elders to break the chain of orally passing down the cultural practices to their children, especially adolescents. In the end, young men and women loathe traditional marriage and choose the more attractive civil marriage, mostly leading to what is termed “white weddings.” Therefore, the influence and exertion of Western culture have attempted to erase and

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<sup>1</sup> Statutes of the Union of South Africa. Marriage Act, 25 of 1961.



“extend to silencing or rendering invisible of a complex of culture, history and communal identity” of the maSubiya [11].

The 1883 Commission on native laws and customs [6] in South Africa, clearly indicates the intent of the colonizers, which was to erase the traditional practices of the natives. It is stated that although the laws and customs of Africans were “interwoven with the social conditions and ordinary institutions of the native population,” an attempt to break them quickly would have been dangerous and “defeating the object in view.” The report, thus, concluded that customary laws were to be left substantially unaltered but “secure an uniform and equitable administration of justice in accordance with civilised usage and practice” [6].

## **2.2 Objectives of the study**

This chapter is guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the process or stages of marriage of the maSubiya people.
2. To compare and contrast the past and present practices of marriage of the maSubiya.
3. To document the unrecorded marriage practices of the maSubiya.
4. To arouse the intellectual minds to study the subject at hand.

## **3. Methodology**

This chapter utilized qualitative methods to address and uncover the processes involved in the maSubiya marriages. The chapter is guided by the colonial paradigm, which includes the dominant and subordinate groups. According to McDougal [12], “the dominant group maintains dominance and control over those with less power” in the colonial context. Moreover, “the basic assumption of the colonial paradigm is that the colonized are pressured to abandon their own cultural values and adopt the values of the dominant groups” [12]. In this chapter, this dominant group is the Western culture that introduced Christian or civil marriage to the maSubiya, whereas the maSubiya are the subordinate group, who were pressured to abandon their cultural practices of marriage ceremonies in order to adopt Christian or civil marriages. Staples (as cited in McDougal) argued that “the colonial subjects’ native culture is modified or destroyed” during colonialism [12].

The methods of data collection used were mainly archival, document analysis methods, and observations. A variety of literature sources, especially anthropological studies, were consulted to draw meaning and develop themes and categories used to explore and contrast the past and present of the phenomenon of the marriage process of the maSubiya. Thus, data from the documents and archival materials were “analyzed by continually comparing incidents [or stages in the maSubiya marriage] and finding relationships within the data and concepts” [11]. Because data were mainly collected through literature review, this is a limitation on the direct or primary data source (mainly people) and may be considered a methodological weakness of this chapter. Nonetheless, important data relating to the phenomena being dealt with in this chapter was gathered from different document sources and archival materials.

Archival methods questions are directed at “people and at written sources, concerning issues...in the past in order to understand the present and predict the future” [13]. For this study, the archival method used is a historical review whereby available literature from other African marriage processes was conducted to draw comparisons of similarities with the maSubiya traditional marriage. The purpose of this review is “to describe what happened in the past...in order to illuminate the present” [13] regarding the maSubiya marriage process. By definition, archival methods are those that “involve the study of historical documents, that is, documents created at some point in the relatively distant past, providing us access that we might not otherwise have to the organizations, individuals, and events of that earlier time” [14]. Similar to archival methods, document analysis “is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents...[and] requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” [15]. Thus, the review of recorded African marriage literature was analyzed to draw similarities and comparisons to the maSubiya marriage process. The data collected from literature is classified as secondary data [16]. Therefore, this chapter lacks primary data, which can be obtained from people through interviews and discussions. Although this chapter may not be considered reliable because of its reliance on literature, it is valid because different sources were consulted and observations. For future studies, scholars and researchers should consider interviews to collect data from new and old generations of the maSubiya people for validation purposes.

#### **4. The choice of a mate**

In the African context, men are hunters and they are always on the mission of seeking that which they want. The same is true when it comes to the marriage process of the maSubiya people and many other Africans in the sense that when the time is right for a man, he will go on a quest seeking for a potential partner. Although this trend changed from the arranged marriage customs, it has become an important part of the process to be taken before a man settles down. Maponga and Bavu [17] relate that after the man has seen the woman, he wants to marry; he would go back to his own family and inform them that he has found a potential wife. Contrary to the previous generations, the current generation would rather jump the guns without due process being followed. In the past, the search was done by the parents (hence, arranged marriages) but the young man was at liberty to identify a girl from a certain family. Failure of the young man to identify his potential wife, parents would arrange for their son when he was at the right age of marriage. At present, arranged marriages are unheard of but they still occasionally occur, depending on the situations.

##### **4.1 Betrothal, *kubikiliza***

Previously, before the encounter with Europeans, “it was customary for a man to marry a child” [7] by making arrangements with the parents of the child while she was still in the mother’s womb or too young to marry. When a girl received her first menstruation (*kufulumana*), she was kept in isolation (*chikenge*) for some period of time where she would be taught a lot of things. Shamukuni [5] explained that the girl was “given instructions on the role of a woman in society, including family care”. He further goes on to state that, “In the past when infant betrothal [*kubikiliza*] was

practiced, the adolescent girl married as soon as her initiation ceremonies were over. This often resulted in young girls marrying men twice their age” [5]. These practices are now uncommon.

The term *kubikiliza* means reserving for marriage, as the husband-to-be would wait for the birth of his future wife and put on a necklace or wrist band as a sign that she was reserved. This process of engaging or putting a placement on a young girl or unborn girl child was done with the consent and foreknowledge of the parents. Similarly, Schapera [18] noted that “girls were sometimes betrothed in early childhood, or even pledged before they were born, so that their fate might be settled before they could choose for themselves”. When the child was of age or *kamwale* [2, 5], the man would make arrangements to marry her.

Contrary to old ways, today young people know each other and live in relationships known as “stay together” or cohabitation to test if they are compatible with each other. When they decide that they can tolerate each other, then they can now introduce themselves to their parents and other family members. Sometimes, they have children together before they make the decision to get married. Thus, the old pattern of the marriage process is broken, and Western cultural life is adopted. Damachi, Holloh and Seibel (as cited in Agbontaen-Eghafona [19]) extends this argument that

*Women’s ambition to be financially and socially independent means that they are most likely to accept marriage proposals that can satisfy most of their financial, social, and economic needs. Hence, the responsibility of choosing a spouse is largely dependent on the individual (male or female), and no longer on the family. Individuals present their love interest to their families for approval rather than the families choosing for them. Despite this development, the selection of marriage partners is still done with the consent of family members, although not as strict as before.*

Thus, most of the times of yesteryears, betrothal was organized between two families, especially friends who wished to cement their relationship and continue to look after their own interests. Although this was effective, this custom is now rarely practiced. New generations regard it backward and undesirable because, by the time a person is told he/she has to be married to a certain individual, that person may be in a relationship with someone else – someone he/she love to the core. Betrothal, therefore, was not based on love, feelings, or attraction, much less beauty, but rather on the continuity of long-term friendships and relationships between families. This is because love was not regarded as *a priori* for marriage but as *a posteriori*. Therefore, the young men and women did not need to love the person but they were rather expected to grow in love with one another. This meant that as the couple lived together, in due time they would love each other because the characters and deeds within them would be revealed. Contrary to the traditional notion that love grows as couples live together for a long time, “the Western marriage is based on love” [10]. This is what the modern Subiya marriages, like other African marriages of today, are based upon. However, Africans did not “think of marriage as a union based on romantic love although beauty as well as character and health are sought in the choice of a wife” [20]. Rather, it is concluded—and this has been the norm—that the “strong affection that normally exists after some years of a successful marriage is the product of a marriage itself conceived as a process, resulting from living together and co-operating in many activities and particularly in the rearing of children” [20].

## 4.2 Family background checks

In the Subiya terminology (*Chikuhane*), the word family or family background specifically is referred to as *luzubo* or *lusika*. Another important aspect in the process of the maSubiya marriage is family background. Family background refers to the “conduct and reputation” as viewed by family members of those who intend to be married [18]. Although it is not so much interrogated in modern marriages, family background is an essential aspect which the man’s and woman’s families scrutinized before their son or daughter got married. The objective or purpose of the family background was to avoid future misunderstanding and rather provide or secure a stable marriage. It was to ensure that the future in-law (whether son or daughter) will live in harmony with his or her family in-laws instead of causing disunity and destabilization in the family.

Family background was and must still be, very crucial in the process of marriage. It informs the families involved of things, such as behavior and attitudes within the families, and raises some of the following questions:

1) Is the family hard-working? 2) what circumstances surround them? 3) how do they handle family matters? 4) how do they live? 5) how do they die? and so forth [17, 21, 22].

These questions need to be answered before the next step is undertaken. Should there be doubts concerning the family, the man or woman’s family withdraws or cancels the plans to be united with the other family through the marriage of their children. As the man is the initiator, background checks are mostly done by his family. This is not to say the woman’s family does not have to do the family background checks. Therefore, this has to happen from both sides to satisfy both families.

For the reasons mentioned above, family background is usually compared to *iziko* (*sing.*) or *maziko* (*pl.*), which is literally translated as the fireplace. It is so-called fireplace because of what usually took place on the fire. In short, the fireplace was where children received their education, mannerism, and doctrines, that is, family upbringing. Here, stories would be told concerning behavior, work, and life in general. Knowledge was passed down through stories told by elders, and children were reminded of these stories in their daily activities and livelihood. Therefore, it was these characteristics, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors that a family sought to know and understand before their children were united in marriage.

When the man has reached the stage to get married, elders usually invoke these words: *muku ba sala* (sift them through), and *mukulola maziko sakata* (look for a woman from a family with a good reputation). After seeking, the man will inform his uncles who then caucus with their wives and aunts. It is like a tender application that needs to be reviewed to determine the suitability of the sought-after woman. Here, the man’s uncles and aunts “pulls a file for the woman’s family” [17] to do the background check. This needs to happen because two families are coming together through the marriage of the two individuals in question—the seeker and the sought-after woman. Therefore, the essence is that the young man does not get married to a young woman, but he gets married to the entire family. The opposite of this is also true for young women. It is notable that when a man has signaled his intention—to his uncle(s)—to marry a woman from a certain family, it takes a long time because a lot of information needs to be gathered about that family.

Unfortunately, today there is little family background checks taking place among the maSubiya youth. Some of the reasons for this process to be excluded include allowing young people the freedom of choice and their basis of love and attraction

toward each other. Some young people are now marrying other tribes from other parts of the country and even foreign lands, making this process difficult to be carried out. Moreover, young people get married in secret (e.g., in courts) and only present each other to their parents at a later stage as a married couple. Perhaps the interrogation part involved in family background checks makes young people uncomfortable. Despite these and other excuses, it is argued that family background checks should still be carried out for the following reasons: (a) to confirm the identity of your partner, (b) to ensure that your partner is legally single, (c) to get acquainted with your partner's family, and (d) to uncover possible skeletons in the closet [23].

## 5. The bridewealth (*malobolo*)

Parents and elders must be satisfied with the family background their son or daughter wants to be married to. Without the unanimous decision, the plans of the young man and woman cannot be allowed to manifest. But if there is an agreement, and the family is found to be worthy, then plans are set in motion to begin the next process—formal introduction to the parents and entire family, as well as *malobolo*. Kayongo-Male and Onyango argued that the term “bridewealth” is preferred to the term “brideprice” because brideprice carries a “connotation of purchasing the wife” [10]. *Malobolo* is the Subiya term for bridewealth and is similar to *lobola*, a term used in most African marriage customs. Thus, the two terms will be used interchangeably in this chapter. The Subiya men pay *malobolo* to a woman's family according to current requirements. Previously, this was accomplished by paying two hoes, two herds of cattle [3], or as Kruger [7] describes it:

*a man required to live at the village of his parents-in-law and render service there until one or even more children were born...At the end of the service, the father of the man would give a beast to his son to be given to the latter's wife, in turn, to be passed to her father, representing recognition of the woman's services.*

Therefore, the most crucial stage of the marriage process of the maSubiya is the negotiation and payment of the bridewealth (*malobolo*). It is common practice for men to pay *lobola* or *malobolo* but Shamukuni [5] argues that the maSubiya did not practice this custom, most commonly known as the brideprice. Rather, “the groom had to work for the parents of the bride for a couple of years and that was all”. According to Shamukuni [5], after consultations with the family members and an agreement reached together with them, a Subiya man stayed with his bride's parents for a couple of weeks. During this time the man would acquaint himself with his wife's family. The parents of the bride also had to satisfy themselves that their son-in-law is a good type of man. Afterward, the man was free to take his wife to his ward [*chilalo*] or village [5, 7].

In the past, *malobolo* was paid as mentioned above but also, a man could only bring some hoes or show that he could provide for his family through either farming or hunting. Presently, *malobolo* is paid through a certain number of cattle, which can also be translated into monetary value depending on the bride's parents. Moreover, Sinclair [8] argues that “With urbanisation, the payment of cattle has to some extent been replaced by the payment of money”. When replaced with monetary value, it is usually based upon the traditional court's (*khuta*) value of herd of cattle. Currently, a cow is valued at N\$1,000.00. For example, if the father requires 20 herds of cattle, he

might say 18 should be in money and two should be delivered physically. This would imply that the groom will pay N\$18,000 cash and arrange for the delivery of two cattle, usually cows.

That said, negotiating delegates are arranged and prepared by the bride's and groom's uncles. These will range from between four to ten people and do not have to be gender balanced. Thus, experience in negotiations is required, while new blood is included for the learning process and continuation of the tradition. The groom's uncles will first contact the bride's parents [10] informing them of their intention to "marry their daughter," by uttering: "*twakeza ku kutunga*," meaning we have come to collect the fire. Upon hearing these words, the parents; already informed by their daughter; will call all the girls who have reached marriage status to gather around for the delegation to mention the name of the specific girl to be married or even to identify that girl. This is done when the groom has whispered the name of the girl in the ears of the uncle. When it is known who the bride will be, the girls are sent away and the parents inform the delegation that they should contact the bride's uncles to arrange the date for *malobolo* negotiations. The role of the girl's parents is to set the demands related to *lobola*, that is, the amount of money and number of cattle to be paid. This information is then communicated to the girl's uncles who will take part in the negotiations.

### **5.1 Malobolo negotiation**

In many customary law systems, the payment of a marriage consideration or *lobola* is the principal criterion for a valid customary marriage. Thus, the bridewealth is used to distinguish a valid marriage from a non-formalized union. *Lobola*, as the criterion for a valid customary marriage, is tendered by the groom or his parents to the bride's parents [3]. Moreover, the "bridewealth was considered to be an essential ingredient of a valid union and without payment or at least some arrangement concerning future payment, the legitimacy of the union would be in doubt" [9]. On the day of the negotiations for *malobolo*, uncles and aunts are part of the delegation that represents the parents of the young man and woman to be married. Parents are rarely involved in the negotiations of *lobola*. The size of the delegation depends on each family represented, but usually between five to ten members. Each side will choose a chief negotiator, usually someone with experience and skillful negotiation tactics. In the past, negotiations could start without delay but at present, the man's negotiating team must make a payment not exceeding N\$2,000.00. This payment is for *sikwalula mulomo* (mouth opener), which is intended to start the discussions. Without this, negotiations cannot take place.

Once *sikwalula mulomo* is paid, the girl's family will welcome everyone present and, as if they are not aware of the occasion, pose the question to the guests (the man the representatives): "what brings you here?" One of the man's representatives will answer metaphorically: "*tukavugana inombe yetu izovete*" (we are looking for one of our lost cows). This sets the tone for the beginning of the negotiations. As mentioned previously, the payment of *lobola* was not expensive as it is today. One of the reasons for the increase is the education of women. The assumption is that the woman's family feels that they need to be compensated through *lobola* for what was spent on their daughter's education. This might be because they will be losing financial support when their daughter is married.

