

# Epistemologies of fire: an approach from ancestral thoughts

## *Epistemologías del fuego, una propuesta a partir del pensamiento ancestral*

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## Epistemologies of fire: an approach from ancestral thoughts\*

### Epistemologías del fuego, una propuesta a partir del pensamiento ancestral

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**Abstract:** This article reveals an investigation carried out on the production of ancestral thoughts from the rituals of many native populations of America (Abya Yala) in what has been called by the authors "Epistemologies of fire". Here their ways of production, search and transmission of knowledge are set which, from the ancestral, have been used by indigenous communities for the construction of a community, privileging how each being thinks of itself inside a world view and a cosmic intelligence<sup>1</sup> that allows for bases to be laid to confront the idea of internal and external separation, that has been pursued by human beings since the western construction of the world.

Continuing with the idea elaborated by other authors of a pluriverse (a world where many worlds can fit), these epistemologies based in the recognition of diversity contribute as well to the construction of an academic polyphony that can recapture these native sciences to integrate their knowledge and the way of producing them to expand the perspectives in Social Sciences.

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1. Cosmic intelligence is a category of researcher Atawallpa Oviedo Freire researcher Good Living / Living Well who developed the cosmology of the Andean peoples.

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Continuing with the idea woven by other authors of a pluriverse (a world where many worlds fit), these epistemologies based on the recognition of diversity also contribute to the construction of an academic polyphony that can take up these native sciences to integrate their knowledge and way to produce them to broaden the perspectives in the Social Sciences.

An immersion work was developed using learning and description methodologies specific to the villages with which the work was carried out. This allowed us to carry out an exercise in careful listening to the spoken word of the elderly (knowledgeable grandparents) and participation in their rituals, which are understood as ancestral pedagogies.

**Keywords:** Law of origin; Laws of indigenous peoples; fire; well-being; ancestral pedagogy; feel-thought; indigenous communities.

## INTRODUCTION

It has been customary from the Cartesian rational-scientific knowledge paradigm of Western culture to show science separate and independent of life, of non-human species, and these, separate from the cultural social contexts of the human. The scientific models of this culture are presented in a unique framework of thought and as absolute truth, where a form and way of producing knowledge has been imposed under the protection that epistemology linked to scientific reason gives it because it is the one that studies how knowledge is built and how we know what we think we know. In other words, epistemology is in charge of questioning how knowledge is produced.

For this work, the epistemology of fire is a metonymy that produces conditions and horizons for the possibility of thinking about other epistemologies, in this case, the idea of making visible the wisdom of native peoples who have shown to have a greater balance with nature and the environment that the development proposals created in the last decades. This work tries to open paths that contribute to the understandings and questions of the epistemology of the South<sup>2</sup> and it tries to produce an appropriate language for the production of "another"<sup>3</sup> epistemology, the epistemology of fire.

Thinking about the epistemology of fire and enunciating forms of production of meaning through the knowledge of our native peoples, is a proposal that implies the great challenge of working together with the rigors and perspectives of the western cultural world, including its forms of validation. What it can be called "science", together with the rigor and perspectives of the original peoples of our continent to produce and think what has been called by them as Science of Origin or Law of Origin<sup>4</sup>.

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2. The epistemologies of the South are a theoretical trend of the Social Sciences elaborated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos who defines them as a claim for new production processes, valuation of valid knowledge, scientific and non-scientific knowledge, and for new relationships between different types of knowledge, based on the practices of the classes and social groups that have suffered, in a systematic way, destruction, oppression and discrimination caused by capitalism, colonialism and all the naturalizations of inequality in which they have unfolded (de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 2011).

3. The epistemology "another" is a term that was born in the current of decoloniality in Latin America used by Anibal Quijano, to refer to the understandings of the anti-hegemonic reality. Understanding the meaning of contemporary counter-hegemonic movements in Latin America requires going beyond the theoretical frameworks of Western roots, as well as the epistemological positions that gave rise to them. Without this, it is not possible to recover the sense of the action of the diversity of the world or the plurality of real practices and social relationships, through which the social organization that originates in the context of the history of a community has been built. A subcontinent with a colonial past, that means, in ancestral nations of non-Western origin, among which the definition of the common and the collective requires other perspectives of analysis that allow recognizing in them, not the survival of backward socialities, but the resistance of sources of construction of the society based on another way of understanding reality as a whole or where it still prevails, rationality different from the hegemonic one. (López, 2015: 213).

4. They are the laws that guide the life of native peoples. The Law of Origin is understood as the organizing principle of the collective action of the four indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. It is that "initial mandate in which the care and duty that indigenous peoples have to take care of the land they inhabit were established. For that reason, reestablishing the greater thought also means restoring the natural order inscribed in said law" (Murillo, 2013: 27). It is important to note

The epistemology of fire is a place to observe how knowledge is produced in indigenous peoples, the knowledge that is little valued and, many times, made invisible by the academy and by the social sciences as knowledge proper. The proposal is to take these forms of production as valid for thinking about the strategic problems of society, in fields such as education, politics, economics, and technology. Since Epistemology is a "science" that deals with the methods of doing "science" and the way of validating "knowledge", it is then proposed to observe how the knowledge of communities, knowers, thinkers are produced and wise men of the territory around the fire, from where the name "Epistemologies of Fire" is born, that being produced in a ritual and communal way around the hearth, the campfire, the bonfire are true spaces of communication where a collective and shared sense of life is shared.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This is qualitative research, under the hermeneutic paradigm, understanding the reality under investigation as diverse, multiple, and holistic, also with an interpretive nature, since an exercise of synthesis, translation, and reflection of the experience of the co-investigators was carried out, as well as of the concepts and dimensions of thought that the elders and the knowledgeable brought in their word. Semi-structured interviews were carried out, as well as immersion in the rituals that are described in the body of the work, considering the reflection on them a systematization of a narrative biographical nature, a meeting place and intersection between different social areas and that allows to relate different knowledge, between the oral history and life history, and narrative anthropology (Huchim & Reyes, 2013).

With Taita Miguel Chindoy, the Jenëkwentan's own Kamëntšá method was carried out «Converse between two or more», Kamëntšá understanding of the way of transmitting knowledge through orality (Mavisoy, 2014: 207), here more than an interview the learning scenario is conceived as a visit, where the Wuachën (visitor), shares space and time with the Tsenjwuachën (visited). The fundamental difference is that the elder is the one who sets the tone for the development of the visit and no written questions are taken, but rather a topic is formulated to begin the dialogue.

Likewise, chatting sessions were held, understood as a meeting between equals around the fire, where the word acquires a "sacred" dimension when pronounced from the heart, usually with the presence of plants such as *ambil* and the coca leaf. For this reason, it is also known as *mambear*, the name given to the act of chewing the leaf while observing the thought.

Fundamentally, a dialogue of knowledge was put into play, where the co-researchers not only entered to ask but also to expose and contribute to the topics chosen to address the central purpose of the research, that means, to observe how knowledge is produced in the towns original, for which topics such as community building, ritual, education understood from customs and the importance and power of language as a structured form of own thought were addressed.

### **FROM EPISTEMOLOGY AND TRUTH**

In a general conception, epistemology studies how knowledge of science is generated and validated. Its function is to analyze the precepts that are used to justify scientific data, considering the social, psychological, and even historical factors that come into play. Hence, epistemology is directly related to science and the importance it has for what has been the project of modernity, considered within a "very reduced space-time region that in a very arbitrary way is called the Western world, and at a temporary part that is, as is usually done, from Greece onwards" (García, 2006: 116).

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that the Science or Law of Origin is what allows the creation of a worldview, that means, to say that through the knowledge of the Science of Origin it is that the elderly have understood the intertwining of the native being with their habitat and, from their study, they have generated their ways of explaining the universe, which is contained and presented at the end in what has been called from the West, as "worldview."

Jaramillo, citing Ceberio and Watzlawick, affirms that "it is a branch of philosophy that deals with all the elements that seek the acquisition of knowledge and investigates the foundations, limits, methods, and validity" (Jaramillo, 2003: 2). For his part, Valderatto, considering science as a communication system that postulates what society is going to consider as true, finds that a center of the epistemic debate is in finding what is truth, understood as the adequacy between theories and the facts in a language capable of explaining the phenomena in a clear and general way (Valdettaro, 2015).

Several themes emerge from this question: what relationships are postulated between theories and facts; what are theories; what are the facts (or reality); which comes first (if the theory, or the facts); All this has to do with the ways of constructing scientific knowledge: whether from theory or facts. Furthermore, what place does the subject (the researcher) occupy in said link: that's the idea, how does a subject relate to facts and theories: is it directly related? Is it related in other ways? Is the researcher involved or not with what he investigates? (Valdettaro, 2015: 23).

For his part, García points out that the emergence of methods and methodologies that specified the truth of knowledge arose in contrast to the six centuries in which the church dominated the field of science. It is the arrival of Thomas Aquinas, proposing a "double truth" that could admit that, under the moon, man could admit the existence of "relative truths" through experimentation, which would open the door for the appearance of Newton, who would bring the truth to the plane of physics and with the discovery of natural laws as opposed to moral or legal norms (García, 2006). Then a form of legitimation of the truth is born that, surpassing faith, admits that the human mind can understand the laws of nature, the truth ceases to be an attribute of divine revelation and becomes a merely rational matter.

In 1901, Bertrand Russell is the one who introduces the term epistemology, translating it from the German *wissenschaft* (science) as opposed to *erkenntnis* (knowledge): "From that moment on it is necessary to distinguish between a theory of knowledge that we could call the theory of common knowledge, and a theory of scientific knowledge that it would be epistemology" (García, 2006: 117).

For García (2006) knowledge (the possibility of determining what is true) is fundamental as the basis of power, in addition, its legitimation within the development of the same is an expansion of the western project in all its senses in the construction of a semi-capitalist market for means of "a production of beliefs based on a system of passions" (Valdettaro, 2015:16).

Precisely for Valderatto, quoting Pierce, knowing is part of a System of Beliefs that it can start from four methods, (i) tenacity (own opinion), (ii) authority (what the power of the day wants us to believe), (iii) metaphysical (beliefs in harmony with natural causes) and (iv) scientific (which allows reaching the truth through reason and experience) (Valdettaro, 2015: 26).

Here it is important to pause to note that for epistemology there are two fundamental contexts from which knowledge is analyzed, the "context of discovery" and the "context of justification", where the first addresses the social conditions of production of scientific knowledge, while the Second, it focuses on the type of criteria that these hypotheses must satisfy to be accepted in the scientific corpus, that means, premises that they can demonstrate their validity based on experience (Bárcenas, 2002: 48).

