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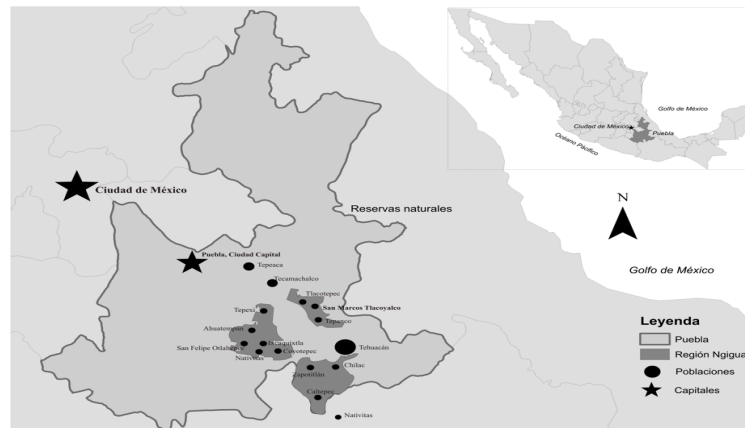
THE NGIGUA COMMUNITY JAGÜEY: A SANCTUARY OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE TODAY

I. Introduction

The State of Puebla has the highest lethality rate of COVID-19 among Indigenous people. According to data from the federal Ministry of Health (Dirección de Información Epidemiológica, 2021), 280 of the 864 people infected by coronavirus have died in Puebla up to July 8, 2021, date of the last cut-off by the federal government. This means that the lethality rate among patients assumed to be Indigenous in our state is approximately 32.5%, higher than other fifteen states in the country with more registered cases.

Despite the fact that, as this report indicates, 30% of the deaths did not have any comorbidity, 70% did have at least one of them. Hypertension and/or cardiovascular diseases (30.92%), as well as diabetes mellitus (28.57%) and obesity (18.59%) represented the main causes of death among indigenous peoples. Therefore, in our paper we want to emphasize the consequences of food insecurity within the Ngigua region of Puebla, where community forms of resistance are present such as the Ngigua *jagüey* of San Marcos Tlacoyalco (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Ngigua Region



Source: López Varela personal elaboration.

In our analysis, from a decolonizing point of view, we want to relate community expressions such as the *Thengijna chooni naa ko naa ni* in the Ngigua language as the cultural form for deploying care for collective life,

healing, and its sanctuaries. In this sense, we conceive sanctuaries not only as localities but also as healing practices.

This paper includes the analysis of semi-structured interviews as well as informal conversations with nine Indigenous community members from San Marcos Tlacoyalco about the *jagüey* as a sanctuary (see Figure 2). We were able to continue our research despite the pandemic situation in Mexico through communication technologies (e.g., Googlemeet, Skype, and WhatsApp). Here we discuss the data collected over the past two years (2018- 2020).

Figure 2: Ngiguas participating in our study ¹

Name	Age	Current occupation	Social status	Location
Alfonso López	50	Justice of the Peace	Married	San José Buenavista
Andrea Marínez	45	Housewife/ university student	Married	San Marcos Tlacoyalco
Paul Gámez	30	Farmer	Married	San Marcos Tlacoyalco
Samir Moreno	30	Farmer	Married	San Marcos Tlacoyalco
Karla Cruz	29	Farmer	Married	San Pedro

¹ We protected the identity of our participants and all the names used in this study are anonymous.

				Pericotepec
upita Flores	35	Farmer	Married	La Estación Tlacuitlalpan
lejandro Carrasco	30	Farmer	Married	San Marcos Tlacoyalco
uan Flores	30	Farmer	Married	San Marcos Tlacoyalco
Catalina Varillas	25	Farmer	Single	San Marcos Tlacoyalco

Source: López Varela personal elaboration.

The aforementioned figure provides a general overview of the population interviewed, most of our interviewees were low income farmers who embodied the challenges of survival through intensive work of local produce. Moreover, their Indigenous identity as Ngiguas gives force to their grassroots constructions of Indigenous health practices and cultural revival.