While some families prefer the couple to be married to sit in during negotiations, some do not want them to listen to the proceedings of negotiations. The reason might be that due to the heated discussions that sometimes occur or break out during

negotiations, the couple might develop hatred toward certain members of the family. Therefore, it is crucial to note that the importance of *lobola* is that “it serves to transfer the woman, and her reproductive capacity, from the family of her guardian into the family of her husband” [8]. It is important to note that the intended purpose of the bridewealth (*malobolo*) was to “compensate the parents for the loss of their daughter, but it was not meant to be an assessment of her ‘cost’ in cattle and goods” [10]. However, today, the custom has become closer to a brideprice since parents, imbued with economic values, have begun to calculate the worth of their daughters in monetary terms [10, 24]. Kayongo-Male and Onyango further detail that

*Higher levels of education lead to a larger bridewealth payment, until the college-educated woman becomes too expensive for men of her age who are not wealthy. When bridewealth become unreasonably high and becomes a way of measuring the value of the woman, it is changing from bridewealth to brideprice. When bride-wealth changes from being a way of committing two families to uphold marriage and becomes a way to acquire quick wealth, the social utility of bridewealth changes. It no longer makes marriages stable and seldom guarantees absolute rights over offspring even in customary marriages” [10].*

In addition to the observations and analysis above, Ambunda and de Klerk further state that

*Generally, there appear to be many misunderstandings and misinterpretations regarding the role and meaning of lobola. Many people believe that paying lobola means “buying” the bride. Traditionally, this interpretation is wrong and unacceptable, as women are not a tradable commodity and should never be perceived as such; lobola was not, and is still not, meant to “buy” a bride, but to secure marriage and prevent divorce. Therefore, lobola is meant to serve as the security in a customary marriage, with the effect of preventing both the spouses and their respective parents from the consequences that arise in the event of divorce. As lobola is meant to secure customary marriages, in the event of divorce there are conditions attached to lobola; these will determine whether the lobola is returned to the groom and his parents by the bride’s parents, or whether the groom and his family forfeit the lobola [3].*

In today’s *lobola* negotiations, many families are looking to compensate themselves financially because of the level of their daughter’s education. The more a Subiya woman is educated, the more the *malobolo* will be asked. Thus, many young maSubiya men feel that this has become a business transaction instead of *malobolo* [24]. When there is this feeling among the maSubiya men, marriages are very vulnerable and women become the subjects of abuse as a result of anger emanating from the negotiations.

At the end of the negotiations, the man’s negotiating team also pays an amount not exceeding N\$2,000.00 for closing the negotiations (*sikwala mulomo*). When this is paid, general discussions and interaction can commence. It marks the end of the business of the day, and plans for the next step can also start from each family.

## 5.2 Escorting the bride to her new family

When *malobolo* have been agreed upon by the two families, the bride’s family shift their attention to preparing her to leave her parent’s home and start her new life

with her husband and his family. These include serious talks, such as preparing her emotionally and psychologically, for the changes about to take place. This stage also includes advice (*intaalo*) from aunts, mainly to guard her from disappointing her family and to act in her best behavior at all times. During this time, the groom's family is informed and given notice of when they can officially get their wife. Therefore, preparation does not only take place in the bride's family but also in the groom's family. What the groom's family prepares is the selection of aunts, sisters, and female relatives to be in charge of getting the bride, the clothing to dress up the bride and the person to dress the bride, and how many people will be involved. It is important to note that although the bride is involved in her preparations, the groom is rarely involved in most of his preparations. According to all local kinship systems marriage is part or virilocal, in other words, the bride should go to live with her husband, either at his own or his father's homestead [25].

After the preparations are done, the groom's family will leave their village with the intention of getting their wife (the bride) and bringing her to their family. The family will head to the bride's said place of boarding, which is usually the aunt's home. Upon arrival, the aunts are informed of the arrival of the visitors as the delegates remain outside, waiting to be invited inside the yard or courtyard. The bride is at this time covered with a veil or long sheet, and waiting to be uncovered by the groom's family. When the groom's family enters and the greetings are completed, they are told to uncover their bride and present her with new clothes. This represents the new life the bride is starting because she leaves all garments and clothing, gotten before this day, behind. She takes nothing from her past, unmarried life. She is now the responsibility of her husband [25] not her parents and their family. Bekker [26] mentions that "there is no customary marriage until the girl has been handed over to the bridegroom".

When she is dressed up, women ululate and the group start to escort the bride to her husband. She is accompanied by her aunts, sisters, and other family members. As the proceeding starts in the evening, the escort of the bride to her husband takes place during the night. Ndana [2] expositis that during the escort, the following nuptial song is sung "just before the bride and groom meet in a sexual embrace to consummate their marriage".

<i>Mutwale kamwale</i>	You take the bride
<i>Kwamwihyavo</i>	To the groom
<i>Aka tuke nyina ne si</i>	So, she insults her mother and father

This song has two meanings or motives. The first is that marriage and life itself is a journey through which "the human race, through sexual union, will be perpetuated [2]." The second is a "warning to the bride [and even the groom] not to behave to her in-laws in a manner which will embarrass her parents [2]." These two motives of the song inform us that as the new couple begins their marital journey through sexual embrace, they should build and uplift the community in which they live through self-control in order not to disrespect elders, especially their immediate families.

In today's busy and complicated life, the song may be omitted based on certain reasons. Taking the distance into account, the bride might be taken from as far as the nearest town, Katima Mulilo. It sometimes gets a bit prolonged process compared to the past. What usually happens is that the bride is brought to her husband's house with ululating crowds.



### 5.3 The morning after

This is the final stage that leads a couple to settle together as husband and wife. Very early in the morning, women begin to ululate (*kululuweza*), a “traditional custom which expresses joy by women when everything is falling into perspective” [27] and is usually performed at weddings. Depending on the situation or choice of the couple, certain events are performed while others are left out. Before the corruption of culture by Western influence, however, nothing was left as optional by the couple but they now have a say in what they want and what they do not want to proceed with. Needless to say, the least, some of the events included or still include the demonstration of (a) the ability to provide for the family, and (b) a session of advice or marriage counseling (*inkelezo*).

At the show-casing of the ability to provide for the family, the groom is handed a spear (*mulinga*) and the bride is given a hoe (*ihamba*). The spear is an old weapon that was used mainly for hunting and killing game animals, while a hoe is used for cultivating and weeding crop fields. The man must throw the spear handed to him onto a target (usually the bark of a tree). It is required of him that the spear should hit the target and remain stuck. This symbolized that when he goes hunting, he will not return empty-handed but that he will always hit his target (game) to bring home to his family. Contrary to the man’s performance, the woman is required to show her skills by demonstrating that she can use a hoe to cultivate and weed her crop field. When the couple have demonstrated their ability to provide for their family, women ululate to show their satisfaction. In the current situation, this is skipped because both the bride and groom are usually employed and can provide for their family financially through their jobs.

If this is omitted, the proceeding will commence with ululating as the aunts accompany the bride and groom to the courtyard of the groom’s mother where marriage counseling will be held. As they are led by a procession of ululating women, a smaller traditional mat made of reeds (*kasasa*) is spread specifically for the couple. After they have sat, a chosen woman—known for her goodwill manners, one who does not spread rumors in the community—brings a small amount of pap (*kakoko*) on a stone. She feeds both the bride and the groom while others look on and continue ululating. While feeding the bride, she lightly beats her with the stone on her chest and comments: “*muku zi kazika*.” This literally means that the bride should not spread rumors in the community or village she is coming to be a part of. It means everything the bride hears should be buried within herself.

The man’s mother puts a necklace of beads around the couple’s necks, symbolizing the union of the two. Afterward, the bride is given a marital name by which she will be known in the community. In some instances, after the conclusion of *inkelezo* or *intaelo* (advice/counseling), a traditional wedding would take place. However, as mentioned before, today young people have options of whether to proceed with the traditional wedding or the white wedding.

## 6. Conclusion

Like in other African cultures, the maSubiya go through a process or stages that lead to marriage. Core among the process is family background checks and *lobola*. Although some of the stages are presently being omitted by young people, most of them are still being followed. The influence of other cultures, such as that of the West

and urbanization, threaten the longevity of the maSubiya marriage practices. It is thus hoped that this chapter will help preserve these practices and contribute to the available literature on the maSubiya people. Moreover, this chapter is a springboard for other scholars to include what has been left out, and which is crucial in cultural preservation. Especially important is the language usage and deeper meanings concealed in the figurative language being used in all stages to be studied and explained, so that future generations will get the meaning.

For the maSubiya, “the payment of lobola—or *malobolo* as they refer to it—is the main criterion for distinguishing a valid customary marriage from a non-formalized one [and this] custom has been passed from generation to generation [3]. Thus, the validity of the union rested on the approval of the two families rather than the wishes of the spouses [9]. This chapter is a demonstration that the maSubiya people use metaphorical phrases to express some terminologies in most of the stages of marriage. They also use symbols to convey meaning to those involved and the observers. The chapter looked at important stages or processes involved in maSubiya marriage. Some of the most important processes include family background, *lobola* negotiations, and escorting the bride.


## **Author details**

Fabian S. Kapepiso  
National Library of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

\*Address all correspondence to: [fabiankapepiso@gmail.com](mailto:fabiankapepiso@gmail.com)

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# Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the Digital Economy through E-Commerce: A Case Study of Oaxaca

*Olivia Allende-Hernández, Evelia Acevedo Villegas,  
Norma Martínez and Flavio Juárez Martínez*

## Abstract

This research aims to know the level of inclusion of indigenous peoples in the digital economy through the adoption of electronic commerce aimed at the sale of indigenous handicrafts present in the state of Oaxaca, as well as the level of technological skills on the part of Oaxacan artisans. The methodology applies a qualitative study through a descriptive exploratory process in order to carry out a theoretical and practical analysis in the context of the Internet. The results indicate that the electronic commerce of indigenous handicrafts of Oaxaca is incipient; however, social networks and specifically Facebook© and Instagram© have favored the artisan in the process of adoption of electronic commerce, which is reflected in the marketing of their products in these social networks. Likewise, it is evident that the indigenous artisan faces important challenges in having legal protection over the rights of their designs and handicraft works; in the same way, it requires technical assistance for the process of learning and building technological competence.

**Keywords:** cultural identity, e-commerce, digital divide, indigenous handicrafts, indigenous peoples

## 1. Introduction

The Mexican state recognizes indigenous peoples by defining themselves in Article 2 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States as a multicultural nation founded on their indigenous peoples [1]. The indigenous peoples of Mexico are those who assume an ethnic identity based on their culture, their institutions, and history that defines them as the autochthonous peoples of the country, descendants of the original societies of the Mexican territory. According to an estimate by the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI by its Spanish acronym), through the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI by its Spanish acronym), in 2015 the indigenous population was approximately 12 million people,

divided into 68 ethnic groups [2]. According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI by its Spanish acronym), the 2020 census showed that at the national level there are 11.8 million indigenous people with 51% being women and 49% being men [3].

In the state of Oaxaca, there coexist 16 of the original peoples distributed in the eight regions that make up the state, which leads to a cultural wealth that has been transmitted from generation to generation through its rituals, symbols, uses, and customs among other factors. The original peoples (also called pre-Hispanic peoples) have traditionally had an important participation in the manufacture of handicrafts, embodying in each of them their ancestral culture. The main problems experienced by indigenous artisans are the abuse of the intermediation of their products, resellers, and the lack of fair remuneration for their creations. The COVID-19 pandemic came to exacerbate the situation of the artisan since it affected the influx of tourism and economic activities, as well as the sales of handicrafts that are traditionally made face to face, giving the artisan the opportunity to communicate to the final customer their emotions, the meaning of their symbols and colors embodied in their works. However, COVID-19 has also helped artisan to reinvent their marketing process by venturing into virtual spaces through the Internet.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) combined with the democratic access to the Internet that prevails in developed countries have impacted the global economy, giving direction to the concept of the digital economy. It is experiencing rapid growth that manifests itself in various sectors, such as e-government, e-commerce, e-learning, e-health e-entertainment, e-business, and others. Likewise, digital mobile devices and the growing connection to broadband and computer networks accelerate the adoption and development of new forms of social interaction, providing new opportunities for marketing products and/or services. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conceives the digital economy as “any economic activity enabled or significantly enhanced by the use of digital and information technologies” [4]. In general terms, the digital economy can be defined as those commercial activities that are carried out through the use of digital computing technologies where products and services are marketed in the virtual space, streamlining processes and mitigating marketing costs, giving rise to digital business. In accordance with the G20, the concept of digital economy comprises the following approaches: digital goods and services, economy with digital transactions, digitally enabled economy, digitally enhanced economy, and the digitalized society.

In the face of the pandemic caused by the infectious disease of the coronavirus (COVID-19), companies have been affected by their marketing processes that impact their economic income, especially micro and small companies, causing in many cases their closure. Faced with this contingency and the measures taken by the state, such as confinement at home and “healthy distance” in order to prevent the spread of the virus, the craft sector in the state of Oaxaca has also been affected, given that most of its sales were made face to face between the artisan and the client. As part of a marketing strategy, in recent years and especially in 2020 to date, Oaxacan artisans have seen the need to venture into e-commerce for the sale of their products. However, how prepared are artisans to make e-commerce a tool that favors their sales and their inclusion in the digital economy? Are there online stores or portals for the sale of Oaxacan handicraft products? Are the artisans the owners of the domains? What kind of handicrafts is produced in Oaxaca and which are sold online? The craft has its roots in the rural crafts of ancient civilizations (Mixtecos, Zapotecos, Triquis, among other indigenous peoples) and many specific crafts have been practiced for centuries, while others are modern inventions or popularizations of handicrafts that were originally

practiced in a limited rural geographic area of the state of Oaxaca. This research aims to answer the questions raised, with the aim of knowing the level of inclusion in the digital economy of the artisans of indigenous peoples.

From the perspective of interpretive procedure [5], the methodology of the applied research is of qualitative type through an exploratory process descriptive of the virtual scenarios of the Internet where the e-commerce practices of indigenous crafts are presumed to be developed, that are the subject of analysis and from this obtain conclusions on the essential of the subject of study (an indistinct reference will be made to the feminine or masculine gender to the indigenous artisan).

## **2. Handicrafts in Mexico**

Finding a concept of craftsmanship is not something simple, that is, there is no standardized concept. The art produced by indigenous groups is generally not referred to as folk art but as primitive art or indigenous art. However, there is no consensus that the concepts of folk art, primitive art, crafts, and folklore refer to the same type of creation [6]. The word craftsmanship comes from the Italian voice *artigianato*, this term is used to explain the activities of the artisan worker [7].

Handicrafts can be understood as a language by which artisans communicate with each other, with nature, and with those around them. Handicrafts express not only their identity but also the creative skill of artisans, customs, or geographical location [6]. Martínez-Peñalosa (1982) cited in Del Carpio [8] considers that handicrafts are the ways in which communities preserve and transmit their physical and spiritual peculiarity. Also, it is considered that they are the way in which artisans seek to preserve their customs, identity, and originality. The craft trade is one of the oldest in humanity, and it stands out for the elaboration of products with cultural elements and materials typical of the region where it is lived, which leads to create the identity of the community. The production of handicrafts is done manually and with the intervention of various pre-Hispanic tools [7].