In this research, due to its delimitation and purpose, an approach to this context of discovery will be carried out in the framework of the communities and groups that shared their experience with us. For this reason, the understanding of epistemology is essential for Piaget, who is specifically interested in how the subject knows more than in what knowledge itself is (Cortes and Gil, paraphrased by Jaramillo, 2003). Piaget also clearly identifies the need to understand "common mechanisms", such as present cognitive activities, even before birth, which then pass to biology and

human activities; activities that "have continuity with science, that there is a functional continuity of mechanisms throughout this process" (García, 2006: 119).

With this clarity, however, it is necessary to outline three basic aspects where later - in other investigations - analysis could be carried out concerning the object, the theory, the systematization, and the methods of production and reproduction of knowledge, revised to the light of an epistemology of fire.

In the first place, although an episteme focuses on the knowledge of an object, the word itself abstracts and names a reality that, in this case, is not a something but a who: grandfather, and a how: ritual. Therefore, fire cannot be confused with fire, it is not about the element and its properties that the concerns of the ancestral sciences revolve, but from a holistic vision of being, being, and thinking about the world based on the knowledge of nature put at the service of life, more than of man. For that reason, the object and purpose of native sciences are to integrate and know a way of being in balance with nature, understanding man as part and guardian of it. **Fire is the thought of ancient man listening to the heart of life in everything that exists.**

From there a sensible theory emerges that passes through postulates that tend to transform every day into a "sacred" space. Good Living, understood as a multifaceted and polyphonic theoretical body, is expressed by each culture from a particular point of view with generalities shared by peoples who are distant from each other but who have followed the same course of thought and validity: accept that there is the knowledge that is beyond the reach of man, but it is placed at his disposal to teach him "the art of living" (Garreta, 2017).

In this research, these concepts are realized without trying to generate a validity structure, for now, we consider that their enunciation is necessary to begin to carefully observe the power of a millennial voice that it has not used writing to preserve itself, a voice powerful and typical of the Abya Yala territories.

Third, in the epistemology of fire, the premise of the systematization of knowledge of Origin, Science acquires a dimension written in the wind (oral tradition) that relies on the transfer of knowledge through memory/thread protected in the fire/grandfather, but sown and cared for in the spiritual, political and cultural leaders, represented in the mamos, curacas, taitas, cooks, sowers, walkers of the path. Here knowledge is perceived as the sowing of a seed. The word and knowledge are handed over to the new generations so that they understand it, keep it, take care of it and then they give it back. This systematization understands the myth, not from a devalued conception and confronted with a piece of real and scientific knowledge, but as a science of the everyday. The myth keeps a power of understanding of all spheres of life, the couple relationship, the treatment of children, the care of the earth, the origin of plants and their use, the cure of diseases, in short, everything that the community requires for its well-being.

Finally, in its methods, community building acquires a deep meaning because is what the word should serve for. The rite that protects the myth is a design of power that protects the participant that it can have its learning process. Experience is essential. Although the elder's word is the guide in most of the rituals and ceremonies described here, it is one's own experience that determines the validity of knowledge, well the body and visions in Yagé, reflection and expanded perception in a Circle of Word, the heat and sweat of the Temazcal, the messages and feelings in a Mayan Fire. Building knowledge in the community is conceived as a space for family learning, therefore Grandfather Fire, Grandfather Yage, Mother Earth, Father Sun are references of beings that they're part of our lineage in the non-human and who are characterized as a fundamental part of learning, recognizing in them beings older than man and with their wisdom.

This perspective allows inferring forms of knowledge other than human, although within reach. Knowing from the perspective of knowers involves not so much an understanding of what surrounds the human being as separate from him, but in the integrality present in the relations of existence in the time plane of experience on Earth and, also in the why and for what of the same.

For the field of CEC (Communication Education in Culture), under construction, an approach to these fields of interaction that goes beyond the purely anthropological is fundamental and promising to think about other ways of producing knowledge directly related to the territory of Abya Yala. Intent not alien to that stated by Wallerstein (1999) regarding the central role of the social sciences in the epistemological reunification of culture, science, and the humanities (Valdettaro, 2015: 156).

### THE PROPOSAL OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF FIRE

The "epistemology of Fire" is a metaphor that allows us to know how knowledge is produced in the ritualities of native peoples, where "other" understandings of life have been woven that has been valuable for its preservation. In the current epistemological conditions, the knowledge of the native peoples is not in the statute of validity of sciences, "the identification of the epistemological conditions allows showing the vast destruction of the knowledge of the native peoples, caused by European colonialism" (de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 2011: 10) what Boaventura has called from his proposal of the epistemology of the South: epistemicide. As the author argues, the end of political colonialism did not mean the end of epistemic colonialism and, on the contrary, it continued to produce a unique way of producing knowledge.

From before Iban Ilich and currently, Buenaventura de Sousa identified the difficulty of new political imaginations to take on the challenges of the present, the confirmation of ways of producing knowledge "others" face this difficulty. It is intended that the proposal of the epistemology of fire becomes part of a proposal of decolonial political imagination that leads to contributing to epistemic absences, understanding the importance of the knowledge of native peoples because it is these peoples that in the last decades have been put into the task of entering the western world to share their wisdom and have given the necessary struggles to enter to participate in politics in a transcendental way in the change of pedagogy.

For this reason, Colombia currently has categories such as ethnoeducation, ethno pedagogy, environmental pedagogies, and a degree in pedagogy of Mother Earth<sup>5</sup>, led by people from indigenous peoples, to talk about the Colombian case. Meanwhile, in Bolivia, there are currently three indigenous universities<sup>6</sup> and in Ecuador, there is the Intercultural University of the Nationalities and Indigenous Peoples of Ecuador, which, harassed and without the endorsement of the State, continues to function. Mexico has developed an experience called the University of the Earth, linked to the Zapatista indigenous revolution and which is closely related to convivial and structured learning based on its own needs, privileging the use of the language of the territory, but in constant dialogue with the world. These are just some of the cases of the participation of indigenous peoples by entering to dispute from their perspective the spaces of power of education and pedagogy.

Thus, it is worth wondering if how knowledge is produced in native peoples can be thought westernly, to determine if they can fulfill the basic internal characteristics of science, namely, the need for a domain of specific objects, a series of minimum hypotheses from which the operation of the said domain is explained, and some consolidated methods. Beyond that, the possibility of wondering if said statement is necessary to determine its validity or if, in another perspective, the

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5. Undergraduate program of the Faculty of Education of the University of Antioquia, created from a work carried out with the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia, the Diverse Research Group, and the Indigenous Education Program, as well as with indigenous communities of Antioquia. It has been in place since 2011 and it aims to develop a process for leading teachers of the towns with pedagogy and a good heart.

6. The "Tupac Katari" Indigenous University, in La Paz; the Indigenous University "Casimiro Huanca", in Cochabamba; and the Indigenous University "Apiaguaiki Tüpa, in Kuruyuki-Chuquisaca.

narrative of the practices of what is called by the indigenous co-investigators of this text Science or Law of Origin is necessary. It has its characteristics and forms of validation that go beyond the intellectual premises and rigors of western science. We consider that the setting of this narrative is the first part of the exercise and, therefore, this writing is focused on it.

This proposal does not try to create a radical distancing from Western thought, but rather to create a scenario to grant the same validity status to ancestral thought, therefore, "taking distance does not mean being simultaneously inside and outside of what is criticized" (de Sousa Santos, 2010: 24). This is by what arises in the epistemology of the South, the double transgressive sociology of absences and emergencies, that means, an epistemological movement that consists in opposing the dominant epistemology of the global North, an epistemology of the South.

For the epistemology of the South, "its empirical object is impossible from the point of view of conventional social sciences (...) it is then about transforming impossible objects into possible objects, absent objects into present objects" (de Sousa Santos, 2013: 22). In this order of ideas, non-existence is configured in that knowledge that has been invalidated and continues to be invisible because it has characteristics of magical, primitive, inferior, pre-modern, or underdeveloped thought, as posited by decolonial currents (Quijano, 2007). The epistemology of fire is a transitional alternative that appears in the face of the difficulty of political imagination since it enters to dispute a space of understanding in the social sciences, giving validity to the knowledge of native peoples, understanding the differences with the forms in the that knowledge is produced in the West.

In the epistemology of fire, as "other" epistemology, fire is not only configured as a producer of knowledge in material use, for example, the Mayan people read fire and from this reading knowledge is produced<sup>7</sup>, this in addition to Being different from how knowledge is produced in the West is a material way of using fire as a producer of knowledge. Fire is also human passion, it means the commitment of affectivity in the production of knowledge, heart research, remembering the old word.

Betty Martínez Ojeda, a researcher on the subject of ancestral peoples, who investigates how the knowledge of indigenous peoples works to understand the clash with Western thought, suggests that Western peoples (Europeans) possess the same cognitive capacities as original peoples, But what does the Western, Cartesian scientific world propose?: "it proposes a knowledge that in search of objectivity separates the subject from the knowing object, forming a radicality in the validity of knowledge, in addition to believing that this way of producing knowledge it is universal" (Martínez, 2018:1).

In this context, Martínez argues that, at a cognitive level, Western thought was stripped of affectivity, of putting emotion into knowledge. This is a difference at the cognitive level, because knowledge stripped of affectivity results in a production of knowledge without affectivity with the environment, with nature. "Western thought has a cognitive form by description, the thinking of native peoples is participatory and for it to be participatory and the subjects can appropriate that knowledge, they generate identity at the same time" (Martínez, 2018: 3). This concept offers insights to understand how knowledge is produced around the fire in a participatory way in an indigenous community, which also promotes the particular identity of seeing the world and organizing life in indigenous peoples' communities.

An example is a way of asking, in the West the research question occurs as part of a whole, in native peoples it occurs within the context not only social and cultural but natural or environmental, therefore, the interest of the native peoples to take into account the animals and plants of the territory to wonder about life. With this, social life is organized in the communities, permission is requested

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7. See the case of Professor Astrid Pinto in the chapter on Mayan Fire.



from the river and the spirit of the fish to access it as food, what is learned tries to understand that life is a sacred time and that indigenous knowledge works in the science of everyday life. Moreover, in the West, the objective of the question is to reason humanly, without the participation of non-human species.