Thus, this paper is divided in the following manner, first we look at health cultures as alternative health practices which represent a major critique to biomedicine therapies and practices. Specifically, food sanctuaries are healing locales which represent grassroots constructions of alternative health practices at San Marcos Tlacoyalco. Second, we will look at food sanctuaries as synergistic solutions for health problems which connect with the social, cultural and economic contexts allowing the creation of new categories of study such as food sanctuaries which reconcile the biological component with the social. Here the ethnographic examples will help us better understand the dynamics in place and allow us to illustrate the prevention and intervention programs from grassroots perspectives such as the Ngigua *jagüey* of San Marcos Tlacoyalco. In other words, deconstructing colonial knowledge and (re)building Indigenous epistemologies.

II. Health Cultures

Following Janzen² in medical anthropology there are multiple areas of research and practice including, but not limited to, health cultures, critical medicine, health systems, and alternative health practices. Here we will emphasize the health systems of non-Western cultures, given our interest to look at sanctuaries as healing locales at San Marcos Tlacoyalco. In the 70s Arthur Kleinman, head of the department of Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School, proposed to study the cultural constructions of

² John. M. Janzen, *The Social Fabric of Health: An Introduction to Medical Anthropology*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

illness, healing, and disease.³ Consequently, the department emphasized the cultural dimensions of sickness, healing, and medicine. The program also established the difference between disease and illness where the first referred to the objective reality of pathology while the latter related to a subjective state of suffering or culturally created. One of the major challenges Kleiman encountered was the lack of followers committed to the idea of studying and validating alternative health practices.

Nonetheless, he forged a new line of inquiry which provided a cultural approach for understanding, studying and practicing biomedicine. His framework also included a definition of etiology⁴, onset of symptoms, pathophysiology⁵, course of sickness and treatment. While exploring the cultural dimensions of illness the Harvard School of Medicine emphasized the culture-bound syndrome approach where health practices belonging to a specific culture were primarily honoured. For instance, Mark Zborowski⁶ wrote his pioneer study on immigrants narratives about pain entitled *People in Pain*. Zborowski's emphasis on cultural perceptions of pain among American immigrants represented a leading research on culture. Also Batzibal Tujal⁷ looked at Maya-Kaqchikel concepts and practices of health in Guatemala which contributed to grassroots constructions of health and disease among Indigenous populations.⁸

As time elapsed, other interests on health cultures represented an alternative to health practices and therapies available in urban-rural areas and represented a major critique to biomedicine practices (e.g., health development projects, clinical care, health education campaigns). As such Tai Chi Cuan, Yoga, Chinese medicine (Acupuncture), Swedish massage, karma therapies, meditation, Qi Gong, and energy therapy represented cutting edge health culture practices. To a greater extent our study precisely looks at food sanctuaries as locale for grassroots constructions for alternative health practices which we turn to analyze.

III. Food Sanctuaries as Synergies Solutions for Health Problems

³ John. M. Janzen, *The Social Fabric of Health*.

⁴ A term in medicine used for the origin of disease or illness

⁵ Pathophysiology or Physiopathology: the functional changes associated with or resulting from disease or injury.

⁶ Mark Zborowski, *People in Pain*. (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1969).

⁷ Juanita Batzibal Tujal, "A Conversation on Maya-Kaqchikel Concepts and Practices of Health". In *A New Dawn in Guatemala Toward a Worldwide Health Vision*. Edited by Richard Luecke (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc. 1993) 23-30.

⁸ Hortensia Oztzy de Cap, "What did we have to teach the Doctor?". In *A New Dawn in Guatemala Toward a Worldwide Health Vision*. Edited by Richard Luecke (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1993) 17-22.

Earth is our mother, for us it means the one who shelters, provides our food, and embrace ourselves deep in our soul. We belong to her, therefore we are not the owners of it. Between mother and children the relation is not of property but a sense of belonging. Our mother is sacred, because of that we are ... also sacred. The earth as territory is part of ourselves. Each one of the elements of the nature fulfills a necessary function with everything and this concept of integrity is present in all the aspects of our life. It is not possible to tear apart the soil from the subsoil. It is the same earth, as a totalitarian space. It is within this territory that we learn the sense of equity, because the living ... this is like that because the earth is life. For us, the Ngiguas, the earth is not an item that could be divided into boxes but it is integral, with all of its components, with nature, with produce, and its relation with knowledge (Interview with Lupita Flores, 2018).

In recent months of syndemia, the inhabitants of the Ngigua region of Puebla have struggled to weave strategies of food political aesthetics in the use of values, because the State of Puebla has the highest lethality rate of COVID-19 in patients from Indigenous background in Mexico. The lethality rate among patients assumed to be indigenous in our state of Puebla is approximately 32.5%, higher than the other fifteen states in the country.