Artisanal production in Mexico is carried out in a context of inequality and difference, since its ethnic origin, manufacture, materials, design, marketing, distribution channels, consumption, and valuation are diverse. On the other hand, the population has multiple differences in access to resources, goods, and services. Many of the differences in handicrafts are related to the cultural diversity of Mexico, which is a multicultural country. The Mexican cultural reality can be described as plural, multifaceted, classist, stratified, complex, contradictory, and rich, but it can only be understood by considering the social reality [8].

The diversity of pre-Hispanic cultures in Mexico favored the production of handicrafts in different regions. The Spanish conquest and the subsequent miscegenation led to the introduction of new techniques that diversified artisanal production [7]. That is why, today we do not find only a single type of craft in Mexico, but vary according to the state, even according to each locality. Crafts production is a ritual where the tradition, color, aesthetics, geometric configuration, and art persist [9], regardless of the type of crafts (textile fibers, black clay, and alebrijes, among others). On the other hand, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics for the quantification of activities related to handicrafts, that is, the Satellite Account of Culture of Mexico (CSCM its acronym in Spanish) uses as a reference the System of National Accounts 2008 of the United Nations, where the production of handicrafts is classified into eight large areas: pottery and ceramics; vegetable and textile fibers; wood, maque

and lacquer, musical instruments, and toys; Cardboard and paper, popular plastic, waxwork, and pyrotechnics; metalwork, jewelry and goldsmithing; lapidary, stonework, and glass; saddlery and leather goods; and typical foods and sweets. According to the CSCM, the culture sector generated 724,453 million current Mexican pesos in 2019, of which, handicrafts contributed 138,291 million pesos representing 19.1% of the cultural sector. In the same year, handicrafts employed 489,890 paid jobs; this represented 35.1% of the positions employed by the culture sector as a whole [10].

### **3. Handicrafts from the state of Oaxaca**

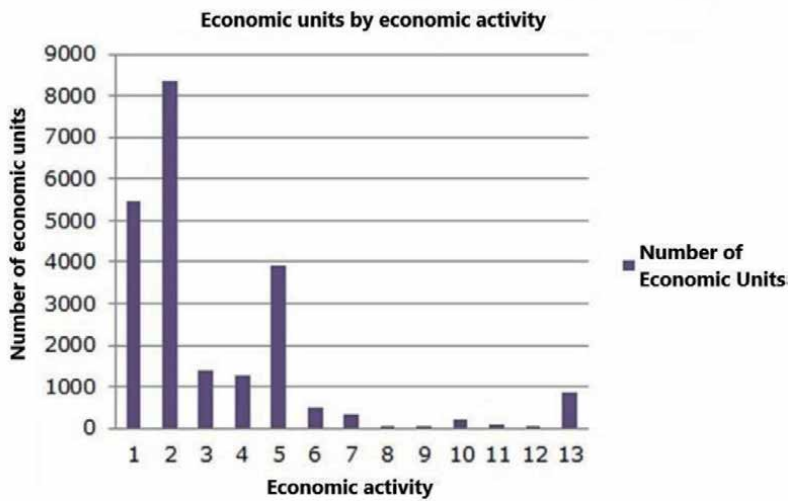
The situation of artisanal activity both at the national level and for the Oaxacan entity is varied. INEGI provides certain data on handicrafts as an economic activity (**Figure 1**). For the state of Oaxaca, in 2018, the economic activities associated with the production of handicrafts with a certain number of Economic Units (EU) were the following [11]:

1. Manufacture of textile inputs and textile finishing (5 485 EU)
2. Manufacture of textile products, except clothing (8 370 EU)
3. Manufacture of carpets, white and similar (1 376 EU)
4. Manufacture of carpets and rugs (1 253 EU)
5. Manufacture of clothing (3 921 EU)
6. Manufacture of knitted clothing (496 EU)
7. Tanning and finishing of leather, and manufacture of leather products (350 EU)
8. Manufacture of draft in fabric cutting (2 EU)
9. Manufacture of rubber footwear (2 EU)
10. Manufacture of huaraches and footwear of other materials (204 EU)
11. Manufacture of handbags, suitcases, and the like (104 EU)
12. Manufacture of other leather, leather and substitute products (14 EU)
13. Manufacture of pottery, porcelain, and earthenware (849 EU)

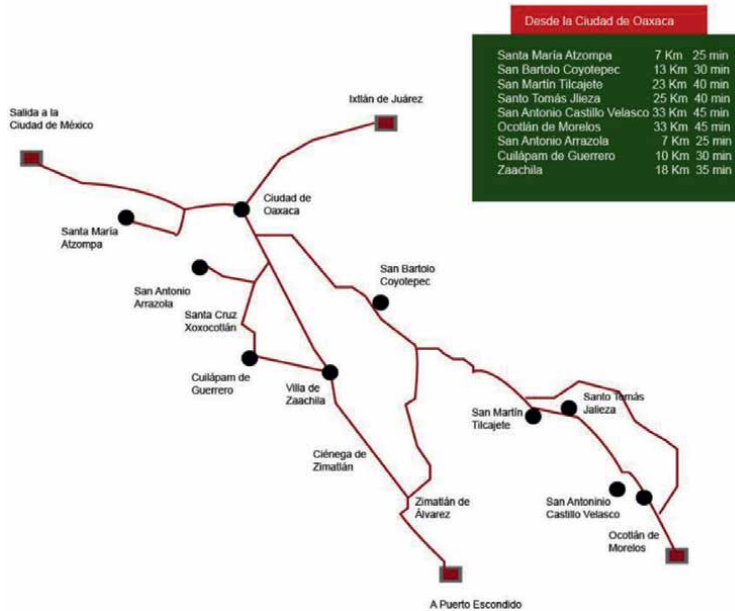
As can be seen in **Figure 1**, in the state of Oaxaca, the manufacture of textile products is relevant as the main economic activity within the artisanal branch.

According to the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR for its acronym in Spanish), the “Magic Route of Handicrafts” of the state of Oaxaca (**Figure 2**) includes the towns of: Santa María Atzompa, San Bartolo Coyotepec, San Martín Tilcajete, Santo Tomás Jalieza, San Antonio Castillo Velasco, Ocotlán de Morelos, San Antonio Arrazola, Cuilápam de Guerrero, and Zaachila [12]. In each of these localities, the handicrafts are exhibited in the central square, in the markets, in museums, or in small-scale workshops that have been





**Figure 1.**  
 Economic activity. Source: Elaboration with data from INEGI [11].



**Figure 2.**  
 Handicrafts route. Recovered from the Ministry of Tourism [12].

installed in the houses of the artisans. When craftsmen sell their products through a collective sales stand, the artisans have a system of labels, where the name of the artisan and the price are indicated, which allows other people to make the sale and the owner artisan to recover her investment for the sale of the product without having to stop producing.

In **Table 1**. The types of handicrafts produced in the localities that are considered in the “Magic Craft Route” are described.

<b>Locality</b>	<b>Type of crafts</b>	<b>Products</b>	<b>Place of sale</b>
Santa María Atzompa	<b>Glazed green clay ceramics</b> In the process double firing is applied to apply the powder “greta” to obtain the green color.	Utilitarian and ornate articles (pots, lamps, pots, pots, pots, and clay animals, etc.)	Craft market “La Asunción.” Merado of crafts “Del Señor del Coro” and local population.
San Bartolo Coyotepec	<b>Black clay ceramic</b> Cooking technique “reduction of atmospheres”	Utilitarian and ornate articles (pitchers, vases, figures of women and virgins, candlesticks, and skulls, among others.)	Artisan workshops in the town. State Museum of Popular Art in Oaxaca (MEAPO).
San Martín Tilcajete	<b>Alebríjes</b> Carved figures in copal wood.	All kinds of “fantastic beings,” product of the creativity and imagination of the craftsman*.	Workshops are installed in the homes of the artisans of the community.
Santo Tomás Jalieza	<b>Textile</b> Technique “waist loom” also known as otate loom. Pre-Hispanic symbols of multiple meanings prevail	Cotton yarn fabrics, such as huipiles, blouses, table paths, shawls, bags, backpacks, wallets, and bracelets, among others.	Handicraft market “El Higo.” Tourist Parador Local posts
San Antonio Castillo Velasco	<b>Textiles</b> Elaborated with silk and cotton thread.	Mainly huipiles, dresses, and blouses. As well as the traditional garment known as “the San Antonio dress.”	Family workshops located in the homes of the craftswomen. Community market premises.
	<b>Carrizo Basketry</b>	Basketry products, such as altillos, cages, baskets or napkin holders, among others.	
Ocotlán de Morelos	<b>Forged</b>	Forged metal, such as swords, knives, letter openers, daggers, and sabers.	Family craft workshops
	<b>Reed basketry</b>	Baskets, fruit bowls, jewelry boxes, and lamps.	Market square
	<b>Textiles</b>	Dresses, huipiles, and blouses made of blankets and embroidered with silk threads.	Community premises
San Antonio Arrazola	<b>Cradle of the Alebríjes</b> Figures carved in soft wood of copalillo, tzompante or cedar.	Creativity of the artisan, visualize the piece depending on the shape of the wood and the animal you want to make, such as dogs, cats, iguanas, jaguars, and dragons, among others.	Don Manuel Jiménez House Museum Workshops installed in the homes of artisans in the community.
Cuilápan de Guerrero	<b>Tufts with bird feathers.</b> <b>Alebríjes</b>	Tufts with bird feathers. Alebríjes	Plaza or artisan market, where other handicrafts from surrounding communities are also sold.

Zaachila	<b>Textiles</b> Costume jewelry Basketry Clay ceramics Mezcal The examples bel	A diversity of handicrafts is presented as a result of various techniques.	Gastronomic market Family craft workshops
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**Table 1.**  
*Types of handicrafts on the “Magic Craft Route” Data from the Ministry of Tourism [12].*

Other municipalities that are not within the handicrafts route, but also have a significant artisan production, are Magdalena Ocotlán, San Martín Tilcajete, and Santa Ana del Valle. These localities are located in the central valley region of the state of Oaxaca. In Magdalena Ocotlán, stone objects used in culinary art are made from metates and molcajetes, to mention a few [13]. In San Martín Tilcajete, wooden figures are made, better known as “Alebrijes” [14]. Finally, in Santa Ana del Valle, the textile activity is 100% handmade, made with wool thread on the loom and dyed with natural dyes. Rugs, jorongos, backpacks, blankets, and shawls are made, and all these elements are designed with landscapes, flora and fauna, or pre-Hispanic motifs of the region [15].

#### 4. Perspective of e-commerce in Mexico

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) can be defined as a commercial form that, using the services and links provided in electronic documents on the Internet, allows people to consult, select, and purchase the offer from a distributor through a computer or a system with an Internet connection in real-time, and at any time and place [16]. The OECD [17] has regarded it as the purchase or sale of goods or services, whether between enterprises, households, individuals, governments, and other public or private organizations, carried out on computer-mediated networks. It can also be noted that e-commerce mainly uses the Internet to offer and sell online the products or services of a company. So, if executed correctly, it can provide a number of financial advantages to companies, as well as being faster to get products and services to market or increase the customer base. In addition, it eliminates time and space barriers [18].

In Mexico, as in the world, the years 2020 and 2021 were important for the digital evolution in all sectors (e-education, e-government, e-health, and e-economy, among others.) e-commerce was one of the most benefited since important advances were presented in its adoption. The Government of Mexico has implemented strategies that have favored change and contributed to the reduction of the digital divide, such as the conversion of analog to digital signals, and it has freed the 700-megahertz band, helping to improve broadband services, as well as the amendments to the Federal Telecommunications and Broadcasting Act, which is aimed at regulating the use and exploitation of radio spectrum, telecommunications networks, and satellite communication. A significant advance for the population and marginalized communities in telecommunications was established in Section V of Article 118 of this Law, which states that as of January 1st, 2015, operators that provide telephony service, whether mobile, fixed, or both, cannot make national long-distance charges to their users for calls they make to any destination in the country [19].

After the constitutional reforms on telecommunications, the Mexican government became the majority shareholder of “Altán Redes,” [20] the company responsible for bringing Internet and mobile telephony to all the country’s towns, especially to the most isolated communities through the project known as “Red Compartida,” which will offer services at more accessible prices, as well as free Internet in public squares, schools, hospitals, and places of collective interest. These actions have led to the growth of the Internet, telephony, and specifically the mobile network, creating high expectations in its development due to increased connectivity and the promise of greater banking penetration to the population through traditional banking and the new banks, 100% digital (called Neobanks), that have bet on reaching remote areas and populations excluded by traditional systems.

In 2021, according to information collected by BlackSip [21], the world population was 7.8 billion people of which 60.9% are connected to the Internet. In Latin America, four countries exceed the world average for connection: Argentina (83%), Brazil (74%), Mexico (74%), and Colombia (69%). And according to the BlackSip report, on average people spend nearly 7 hours online and 92.1% access Internet services from their cell phones, so approximate global sales of \$4.189 billion are expected. Pierre Cuevas, regional director of sales north Latam for BlackSip, says: “The projections for the coming years are positive. It is expected that by 2025, e-commerce users will reach 77.9 million globally. This is thanks to the increase in connectivity and the spending capacity of generations that grew up in the digital context and therefore fear fraud less and rely on this type of services” [21].

According to the Mexican Association of Online Sales (AMVO) 2021, it stands out as preferred categories for purchase through digital channels in Mexico: food delivery in 66%, fashion items, such as clothing and footwear in 57%, beauty and personal care in 52%, electronics with 46%, appliances 43%, consoles and video games 41%, pharmacy 41%, supermarket 40%, office supplies 37%, and tools 35%. Among the trends for the acquisition of services are subscriptions to television, movies and music 83%, mobile telephony 78%, mobile banking 78%, utilities (water, electricity, and telephone) 75%, cultural content 72%, urban transport 70%, travel 67%, shows and events 57%, education 52%, courier service 52%. Also, according to the analysis of Americas Market Intelligence (AMI) the forms of payment for purchases in e-commerce in 2020 were credit cards 43%, debit cards 26%, some method based on cash payment 16%, digital wallets 10%, other forms of payment 3%, and bank transfers 2%. The main devices used to make online purchases were mobile with 57%, while 43% were made from a desktop computer. The main shopping applications (Apps) that were used on mobile phones and digital platforms were “Mercado Libre,” “Amazon,” “Shein,” “Liverpool,” “Aliexpress,” and “Segunda mano.”

Digital platforms have participation in a wide range of industries, so they can be defined as digital infrastructures that enable the interaction of two or more groups. That is, they serve as intermediaries that bring together different users, such as customers, service providers, advertisers, and suppliers, among others. Within these digital platforms enter e-commerce websites [22]. E-commerce platforms typically present information to shoppers, such as what they can buy, what they have purchased, and their status as customers. It is important to mention that the ease of payment, the benefits of online shopping, the quality of the information provided, and mainly trust are elements that significantly affect the purchase decision of consumers [18]. However, it does not mean that design does not matter, since, if the site has a quality interface, this will contribute to generate a positive impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors.

## 5. Status of e-commerce of indigenous handicrafts

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) allowed new tools for the commercialization of products and services [23]. It is worth mentioning that e-commerce represents advantages, but also disadvantages, especially for small businesses, or small businesses. In the state of Oaxaca, the production and sale of handicrafts are considered a family business, since, in most communities, complete families are dedicated to this activity. It is important to mention that in the information society and in the context of the digital economy, electronic commerce can change the way businesses are conducted [24], and of course, in the field of handicrafts, this can also have an effect. Although due to the sector, at present, it is still considered that they have not been reinvented, and artisans have not entered this new sphere, which is the electronic commerce of crafts. However, despite the advantages offered by electronic commerce and its inclusion in different sectors, currently, in the state of Oaxaca, this option of electronic business is still far from artisans, because while some do not yet have the knowledge of the concept itself, others do not have the technology. The vast majority of native craftsmen are not digitally literate and are unaware of its advantages, such as sales at all times, cross-border sales, and larger market, among other services. In addition, they do not have enough technological and economic resources to reinvent their current business as a digital business, in which the base would be an e-commerce platform.