The knowledge of native peoples is mythical, it is not always or exclusively cognitive, mythical knowledge is fundamentally metacognitive, it cannot be worked as an ultra-conscious reflection of reason, of modernity, but, on the contrary, it is produced through myths. What the communities do is listen to the myth in a ritual, then cognition changes, it also changes with the alteration of consciousness, an example of this is the taking of yagé, yopo, or other plantas that participate in the reflection. That is to say, metacognition is provoked, which reflects on the subject itself and its cosmology from the myth. While Descartes takes metaphysics out of knowledge, in such a way that it takes away the sacred, in native peoples the sacred comes to make sense, that means, the metaphysical plane, and that makes a greater connection of the subject with the environment to produce their knowledge (Martínez, 2018:6).

The knowledge produced through or accompanied by fire is knowledge produced about something objective with human participation and non-human species, which tends to promote collective identity, a knowledge that moves.

Therefore, the emotion is concentrated through the ceremony, when it wants to give more meaning than it is ritualized. The ritual is a powerful source of knowledge, these actions are liminal, where people are taken to the limit of their capacities, from disorder, from fear to terror, all this allows to create knowledge and learn. It is the place where consciousness begins to disrupt limits, acquired logic is lost, unlearned, and learned again (Martínez, 2018:7).

### WHAT FIRE SYMBOLIZES

Fire in human history was essential to create a new relationship with the world, its knowledge gave it the possibility to protect itself from the cold and animals, settle in a place, cook and, thus, absorb more proteins from food, transform elements of its environment, for example, with the production of stone and clay tools, in short, rethinking the world and life. Its light and heat also allowed it to prolong the day and carry out other activities that were no longer restricted by the arrival of night. That memory of gratitude to the element that seems to have been lost in modernity was well kept in a memory that is preserved in our territories through the original peoples.

On a trip within the context of this research, the co-investigator had the opportunity to reach Nabusimake<sup>8</sup>, where he was hospitably received at the home of Professor Tobias Mindiola<sup>9</sup>. There, the kitchen was offered to him to spend the night.

(...) On a cowhide, I spent several nights seriously wondering why, if there were several unoccupied rooms, they did not offer me a bed. The discomfort of the first days gave way to well-being without equal for the situation and to multiple dreams that made me wake up in peace and harmony. The last night, in front of an armed bonfire in the interior patio of the house, a son-in-law of Don Tobías revealed to me the true dimension of my stay in the kitchen, a place reserved, he told me, for very special guests, because it was located in front of the fire that supported the

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8. Aruhaco Territory in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. To get there, it is necessary to take a tour of the uncovered road in 4x4 trucks, capable of overcoming the inclement journey. The Aruhacos have refused to let the road be fixed to protect themselves from the penetration of the Western world and consumption. Tourism is handled with great prudence. Likewise, they have not allowed light to be installed to avoid the production of garbage, represented in all the electrical appliances that are damaged over time. They do not need an aqueduct because their care of the water means that everyone has it in abundant quantities from the multiple rivers that bathe their territory.

9. A native of the territory, Don Tobías is a professor of history and he is one of the promoters of recovering the language and the territory from the wisdom of the science of the origin, represented in the knowledge of the mamos

house. It was, in some and many ways, a way for me to open his heart and that I open mine. (Sánchez F., 2017).

This anecdote shows how communities use fire in daily life to produce solidarity with the guest, it is a way of pleasing the other who comes from far, of indicating that they are well received. The kitchen represents the warmth of the home, created by and with the fire, which exemplifies how the community weaves its relationships around the element, capable of uniting the affections that are given, by giving the kitchen to spend the night. It is also customary in rural areas of Colombia, especially in cold regions, that the kitchen, generally made of firewood or charcoal, is the meeting place for families. Cooking is a fundamental part of life in indigenous territories. The fire there symbolizes affection, protection, and food both material and spiritual.

In this spiritual dimension, the Taitas Ingas and Kamëntšá, in Putumayo, gather around the fire to chat, cook and serve yagé; The Misak, in Cauca, they use it in an essential way to practice their ritual healing; in the Sierra Nevada for the Kogui, Aruhacos, Kankuamos, and Wiwas it is part of the design of the original world and it is located in Nabusimake (Place of Clarity), known for that as "the heart of the world". Mama<sup>10</sup> Senchina<sup>11</sup>, Major Kogui, and her family continue to sit in front of the fire to tell the myth of the origin of the coca leaf (an experience that lasts three nights without sleep), to teach the ancient word "word of origin", to learn to weave, sing and tell life. Fire serves to encourage the use of reflective speech about every day and the sacred within every day; fire accompanies the memory of the community through the narration of myths and the performance of rites.

Taita Miguel Chindoy<sup>12</sup> thinks of fire as the first form of human knowledge, that's to say, that in itself knowing how to light it and use it meant a lot to all of humanity. "It is an element that tells us about life and, around it, the grandparents sat down to cook not only food but also their word, to warm up the word" (Chindoy, Wordreo, 2017)<sup>13</sup>.

Astrid Maribel Pinto<sup>14</sup> states that "fire is the only element that man cannot pollute", however, she clarifies that "the only way to pollute fire is rationalizing it". This does not mean that it cannot think about its meaning, she states that "the best thing is to sit down and feel, look at itself from and with the heart" (Pinto, 2017).

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10. Mama or mamo is the spiritual guide of the Kogi, as well as the central figure of the culture by embodying the law of origin. Her preparation begins from gestation, learning directly from her eldest and in nature the knowledge of the origin that, according to her belief, not only preserves and takes care of the balance of her territory but of the entire earth.

11. Mama Senchina belongs to the Wiwa people and he was trained with the Kogui as a spiritual guide. Currently, he lives in the territory of Ubate and moved from his territory of origin together with his family to share advice with the "younger brothers", as those who do not belong to his culture are called. Mama is the bearer of valuable knowledge of good living and his teachings focus on the care of life through the personal healing of sexual energy, as well as the "pagamento", a ritual through which it is appreciated and "paid" To Earth for the food and other gifts received.

12. Taita Miguel is the authority of the Kamëntšá people and he has come a long way as a representative of his community and the indigenous peoples of the country. Although in his walk through the indigenous world he has seen how traditional doctors have been given the name "taitas", especially those who serve yagé, Taita Miguel clarifies that the term comes from who can exercise authority and that it is derived from the three fundamental pillars that supported the Kamëntšá hearth, they are: the spiritual one, in charge of medicine; the politician, in charge of social welfare; and the productive one, fundamentally in charge of sowing. Therefore, whoever exercises or has exercised these dignities is Taita ... and whoever is a Taita does not cease to be one because he becomes a guide and must be an example. Taita Miguel was popularly elected as governor of his community in 1997 and later in 2004, the highest political position within the town hall structure inherited from the Colony, but which has been intended to resignify from practice with all the difficulties that this may entail. Currently, the oldest is linked to the organization Indigenous Authorities of Colombia, which involves the constant evolution of him throughout the national territory.

13. These and the other quotes by Taita Miguel Chindoy were compiled in meetings of the Word, following the already proposed methodology of the original people, where the researcher was the visitor (minor) and the Taita was the visited (major).

14. Master of the Mayan Fire ceremony and guardian of a territory of beauty and power on the outskirts of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. She is a researcher and professor at the University of Sciences and Arts of Chiapas, as well as the Center for Higher Studies of Mexico and Central America. Her life between the academy and the Mayan knowledge hasn't been immune to the criticism of her fellow workers, however, she has managed to position this knowledge in her environment since the millenary seriousness with which she learned them, her current line of research is History and cultural studies of emotions.

The ancestral fire is presented, then, as an element connected with the heart, with the spirit, it symbolizes healing and community, communication through the word that is heated and repeated in it so that it adheres in the mind and heart of the communities that allow themselves to be with their company and guide; knowledge of the ancient art of human learning; grandfather and life guide.

In summary, we reiterate this epistemology conceives fire as the thought of ancestral man listening to the heart of life in everything that exists.

### **HOW TO THINK THE EPISTEMOLOGIES OF FIRE. DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE AND SOUTHERN THOUGHT**

To answer the question of this research, how is knowledge produced in indigenous peoples? it is necessary to retake their wisdom as native sciences to integrate their knowledge and the way to produce them and, in this way, broaden the perspectives in the "other" Social Sciences.

To do this, taking up what was proposed by the Coloniality - Modernity group, it's necessary to think of the "other" Social Sciences as a decolonial space. This work intends to propose "other" episteme, where the hearted thought symbolizes fire, and affection and connection with nature can be part of science and educational spaces for children and young people.

From the decolonial perspective, led by Quijano (2001), there is the concern for the creation of new concepts that allow accounting for "other" epistemologies that allow narrating the reality of society, in this case, knowledge production in the communities visited. A challenge in shaping this creation of these new conceptual frameworks is the narratives of social practice that they are made through "other" ways of producing knowledge such as the dialogue of knowledge, the taking of Yagé, the Temazcal, and the Maya fire.

On the way to knowledge from the work of Anibal Quijano (2014) in the development of the decolonial category of knowledge, it can be concluded that the necessary conditions are in place to generate knowledge about the reality of native peoples to propose "other" epistemologies. Quijano puts into discussion how, from the epistemology of the social sciences, three assumptions arose: that of simplification, objectivity, and the assumption of the two cultures and, like these assumptions, they can no longer explain the social reality of populations (Quijano, 2014).

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, argues that the epistemology of the South is fundamentally a claim for new concepts of production and valuation "of valid scientific and non-scientific knowledge, and of new relationships between different types of knowledge based on the practices of the social groups that have suffered the unjust discrimination caused by capitalism and colonialism" (de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 2011: 35). The premise of an epistemology of the South offers the dimension of the world beyond the understanding of the West. This means that the epistemological proposal can deviate, change and take unexpected paths in Western epistemology. The second premise focuses on the fact that the diversity of the world is infinite, a diversity that includes very different ways of thinking and feeling, of conceiving time, the relationship between human and non-human beings, and of collectively organizing life, coexistence, and science topics.

These premises provide the basis for the epistemology of fire, understanding that Western epistemology left out and wasted countless knowledge of native peoples that would serve for their thinking because the theories and concepts developed in the global north and especially in the world academic, "It does not identify such alternatives and, when they do, they do not value them in terms of valid contributions to build a better society, for that reason we need alternative thinking of alternatives" (de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the south*, 2011: 36), in this case, an alternative thought is found in the opening of an epistemology of fire, which offers parameters of academic validity for the living thought of native peoples.

For the production of the epistemologies of the South, Bonaventura de Sousa Santos proposes the ecology of knowledge and intercultural translation. The foundation of the ecology of knowledge is that there is no ignorance or knowledge in general; all ignorance is ignorant of certain knowledge. For this reason, the interest that the knowledge of the native peoples integrate these new epistemes compose a critical look at the way of producing knowledge in all the centers, without leaving out any of them in its territorial form, that means, in the south there are centers, and in the centers of the north there is the south. In each phase of the ecology of knowledge, it is crucial to question whether what is being learned is valuable, or whether it should be forgotten or not learned. Ignorance is only a disqualified way of being and doing when what has been learned is more valuable than what is being forgotten. The utopia of inter-knowledge is to learn another knowledge without forgetting one's own (de Sousa Santos, 2011: 35).