It is therefore important and necessary for craftsmen to have digital skills and knowledge about the advantages that electronic commerce would offer them since today we live in a highly technical society, which allows having a market with the ability to offer a wide variety of products and services to the consumer at low cost and in a short time, so in this society, technology becomes a means to adequately respond to market demands [24]. Having a new sales channel, such as e-commerce, will contribute to improving their income and possibly their economic life, as well as having a greater presence in both domestic and international markets.

According to the study and analysis that was carried out in the search for e-commerce platforms for handicrafts, the sites shown in **Table 2** were obtained. Where the main handicraft products that are marketed are utilitarian and ornamental ceramics, pieces of goldsmithing, and alebrijes, as well as various textile articles, such as dresses, huipiles, blouses, curtains, bedspreads, and rugs, among other pieces. The main technology-based social networks were identified as the platforms of Facebook© and Instagram© that act as mediators in the exhibition of handicrafts. However, their owners are not the original artisans, so it follows that the intermediation and resale of artisanal products prevails. In other cases, it was found that non-artisan people take advantage of this technology to sell the products of artisans. This happens for the same reason because these people who do have the technological skills take advantage of technology to sell this type of product, when artisans would be expected to do so to increase their profits.

It was also found that the government of the state of Oaxaca collaborated with Amazon to offer Oaxacan handicrafts for sale and support the state's producers during the pandemic. Textiles, alebrijes, clay figures, and various ingredients of Oaxacan gastronomy are available through the "Amazon" handmade platform [25]. However, with this initiative, artisans remain in the same situation of exploitation of their handmade work since part of their profits is destined for "Amazon." Another important fact to consider is the lack of legal protection of the rights over

<b>Name</b>	<b>Platform</b>	<b>Link</b>
La Casa de las artesanías de Oaxaca	Facebook©	<a href="https://es-la.facebook.com/lacasadelasartesaniasdeoaxaca">https://es-la.facebook.com/lacasadelasartesaniasdeoaxaca</a>
Artesanías Oaxaqueñas	Facebook©	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/sandovalbarriosadelina/">https://www.facebook.com/sandovalbarriosadelina/</a>
Artesanías oaxaqueñas mayoreo y menudeo	Mercado Libre	<a href="https://listado.mercadolibre.com.mx/artesanias-oaxaqueñas-mayoreo-y-menudeo">https://listado.mercadolibre.com.mx/artesanias-oaxaqueñas-mayoreo-y-menudeo</a>
Oaxaca de mis Amores, Productos Artesanales	Facebook©	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ProArtOax/">https://www.facebook.com/ProArtOax/</a>
La Oaxaqueña Ropa Artesanal	Instagram©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/la_oaxaqueña_ropa_artesanal/">https://www.instagram.com/la_oaxaqueña_ropa_artesanal/</a>
Oaxaca en Casa	Instagram©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/artesanias_oaxaca_en_casa/">https://www.instagram.com/artesanias_oaxaca_en_casa/</a>
Chiquihuite artesanías	Instagram© Facebook©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/chiquihuite_artesanias_oax/">https://www.instagram.com/chiquihuite_artesanias_oax/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/chiquihuite.artesanias.de.carrizo/">https://www.facebook.com/chiquihuite.artesanias.de.carrizo/</a>
Casa de las Artesanías	Instagram©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/casa_arte_oax/">https://www.instagram.com/casa_arte_oax/</a>
Morena Mía	Instagram©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/morenamia_artesaniasoax/">https://www.instagram.com/morenamia_artesaniasoax/</a>
Artesanías Monte Albán	Instagram© Facebook©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/artesaniasmontealbanoficial/">https://www.instagram.com/artesaniasmontealbanoficial/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Artesan%C3%ADas-Monte-Alb%C3%A1n-104418065036049/">https://www.facebook.com/Artesan%C3%ADas-Monte-Alb%C3%A1n-104418065036049/</a>
Artesanías Oaxaca	Instagram©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/artesanias_oaxaca_/">https://www.instagram.com/artesanias_oaxaca_/</a>
Artesanías de Oaxaca	Instagram©	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/artesanasdeoaxaca/">https://www.instagram.com/artesanasdeoaxaca/</a>

**Table 2.**  
*Types of platforms used for e-commerce of indigenous handicrafts.*

their handicrafts since in none of the sites investigated is their legal protection of the design and art embodied in each of the handicrafts in a globalized market where piracy coexists.

As can be seen, in the incipient incursion of the sale of indigenous handicrafts of the state of Oaxaca in the digital modality, social networks have been mainly used through the Facebook© and Instagram© platforms, but no e-commerce stores of official handicrafts of each locality mentioned in this study were found. However, reference was obtained from three sites that allude to the sale of handicrafts. The first, belonging to the H. Ayuntamiento de San Pablo Villa de Mitla [26], is a traditional Web site that mainly shows the textile crafts of the artisans of Mitla. The site's interface reflects the ethnic culture of the locality and maintains an approach between the client and the artisan where brief stories of their artisans are written, such is the case of María del Rosario Hernández Monterrubio:

*“I am originally from San Pablo Villa de Mitla, since I was a child, I was very close to our culture because my grandfather was custodian of the Archaeological Zone and I enjoyed accompanying him. I grew up and learned about trade when my parents opened a “Mezcalería” that I took care of and since then I have really liked being a merchant. In my free time I embroidered garments to help with the economy of my family. As a craftswoman, I started 11 years ago with my husband, once we got*

*married, and since then craftsmanship has been our source of income. For me being a craftswoman is the best of the trades because besides enjoying it, it allows me to be close to my three children and see closely their growth.” [26]*

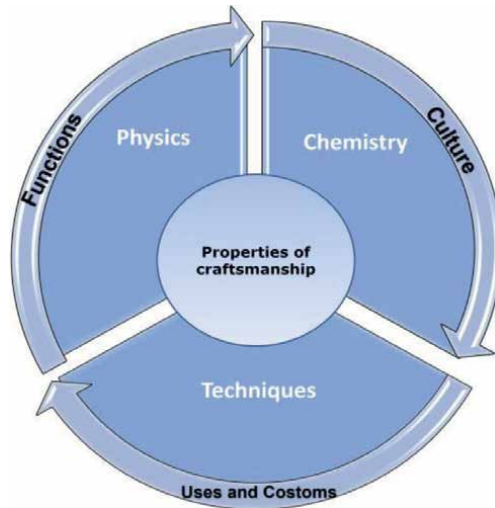
Since different artisans converge in the “Artesanías de Mitla Oaxaca” portal, the buying and selling process is carried out as follows: each artisan has a bank account number, which is associated with each of their handicraft products. The quantity of garments to be purchased is from 1 to 5 per artisan. It is also necessary to fill out a form with the following information: name of the garment, number of garments, and define sizes and colors. The customer must deposit the payment equivalent to the number of garments he/she wishes to purchase. As a way to verify the payment of the garments, the customer must provide his/her address and a photo of the receipt. Finally, the purchase process is completed after a maximum period of seven working days, the estimated time for the delivery of the product to the customer’s home via courier. Therefore, if the client wishes to purchase more products from different artisans, he/she will have to go through the buying and selling process with each of the artisans involved.

The second case is “ARIPO” [27] is an online platform of the Oaxacan Institute of Handicrafts (IOA) created for the online sale of handicraft products from the eight regions of the state. Its purpose is to promote artisan families and preserve the cultural legacy of the state. Also, another essential part is that it seeks artisan development in the digital era. The platform offers for sale various handicraft products: huipiles, blouses, wool rugs, alebrijes, shawls, clay pieces, glasses holders, pencil cases, cosmetic cases, baskets, and tinplate pieces, among others, where the production of various artisans from different communities converge. Therefore, it has a variety of products in its handicraft offer. The added value in each product is given from the moment in which each piece is conceived, for being unique and incomparable. Likewise, the product has a description so that the consumer has the opportunity to get to know the artisan, as well as the process of creation of the work, and not just make a purchase. This site has features, such as product control, order management, payment control, and delivery control; all these systems contribute to the commercialization of the products of Oaxacan artisans [27].

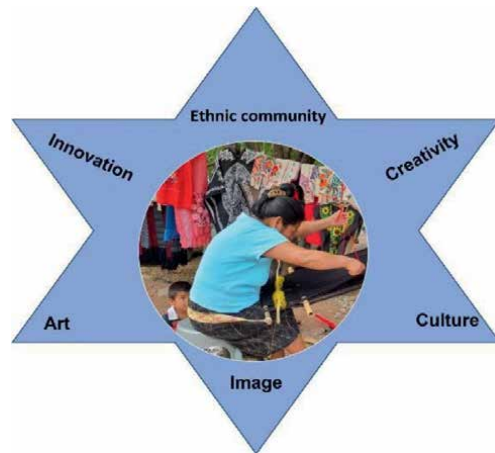
The third case is the platform of the “Casa de las Artesanías de Oaxaca” which is an organization composed of 54 families of artisans, the online platform has for sale crafts, such as rugs, t-shirts, mezcal, handbags, and kitchen utensils, to name a few. Also included is a menu that shows the buyer the ordered and classified crafts. Through this menu you can navigate between the different options of handmade products. In this e-commerce portal has applied the metaphor of “supermarket trolley”, so that intuitively the customer add the product you want to buy. The payment system has also been implemented through Paypal and/or by credit card. In the design of the interface of this e-commerce site, a variety of handicraft product lines are presented, such as pottery, tinsmithing, goldsmithing, palm, embossing, clothing and footwear, saddlery, wood carving, wool rugs, and includes food and beverages. There is a lack of balance between the quality of their images to highlight the qualities of the product, as well as products that are advertised without images, a situation that weakens the buying process. The products are presented through images that lack visual quality, which is a factor that discourages the purchase of the product.

## **5.1 Challenges of e-commerce of indigenous handicrafts**

The development of a business model for ethnic handicrafts through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) requires full knowledge of the



**Figure 3.**  
*The core of the ethnic handicraft product.*



**Figure 4.**  
*Socio-cultural attributes.*

tangible (shape, size, and color, among others) and intangible attributes (image, service, identity, etc.) that are present in an ethnic handicraft and that are appreciated by the consumer. Some of the factors that must be considered to make the decision to venture into digital e-commerce platforms are shown in **Figure 3**. Undoubtedly, the core of the handicraft product is composed of the physical, chemical, and technical properties, however, the functional characteristics, use, and customs inherent to the product and granted by the set of people or target audience (also known as Target) who will be the future consumer of the handicraft product, have relevance.

Oaxacan handicrafts are made up of elements that mix mysticism with functionality, that is, the artisans of an ethnic community (**Figure 4**) in each of their handicrafts capture elements that reveal the art of the rituals of their pre-Hispanic ancestors with the functional factors of the product. Today, the new generations make



a symbiosis between creativity, innovation, and mysticism where their culture is not lost with the new image of handcrafted products. Knowing who the target audience is, what type of product or service is offered or how you want to compete in the market are key issues when defining a business model in e-commerce. As it is an e-commerce business, the opportunities grow for the supply and demand of handicraft products, so the strategy to identify the characteristics, preferences, and needs of the consumer also requires accessible technological tools to obtain the most relevant information for the design of the graphic interface and the architecture in the content management of the e-commerce portal.

Defining the demographic profile of the target audience facilitates the task of the portal designer, within this framework, elements, such as age, gender, and location are relevant. In the case of this last element, it is a key element to focus on the design of the interface in a local, regional, or worldwide context. Once the consumer profile and the socio-cultural attributes of the product are known (**Figure 4**), it is necessary to differentiate between B2B (Business to Business), B2C (Business to Customers), and C2C (Consumer to Consumer) business models. The first refers to the B2B model where a company sells products to another company; in the case of the ethnic community of artisans, the company is made up of a social group generally composed of women who develop handicraft activities originating in an ethnolinguistic community and who find it difficult to position their product at a business Target. One of the main limitations is the productive capacity of the social group to supply the demand of a company that buys wholesale.

The B2C model refers to electronic commerce carried out by a company directly with the end consumer. For this model to be applicable, the social group of artisans would first have to be constituted as a micro-industry, that is, become an economic unit (EU) that through artisanal activity and work organization is dedicated to the transformation of its raw material into artisanal products. This provision is made in accordance with the Federal Law for the Promotion of Microindustry and Artisanal Activity (LFFMAA), which would imply administrative and accounting management. In most cases, the lack of accessibility to ICTs, the low level of education of the craftswomen, and their lack of knowledge about the LFFMAA are causes that prevent the incorporation of microindustrial entities of the handicraft activity into the state's economy, in addition to the fact that the craftswomen do not receive technical assistance to facilitate the constitution and operation of the economic units. This represents a great disadvantage for artisans because due to all the processes that must be carried out to set up a company and the economic investment it represents, they decide to continue selling in the traditional way and not to venture into e-commerce.

In C2C (Consumer to Consumer) e-commerce, which stands for consumer to consumer, it is a modality where sellers are closer to the end customer. This modality favors the artisan since it is not necessary to have a physical store beforehand. The client is the one who takes control of the commercial transaction, that is, the commercial operation is carried out directly between the artisan and the client, they agree on the transfer of the handicraft product, in exchange for a previously agreed price, without the intermediation and resale of the handicraft products. However, in this study, customer complaints were detected due to the lack of security and follow-up in the delivery of the products, once the corresponding payment has been made.

In order to provide reliability and security to the buyer during commercial transactions, sometimes third parties intervene, as in the case of the "Amazon" portal previously mentioned; another example is the "Mercado Libre," which is a portal where people can promote their own products (first or second hand) and coordinate

themselves with their customers the form, time, and place of the transaction. In return, these types of web portals are entitled to receive a certain commission for each sale that takes place on their platform as payment for their services. Also, with the intention of not making major investments in economic resources, artisans and non-artisans decide to opt for social networks as a sales channel. Although it represents disadvantages in terms of payment and delivery logistics, it is clear that its purpose is not that of an e-commerce platform. However, using these channels also has advantages, such as greater trust between the artisans and the consumer, and greater visibility on social networks, either of the artisan or of the products he or she sells.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

The Mexican state presents relative advances in the context of the digital economy; however, the net balance in socioeconomic terms is dissimilar for indigenous artisans, given that the strategies of growth and development in the technological structure of the country have not been sufficient to provide democratic access to the internet to the entire population, with isolated and marginalized communities being the most affected. However, given the contingency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic without a formally established online store, Oaxacan artisans have begun to offer their products on social networks, mainly Facebook® and Instagram®. To a large extent, the action is due to the development of mobile technology that is increasingly within people's reach. Indigenous artisans make use of cell phones to venture into e-commerce, giving rise to mobile commerce (m-commerce). This study highlights the presence of the indigenous artisan in electronic commerce in an incipient way, mainly due to digital illiteracy that is largely caused by the vertiginous technological advance and the precarious economic situation that the artisan lives in. Lacking technological competencies and skills, artisans are dependent on third parties to exhibit and market their products, which causes the prevalence of intermediation for the sale of their handicrafts. At the same time, there are few platforms dedicated to the e-commerce of indigenous handicrafts that comply with the entire process of buying and selling that gives value to a digital economy; for example, the payment of commercial transactions with credit or debit cards are almost nonexistent. For this reason, the customer has to pay for the product or service by electronic transfer or in cash at the time of delivery. It should be clarified that in this research it was found that most of the time the delivery of the product is made after the corresponding payment has been made.

On the other hand, taking into account the figures of the growth and adoption of e-commerce in Mexico, it is possible to infer that the electronic commerce of indigenous handicrafts has a virgin and promising market. However, just as new opportunities are created, new challenges also appear for the craftsman. It is not enough to exhibit handicraft products in a wider market, such as digital commerce, where barriers of borders and time are eliminated, it is also necessary to carry out actions to give legal protection to the designs of handicrafts and respect for the copyright of ethnic artisans, given that in none of the websites of this research there are property rights that protect the design and embodied art in each of the handicrafts against piracy. It is also important to combat digital illiteracy in most ethnic artisans, so technical assistance is required for the process of learning and building technological capacities. Finally, this research has given direction to carry out other studies that allow the researcher to venture more deeply into the rights of the indigenous artisan

in the face of the growing digital economy that brings with it new methods, forms, and challenges in the use of digital technologies and information.

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## **Author details**

Olivia Allende-Hernández<sup>1\*</sup>, Evelia Acevedo Villegas<sup>2</sup>, Norma Martínez<sup>3</sup>  
and Flavio Juárez Martínez<sup>2</sup>

1 University of the Sea, Oaxaca, Mexico


2 Technological University of the Mixteca, Oaxaca, Mexico

3 Nova Universitas University, Oaxaca, Mexico

\*Address all correspondence to: [oallende.mx@gmail.com](mailto:oallende.mx@gmail.com)

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# Indigenous Knowledge and Food Preservation: A Case of ‘Collective Responsibility’ for the Murambwi Locality in Chivi, Zimbabwe

*Dominic Mashoko*

## Abstract

Research in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe included, focusing on indigenous knowledge (IK) and food preservation practices have increased markedly over the past two decades. Some research focus on IK and the role of gender. It does not, however, consider specifically the role played by traditional values in indigenous food storage and preservation techniques. This paper explores a rural community’s IK and how this contributes to their post-harvest strategies used in Murambwi locality in Chivi, Zimbabwe. This locality has a dry ecology and indigenous people in the area have for centuries managed to preserve their food using indigenous knowledge. Sixteen community elders were interviewed through open discussions. The elders stressed the importance of collective responsibility in their IK of food preservation in communities, with reference to large and small grains and seasonal and perishable foods. Also, the elders displayed a collective sense of belonging, as manifested in their use of collective pronouns when referring to their homes and the land, ownership of resources, working together, close family relationships, and respect for sacred places. Relationships were at the center of the community, and they manifested through the emphasis on sharing, caring, respect, and common good.

**Keywords:** indigenous knowledge, collective responsibility, values, food preservation, respect, common good

## 1. Introduction

This paper was framed within the context of social values and their potential for contributing to the community’s IK of food preservation. The article draws on practical experience of the indigenous methods of food preservation from Murambwi locality in Chivi, Zimbabwe. The main purpose of this paper was to examine community elders’ social values related to post-harvest indigenous food preservation strategies for their seasonal and perishable foods. Science education literature is replete with studies focusing on IK for food security, for example, [1, 2]; a few, however, have looked specifically at the role of collective responsibility in the community members’ IK of

food preservation. The capacity of IK values to sustain indigenous peoples' livelihoods has been undervalued as a result of globalization and modernization in rural communities in Southern Africa [3]. In spite of this low regard due to colonization of African societies, indigenous people resisted individualism in favor of "*kubatana*" / "*ukubambana*" (togetherness). As a result, many of these peoples' values have remained intact and are applicable to modern-day indigenous peoples' lives. These lives are driven by a sense of belonging to a community. While retaining a keen sense of place and rootedness in the land they occupy, they have changed lifestyles within their own framework of values, priorities, and worldview. In most rural indigenous communities, "traditional societies tend toward collective decision-making, extended kinship structures, the ascribed authority vested in elders, and traditions of informality in everyday affairs" ([4], p. 5). It is worth noting that IK, as reflected in the community members' collective decisions in life, might play an important role in the indigenous peoples' methods of food preservation. This collective responsibility of the community with regards to cultural values was examined by first clarifying our understanding of the concept IK as was used in this paper.

## **2. Indigenous knowledge**

First, the paper provides a view of what indigeneity means in the context of this study. The concept of indigeneity or indigenousness carries with it a sense of belonging to a place [5]. This view concurs with the contention that indigeneity is a process that asserts that land and place-based knowledge are key to understanding oneself [6]. This indigenousness as originating from the local consciousness and long-term occupancy of a place and develops skills that are embedded in the culture of a given location or society [7]. In agreement, the idea of indigeneity is about indigenous knowing; it is the knowing of bodies in relation to the spaces and places in which people are inseparably interconnected. In these interconnections, indigeneity emphasizes context [6]. In this paper, indigeneity refers to the collective engagement of indigenous communities as active knowers. But the question still remains, what is IK?

It is important to provide a conception of what IK entails for the study. Various debates have been forwarded by different authors with regard to the definition of IK in science education. More importantly, IK is not a monolithic epistemological concept, with no unitary experience providing a useful starting point for our argument [5]. The author further argues that this form of knowledge is drawn from diverse sites and collectives; that knowledge is a connecting feature in indigenous communities. Literature shows that authors slightly differ with regards to their distinction between IK and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), but on the whole, they are in agreement. For example, IKS is a systematic reference to the knowledge and practices of indigenous communities constitutive of their meaning and belief systems, as well as the substantive dimension of their practices and customs [8]. On the other hand, in the process of generating IKS, indigenous people take into account their cosmos, spirituality, ontological realities, land, socio-cultural environment, and historical contexts [3]. This belief casts IKS as a holistic form of knowledge that is context-based. In concurrence, the idea that IKS is: "community knowledge rather than individual knowledge, unique to every culture or society and providing problem-solving strategies for that society" ([9], p. 39). This knowledge used by the community is IK [9]. With this view, IK is a place-based knowledge, rooted in local cultures, and mostly associated with long-settled communities, which have strong ties to their natural environments [10].



By implication, IK is part of the IKS. For this study, IK is the product of the knowledge, skills, and practices of the people within a community based on their historical ties to their land. These ties may manifest themselves as values that play an important role in the indigenous peoples' community practices with regard to food preservation.

### **3. Communities' food practices**

This communal life rests on the collective responsibility members of a cultural group undertake in African societies [11]. This way of life is a true reflection of the peoples' lives in Murambwi locality, in Chivi community, Zimbabwe. The concept "community" refers to the living, the departed, and the unborn [12]. It is through this community that the individual gains an understanding of his/her identity, his/her kinship, duties, and obligations to other persons. This communal life is guided by the philosophy of *Ubuntu/Hunhu*. In the Ubuntu philosophy, an African individual is a member of the community with one's existence defined with reference to others and one's relationship with them [13]. This communitarian way of life can be succinctly expressed in the words including "tirivamwe/simunye (we are one or unity is strength)" ([14], p. 3), "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" ([15], p. 106), 'one lives for the other' ([14], p. 313). Ubuntu is an ontological perspective; an interconnectedness of all beings in the community [16]. This community life is based mostly on "mushandirapamwe" (working as a community, or working with others) as a collective responsibility.

Collective responsibility with regards to cultural values occurs when a group of people engages in collective decision-making and all take responsibility for something that has happened in everyday affairs [4]. Such collective decisions come with the moral responsibility to be taken by people in a society based on common interests. This community's collective responsibility is aptly summarized by an African proverb: "*Mwana ndewe munhu wese*" translated to ("It takes a whole village to raise a child") ([4], p. 15). In an African society, every adult member of the community is a teacher and parent of any child even to those without any biological links. In this regard, this common Africaness is about harmony in the culture and religious beliefs and practices [17]. For example, the time-honored values of respect, reciprocity, and cooperation are conducive to adaptation, survival, and harmony; especially when dealing with issues of food security in societies at the household level.

Food security is a situation where all people at all times have access to nutritionally adequate food and safe water [1]; which can be expressed as access, entitlement, and security issues [18]. To ensure food security, indigenous societies had inherent values [2], some of which have remained intact and are applicable today. The following discussion section describes traditional values and IK among the Shona people in Zimbabwe.

### **4. Traditional values and IK**

In the indigenous Shona society value system, knowledge is passed down from the elders to the youth through storytelling or oral culture [2]. Besides oral tradition, knowledge was passed on to children by working with, observing, and mimicking their parents, grandparents, and older siblings, or the sage practice [11]. In a sage practice, indigenous people regard very old persons to be wise and knowledgeable, with a lot of experience. The young ones were educated at the "*dare*" (homestead

meeting place for males) and the young women were given an education that was called “*yemapfiwa*” (education from the hearthstone). For girls, this was meant to impart knowledge about the duties of motherhood including cooking and raising the family. In addition, communal learning in the Shona and other traditional societies was provided through teachings using proverbs, riddles, folktales, songs, legends, dance, taboos, and myths among others [19]. Furthermore, among the Shona, these teachings are usually preceded by the words: “*Vakuru vedu vanoti...*” or “*Vakuru vedu vaiti...*” (Our elders used to say...” or “Our elders say...” [19]. He concludes by asserting that this appeal to the *Vakuru*, who may belong to the dead or are much advanced in age, also comes from the Shona proverb that states: “*Nzira inobvunza vari mberi*” (You should ask the experienced for assistance). This concurs with the view that indigenous peoples’ knowledge is determined by age with the older members teaching the young ones [11]. This type of education produces an individual who conforms to societal values facilitated largely through cultural safety nets in communities.

Cultural safety nets at the level of the family, other small groups, or community may play an important role in how people collectively act to survive [2]. In the Shona society, these safety nets are manifested, for example, in the form of “*zunde ramambo*” concept (the chief’s granary). In this concept, apart from individual fields, the chief has also a separate communal field where people would work communally and the chief is the overall manager. Every household would contribute to the production of crops from the sourcing of seeds to harvesting and storage in the chief’s granary. The main concern for the *zunde ramambo* concept is its nature as collective well-being of humanity. Apart from this concept, the Shona families also have their own “*matura*”/ “*tsapi*” (granaries). At this family level, the knowledge for food preservation in these granaries is derived from community knowledge systems that are collectively held by the elders. After constructing a granary, it is cleaned and smeared with cow dung, before being filled with grain to exclude air. This sealing of the granary kills organisms responsible for decaying food [2].

In the traditional person’s life, people’s practices are grounded in collective practices. In these practices, communal good takes priority, and the individual is a contributor to communal goals [11]. For example, in the Murambwi locality, ownership of land is communal, vested in all the members of a particular group, or perhaps of a clan or subgroup. In this ownership, a resource-holding group may own territory, or a group of religious sites, or a water hole. The relationship of people to their territories is closely identified with their close family relationships or “*ukama*.”

In the indigenous societies, communities are built around their patterns of kinship which extend beyond the elementary family. For example, in most rural communities including the Shona localities, this kinship system is patrilineal since male systems are stressed over women [20, 21]. Like any other cultural group, the Shona people have a distinct way of organizing their own society and they are always collective structures governing the behavior of individuals in every aspect of life. Their kinship ties that spread from, say, a nuclear family to include all members of the group are meant to provide social cohesion to the people.

The study was interested in exploring the community members’ practices with regard to their IK of food preservation. Specifically, the study was guided by the following three research questions: i. How do indigenous community members in the Murambwi locality preserve their food; ii. What are the indigenous community members’ practices informing IK of food preservation in Murambwi locality in Chivi, Zimbabwe; iii. How do such values influence the community members’ IK of food preservation.

To answer these research questions, the research now turns to the description of the methodology of the study.

## 5. Methodology

The research took an interpretive approach to data collection. Overall, an interpretive philosophy was required for our purpose, that is, a research paradigm intended to make sense or interpret the meaning others have about the world [22]. In keeping with the interpretivist research, the study focused on the way people construct their understanding of the phenomenon based on their experiences, culture, and contexts. The study did not focus on empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by other knowledge systems (critical theory) [22]. Rather, the thrust was at an in-depth understanding of the people's lived experiences on traditional methods of food preservation within a particular community.

This research was carried out in two villages in the Murambwi locality in Chivi, Zimbabwe, one of which the author belongs. So, access was not so much of a challenge to the researcher. Although the author knew where to go, whom to speak to, what language to use, for what, and how; it was later realized that some of the issues turned out to be more complex than the study originally assumed. The issues the study took for granted, did not present themselves easily as anticipated during data gathering and interpretation in the villages under study.

The two villages, *Gomoguru* (big mountain) and *Dzivaguru* (large pool of water), were selected based on their distinctiveness in terms of geographical location for the site. A total of 16 community elders comprising 4 males and 12 women participated in the study. All participants were of the Karanga dialect of the Shona ethnic group and had a long history as inhabitants of the area. For this reason, most participants possessed IK they depended on for survival in the area since time immemorial. In this area, indigenous people eke out a living mostly through subsistence farming. The study focused on how these farmers keep their food safe for consumption in relation to crops grown, animals reared; and hunting and gathering.

This qualitative research study collected data using semi-structured interviews and site visits. In our semi-structured interview, a tentative set of questions was formulated for individuals and groups. Participants were purposely selected [23], by identifying the most likely participant from which insights into the phenomenon could be learned. The key selection criterion was to identify through the "*Vana Sabhuku*" village heads (as gatekeepers) [23]; those participants with an interest in IK as a method for sustaining their lives with regards to food preservation. Initially, individual interviews were held with four participants from each village. After realizing that there was a need for additional information, more participants were sought in the study. As more participants were sourced, the study shifted the format of discussions to group interviews. In these group interviews, *Gomoguru* had seven elders; and *Dzivaguru* had nine who were involved in focus group discussions (FGDs). In doing this, a total of 4 FGDs were held at the participants' choice of place. Each session lasted between 30–60 minutes.

## 6. Language

All interviews were conducted in Chishona, and recorded after acquiring both signed and verbal consent from the interviewees. These interviews were either videotaped or recorded with handwritten notes. Holding interviews in their local language allowed clear communication and maximum participation [24]; respondents felt comfortable sharing their stories and experiences in a language they preferred. The assertion that language is a vehicle of knowing [25], resonates with the view that language acts as the mediator and

supporter in the continuous matching and fitting that takes place between “things as they are” and “things as we know them” ([26], p. 21). The study took note of details in terms of participants’ pronunciations, greetings, gestures, and comments during the study.

After realizing that interviews were not adequate to capture participants’ knowledge of food preservation, interviews were supplemented with site visits. Participants’ residences were visited and observed their food preservation artifacts and took photographs. To facilitate this, an observation guide based on literature was developed. In carrying out this approach, the study took note of the word of caution that in a participant observation method, people who give information may shift much of their attention to the research project rather than focusing on the natural social process being observed [27]. The process may thus no longer be typical. Although the study also asked participants to demonstrate how they preserve their food, the main focus was on the food community members had already preserved. Food artifacts observations were combined with interview data for analysis.

In data analysis, all recorded transcripts were first translated verbatim in Chishona and then translated into English. Thematic content analysis was done on the transcripts. Categories were constructed a posteriori informed by the literature and by the theoretical framework guiding the study.

In this study, the research was guided by the advice that for IK studies ethical obligations cannot be sufficiently met through conventional contractual agreements [28]. So, the study went beyond these requirements and asked each participant to verbally express his/her willingness to participate in the study.

The following section presents and discusses the research findings.