For Bonaventura de Sousa Santos, “the ecology of knowledge begins with the assumption that all the practices of relationships between human beings, as well as between human beings and nature, involve more than one form of knowledge and, therefore, of ignorance” (de Sousa Santos, 2010: 43). The problem is that, epistemologically, the dominant hegemon of society is characterized by the fact that it favors practices in which scientific knowledge predominates.

Apart from the fact, this form of distribution is impossible under the conditions of global capitalism, this knowledge has intrinsic limits about the types of intervention in the real world that it can be achieved. These limits are the result of scientific ignorance and an inability to recognize alternative forms of knowledge and interconnect with them on equal terms. In knowledge ecology, building credibility for non-scientific knowledge does not discredit scientific knowledge. It simply implies its counter-hegemonic use. It consists, on the one hand, in exploring alternative scientific practices that have become visible through the plural epistemologies of scientific practices and, on the other, in promoting the interdependence between scientific and non-scientific knowledge (de Sousa Santos, 2010: 43).

This principle of the incompleteness of all knowledge is the condition for the possibility of an epistemological dialogue and debate between them. What each knowledge contributes to such a dialogue is how it leads a certain practice to overcome a certain ignorance, The approaches of Bonaventura de Sousa Santos, allows us to understand how from a Western epistemology, It constantly delegitimizes itself based on rational assumptions and it denies the presence of knowledge and knowledge in its origin and millenary tradition of peoples who have been able to coexist and dialogue with non-human species, making them participants in their production of knowledge and a fundamental part of the organization of the social life of their peoples and communities.

The epistemology of fire is an alternative to the current civilizational and environmental crisis, taking into account that society has not built its common sense around tranquility and ecological balance, which implies a challenge to regain knowledge that it had not previously been available for reason and development, but today are urgent because the thought and the way of producing knowledge of the native peoples are much closer to harmony with nature and to produce ways of Good Living<sup>15</sup> in a project of society that includes and heals the deteriorated relationship of man with the earth.

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15. Good living is an epistemological perspective that arises from the original peoples of the Andes, especially in Bolivia and Ecuador. From this perspective, territories are not only a geographical space, as the State thinks, but also, they are natural resources closely linked to the life of the human being, from where life is structured as an integral whole and allows the recognition of built principles, in by the laws of nature, for the formation of community. The process of change that emerges today in the region, from the perspective of indigenous-native ancestral peoples, radiates and it has repercussions in the world environment, promoting a paradigm, one of the oldest: the “community paradigm of the culture of life to live well”, supported by a way of living reflected in a daily practice of respect, harmony and balance with everything that exists, understanding that in life everything is interconnected, interdependent and interrelated (Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations, 2010:11)

For this epistemology, fire in native peoples is energy, an expanded body, representative of the sun that becomes food for the body (kitchen) and the spirit (medicine) because fire heals, purifies, and transforms.

The indigenous world is lived around the fire, where the word gets heated, though, and offered with the depth and the truth that it can make it resonate with those who listen to it. It brings with it teaching from ancient perspectives of understanding life and creates practices around communication from the art of listening and the art of speaking. Indeed, the creation of life in community arises before the fire as a symbol of unity and commitment, memory and identity. There, everyone weaves the knowledge for the community and, finally, they are named in a collective. Fire is the organizer of social life recognized as teacher and memory, a thread of thought and feeling that is woven into social relationships. Fire is also the meeting place and builder of a community that reflects on its own experience (Sánchez, 2017).

This epistemology is present in the rituals with which the search of the men of knowledge of our continent has been honored, from the north to the south, its presence in the ceremonial rituals is of the utmost importance. However, fire is not alone, the elements of nature are always present as guides and companions on the way, just like the plants of knowledge; each culture has one, many share several. We can say that it is common and therefore extremely important, that the native peoples sustain their knowledge and their being in nature, endowing it with a full and equal life to that of man, and that they have not managed to talk to it so much (which they do) as to listen to it. Fire is part of the knowledge of our Native Americans, a place/time where knowledge and knowledge are built that transform and intervene in life through rituals and ceremonies that produce knowledge about their territory.

The epistemology of fire seems to emerge as a necessary complement to the world of reason from the multidimensionality of dialogue and singularity. This sensitive science, which recognizes in nature a source of wisdom applied to the well-being of all beings, can provide a lot of meaning to the present moment. For the knowledgeable participants in this research, fire is a living being, a grandfather capable of guiding and the human being to maintain the balance of life with concrete practices such as water care, health, sexuality. Learn to be interested: to be with the intermediation of everything that exists.

The purpose of establishing a dialogue between Western thought and ancestral thought is a work of weaving that unites, both how the first has been produced, and how the second has been sustained.

This is an exercise that allows us to consolidate what we are trying to investigate, but also, in the little that it can be produced, to contribute to society, to the world, because today we need to understand the world from plurality, to understand ourselves from the dimension not purely rational and that is what it is about: how to understand ancestral thinking not simply from rationality, but other dimensions (Chindoy, 2017).

From this perspective of the indigenous dimension, fire signifies and dignifies the need to recognize emotions and feelings as part of the knowledge of each human being, in the same sense as Orlando Fals Borda uses it, with **sentipensar** (Fals Borda, 2009).

Bringing these other-own-ancestral glances to the academic scene allows us to observe a dimension of life beyond Cartesian reason, without the need to eliminate or oppose the latter. On the contrary, it is in the meeting of knowledge, through a sincere dialogue, which it can bring to the field of social sciences an opportunity to unite what should never be separated<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, listening

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16. Eduardo Galeano describes it well in his text Celebration of the wedding of reason and heart: "Why does one write, if not

to the invitation that the communities make us through their knowledgeable people, and through symbols such as fire, to reunite with the most essential of life, makes a lot of sense.

For this reason, fire represents the urgent possibility of moving thought, which means, putting it in motion and revitalizing it with a re-enchantment of the world that allows us to feel and think of ourselves as part of life. As Arturo Escobar says, more than social movements, create a moving society capable of recognizing that “consciousness is not a prerogative of human beings but rather a property distributed throughout the spectrum of life” (Escobar, 2017: 55). In addition, it helps us to recognize the great diversity of knowledge that native peoples have preserved with great effort and sacrifice to begin to measure their usefulness in the construction of a territory that requires thinking from the complexity of its multiple perspectives.

When speaking of the epistemology of fire, it is necessary to understand the particularity of each community, place, and customs of the human groups that have woven particular forms of understanding and rituals around the fire. In the polyphonic diversity of the communities, a single fire is symbolized, an elemental that becomes a bridge - door - stage multidimensional that allows purification of the being. It can be said that the different voices that come together here are caring for a single fire-memory that comes to remember and propose a relationship with the world and life closely linked with the Earth, but, above all, with the territory, which allows humanity to be capable of recognizing itself in everything it sees.

#### **KNOWLEDGE OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF FIRE**

The need to weave, produce and transmit this knowledge is to propose new horizons of meaning in the teaching, pedagogy, and research processes with the capacity to generate theoretical frameworks of indigenous intellectuals and academics and researchers that coincide in the thought of the organization of social life from biocentric principles. For this reason, in this epistemology of fire, the thought and worldviews of native peoples, Good Living / Living Well, popular education, and south-decolonial thought are proposed as founding theories, which propose a dialogue between epistememes.

This epistemology is nourished by new possibilities of resignifying what has been learned and learning other ways of producing knowledge, previously invalidated by the status of academic truth. This transmission of knowledge of the native peoples has managed to maintain practices of peaceful coexistence, of collective and communal processes that develop bonds of solidarity between human and non-human species, rooted in values of the Cosmo community.

Understanding a way of acquiring knowledge through nature in a teaching-learning relationship leads to admitting and confronting several things that will support this new-old epistemology:

1. Nature has its way of knowing.
2. This knowledge is so powerful that it is capable of creating and recreating life.
3. It has a memory and keeps it in the reality of what it is, minerals, plants, and animals (including the human being).
4. It moves in spheres that exceed rationality, but that is within the reach of human understanding (understanding from the heart, *Sentipensante*).

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to put its pieces together? From the moment we enter school or church, education dismembers us: it teaches us to divorce the soul from the body and reason from the heart. Wise doctors of Ethics and Morals must be the fishermen of the Colombian coast, who invented the word *sentipensante* to define the language that tells the truth (Pérez, 2012).

5. It has rules that precede - exceed - man (and his needs) to respect and keep the balance of life.
6. it places itself at the service of man to help him keep his balance (internal-external) and, in that sense, it gives him a purpose: to be the guardian of life.
7. It has its pedagogy that, although it is different in each human group (use of different rites and plants), retains common characteristics in all of them.
8. It allows changing the focus from anthropocentrism to biocentrism, therefore, life cannot be understood apart from community relations and with the territory.
9. Recognizes in man his diverse equality.

All the power and enrichment that can be generated in this work is only possible if this enunciation is also followed by a work of understanding, only worthy and sustainable, insofar as it brings together many voices capable of being named from other realities, many hands that want to build which will urgently be the basis of debt with our indigenous identity.

### **THE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCED AROUND MOTHER EARTH**

For Taita Miguel, the recognition of indigenous thought is a necessity found in the "laws of nature." From her perspective, another way of understanding the relationship with Mother Earth is required and, therefore, she has sought a space to observe from the ancestral knowledge of our territories a relationship that connects us again with life, of which we are caregivers. She also highlights the importance that she has for the academy, and for the indigenous world, to generate this dialogue "between equals" to share, from diversity, ways of thinking about the world that can be taken seriously and respectfully.

(...) The time has come to listen to that other thought born of nature, what we call natural law. In the world there are much older norms than human ones; what the indigenous peoples have done is listen to, interpret and respect that law. Our call is to respect that law (Sanri, 2013: 74).

This knowledge of the so-called Law of Origin has resulted in environmental benefits thanks to the care of the ecosystems that in this word/work of the elders has allowed in our country. It is well explained by Taita Víctor Jacanamijoy<sup>17</sup> -who resigned from being a lawyer for not being able to accept the concept that the land is a "good" that can be sold and bought-, by stating that indigenous peoples have dedicated themselves to caring for the Earth and that in their territories is where the natural wealth and the most notorious biodiversity of the country can be found.