## **7. Findings and discussion**

### **7.1 Murambwi locality’s practices on IK of food preservation**

In this study, there were 5 males (31%) and 11 females (69%) participants who took part in the study. This agrees with some observations made in other studies that it is mostly women who are involved in food preservation [7, 24, 29]. **Figure 1** in Appendix shows some elders harvesting their groundnuts collectively.

The collective responsibilities found in the Murambwi locality can be summarized as (**Table 1**).

The Murambwi elders have strong feelings of community connectedness as shown through *mitupo* (clan names) or *zvidao* (sub-clan names). Their use is based on the traditional knowledge in a society having religious and symbolic connotations rather than just simply names. In this regard, the VaShumba (not his real name) commented: “People in the village are of various totems that we are living well with as our close friends.” In this Shona society, totems deter people from killing and eating their totemic animals. In the Murambwi locality, elders had close bonds with each other.

Since IKs go to the heart, spirit, mind, and subsequent practices of a community [7], the study now turns to a description of some IK practices of food preservation in the Murambwi locality.

### **7.2 Food preservation strategies**

When asked how they preserve their grains, vegetables, milk, meat, and sweet potatoes, elders’ responses were a reflection of their symbiotic links were preceded by words

Elders’ collective responsibilities	Influence on their IK of food preservation
a) Connectedness through clan relationships	Some animals are not killed and thus not preserved by the concerned people. Meat selectivity.
b) Identification with others in a group	Collectively inform each other on how to preserve food. Cooperatives for gardening and construction of granaries.
c) Sense of belonging to homes and land	All women and men are involved in food preservation.
d) Agenda to solve societal problems	Sharing ideas on preserving food.
e) Common good practices, like marriage ceremonies	Encourages growing and preserving crops suitable for the occasion, like fermented foods.
f) Sacred places (where indigenous people used to go for spiritual assistance) and cultural taboos (prohibits certain forms of behavior and give reasons for such)	Determine the type of food to be stored in the event of drought and the types of crops to be grown and eaten.
g) Traditional cultural sayings	Teaches community members to be responsible for food preservation and keeping harvests.
h) Preferences for traditionally-preserved foods than commercial ones	Most people in the communities are extensively involved in traditional food preservation.

**Table 1.**  
 Summary of collective responsibilities and their influence on Murambwi locality’s IK of food preservation.

including: “*isu*,” “*timoti*,” “*vanoti*” meaning “us” we do things as for example, VaMamoyo (not her real name) commented: “when we built our granaries we get a flat rock which we work on it make it round. Since this involves a lot of work, we brew beer and hire labor to pull the flat stone home. Then people help each other to place the flat stone on four big rocks to build the granary. The flat stone will be the “*hwaro*” (raised floor of granary). Then we built using bricks or poles onto which we smear mud. On roofing we built “*hwikwiyo*” (plastered roof of granary). We close the granary opening using “*gwandefa*” or “*fendefa*” (flat light stone). Some use *gwandefa* of “*mufandichimuka*” (small shrub: resurrection plant or *myrothamnus flabellifolius*) plant on their plastered roof granary. This plastered roof offers maximum security against rats; moisture, and destruction by fire.” The Murambwi people practice what may be thought of as cold-room technology, as what literature says [1]. This Murambwi technology involves keeping cool temperatures for crops including pumpkins and watermelons to remain fresh after harvesting. In these technological practices, the person learns from the elder; and teaching is largely through observation.

How the community members work together is presented as follows:

### 7.3 Common good practices

Most of the elders expressed their sense of belonging with reference to collective pronouns, for example, “our” homes and land. Since IK is not linear and its essence is shared by community whose world views engage and embrace the totality of being and living [30]. When asked who does the preserving of foods at their homes, elders said it is the mother’s responsibility and the fathers will be doing other jobs. As a result of this gender differentiation and specialisation, the IK and skills held by women on food security often differ from those of men [18]. However, they agreed that the homes belong to the family and the land is communally owned. This collective ownership of resources was emphasized when we asked about the role of children, women and men in the area on food preservation. The Ward councilor, VaManyoni (not her real name), from which Dzivaguru falls, commented:

“the land belongs to all of us which means that it is the duty of everyone from grassroots level up to the Chief of the area to ensure that resources of the area are safeguarded.” The elders interviewed were found to have a common agenda of solving their societal problems.

The elders in Murambwi communities emphasize activities they regard as a common good. A case in point is community involved in marriage parties. In these parties, staple food that people feed on “sadza” is prepared from rapoko, sorghum, and millet. On such occasions, a goat or a beast is slaughtered for families to celebrate in unison. Interestingly, in Dzivaguru village, one visit on the 15th of April 2022 was cancelled when all village members were involved in the receiving of the new bride when the son of the village head got married. On this occasion, all community members were involved in teaching the bride how to maintain good community relationships. The bride was taught how to share food with and take care of others in the community. For celebrations, people cook sadza prepared from sorghum, rapoko, and millet. These elders reported that they entertain themselves by drinking “*maheu*” (sweet beer), and “*masvusvu*” (boiled mixture of malt and water) brewed in their communities. In explaining how they brew them, VaMaSiziva said that she uses millet, rapoko or sorghum as powder for preparing beer in “*makate*” (large earthenware pot in which beer is set to ferment). Since it was the Shumba clan family occasion, elders had the following to sayings: “You should say to your husband, “*Maita Shumba*” (thank you of the Lion clan), those from the Mhungudza Mountain, who frighten others by their body size. This is done to please their traditional practices. Even if he wanted to ill-treat you he would not since he had been pleased already.” Such form of respect is also bestowed upon other community members and other cultural practices as well.

#### **7.4 Respect of some cultural practices**

In the Murambwi communities, respect of sacred places and cultural taboos were emphasized. Community elders have sacred places where they store their grain food (millet and rapoko) in caves they call “Nyaningwe” Mountains. Elders also said that they have sites they visit for their “*mutoro*” (rain-making ceremonies). In these ceremonies, elders said had a rainmaker; they call “*nyusa*,” whom they begged for the rains through singing at the sacred place until rains come. In this regard, elders cited their ceremonial site as “*Matonjeni*” at Matopos in the Southern part of Zimbabwe for rain making. In relation to the community practices regarding taboos, VaMadhlovu (not her real name) commented: “If we have mushrooms which as a gatherer you are not supposed to gather before thanking the Spirits for their generosity; and if you find Mopani caterpillars, they were not supposed to be cooked in a closed “*hadyana*” (cooking pot for side dish) for the spirits of the forest to continue providing.” As knowledge is about wholeness and interconnection, the elders related their knowledge production to both the tangible and spiritual realm as well [6]. In the traditional Shona societies, there is an association between the spirits and the land is expressed in the tradition of “*chisi*” (days sacred to the spirits, on which people should not work the soil in any way). The practice of *chisi* is prevalent among the Shona people in Zimbabwe, including the Murambwi communities as well. Most significant here is that community members in the Murambwi locality have their way of sacred life which they collectively uphold. They also had community sayings for food preservation.

#### **7.5 Community sayings on food preservation**

The Murambwi elders provide guidance on community practices through traditional sayings, for example, “*Pasina nzombe hapana dura*” (If you do not have oxen

you cannot expect to harvest). VaZimuto (not his real name) explained that this saying is similar to a homestead without a granary which cannot be called a home. Furthermore, he said that if a household does not have a granary no one will pay a visit to it. These sayings serve to inculcate a sense of responsibility [19], and respect among the villagers in Murambwi locality.

As a respect for their family members both living and dead, the elders give names to the children derived from these departed or living members. However, they value names that have meanings to their lives. For example, one person is called “*Harubvi*” meaning death continues to haunt the same family. This naming happens when a family continues to lose its young ones through deaths. Similarly, the name “*Tapiwa*,” mean a family has been given a child given by the almighty. “*Farai*” is a name referring to a situation when family members become happy for the blessings. “*Hapazari*” meaning the ground continues to accommodate the dead. This means that deaths continue to be experienced without ceasing. “*Munhuwei*” means what kind of a person are you, which implies that if one is married at a “*barika*” (polygamous relationship), one wife may be neglected by the husband so in the event that she delivers a child, a name may be used showing her disgruntlement emanating from the relationship. Although elders embrace this idea of giving their children family names, they wished that to happen if the forebear had impeccable behavior. Elders said such sayings are important with regards to food preferences in their villages.

## 7.6 Food preferences

All elders indicated that they prefer traditional over commercially-preserved foods. In the case of milk, they said that traditionally-processed milk tastes better than the commercial one. VaMusaigwa<sub>1</sub> commented that: “after milking cows into a “*hwedza*” (milking vessel), we place it in a “*chingo*” (pot for storage). As we continue milking, we mix milk in a continuous cycle of five days. Some may remove “*ruraza*” (cream) and mix them.” VaChihera concurs with the views given by VaMusagwa<sub>1</sub> and further elaborate that after removing the cream from stored milk, some people may place milk without “*ruraza*” in a pot with small cracks at the bottom to drain off the “*mutuvi*” (the whey) leaving “*mahorakora*” or “*mashorongwa*” (curds of very thick sour milk). This type of sour milk does not shake easily like “*zifa*” (day old sour milk).” It is this traditional thick sour milk with cream that VaShumba said is cool and nicer to drink than a commercial-processed one. When milk is commercially preserved, cream is removed [31]. This removal of cream from sour milk, elders in Murambwi locality believe reduces the good quality of milk. Similarly, the community elders also indicated that they prefer traditionally preserved vegetables as relish. For example, VaChihera commented: “We take wild vegetables from the bush including “*chirevereve*” (senecio embescens), “*muvhunzandadya*” (cheopodium album), “*mhuu*” (bidens biternata), and “*musemwasemwa*” (deome monophylla) to dry them in direct sunlight.” This implies that most community members interviewed prefer traditionally preserved foods.

## 8. Conclusions

These collective responsibilities were a key feature for IK of food preservations in the communities. The results also have shown that the elders displayed a collective sense of belonging, as manifested in their use of collective pronouns when referring to their homes and the land, ownership of resources, working together, close family

relationships, and respect of sacred places. Therefore, relationships were at the center of the communities, and they manifested through emphasis on sharing, caring and respect, and common good. These relationships give a sense to how preserving food not only sustains lives but is central to communally-based knowledge and belonging.

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## **Conflict of interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## **Appendix**

See **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.**  
*Elders collectively harvesting groundnuts in the Murambwi locality.*




## **Author details**

Dominic Mashoko  
School of Education, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

\*Address all correspondence to: [dmashoko@gzu.ac.zw](mailto:dmashoko@gzu.ac.zw)

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# De-Coloniality and De-Minoritization of Indigenous Cultural Heritage in Africa: An Exploration of Nambya Religion

*Wilson Zivave*

## Abstract

Scholarship on indigenous populations has tended to downplay the importance of minority cultural heritage. In this article I explore how colonialism, Christianity and ethnicity have colluded in ensuring that indigenous cultural heritage of minority groups is diluted, compromised and disfigured. This has led to the identity loss and cultural circumcision of minority groups like the Nambya people in Zimbabwe. Drawing on religious-ethnographic research of the Nambya I argue that Nambyan culture have been treated as the “other”. I contend that by exploring the role of colonialism, Christianity and ethnicity dominance in impacting on the loss of the rich religious heritage of the Nambyan ethnic group. There are factors which minoritise the other in order to dominate the cultural and religious spaces in multicultural society. I demonstrate that minoritisation of ethnic groups like the Nambya have resulted in the cementing of colonial hegemony and ethnic dominance of the Shona and Ndebele. Lastly I recommend that de-minoritisation of Nambyan beliefs system is imperative as part of the wider efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of people who are marginalised because of ethnicity.

**Keywords:** de-minoritisation, ethnicity, colonialism, cultural heritage, beliefs, practices

## 1. Introduction

Hegemonic practices are the bases of Minoritisation in many multi-cultural societies. They dictates the politics of the hegemony’s constituent subordinate states via cultural imperialism, the imposition of its way of life, i.e. its language and religion to make formal its dominance [1]. For this reason, cultural imperialism has in recent years generated contested debate in cultural and religious discourse amidst calls for multicultural and multi-religious society the world over.

It should be noted that the chastisement of indigenous cultural and religious heritage particularly of the Nambyan has exposed the façade of multi-culturalism, freedom worship and religious diversity. Nambyans have been considered a minority group socially, religiously, culturally and above all historically but they have a rich

religious heritage which needs to be unpacked and in the process de-minoritising it. The chapter is alive to the realisation that colonialism and Christianity have heavily affected indigenous people's beliefs by promoting Victorian culture and condemning the religious beliefs and practices of minority groups like the Nambyans by ascribing exclusionary and indoctrinating attitudes towards indigenous people. This was further worsened by the dominance of Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups in cultural space which pushed minority groups to the periphery. This argument is spurred by the realisation that minoritisation of ethnic groups coincides with the extinction of cultural and religious heritage of Nambyans and an emergence of a dominant culture which is influenced by colonial past, Christianity and dominant ethnic groups. This has established that the extinction of religious beliefs and practices of minority groups particularly the Nambyans cannot be understood outside the purview of the neo-colonial hegemony, exclusivism of missionary religion and ethnic power politics [2].

The supremacy given to Christianity, Victorian culture as well as the Shona-Ndebele culture has been detriment of Nambya culture. Thus, throughout the colonial period, Christianity was given the status of a superior religion while indigenous beliefs and practices of the Nambya is more than despised than that of dominant cultural groups in Zimbabweans like the Shona and Ndebele. Thus, the chapter pays attention to colonialism, Christianity and ethnicity in Zimbabwe from which the decolonisation and de-minoritisation process of indigenous cultural heritage begins as a response to and ideological influences embedded therein, which potentially shapes the existence of Nambyan cultural and religious practices. It interrogates how coloniality, religious exclusivism of Christianity and politics of ethnicity (in) directly contributes to the side-lining of religious beliefs and practices of minority ethnic groups as well as identities of the Nambyan people. The chapter concludes by dismantling coloniality and in the process de-minoritisating Nambyan ethnic culture and practices in the quest of promoting and preserving cultural heritage of all indigenous people in Zimbabwe. It recommends that no religious beliefs and practices are superior to the other.

## **2. Background of the study**

At the moment, Zimbabwe has more than 11 indigenous ethnic groups and these include Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Nambya, Kalanga, Sotho, Hwesa, Sena, Chikunda, Doma, Tswana, Tswawo/Khoisan, Barwe, Fingo/Xhosa, and Chewa [3] and all of them are marginalised except for Shona and Ndebele. This means that the culture of the Nambyans especially their rich heritage is by far suppressed, subjugated and decimated in Zimbabwe. The Shona and Ndebele cultures have been considered the model of Zimbabwean cultural heritage. For this reason, the Shona and Ndebele cultures are not only considered dominant indigenous cultures but model cultures for every native Zimbabwean. This has generated a cultural identity dilemma in Zimbabwe because the 11 minority cultural groups account for 6% of the total population are marginalised and face extinction while Shona and Ndebele have 75% and 15% respectively are enjoying supremacy in culture and heritage preservation.

It should be noted that the coming the Ndebele to Zimbabwe in contributed to the minoritisation of the Nambyans who had already been inhabitants of the now Matebeleland north. They deleted the Nambyan places with Ndebele names.

For instance, Fungautsi was changed to Filabusi while Gwararavaranda was changed to Gwabalanda as well Musorowe Zhou was changed to Tsholotsho. In Hwange, which is a Nambyan territory they are locations like Mpumalanga which reflect Ndebele dominance among the Nambya. The use of Mpumalanga a Ndebele term instead of Kubuvezhuva is reflection of intolerance to Nambya cultural heritage. For this reason, the changing of Nambyan places resulted in the dilution of cultural heritage of the Nambyans. The places were over coated with Ndebele elements.

These; indigenous cultures have been threatened with extinction because they are being marginalised through the education system and the colonial legacy [4]. After colonisation of Zimbabwe like in many parts of Africa, the colonial masters were eager to replace indigenous culture with their own. All indigenous people were made to embrace western religious culture as a way of accepting colonial domination and civilisation brought by the colonialists. In this context, the coming of colonialism and Christianity resulted in the cultural erosion of indigenous people. This affected minority ethnic groups whose cultural values and religious heritage was undermined as evil, demonic and backward by the dominant religious culture in form of Christianity [2]. The roots of cultural and religious imperialism that affects the Nambyans in Zimbabwe today cannot be understood outside the context of three broad historical interludes: the coloniality, missionary work and ethnic dominance through their religious convictions and practices which have assisted in loss of cultural heritage of minority groups.

Missionary work in colonial Zimbabwe which happened in 1860's contributed to the current minoritisation of indigenous people's beliefs and practices by labelling them as satanic, barbaric, savage and backward. Missionaries felt that African traditions and cultural practices were perceived to be inferior, uncivilised and primitive [2]. They then gave themselves the task to impose their culture through Christian religion whose main task was to civilise Africans [5]. Like other indigenous ethnic groups, the Nambyan people were forced to renounce their religious beliefs and practices in preference of western culture and religion. This resulted in the marginalisation of indigenous cultural and religious heritage. Missionary schools were established by the Roman Catholic church so that Nambyans would be converted into Christianity. Some of the mission schools which became ambassadors of Victorian cultural values and Christianity include St George primary, St Marys, Sacred Heart in Jambezi, St Francis Xavier in Dete as well as Marist Brothers among others. These missionary schools taught Nambyans Christianity through English, Shona and Ndebele languages. The Bible was first translated into Shona in 1949 and Nambya was sidelined even up to today. Nambyan had to learn the Bible through other languages. The introduction of Christian education under catechesis which eventually resulted in the teaching of Christianity as the sole religion for salvation and disbandment of Nambyan language, indigenous knowledge system, religious beliefs and practices which are the main facets of Nambyan culture. Firstly, they were taught using English language but later on they were taught Christian values in Ndebele which was the second vernacular language to be translated from English during catechesis. This is because missionaries promoted only Shona and Ndebele and thus the bible was translated into these two languages in Zimbabwe [6]. The promotion of Shona and Ndebele during bible translation by Missionary is also tantamount to say Nambyans among other minority groups were part of the dominant cultural groups. However, it should be noted that Nambyan were a unique cultural group which shared a lot of things in common with Shona and Ndebele cultures but its beliefs systems were marginalised.

Therefore, Shona and Ndebele cultures were used to strengthen colonialism as well as marginalisation of small ethnic groups. For this reason, the indigenous culture of the Nambyans was branded as more archaic, backward and evil than the Shona-Ndebele culture.

The coming of the Ndebele was followed by the colonisation of Zimbabwe which also adversely affected the culture of the Nambyans. The Nambyan people were heavily affected by colonialism which recognised the Shona and the Ndebele as dominant cultural groups. This is evident in the naming of provinces with ethnic coated names like Mashonaland, Matebeleland, Manicaland and Masvingo which represented the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups. The demarcation of Rhodesia into provinces with the terms Matabeleland, Mashonaland and Midlands meant that in areas where the province was Matabeleland, the expectation was that it should be Ndebele that is dominant and is used there; Mashonaland meant that it is the Shona language that was expected to be used there and in the Midlands, it was both Shona and Ndebele languages that were expected to be used there [7]. Shona and Ndebele were the only recognised indigenous cultural groups whose religious worldview was perceived as far much better than the Nambyans. This resulted in the sidelining of minority ethnic groups like the Nambyans whose “speaking minority languages, were lumped into these ethnicised administrative units and their alternative identities ignored” [8]. For this reason, the Nambyan cultural identity was understood within the Ndebele cultural lenses because they were settled in Matebeleland North. Rhodesian colonialism, like colonialism in many other parts of Africa, set into motion the politicisation of African ethnic identities by trying to construct and reconstruct people’s identities and by compartmentalising them in cultural and geographic terms [8]. Colonialists demarcated geographical locations and named the area where Nambyans dominated as Matebeleland North. They stifled the cultural identity of Nambyans by Ndebelelising them. Nambya became mutually unintelligible with Ndebele [7].

This created polarised and reinforced ethnic divisions among Africans, thereby deliberately preventing them from developing nationally integrated identities, by differentiating among them and favouring certain groups against others [9, 10]. It is this colonial misnaming and cultural bunching which marked the cultural neutralisation and minoritisation of the Nambyans. To advance this argument, the conquest of minority cultures is traced to colonisation through the compartmentalisation of ethnic groups, demonstrating the lasting effects cultural extermination and minoritisation of cultural groups with numerical inferiority [8]. The dominance and suppression of the indigenous cultures especially those of minority groups is inextricably linked to racial and tribal domination, which has played a big role in the history of Zimbabwe [8].

The situation of the Nambyans was further worsened in 1980 when the independent Zimbabwean government did little to recognise cultural diversity until the enactment of the new constitution in 2013. This means that the Shona and Ndebele cultures continued to dominate the cultural landscape of Zimbabwe from 1980 to 2012. However, when blacks got into power in 1980, the nationalist leadership of Zimbabwe tried to restructure the inherited colonial racial and ethnic order in a number of ways [8]. They introduced indigenous languages in the education system and the media was also made to use local languages as well as advancing the culture of the indigenous people. On the contrary, efforts made soon after 1980 had a bias towards Shona-Ndebele cultures at the expense of minority groups which had to switch to either Shona and Ndebele in their learning in schools [3]. The marginalisation and



minoritisation of minority ethnic groups in language and other national policies also entailed the undermining of the broader cultural values and norms of these minority groups [7]. This means that Nambyans were affected not only by colonial legacies but by the Shona-Ndebele ethnic superiority introduced by the colonialists. The post-colonial government policies for the greater part of the first two decades minoritised the Nambyans and cemented colonial hegemony. For this reason, the Shona and Ndebele ethnicity strengthened cultural segregation and subjugation of the Nambyans and other minority groups through politics of dominance. Ethnicity, in its variant forms refers to the capacity in people to classify themselves as social “others” [11] while Politics of Dominance is simply defined as a situation whereby one group or person has power over another [12]. This dominance was seen in industries and public institution where the dominant indigenous languages were Shona and Ndebele [7]. It is this dominance in question that is referred to as hegemony in this chapter, which means “political, economic, ideological or cultural power exerted by a dominant group over other groups, regardless of the explicit consent of the latter” [12]. It is vividly clear that the politics of cultural dominance of Ndebele and Shona dates back to the colonial era in Zimbabwe when hegemonic principles were introduced. Thus Colonialism created racially hierarchised, imperialistic, colonialist, Euro-American-centric, Christian-centric, hetero-normative, patriarchal, violent and modern world order [13]. It is a power structure which has affected the existence of minority cultures. Therefore, coloniality and minoritisation of Nambyan ethnic groups need to unmasked, resisted and destroyed in order to preserve the cultural heritage of all people regardless of numerical inferiority. This unmasking, destruction and resistance cultural domination of whites, the Shona and Ndebele is part of de-coloniality process which is vital in ensuring preservation of cultural identity for the benefit of future generation. Thus this chapter seeks to de-colonise and de-minoritise the Nambyan cultural heritage particularly their indigenous religion so that cultural diversity, religious inclusivism and plurality is promoted.

## **2.1 Conceptual framework**

Decoloniality is concept that is born out of a realisation that ours is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies and epistemologies of equilibrium that continue to produce alienated Africans who are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them, and liking the Europe and America that rejects them [13]. This is applicable in this study because the Nambyans have been alienated from their cultural heritage because of the colonial imprints which glorifies western culture and Christianity in every sector of the society. Nambyans have been disconnected from their religious system of worship as well as practices because they have been labelled as demonic, barbaric and superstitious. They were socialised that their cultural practices are primitive and third from western culture and native dominant cultures like Shona and Ndebele culture. Nambyans have been socialised in colonially constructed institutions that they are minority ethnic groups. They have been led to accept western forms of civilisation which glorifies the modernization the Euro-American culture at the expense of indigenous cultural heritage. It critical to deconstruct coloniality in every institution so that all cultures continue to exist without allowing other cultures and ethnic groups to dominate other cultures at the expense of other minority ethnic cultural groups. In this context, the decoloniality seeks to unpack western and local dominant cultures lies concerning other cultures.

### **3. History of the Nambyans**

Nambya consists of dialects namely, the baNizi and the baNyayi [6, 14]. The BaNambya originated from the Rozvi empire of Masvingo Great Zimbabwe and largely seen as a branch of the Shona ethnic group which made an exodus from Great Zimbabwe when one of the sons of the chief had sinned against his father and his life was in danger. The history of the Nambya people begins from what is today known as Great Zimbabwe where they originated from [6]. They left Great Zimbabwe around 1737 [14]. The son of the chief is and he migrated with his sympathisers via Gwai until they reached Binga and went westwards where they settled in the present day Whange area. They established capital city known Bumbusi and Shongano by constructing stone works which resemble Great Zimbabwe [7]. It is this resemblance that made people believe that the Nambyans are people of the wider Rozvi clan and they are the Shona. Their interaction with the Ndebele, Kalanga and BaTonga led to the metamorphosis of their cultural heritage. This means that the culture of the Nambyan people is heavily influenced by the cultures of other native people. Therefore, there are a lot similarity than differences with the Shona and Ndebele cultures yet Nambya is marginalised and minoritised. They managed to create a unique cultural heritage whose values, norms and beliefs are worthy interrogating.

Today the Nambyans are located around Hwange which is found in Matebeleland North. For this reason, the Rhodesian colonialism did not invent ethnic groups or divisions in Zimbabwe as pre-colonial African societies, present-day Zimbabwe was a multi-ethnic society inhabited by a number of Ndebele in Bulawayo, Shona-speaking groups in Mashonaland and Nambya in Matebeleland North in Hwange [8]. It was through colonial demarcation that minoritisation of other cultural groups despite the fact that Africans have a unique culture which is almost uniform. The upliftment of the western culture as well as Shona and Ndebele cultures is by and large scandal to the essence of Ubuntu. This is because the Nambyans are native Zimbabweans whose cultural norms and values cannot be labelled inferior to other native cultural groups on the basis of preserving colonial legacies and politics of dominance which is ethnicised.

In terms of numerical supremacy, the Nambyans are about 110 000. This is the reason why they have been labelled minorities because “all non-dominant groups, whether nationals or not, which are less numerous than the rest of the population, that have separate, distinct characteristics like culture, language, and religion among others are minorities [15]. The minority status of the Nambyans is not based on cultural deficiencies or backwardness but on numbers which have been influenced by colonial factors and politics of dominance of the Shona and Ndebele who wanted their culture to be dominant in every sector.

#### **3.1 Religious and cultural heritage of Nambyan people**

As previously adumbrated, the scope of cultural heritage in this chapter is mainly focused on the beliefs and practices of the Nambyans. Like all other Africans, Nambyans are “notoriously religious” [16]. This means that religion for the Nambyans is part and parcel of every stage and eventuality of their lives. It is a very difficult to separate Nambyans from their religion and culture. Religion is therefore part of the fibre of society; it is deeply ingrained in social life, and it is impossible to isolate and study it as a distinct phenomenon [17]. Nambyans have a belief system which is

part of the social life and it reflect their Africaness. To firmly grasp the rich cultural heritage of the Nambyans, their religious beliefs and practices is the foundation. However, the cultural heritage of the Nambyans and in particular beliefs and practices have suffered as a result of under-use and the domination of dominant cultures i.e. Western, Shona and Ndebele cultures. These dominant cultures have been influenced by coloniality, missionary work and politics of ethnic dominance to marginalise and make other cultures inferior. As a prophylactic measure to the disappearance of Nambyan belief system and practices, the chapter explores the religion of the Nambyans, unmasking and destroying colonial and post-colonial lies in order to appreciate the rich religious heritage which would result in the cultural inclusivism and plurality.

### **3.2 Belief system**

The Nambyans have a rich belief system based on cosmological, numinological and soteriological beliefs. However, the coming of Christianity and colonialism have led to abandonment of Nambyan beliefs and practices in preference of Christianity. For this reason, colonialists and Christians treated “African religions as evil and did everything possible to ensure that it was ousted” [18]. Christian missionaries believed that traditional religious beliefs and practices of people like the Nambyans were inferior, and together with the traditional customs. The Nambyans have been dominated, the disempowered and dispossessed as the voiceless by the Christians and other native people. This disempowerment has resulted in the loss of their authentic belief system as they accepted Christianity as their religion. It is for this reason that this paper has to retrace the religious heritage of the Nambyans which has been double minoritised by the dominant social class like the colonialists and the Shona-Ndebele cultural group. The belief system of the Nambyans is based on the belief in the existence of one Supreme-Being, spirits and the sacred phenomena. All this is embedded in the sacred days, sacred places as well as rites and rituals practices of the Nambyans.

### **3.3 Belief in the supreme-being**

Nambyans believe in the existence of one Supreme-Being who is actively involved in human affairs. The belief in that God is at “the centre of African religion and dominates all its other beliefs” [16]. This means that the Supreme-Being is central to the beliefs of the Nambyans who believe that in the existence of the divine being popularly known as *Mwali* and *Umbumbi* [the Creator of humankind]. Other names of the Supreme-Being among the Nambyans include *Samatenga* which means owner of the sky, *Tate/Dade* which means old father as well as *Ukulugulu* which means that Great one. God is the Supreme entity among the Nambyans and is considered to be the origin of everything in this universe. This is the reason why the Supreme-Being is called *Umbumbi* and *Mwali*. The names of the supreme being among the Nambyans were there before the coming of Christianity. However, one some argue that the fact that even though Africans generally have an awareness of and belief in the Supreme Being, the truth is, this Supreme Being is not known to have been exclusively worshipped by traditional Africans [19]. This is dismissible because missionaries did not bring God to Africa and God has always been in the lives of the indigenous people [20]. Missionaries brought a new belief system which they presented as superior, better and more civilised than that of the indigenous people. The concept of belief in one Supreme-Being is not alien to the Nambyans as they believed in the existence

of one Supreme-Being before the coming of colonialists and missionaries. For the Nambyans, the Supreme-Being has attributes like omnipotent, omniscient, creator and provider which is derived from the names which they assign to the Supreme-Being. So the common perception among missionaries that Nambyans had no belief in one God is a misplaced fallacy.

The Nambyans had a clear belief system based on one Supreme-Being before the coming of missionaries. The view that Nambyans had no religion was meant to minoritise indigenous ethnic groups and 'declare the superiority of Western value systems [and] using this claim to justify European conquest and exploitation of Africa' [5]. The descriptions that Nambyans are animistic, backward and heathen is thus prejudiced and biased. This is understandable because missionaries had an objective of uplifting their religious belief system at the expense of the dominated people who included the Nambyans. However, Nambyans suffered from a double dilemma i.e. being a minority for the colonialists and being a minority for the Shona and Ndebele people. They had to embrace Ndebele culture and colonialists religious beliefs because they were understood as religious and culturally bankrupt. Consequently, the view that Nambyans have no clear belief system in one God lacks depth and need to be put into religious dust bin. Hegemonic cultural imperialism has resulted in the failure to understand that Nambyan belief in *Mwali*, the Supreme Being is unique and represented their own ethnic group. Though the colonialists found the Nambyans being rich religiously, they replaced the belief system of the Nambyans with their own. This reduced Nambyans to minorities as they considered their belief as backward and inadequate. The desire of the Ndebeles and missionaries was that the Nambyans as the dominated group would abandon their religion and culture and adopt the dominating western as well as Ndebele religion and culture. This minoritisation of the Nambyans facilitated the extinction of Nambya cultural heritage particularly their religious beliefs and practices.