This outside thinking (the land is good) has led us to make everything susceptible to negotiation, exploitation. And that is what humanity has done, take out and take out and loot. They do not put anything; they only take out and pollute. On the contrary, the indigenous peoples have taken care, we have not minded removing those things that are under the earth, which for something must be there because they are part of that other body that is the Earth. The Earth has bones that are rocks, the Earth has blood that is water, and also oil, its heat. It has a respiratory system, which is the lagoons; If the lagoons are over, where can the water evaporate? That is how it breathes. We understand that

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17. Taita Víctor claims to be six times a Taita, since he has six daughters, he is a traditional Inga indigenous doctor, belonging to what he proudly calls "the Millennial Indigenous Medical Culture of Ambi Uaska, Yagé". He was born in Santiago, Valle de Sibundoy, Putumayo, and he is the founder of the Inga Indigenous Council of Bogotá, where he was also governor in 1999. He works permanently in the diffusion of the culture of yagé and the recovery of indigenous music (Kalusturinda), traditional dress, language, and fabrics in Auanga (traditional loom). He is recognized in many areas for his ease of expression and active social and political participation, which makes it very easy to find interviews of him on the internet talking about his people. He has been a lecturer in Comparative Law, Indigenous and Roman Law, Indigenous Medicine, and the Quichua Language, due to his three-year training in the study of Law.

from the grandparents. Today, scientists talk about the ozone layer and the atmosphere; we have understood it for a long time (Sanri, 2013: 64).

The native cultures of Abya Yala allow us to understand how the native peoples have centered their existence concerning the care of the Earth and their role as a living being:

A beautiful thing, which I have learned from the brother indigenous peoples who handle different plants, it's caring for the Earth, that means, we are at the service of nature, not the other way around; here it has been understood that nature is at our service. In our lands, which I call "Indigenous America", we must be at the command of nature; she is the one who governs us. For this reason, our wise men, our taitas, our mamas, our curacas understand that this is so; we must be at the service of nature (Interview with Taita Víctor Jacanamijoy in Sanri, 2013: 64).

When the grandparents have understood that the center is life, then ... we are part of that living existence and not the center, and we as a living existence with all the possibilities and gifts that nature has given us, we have understood -or the grandparents understood-, the responsibility of being guardians of life, understanding that everything is life (Chindoy, 2017).

This is what we know: the earth does not belong to man; it is a man who belongs to the earth. This is what we know: all things are linked like the blood that unites a family. The suffering of the earth will turn into suffering for the children of the earth. Man has not woven the web that is life, it is just one more thread in the plot. What he does with the plot he is doing to himself (Chief Seattle, 1854:5).

In ancestral knowledge, the understanding of life and the role of man is emphasized from different territories and cultures on the same points: the first, the impossibility of not understanding the Earth in a respectful dimension from a family relationship, as the mother; secondly, to honor her through deep gratitude that must be manifested in concrete acts of care that benefit future generations; thirdly, to understand that man's role, more than that of a transformer of his environment, is that of a guardian of it, which gives meaning and purpose to his existence, remembering that the well-being of the Earth is his own; finally, accept that the Earth, as a living being, has an intelligence capable of dialogue and creating levels of knowledge and order (Law of Origin) which, although in many cases may exceed human understanding, are made available to those who want to listen to and respect them.

### **PEDAGOGIES OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF FIRE**

All epistemology has its methodologies, which means, those ways that are it is own to look at how its knowledge is learned. In this case, we will refer not only to a way of creating (and believing) an ancestral knowledge -invisibilized by the idea of truth and a unique privileged way of arriving at it-, but also to how the same Ancestral knowledge has been involved with the construction of a community through practices that turn life into a ceremony of connection with the environment.

In this sense, more than methodologies, these practices are ancestral pedagogies that have sustained, from one generation to another, the most important features of the cultures that dialogue here. From the north to the south of the continent, the grandparents found power plants with which they discovered that healing and knowledge are not separated. Although indigenous science-primarily seeks health, it does not understand it far from learning. For this reason, the way of transmitting science is fundamentally ritual, which is also medicine and at the same time memory and school.

Each indigenous ritual has its design that, beyond the way it is performed, keeps ways of ordering the environment so that the time invested in the experience is more profitable and it is by the knowledge that has been acquired by previous generations. The design also protects the protection



of a path taught, usually by a grandfather, which guarantees that his spirit is present to the extent that his teachings are respected through the "care" of the ceremony that, in many cases, it revolves around sacred plants.

For Taita Benito<sup>18</sup>, the next step in the evolution of a human being is to become a sacred plant, as it is the way to help the brothers who are looking for ways of being and being in the world. Plants in rituals are used as mediators of knowledge and communication portals with the sacred, their proper use allows a transcendent state of attention that teaches and heals, common purposes of the rituals that will be addressed. However, it is not exclusively about their use, qualities, benefits, or their rituals that this research deals with, as this requires its own space of inquiry<sup>19</sup>.

Therefore, although plants are a fundamental part of the ritual life and knowledge of indigenous peoples, it is not in them, or exclusively with them, that the existence of an epistemology of fire is being considered, nor is it intended to ignore its importance, but to understand that in the rituals, which are developed around them, a good part of the knowledge that sustains the ancestral world has been woven, and that in its use a true multidimensional science has been developed aimed at the benefit of man and life itself.

Considering the space and the intention of this work, the depth that each of the rituals deserves will not be able to be fully addressed in the present investigation. Therefore, although the main rituals in which the co-authors have participated will be described, the text will focus specifically on the relationships that occur in them and the reflections that have emerged from their approach.

### **EL YAGÉ: A SCHOOL, A PATH**

The first thing that is put in tension when entering a ritual is the dimension of the sacred, this because from the Catholic spirituality, prevalent in our environment, it is very difficult to think that a plant is not only alive, but it is the representation of divinity itself on Earth. That happens with yagé.

This ceremony around the yagé vine proposes the taking of medicine to heal not only the body but also the mind and spirit. Yagé is an ancient drink that is made with two plants, yagé<sup>20</sup>, and chago pangra<sup>21</sup>. It is carried out at night and with the fire lit, it is directed by a Taita, who, in general, has received the medicine from the cradle and has prepared to share it through serious study<sup>22</sup>. For this reason, the conception of yagé among the Taitas is not exclusively linked to medicine, the elders refer to its practice as "the science of yagé", they speak of the study of the plant and name the guides who serve it as "knowers."

Yagé, therefore, offers a path of knowledge that allows the one who studies it to understand, through experience, first of all, its life itself. Here the word science does not seek to emulate Western culture, rather it is a way of referencing the field of knowledge within a context of ancestral knowledge where healing is a way of knowing, as Taita Víctor Jacanamijoy relates.

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18. Benito Chasoy is a Taita Inga, who for more than fifteen years has devoted himself to the study of the science of yagé through its preparation and practice. He lives in the Putumayo jungle, in the Planadas Region, twenty minutes by boat from Puerto Asís. His confidence in yagé led him to adopt a lifestyle dedicated to the study of it and, therefore, he traveled to this region to be able to deepen the teachings of both the plant and the jungle.

19. In this regard, Sánchez F. (2015) can be consulted where the yagé plant and its ceremony are analyzed as a space for deep learning teaching, and the subdivisions proposed here are developed.

20. Vine that grows in the Putumayo jungle, responsible for the physical cleansing of the body in the ceremony.

21. Jungle plant to which the visionary properties of Ambi Huasca medicine are attributed.

22. This description corresponds to our experience, without pretending that all shots or ceremonies are like this. Moreover, due to the arrival of yagé in the big cities, the number of "taitas" who do not necessarily have so much training has increased, so it is necessary if you want to have the experience, carefully select the expert who will guide the ceremony.

In Lower Putumayo, one comes and the elders say to him: "Well, are you Taita?", And one says: "Well, I'm learning." "Let's see," they say to one, "heal this patient for me. If it is cured, I think you are a Taita, if not, then no". It is a great test; This is not like the Icfes or the National exam, where they put you to tests on a piece of paper; This is live and direct, in front of the Taita: whether or not you know takii (singing to heal), you know samai, you know how to heal or not (Sanri, 2013: 17).

Although the role of the Taita as a guide of the ceremony is essential, the role of the yagé taker in his cure is fundamental. In itself, the progress you make along the way depends on it. The intake of the "**remedito**", as most taitas say it with affection and respect, generally causes Chuma (yagé drunkenness), vomiting, and diarrhea. This is a fundamental part of the teaching of yagé since one of its objectives is to clean the body.

Taita Víctor Jacanamijoy, paraphrasing Descartes, says, in all seriousness "I vomit therefore I am". This "cleansing" connects the experience deeply with the body and prepares the taker for the pint, that means, the visions that may come.

Yage is a plant of knowledge and teaching. Therefore, when we take it, we say a pint. Add: the most beautiful thing in life, and paint: vision, which cannot be confused with either a dream or a hallucination; it is a state of consciousness. In this state, we put ourselves at the disposal of useful information for ourselves and our loved ones. Yage heals you with the beauty of nature; that is what is seen in visions: the perfection of nature (Sanri, 2013: 67).

As a construct of knowledge, yagé can also be thought of as a medical science-expanded medicine- (Sánchez, 2015: 26), which works at very deep levels of observation, both of the patient and the Taita, which allow us to recognize, on an energetic level, the causes of physical problems. However, the concept of health is not focused on disease, but on leading a life in fullness and balance, where mind and body are deeply related. "After you are happy, even if you have a disease, if you are happy and do not mentalize the disease, then inevitably it is cured because it must be remembered that most diseases are psychological" (Chasoy, 2013).

Health and education go hand in hand. As in other ancestral views, the concept of separation does not exist in the indigenous world; learning to take care of yourself is a form of knowledge, yagé is mandated, to begin with, not to contaminate the body. Little by little, it starts to show, for good, changes in the diet and in the daily practices of the drinkers who take yagé seriously, "yageserios", they are said in some groups, in contrast to "yageceros", such as takers are usually named.

They are killing us from the cradle; a little boy from the cradle is given toxic and poison: sugar. Instead of scraping panela that provides him nutrients and calories to his body. The theme is human behavior. Here [in my house] sugar is not consumed; second, we bathe in warm water on the stove; we try to sow our corn that does not have insecticides, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, because nothing more, nothing less, the life of each one of us is at stake here. It is this seed; I am a seed; this seed is the body. It is taking care of our nature, our body. How are we eating, sleeping, breathing? ((Jacanamijoy, 2012).