### **3.4 Belief in spirits**

The Nambyans like many other indigenous cultural groups in Africa believe in the existence of good spirits known as *Mijimu* which literally means ancestors. Ancestors are given prominence among the Nambyans. Being an ancestor is an ultimate desire of all indigenous people. For this reason, Nambyans believe that death is death but a transference from one state to the other. For this reason, the living dead occupy the ontological position between the spirits and human beings and between God and human beings [16]. Ancestors are valued by the Nambyans. For them ancestors are good spirits which they believe that they bless and protect the living. The Nambyans believe that the Supreme-Being is transcendent and ancestors act as a bridge between the human world and the spirit world. For this reasons Nambyans conduct rituals such as *Malila* 'home bringing ceremony'. It is the rituals done to bring back the dead to assist the living by protecting from harm as well as misfortune. Ancestors also provide the living with their daily needs. However, Nambyans believe that when ancestors '*Mijimu*' are angry they can cause untold suffering to the living. They cause drought, pestilence and other natural calamities. To appease ancestors, Nambyans perform an appeasement ritual known as *kutebula* where they brew beer and offer to the ancestors. Nambyans do not believe in the existence of bad spirits. However, when missionaries came they chastise belief in the ancestors among the Nambyans. They wrongly concluded that Nambyans worship the dead i.e. ancestors yet they only venerate them. For this reason, Nambyans belief system has been branded as

ancestor worship. Ancestral veneration or ancestor worship' is not African because it is a foreign term that has neo-colonial connotation [21]. The Nambyans prefer the use of African terms like *kutebula*, *Mijimu* where they use bear to venerate the ancestors. It is because of this that one may argue that in African religious practice ancestors are serviced, but not worshipped" [22] thus for the Nambyans *kutebula Mijimu* is done through ancestors who act as intermediaries between themselves and the Supreme-Being. On the contrary, the colonialists through Christian missionaries labelled Africans as worshippers of the living dead and they needed to repent from this pagan practice. The conversion of Nambyans into Christianity resulted in collapse of their belief system because of minoritisation their belief system. The Nambyans by virtue of being colonised and receptive to new religion accepted became dominated and disempowered religiously. It is because of this reason that there is need for de-minoritisation of Nambyan belief system. Nambyan rituals 'revive relationships within the community and between the living and the ancestors' [17]. This preserve their religious heritage as their belief in "ancestors continue to be practiced by Nambyan Christians. This phenomenon and practice is an 'attempt to preserve good relations with the departed kin' as well as their rich cultural heritage [23].

### **3.5 Belief in sacred phenomena**

The worldview of the Nambyans is a tripartite one as they believe that there is the human world, natural world and spirit world. For them the natural world in sacred and the spirits manifest themselves in the natural world. As such they believe in the sacredness of land, water bodies, mountains and forests. Nambyan natural environment is saturated with sacredness.

Firstly, Nambyans have sacred days which they observe. Thursday which is known as *Bwachina* is their sacred day and there are taboos associated with this sacred day like people are not allowed to do any work on this sacred day because it is the day when ancestors who are the owners of the land are respected. Any work done on this day is a violation of the taboo and is frowned upon by the spirit. The chief who are the custodians of the land given to them by the ancestors punish people who do what is not permissible on the sacred day. Misfortunes like pestilence, drought and famine also happens when people violate the sacred day. However, the coming of Missionaries led to the replacement of these sacred days when they instituted Saturday and Sunday as sacred days. It is observance of Christian days that have led to the sidelining of Nambyans cultural heritage. This because Thursday is no valued as sacred because of Christian influence.

Nambyans also believe in totems as sacred animals and objects. The dominant totems for the Nambya include *Shoko*, *izhou* and *chuma* are given great value by a particular group of people and is considered as sacred among a group of people. In simple terms, totems are sacred animals and things which are valued by clan. Totems creates ideological, emotional, reverent, and genealogical relationships of social groups or specific persons with animals or natural objects [20]. The beliefs system of the Nambyans is also hinged on totems. Furthermore, believe in the sacredness of the environment is part of the indigenous knowledge systems of the Nambyans. There is a connection between the ancestors and the natural environment. The universe is not static or dead but dynamic or living and powerful [24]. As such, the environment is the residence of the ancestors among the Nambyans. Bambusi and Shangano are sacred place which where Nambyans conduct their community rituals like rainmaking ceremony. Even today, these three sites are considered sacred and are an important

part of Nambya cultural identity [14]. These sacred sites are considered as sacred and are protected from any internal or external human interference by the religious practitioners known as Mande 'spirit mediums and *Mashumba* 'lion spirit in charge of the territory' who live in isolation from other people. Spirit medium among the Nambyans can either be a male or female. Not everyone is allowed to enter into the sacred place but only by the spirit mediums known as '*mande* as well as chiefs '*bashe*'. The sacredness of Bambusi and Shangano reflects the belief system of the Nambyan in ancestors. They believe that sacred spaces are dwellings places for ancestors. These places due to minoritisation, have been subjected to colonial profanement and missionary bombardment. Due to minoritisation "African minds, thought systems, social-cultural institutions, political and religious institutions and bodies have been subjected to colonial experiments" [25].

### **3.6 Rainmaking ritual practice**

From time immemorial, Nambyans have always had knowledge and belief in *Mwali* or *ukulugulu* as the provider of rain. They conduct a rain making ritual ceremony known as *kupindula* where they solicit for rain. The sacredness of the Supreme-Being *Mwali* manifest himself in rituals connected to myths. For the Nambyan, rain is only provided by the Supreme-Being after rituals are done. Furthermore, the presence of the rain cult among the Nambyans at Chilanga where *Mashumba* 'rain making messengers' resides attests that belief in the providence of the supreme-being. This belief was condemned by colonialists and missionaries who considered this as black magic. For this reason, the Nambyans value the Supreme-Being as the provider of rain and fertility. The belief that rain is given by the Supreme-Being is common among the bantu people. The early missionaries' failure to properly grasp Nambya belief system and has led to the distortion, misrepresentation and discrimination of Nambyan religious heritage.

### **3.7 Divination ritual practice**

Nambyans believe that health is given by ancestors. As such, they consult diviners '*inanga*' for health, social and religious issues. The diviner is 'the person is a specialist expert in communicating with the ancestors and who may also be able to pass on a message to family members" [26]. The beliefs of the Nambyans in ancestors is seen by their consultation of diviners who have mystical powers to communicate with the spirit world. In the times of pandemics and various ailments a diviner is consulted because of his or her knowledge which is important in the promotion health and well-being. Nambyan diviners can prescribe spiritual remedies as well as physical remedies to diseases. They have the knowledge about herbs like *moringa*, *gavakava*, *muroro*, *mupangara* and *Mutarara* which treat various ailments. Herbal medicine for stomach problems, wounds and toothache among other ailments are known by the diviner. It is because of this reason that indigenous healers known as '*in'anga* are required to give spiritual explanation and herbal prescription. Be that as it may, indigenous knowledge system related to herbal medicine and health among the Nambyans have been condemned as un-scientific and not worthy to be used in the civilised society. Nambyan religious heritage has been distorted, obscured, and discarded by the domination of Victorian religious heritage and knowledge systems produced by colonial and missionary institutions. This also compounded to the minoritisation of the indigenous knowledge system of the Nambyans as well as their belief that health is given by

ancestors. Health and well-being within the African context is understood from a religious perspective. There is need to revive, the religious heritage of the Nambyans because “African epistemology is situated within a particular cultural context of the indigenous people” [27].

#### **4. Decolonising and De-minoritisation of the Nambyan religious heritage**

In 2012, the United Nations marked the 20th anniversary of the landmark Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (UNDM) [28]. The UN Declaration for Minorities is vital in the decolonization and deminoritisation of the Nambya beliefs and practices as it assist in the preservation of cultural heritage of the minority cultural groups by granting minority rights protection. Zimbabwe as a state party to the Declaration has the responsibility to protect the rights of linguistic minorities like the Tonga, Nambya, Venda and Kalanga to enjoy their cultures, use their languages and practice their religion as reiterated in Article 4 [15]. For this reason, there is need to cherish the religious beliefs and practices of minority groups since religion and culture cannot be separated in African context. This chapter avers that the Nambya people in a multicultural and multi-religious society need to express their belief system without being labelled with pejorative terms and even attached to dominant cultures because it promotes democracy, equality and nation building.

Dismantling of colonial institutions and values as well as adhering to freedom of worship and removal of politics of ethnic dominance are key in unlocking the emancipation of minority groups. The crucial step towards sustainable development in Africa cannot be secured without full involvement of the indigenous minority people through use of their languages [29]. This means that the whole culture which include religion, language and other facets of culture need to be recognised. It is imperative to recognise the culture of all people whether minority or not and racial inferior or not.

Zimbabwe is a multi-cultural country with an estimate of about 16 cultural groups. In 2013 Zimbabwe through the New Constitution recognised cultural diversity. This makes Zimbabwe officially a multicultural and multi-religious country. In a multi-cultural and multi-religious country, there is, quite often a problem of inequality in cultural spaces and religious spaces respectively, a situation which makes it difficult for other cultures to be recognised in the public domain as members of the cultural group leading to cultural extinction and disappearance as the dominant cultures dominate. The present constitution guarantees the principle of multi-culturalism and freedom of worship which cultivates religious inclusivism pluralism and tolerance for different cultures, but the practical implementation of this philosophy may prove very difficult. Minority cultures though officially recognised, they are discriminated and labelled as inferior, backward and insignificant. The cultural heritage of all indigenous groups need security for members of those cultural and ethnic groups to be able to articulate their culture in different public spheres. Their security comes from laws and practices which protect them against harm caused by dominant cultures and other factors. This is because minority cultural groups in multi-cultural societies are some end-up disappearing and being unutilised as they are replaced by dominant cultures.

In 2013, Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution which caters for cultural activities in order to promote various cultures found in Zimbabwe. This policy is consistent with the African Union Cultural Charter for Africa with the main aim of promoting

African identity. The policy seeks to promote and respect for cultural identity as it is important for nation building. As a matter of fact, the 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe recognises and appreciates the importance of culture and heritage in national development. According to Section 3 (d) of the constitution of Zimbabwe; cultural, religious and traditional values are recognised among the supreme law's founding values and principles [30] while Section 6 explores the role of languages, Section 16 speaks of the role of the state and in the promotion and preservation of culture [31]. This constitution is Afro-centred as it seeks to protect indigenous cultural heritage which has been eroded from colonial period up to the present. The cultural policy also influenced the review of the curriculum to suit the heritage of the indigenous people. Although the constitution provides an impetus for the protection of intangible and tangible heritage, the policy has not been fully implemented as the indigenous religious heritage is structurally side-lined despite the legislative framework. The policy seeks to decolonise the mind of the African and preserving culture as embodied in indigenous knowledge systems that have been thrown into cultural dustbins due to colonial influence and Christian influence. Cultural policy ensures the reconfiguration of indigenous norms and values as well as solutions that are found in indigenous knowledge system.

The major objectives of the national cultural policy in Zimbabwe is to promote Multi-culturalism and multi-faith societies which promote respect for, and tolerance towards, cultural and religious diversity. Even though this is a national imperative, not all cultures are utilised, developed and promoted equally. This is particularly so in the case of the minority cultures like the Nambya culture. The dominant cultures tend to replace the range and functions of a minority cultures leading to the disappearance of minority cultures where members of the minority cultures adopt the dominant culture. In Zimbabwe, this seems to be the case where members of the Nambya cultural group prefer to be identified with dominant culture like Ndebele.

Funding the training of teachers from the so called minority groups by UNICEF in recent years. This has been augmented by the establishment of Hwange Teacher's college has also been to deminoritise Nambyan Culture. Hwange Teachers college which was established in 2019 has the core objective among others of ensuring that people of Nambyan ethnic group are trained in education which will help in the preservation of Nambyan culture. Teachers have the role in safeguarding the cultural heritage in line with the 21st education system which is relevant to the needs of the society in which they operate. So trained teachers with their knowledge in heritage and social studies as well as Family Religion and Moral education will apply their knowledge of Nambya culture in the teaching and learning of the subject which act as repositories of indigenous cultural heritage. It is of paramount importance that teachers being trained are aware of the culture in which they will operate.

Furthermore, the introduction of the updated curriculum in 2017, which saw the introduction of Indigenous religion as a subject which calls for a multi-faith approach is deminoritisation mechanism. The old curriculum created a cultural deficit among the native people. The updated curriculum fill in a serious vacuum left by the old Religious and Moral education which promoted cultural and religious exclusivism. The adoption of the new curriculum in 2017 made changes to the study of religion, and infuses Islam, Hinduism, African and other religions [32]. Thus there was a paradigm shift in terms of curriculum content and methodology. The new curriculum attempted to "limit the exclusionary approach of religious studies, and there was hope that the new curriculum would be neutral, non-hierarchical, and acceptable to religious organisations" [32]. The new family, Religion and Moral education embraces



religious diversity as the study of indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Nambyans are now part of academic study. Thus the updated curriculum helps in the deminoritisation of Nambya religious beliefs and practices which promote inclusive, plural and tolerant society.

## 5. Conclusion

The Nambyans are not minority ethnic group but they had been minoritised due to historical factors linked to colonialism and the coming of the Ndebeles. Colonialists in order to subjugate native Zimbabwe, made sure that other ethnic groups are identified within the broader ethnic groups like the Shona and Ndebele. On the other hand, the Shona and Ndebele have used the politics of dominance to sideline other ethnic groups. The coming of the New constitution as well as the issue of cultural rights have led to the need to de-minoritise ethnic groups such as the Nambyan which have been minoritised. This is because there is no cultural group that is a minority since all Zimbabweans have one historical background that codifies them as Bantu people. The recognition of every cultural group and granting of the right to exercise their cultural practices makes Nambyans part of Zimbabwe. This assist in the end of minoritisation of ethnic groups that have been institutionalised.

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## Notes/thanks/other declarations

There is no conflict of interest in this study.


## Author details

Wilson Zivave  
Hwange Teachers College, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

\*Address all correspondence to: [wilsonzivave@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonzivave@gmail.com)

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*Edited by Sylvanus Gbendazhi Barnabas*

The sections and chapters contained in this book deal with issues and challenges facing indigenous and minority populations located in several geographical areas of the world. The papers are written by writers and scholars from various parts of the world and, like any piece of literature on indigenous and minority populations, the topics are diverse. The perspectives are both interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary. The issues examined in the various chapters cover areas pertaining to their human rights, preservation of their culture and identity, traditional knowledge, and their challenges, but also scholarly and epistemological approaches to understanding and articulating such topics in academic contexts. Indeed, the issues around indigenous and minority populations across the world transcend their human rights concerns in relation to dominant groups and institutions within the territorial boundaries of the modern states where they currently live. These issues are cultural, anthropological, sociological, philosophical and epistemological, as well as historical. Any scholarly piece of work on indigenous and minority populations is therefore inevitably inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or both. The various topics examined by the authors epitomize this diversity of issues around such populations. The book is a significant source of information for students, academics, practitioners, policymakers, government officials and non-governmental organisations working on issues that pertain to such populations at national, regional and global levels.

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