(...) It has been very difficult to see myself and transform myself; See where I am failing and how to self-correct, is a grandfather who teaches yourself to correct yourself, not only that he will correct you, but he also allows you to do it yourself and he allows you to evolve and acquire strength: (Gaitan, 2015).

As it is usually carried out in spaces outside the city (and although not, too), it creates for the policyholder a more conscious relationship with the Earth, who is recognized as the mother, the great provider of everything that exists:

The Earth is the one that gives us everything. Just as a mother gives us her breast, she gives us her affection, she gives us her love. Just as a mother gives us milk, the Earth gives us the milk that is water, the vital liquid of all living beings that is water. She gives us oxygen, she gives us food, she also gives us medicines, because we are all susceptible to getting sick, but nature itself gives us plants to heal. In other words, everything is on Earth. This would be enough to explain why we must be at the command of nature, of the Earth; not the other way around (Sanri, 2013: 64).

For Taita Victor, medicine teaches will<sup>23</sup>, patience<sup>24</sup>, and perseverance<sup>25</sup>. With yagé, the ancients learned the secrets of nature, and they managed to order and educate their communities. Therefore, thinking of this ceremony as a field of acquiring useful knowledge for a good life places the plant - within the indigenous world - as an essential part of the human formation process that, usually, in the western world, it is related to the school. Reflecting on yagé and education, Taita Miguel thinks that one of the goals they share is clarity.

Older people always talk that yagé shows us the way, so it is like the equivalent of education or training, as they say in society, because for those who have had the opportunity to be clear about the way, and that is education, education is clarity ... clarity with life, commitments, and the duty to be (Chindoy, Palabrareo, 2015).

Taita Miguel explains that the grandparents “understood this practice as part of the training required by human beings; ancestrally, education has not been understood as an information process, but as an experiential and energetic process, fundamentally, it is not information” (Chindoy, 2015). This is also confirmed by the “yageserio” musician from Tabio, David Sánchez<sup>26</sup> when he’s comparing yagé with the academy: “I tell it my university, I’m doing a career, I’m learning there, I have teachers, I have classmates, I feel the same than a university where I am learning” (Sánchez D., 2015).

Personal and non-transferable learning. Each one learns what to need for life, it is not intended that all learn the same, or at the same time. Despite taking place in a common space around the fire, each taker has his teaching scenario through the body, silence, music, word, and painting<sup>27</sup>. In those spaces, each being determined his path. Taita Oscar Garreta assures that the progress of a good taker can be seen by how he heeds both the advice of the Taita and those of the plant itself.

Although it is emphasized that healing and learning are personal, the community that is generated around yagé is built around a proposal of solidarity and brotherhood:

They all drink from the same cup, they are all part of the healing, there are apprentices dedicated to helping those who go through times of crisis, and the Taita puts his life at the service of the health and protection of those present.

Finally, yagé is a path of self-discovery that allows us to understand man's relationships with nature, it seeks integral personal healing (mind, body) and it allows experiential dialogues with inner dimensions. It is an ancient practice that, now shared with non-indigenous people, becomes

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23. Nobody is obliged, it is essential to want to spend a cold night facing the discomfort of the body, and looking at oneself within the mystery of the unknown requires, without a doubt, will.

24. Learn to take life calmly, the great mental anguish of everyday life take a second place compared to the intensity of the experience, and problems are measured with another scale.

25. The path requires permanence to deepen and learn to resist medicine.

26. Guitarist from the Gentil Montaña academy, he has a piece of land in Tabio, where he built, together with other seekers of knowledge, a maloca arranged to serve as a place of healing. He currently plays with a group that was created thanks to the yagé sessions and he is an apprentice to Taita Oscar Garreta, with whom he currently takes medicine. His role as a musician is fundamental during medicine since music is an essential part of yagé.

27. It is recommended to deepen in these spaces of understanding to Sanchez, F. 2013.

a way of teaching an ancient thought that, as Taita, Víctor says, necessarily requires going through experience to be understood.

We, Inga, left our territories, but not empty-handed; we come to propose, to propose them clean, knowledge. We were also driven by the need for more people to share our knowledge. Something that I have already understood is that, alone, nothing will happen. What we want to do is, as the Arhuacos say, too little brother you have to make him understand, you have to make him try yagé. That is the teaching of yagé, it is taking. Many professors at the university claim that you have to read; you finish university and come to specialization, and then a master's degree, and then a doctorate, and then a Ph.D. The more you read, the more knowledge. They have tried to deceive us or say that the only way to acquire knowledge is by reading. I am affirming that it is not like that, because knowledge is also experiencing, understanding directly (Sanri, 2013: 69).

### **MEDICINA TEMAZCAL: "A HOUSE FOR SWEAT WITH ALL MY RELATIONSHIPS "**

It is raining. I don't know if that is a good or a bad sign: The earth communicates but I have not been taught to listen to it. The fireman is fighting with all his might to light the bonfire that will remind the grandmothers of the volcano from which they come, however, the weather that surrounds Tabio at one in the afternoon makes his task of providing warmth difficult, then we help to light the fire, while the clouds fall on us in the form of old and cold rain. Luz Amalia begins to sing a song that asks the sky for a little sun, she is accompanied by a maraca that imitates the sound of the rain dancing with the wind, this is a way of speaking to the sky where the two vital forces dance with the trying to communicate (Sánchez F, 2017).

Re-entering the womb of Mother Earth with awareness, a place of protection and growth, happiness and peace; remember the humility of someone who is nothing more than a child learning to crawl through life; face darkness, mother of light, grandmother of humanity; to remember using the heat of the grandmothers stones heated to the fire; have a purpose; die to be born again; all that, and more, happens in a Temazcal.

The word comes from the Nahuatl (Yutonahua language of Mesoamerica) and it means "house of hot stones": Tetl, stone; Mazitli, hot; Calli, home. As its name indicates, it is a place to purify the body through sweat, which is produced by the interaction of water with fire concentrated and condensed into volcanic stones, called grandmothers, as they have been part of the Earth since its creation. In the first place, the grandmothers are put on the fire for several hours, this work is carried out by the fireman, a being who has been given the responsibility of activating his memory using a bonfire that must remain correctly lit to heat to all equally and thus allow their knowledge to be useful to those attending the ceremony.

The Temazcal is made within a circular design that has four entrances, which symbolize not only the four directions (north, south, east, west) but the four elements (fire, air, earth, water) and also the four doors. in which the ceremony takes place. Inside the larger circle, which surrounds and protects what is contained in it, it stands a construction that resembles the belly of a pregnant woman, made of flexible wood and tied with lianas. This house should be crawled and greeted, kissing the Earth, with a phrase in Nahuatl, Mitakuye Oyasin, which translates "with all my relationships", which indicates that whoever enters recognizes that it does so with everything beneficial and what it has sown in its relationships with life (human and non-human beings) and it enters ready to heal it (re-signify it).

As in other rituals, the entry of women in their sacred time of the moon (menstrual period) is prohibited because they consider that their energy must be treated carefully<sup>28</sup> (specific temazcales

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28. In this, most rituals coincide in preserving the time of the menstrual period as a moment of regeneration of the woman in which it must be preserved and cared for. In this regard, a traditional Misak doctor, who led a ceremony attended by the co-

are made for women with periods). It is also recommended to enter guided by a definite purpose and sweat with it. Although with different ways of doing in specific points (songs, purposes, ways of handling the word, most of the experts who direct it (medicine men) obey a traditional legacy that is protected in the structure of the ceremony, mainly oriented to reconnect the being with its body, its spirit, its environment and with the life expressed on Earth, which is invoked in the Temazcal as the mother of love and wisdom.

The four doors, more than a physical place, express the symbolism of the time that each part of the ritual lasts. When all those present are inside, women on one side, men on the other (to guarantee the balance of the energy of the masculine and feminine) the man of the fire enters the grandmothers stones, who are greeted by all those present and they are welcomed by offering them a plant that is rubbed on its surface (copal, sweet palm, cedar, among others) and that it emits medicinal fragrances. Whoever offers the plant also makes a prayer according to the purpose of that specific moment of the ritual. The person in charge of accommodating the grandmothers in the center of the Temazcal does so with deer antlers. Once all the grandmothers have entered, the fireman is ordered to collect the medicines and the horns and enter the "water of life", usually, deposited in a clay jar. Then the maraca and drum enter and, finally, at the request of the medicine man, the fireman closes the Temazcal.

Even with your eyes open, everything is in perfect darkness. The knowers explain it is an opportunity to see oneself and the energy normally used to be permanently looking outward, returns to the interior of those present. According to the door and the school of the medicine man that he directs, the purpose is indicated, which it can be to think and, or, pray in, and with, the grandparents, the parents, the children or oneself; concentration is also requested and silence to listen to the songs of medicine, which it can be in Nahuatl or Spanish. The medicine man offers water to the grandmothers and the steam begins to heat the entire space, little by little the temperature rises and the heat begins to be the main protagonist of the experience. Meanwhile, the songs are intoned and the drum fills the air with the beats of the heart that it tries to emulate. The drum is the heart of the Temazcal and whoever plays it must keep its beat constantly, agitated breaths and moans produced by the heat are heard, time begins to seem eternal and everyone does what they can to stay focused on their breathing and stay alive.

It is not in vain that Arturo Rueda<sup>29</sup>, knowing about Mexico, in the last Temazcal attended by the co-investigator, had started the ceremony by saying that we were in "the oldest university, and also, at the same time, in the oldest hospital in the world. continent" (Rueda, 2017). The close relationship between health and education that occurs in these practices brings us back to Taita Miguel, who explains that, in the indigenous world, education is a whole experiential and energetic process, rather than a space for accumulating information. Indeed, in the Temazcal, as toxins are released, the mind also cleans deeply. This happens, according to the experience of the researchers, because the mind, not being able to sustain itself in its normal rhythm of thought, due to facing a situation that seems to be limiting, releases the energy that it expends in daily repetitive thought processes and, then, you access a different level of consciousness of life, where everything counts for learning.

Fears, anguishes, the memories that need to be healed become a very deep form of teaching. The Temazcal is to die to fear to be born to live, to let go of what is useless to move on, to gain strength to be more aware of the privilege of being alive. Feel the body, test its limits, discover that it is stronger than one thinks, understand that in its way of functioning there is a knowledge that keeps us alive (Sánchez, 2017).

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investigators, explained that part of her preparation to be a healer was knowing how to menstruate.

29. Master's student in Sustainable Development at ECOSUR, Arturo Rueda is a young Mexican who has been taught by the Temazcal of the Lakota, town of the north of the continent. He is also a biologist and works with social research.

For Felipe Mardones<sup>30</sup>, the Temazcal seeks unity, to remember that we are not separated, that mind, body, and spirit are a permanent unit and they do not walk alone, each one by their side, but in a common unity concerning themselves and to everything. that is part of the whole. The dynamics of separation are evident in the way of thinking about the world, that generates the disease, "to think that it has nothing to do with you when everything is a reflection of the same creation is a mistake that must be healed" (Mardones, 2017).

Felipe Mardones calls the separation a "collective neural arrangement", equated with a culture, a narrative. He identifies in that culture of separation the true root of our problems or everything we call problems, including inequality, poverty, the destruction of nature. So, into that logic, it seeks to fix what seems to be the problem, for example, fighting against ambitious businessmen and corrupt politicians would seem to solve it, but it seems naive because we have been in that fight for decades and decades and it does not work because, to he, ambition and corruption are not the cause of the problem but their symptoms. This, in his understanding, does not make sense, separating the world between "good and bad" is completely absurd, it must go to the origin: separation is the problem. But if so, what exactly are we separated from? (Mardones, 2017).

Separated from everything, I separated from you, separated from the wind, the wind is a random force, it is blowing because there is a change in atmospheric pressure in one place, and in the other, it is not blowing because life has something to do with me. Do you realize? When you reduce everything, everything is reduced to chance, and if a girl is walking there, she has nothing to do with me, why would she have something to do with me? When you begin to expand your being, you realize that everything has to do with you, even the little bird that has just passed overhead, it is saying: "Ah, I like what he is saying, he is remembering what life is like", and that I am remembering only a zero-point one percent of what there is to remember. Separated me from life, dividing the situations that I like and those that I dislike and I have to avoid, if there is someone in my community that I do not like, I will learn to put it aside. Our neural arrangement, our way of thinking, makes us think separately (Mardones, 2017).

Apart from the unit, Onennes, Felipe Mardones explains that the Temazcal has two other fundamental principles: one, breath, the air we breathe (breath out, re-spiritualize existence), and another, water, fluidity, the beauty of the life. Although he clarifies that he is not a spokesman for the Lakota, whom he respects for what he has been taught and whose tradition he carries in his heart, he explains in greater depth the Mitakuye Oyasin, and how the call of this medicine has nothing to do with that one becomes a good person:

We are all related, we are all family, with these stones, with the air, with the whole visible world and the whole invisible world, with the stars, with the lady who is walking in front. People, when they don't understand, think that this path is a call to be a good person. It is not. The separate world can also be within oneself, just as it separates Donald Trump [from] Mother Teresa, to give you an example, I can also separate myself [from myself]: Ah, I have an angel and a devil! which is also an absurd separation. For example, if we judge that we are sinners -seen from religion-, or that we have an ego -in spiritual paths-, we must defeat our ego. Just as we must defeat Monsanto and Donald Trump, we must also defeat our ego, it is the same. There comes a point in life where the absence of separation is not so easy to accept because we are used to being at war with something and many will not want to hear what I am saying. If one is at war with something of oneself, one is at war with something outside and vice versa, then there comes a moment in life when one gets tired of being at war and learns to open the eyes of the soul and see its mind and its heart as they are. I don't know how to do it, I don't want it to sound like a recipe, everyone has their way (Mardones, 2017).

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30. A medical man from Chile, who after doing a doctorate and being a university professor resigned from the academy to dedicate himself to another way of life, with practices such as Temazcal, but also through the development of a "sacred economy", more aware of the needs of the Earth.

Ancestral traditions are paths that welcome those who feel their calling. In the Temazcal the grandparents have proposed a prayer to remember and be reborn to the experience of a life not separated from the human being, to re-spiritualize the experience of walking through the world and knowing in the fullness of the present moment. As the Mapuches say in Argentina, "just be there" ... with all my relationships.

### **MESOAMERICAN ECOSOPHY: THE MAYAN FIRE**

The Mayan Fire ceremony<sup>31</sup> is one of the fundamental examples for the understanding of what is proposed in this research, due to its special relationship with the element chosen to condense the pedagogical relationship between man-as a being integrated into nature, and the fire-like grandfather willing to guide it on the path of Good Living-

Although, as it has already been said, fire is recognized in ancestral ceremonies as a grandfather, memory, guide, and profound knowing, it is in the Mayan Fire where it presents itself with a defined role as a Living Being capable of speaking, expressing itself and directing the ritual according to the characteristics of those present. The visible and the invisible in a space that erases the borders of a reason protected in its bodily senses (only what it can be measured is true) and theoretical (only what survives the rules of logic is real). In addition, it is reiterated, the fire in this ritual is considered sacred because it is the only element that man has not been able to contaminate.

The teacher of Mayan Fire, Astrid Pinto, tells us that the ceremony reflects the many pieces of knowledge the ancients condensed in its realization: impeccably handle the space where the fire is lit, ask permission from the territory and the spirits, clean the place, make the offerings properly, know what day the ceremony is being done, what is commemorated on that day, what nawal is the one that is being worked on<sup>32</sup>, it is a long apprenticeship that, in her case, started from her relationship with her grandmother, an indigenous scholar who, when Astrid got sick, healed not her body, but her nawal, "if you get sick, you come to the altar and burn a candle, you make a prayer, you make an offering and that is how it is cured. It is healing through the spirit. He also explains, laughing, the Mayan botanical medicine is an invention of anthropologists, "the Mayans do not heal with herbs, they heal with fire, with the spirit" (Pinto, 2017).

The fire in Maya K'iché is said Q'aqu, when Lok'laj Q'aqu is added, it then refers to the Sacred Mayan Fire, which is considered above all as "a portal of communication with the spiritual hierarchies" (Mayatecun, 5133)<sup>33</sup>. It is also a ceremony to remember the time as the ancients conceived it and raise a prayer, day by day, to each of the nawales that symbolize the twenty months of thirteen days into which the year is divided, according to the ceremony to which it assists. Such is the importance of time for the ceremony that the person who directs it is called Ajq'ij, which means "the counter of the days" or the "counter of time". "Counting" means that it not only knows how to accurately enumerate it but also to narrate it, being in this way, more than spiritual guides, orients, and mediators of the relationships between the community, fire, and time.

The Toj (Mayan ceremony) [offering] has the sense of thanking the Ajaw (the energies of the Universe) and harmonizing with the Cosmos. It also has particular senses, depending on the energy of the day and the intention of those who celebrate it. A dialogue is established between the participants, with the fire, mediated through Ajq'ij (Baldomero Cuma cited in: Hurtado, 2013:1).

31. The Mayan Fire reported in this research was developed in the context of the course "environmental ethics and political ecology" of the master's degree in the sustainable development of the Colegio de la Frontera Sur ECOSUR and it was created by Astrid Pinto, who in addition to Being a mediator of the ceremony, she works as a researcher at CESMECA.

32. The term nahual and its meaning will be discussed in detail later; it first wants to put it in the context in which it is used and then it observes its narrative in a special passage for it.

33. Although the consultation date in the Gregorian calendar is November 6, 2017, and in the absence of publication date, we have decided in homage to this other way of looking at the time, to reference it with the date in the Mayan calendar A'b: Month Mak year Job'Iq 5,133, as informed by the consultation page.

Fire, as the door of time, focuses on the solar calendar, preserved in the Mayan territories to think about life around sowing and as a ritual in itself. In addition, as Alberto Vallejo<sup>34</sup> explains, as a vision of Mesoamerican ecosophy, which involves the possibility of invoking and summoning the wisdom of nature in a proposal at the service of man for the care of life.

The nawas called this calendar the Tohualtalani, the count of dreams or tonal, because precisely, what it refers to, it is a calendar of ritual and divinatory uses. These mathematical and mental devices generate thought and knowledge of the entire environment, ecosophy, a relationship with the environment, and with the beings that interact with those media. These calendrical mathematical devices have those functions, those origins, those uses (Vallejo, 2017).

The Mayan Fire, as we knew it and as we have been able to verify in other experiences, is based on an offering to various elements of life. Sugar is the base of it and, from circles made on the ground, other foods such as panela and cocoa are arranged within its limits, as well as flowers and candles (in groups of thirteen) of different colors, which they are located according to the Ajq'ij instructions. One of them is to understand that fire (life) is being offered "gifts", objects with meaning, food; what is given is what is received. Thereby, the idea is to remain with good thoughts and attentive to what is being done, among others: strip the flowers and arrange their petals, according to the colors without mixing, arrange the food in order, arrange the sticks of wood among the elements. In other words, attention devices are created in what is done and how it is done. It is a shared practice in all rituals, where the learner is not focused on a result, but attention to the process.

A multicolored mandala made by the interaction of everyone present is the result. From within, Astrid lights the fire to remind the academy that there are many ways of knowing, and all deserve to be embraced with the heart of science that needs to recover the spirit of life, to be, above all, useful, in these moments of crisis.

Then, it begins the process of offering (giving food) to the nawales, elements that symbolize the union between man and nature, through an animal or a being. For Vallejo, 2006, the use of nawales obeys an indigenous logic of alterity and dialogic construction that responds to the approach of the other "non-human, nature and the beings of the sacred world" (p. 216), and it defines at the same time the construction of the self from the relationship with the symbolic.

For Alberto Vallejo, the importance of nawal is that it makes visible one form of knowledge about the human condition, by remembering that men are diverse and, within that diversity, each one has functions, abilities, and personal characteristics, without which, simply, he would not be himself.

Nawal is your art, knowing what and what you are made of. The Mayans in Guatemala say that one of the most common diseases in society, in general, is not knowing your nawal. We are so in need of work and all this, within a labor system imposed by capitalism, that people do not develop what their being is. Neuroses, psychoses, and mental illnesses in today's society occur because people do not follow their destiny, they do not follow their path, they betray themselves, they do not know themselves. They do not develop what they could contribute to the world (Vallejo, 2017).

The Mayan Fire is ancestral anthropology that proposes, from the Mesoamerican knowledge, answers to the why and for what of life from the gifts that each human being possesses by nature about the cosmos. Its practice, like all those described in this research, was fiercely persecuted during the Conquest and the Colony, evangelization related it to witchcraft. As in other territories, the ritual, as a device of memory and relationship with the world, was preserved in the depths of the

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34. Anthropologist and a recognized scholar and expert in the Mayan Culture, not only at a theoretical level but with an experiential journey that, in the ceremony in question, led him to carry out a co-direction where he explained most of what is here exposed. He is part of the Center for Higher Studies of Mexico and Central America (CESMECA), San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, San Cristóbal de las Casas.



jungles, guarded with care until the right moment arrived. The moment the white man might have the willingness to listen. That time of the rebirth of these ritual ceremonies seems to have come with force to allow an ancient voice to be felt that, of course, it is not thought differently from political practice.

We are in times where these traditions have not only had a resurgence but also use at the political level, by the Mayan peoples, even with one of the most important peace agreements, the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>35</sup>. It is the first time, since the arrival of the Spaniards, that there is a legal instrument that recognizes the right of indigenous spirituality and its worldview, an anthropological concept that has become a political tool (Vallejo, 2017).

### **THE FIGURE OF THE GRANDFATHER / TEACHER IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF FIRE**

The grandfather in the indigenous world plays the same role as the teacher in the spiritual world of the East or, keeping the proportions, the teacher in the Western world. The difference lies in the depth of the treatment that is created thanks to a direct or symbolic blood bond, which generates a scene of family and human tissue, not disengaged from a serious and demanding learning process. In this stage, the teacher belongs to the family (grandfather) and he teaches for the family (grandson, town), he is "the oldest", a term that refers with great respect to the teaching that he represents for his town the community that is gathered around the fire with all the load of meaning that it implies.

The Symbolic meaning is the one that refers to this educational, communicational, and spiritual process as sowing. In this sense, the possibility of sowing properly offers whoever deposits the seed the opportunity to perpetuate itself through the word that the other carries with it. The sowing is done for many generations ahead, the word is a seed reference, The example is food and fertilizer so that the seed grows well. Just as the plants are offered themselves as food from their descendants, this delivery process is not alien in the spirit of the ancestrality of our peoples. In the village Kamëntšá, a phrase is repeated that exemplifies this process with great beauty: "We are the heirs of our grandparents and grandparents of our heirs" (Chindoy, 2017).

That knowledge that is weaved orally, is written through the experience in the sensitivity of the participants. It should be noted, this is generating a way of being, being, and thinking about life. The word is not so much owned by a person. The plural of grandparents, the elders, the Taitas, the Mamos, generally before the enunciation of the spoken knowledge that is taught, the knower takes refuge in a community knowledge of which he is only a messenger. However, each one makes and weaves the history of this millenary thread from its being, its infinite diversity that came to express itself with freedom and wisdom that brings the path traveled through its ancestors.

It is worth saying, the idea that the elders are the community guides (or society) was not unknown: in Rome, the term Senate, in Latin, *Senatus*, came precisely from *Senex*: Elder. For the communities, the elders are those who hold the community with their word. Fundamentally, the word of an elder shelters a millenary path that indicates who listens to how to get to its gray hair and, beyond, how to ensure life for those who come into the community. There is reflected the culture, use, customs, -its uses and custom-, the living myth of origin law. Word of order and respect, the word of the elders is, fundamentally, a medicine.

In that sense, grandfather, grandson, and father are not separated, everyone has the same blood thread and connects them not only to each other but all of them with the earth. Therefore, the placenta along with the navel of the newborn is sowed on earth, it is not simply a tradition, but a rite with the intentionality of starting the new community member in the care of the legacy of the elders (Kamëntša people, 2014: 6). From that part of his being, sown in his birthplace, is that Taita Miguel

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35. Signed in Mexico D.F. in 1995.

enunciates the Kamëntša, not as a community that is thought of as part of the earth, but it feels like part of it.

By saying that "we are the heirs of our grandparents and the grandparents of our heirs," the Taita Miguel indicates that those who come forward are the elders, so in the communities, it is very common to carry the children behind. Faced with a conception of time proposing linearity with the beginning and end, (re) a spiral look appears where sometimes to advance you have to be returned, and to climb you should be lowered.

The metaphor of the snail, so well managed by the Zapatistas, perfectly defines the movement: from the inside out, from bottom to top, from inside out.

### **THE PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCE - SENTIPENSAR.**

In this pedagogical proposal, experience is installed as the main source of knowledge. Sentipensante, a term coined by the researcher and founder of Participatory Action Research, Orlando Fals Borda, indicates that the way to produce relevant knowledge for life is in life itself. **Sentipensar** has mind-body awareness in the construction of thought. Fals Borda argues, it is necessary to recognize the knowledge of the popular, peasant, and indigenous communities, because they are the ones who have the knowledge and knowledge of the foundations of life, such as food, water care, and the protection of nature.

The strategic issues of social life are played out in the daily life of ordinary people, therefore, this proposal involves leaving the classroom to the territory and turning it into a classroom. An example would be open classrooms, where the research interest of the academy converges with the communities.

Orlando Fals Borda proposes, based on the experience in the territory, there are intelligent people, prepared to assume their rhythm of life, who have the knowledge and they were who invented the concept of **sentipensante** that appears in his books, That concept was not invented by me, it was near the swamps of San Benito Abad, a fisherman who was with me, he told me: look, we really believe we act with the heart, but we also use the head and, when we combine the two things, we are Sentipensantes. It is a very simple concept that is fully understood (Fals Borda, 2008).

This anecdote of the researcher points out, as he puts it, "the language that tells the truth is the **sentipensante** language, which is capable of thinking by feeling and feeling by thinking" (Fals Borda, 2008). **Sentipensante** pedagogy is committed to transforming the reality of people's lives. It is to produce knowledge that breaks with the classical conceptions of the social sciences, which place teachers, intellectuals, and researchers outside of society, when, on the contrary, they are the ones called to transform reality with the participation of the people.

When the school is far from the territory, it is also blind. It is necessary to turn the territory into a classroom where useful knowledge is learned and produced. The teacher and the researcher are no longer those who have and carry the knowledge, they are the ones who must listen to understand and, with the other, with the settlers, with the native peoples, with the peasants and the fisherman, to produce a pertinent knowledge for the true solving the problems of life, for that, a thoughtful knowledge is essential.

In the epistemology of fire, native knowers produce their knowledge, and share it, in a deep connection between mind and body, explaining with their example and in ancestral rituals that there is a way of being in the world that can be more beneficial for himself and those around him. For grandparents and their apprentices, the pedagogy of feeling is daily life and knowledge is to transform.

**THE OBSERVATION OF THE WORLD IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF FIRE**

For Taita Miguel, it is clear the exercise that involved the indigenous rationality of life was carried out by the elders through a profound process of observing the world. To observe from Kamëntšá thought implies that when we observe we are communicating with what we are observing. "It is not a simple look", clarifies the Taita, thanks to this ability, the grandparents learned to understand their environment and, therefore, to penetrate the spirit of what is observed, for that, *boninch ja bua juan* means to enter us with our eyes in what we are looking at, observing. Enter somewhere with our eyes:

Through the observation of the *boninch ja bua juan* was how our grandparents began to understand the world, the environment, and, of course, the perfection of the world. Then they did not look at an environment full of things, but at the perfection of the world, through observation, it was how our grandparents understood that the Earth is a living being, and everything that grows around the Earth has life. Look at everything that is produced through an act that is the observation *boninch ja bua juan*. This act of observing has effects that generate rapprochement, understanding, and affect what we are observing (Chindoy, 2017).

So, while observing, how is done in traditional research, to describe an object of study, exclusively through the anthropocentric eyes of modern reason; In ancestral cosmologies, observing is an exercise that is carried out through the eyes of the heart, it is a space to know, but also to care for and preserve because life is conceived as the same vital tissue. As Chief Seattle of the Sioux Tribe so beautifully put it when he was forced to sell his land to the President of the United States in 1854:

This is what we know: all things are linked like the blood that unites a family. The suffering of the earth will turn into suffering for the children of the earth. Man has not woven the web that is life, it is just one more thread in the plot. What he does with the plot he is doing to himself (Chief Seattle, 1854).

Understand observation from the wisdom of native peoples largely explains the deep respect for the environment that ancestral cultures developed on the continent, this understanding accepts and involves that not only the other human but the other (living existence) they have subjectivity and meanings of their own. Therefore, these agents - beings (plants, sun, objects, spirits...) establish permanent communication with what we are and what we do in the world. The importance of bringing life to a plane such as the one expressed here can make it easier to understand the need to understand urgent ecological processes for our territories.

The epistemology of fire seeks the possibility of integrating, to current knowledge, the ancient word of the elders (native peoples) to connect the experience and make decisions about the future, to produce shared social meanings around a good and beautiful life for all.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The research work addressed the epistemology of fire, more than its study, its practice is responding to a call that ancestral peoples have received to share their way of learning and healing. A call that, they maintain, is made directly by the territory, by *Abya Yala* who, as a living being, requires that this way of caring for life, without disregarding it or focusing it exclusively on the human, can have the opportunity to contribute something useful in these moments of an intense search for meaning.

The practices and notions that have been delivered with the care and respect of the original peoples to the cosmos, allow the elaboration of certain precepts to address what has been called epistemologies of fire, enunciating in them the ways of producing knowledge, and that, from the ancestral, they have been used for the construction of community, privileging how each being thinks

of himself within a worldview and a cosmic intelligence and that allows bases to face the idea of internal and external separation, to which the human being has been doomed since the western construction of the world.

As a necessary complement to what man is, knowledge emerges from the jungles that are put at the service of life, teaching him to be at peace with it. Unresolved destiny within utilitarian thinking schemes, where the only thing that has had value (if he has had it) is the human being. Unrealized discovery of a true New World, which is waiting to make contributions that not only generate a movement in thought to admit the need to cure a very deep disease in the way of understanding life but the possibility that admit other forms of knowledge created with rigors and perspectives of ancient science.

Again, in the face of the coincidences in the discoveries of Abya Yala as a territory capable of producing its knowledge with an enunciation that surpasses and puts in tension the traditional logics of scientific validity, the role of the social sciences expands. Indeed, if these sciences are capable of integrating the knowledge of native peoples into their thinking, they will be able to recognize in them their ancestry and history to, from there, contribute to an urgent resignification of the life of the human being in the crisis of modernity that, in many places on the continent, has not even fully arrived.

In this sense, and continuing with the idea woven by other authors of a pluriverse (a world where many worlds fit), these epistemologies based on the recognition of diversity also contribute to the construction of polyphony, where not only words and thoughts are protagonists of the production of meaning; Indeed, the relationship of varied expressions such as music, song, poetry, sung narratives, myths, rituals, and others emerge as a stage of communication-education in culture capable of forging deep ties and producing varied and useful knowledge for a good life.

Inviting the body to the stage of formal education, understanding it as a vehicle that wisely relates to the world, is a call to become aware of its importance and care through different ways that may be useful for that purpose. The connection of man with his whole being is a call from the elders who, with their example, teach a lifestyle based on respect and recognition of the sacred, beyond the religious, in a practical spiritual dimension that is not in war with nothing external and that sincerely seeks unity, from the diversity of each one and of their dreams.

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