Therefore, in our text we want to emphasize, as the current government administration has been doing, that the morbidities of the population in Mexico are not only related to a lifestyle or a type of consumption, but involve profound consequences of neoliberal food and health care policies. In our analysis we want to relate the consequences of the neoliberalization of food among the Ngigua region of Puebla with community forms such as the *manovuelta* (*Thengijna chooni naa ko naa ni* in the Ngigua language) that deploy a whole socio-cultural political economy of affection and care from the values of use that confront the gourmetization, commodification and fetishization of native food.

In addition to the above, we cannot ignore the fact that the Ngigua region of Puebla, the socio-historical context of our reflection, is an area with a high, very high and critical vulnerability index⁹ where demographic, health and socioeconomic dimensions converge, making its inhabitants prone for not being able to face an infection disease (e.g., COVID-19) with the best tools at their disposal. Therefore, it is crucial for us to explore some of the socio-cultural strategies implemented by the Ngiguas of the State of Puebla since February 2020, in order to nurture what we call the "political aesthetics" not totally subsumed to the values of change. In this sense, it is worth

⁹ L. Suárez, G. Valdés and Galindo P, *Índice de vulnerabilidad ante el COVID-19 en México*. (México: UNAM, 2020).

mentioning that we will use the word syndemic because we recognize that there are synergistic health problems that affect the health of a population in their social, cultural and economic contexts which allow us to bring together new categories of study -that reconcile the biological with the social-, the risk factors that allow us to anticipate and implement prevention and intervention programs to address comorbidities as cross-cutting axes that cross pandemic phenomena conjuncturally.

From this point of view, Ngigua constructions about Mother Earth foresee activities for caring and providing for community members who represent grassroots constructions about communality and well being. It is necessary to delve into the use and meaning of *jagüey* and food sanctuaries through our ethnographic example. Caring implies honouring ancestral relation with the *jagüey* both in use and meanings such as the *Thengijna chooni naa ko naa ni* (in Ngigua) as the cultural form for deploying care for collective life, healing, and sanctuaries. In this sense, we turn to explore the *jagüey* as healing practices.

IV. The *jagüey* as healing practices

The *jagüey* represents an ancestral method of artificial water collection. The major contributions of communal work is the concept of *dar mano* (give a hand) which implies traditional knowledge, practices, and a sense of belonging for Indigenous people who (re)create grassroots constructions of the meanings for defining sanctuaries. Specifically, those related to survival, food production, and healing (e.g., farming, irrigation and community gathering). The following video illustrates the relevance of communal work, care and maintenance. Here *jagüeyes* represent water sanctuaries for surviving and healing purposes.¹⁰

The aforementioned video entitled “*Retención de agua en el jagüey*” (Water collection in the *jagüey*) envisioned Ngiguas knowledge and practices about sanctuaries. The inclusion of this video in a public platform, Utube, represents an accesible format for community members within and beyond the limits of San Marcos Tlacoyalco. The appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and practices related to the use of sanctuaries for ritual performance and healing purposes is now available in a digital format and beyond their borderlands (e.g., community and nation-state borders). Under this logic, the Ngigua community theatre illustrates how the Elders from San Marcos Tlacoyalco use the “*Thengijna chooni naa ko naa ni -mano vuelta*” (give back) for clearing and cleaning the mountain waterfalls and creating the *jagüeyes*.

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=6R8c-JlRVJ0&feature=youtu.be>.

The following examples will illustrate the connection between the *jagüey* as a sanctuary and healing site. The “*Sierra de Soltepec*” not only nests the chain of mountains surrounding San Marcos Tlacoyalco but also the waterfalls which complement its landscape (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: San Marcos Tlacoyalco



Source: Jazmin Moreno daughter.

Here Moreno's daughter depicts in a very natural manner the process for containing the water which is collected from its point of origin represented through the chain of mountains where the water flows during the raining seasons (e.g., March-May and August-October). San Marcos Tlacoyalco is a community recognized for its hydraulic design and contribution for Mesoamerica such as the water dam known as *Mequitongo* (700 A. C).¹¹ This is one of the oldest and thus, the legacy of the Ngigua region while relating to their ancestral knowledge on hydraulics design and water containment. This historical background gives force to ancestral connections with *jagüeyes* as sanctuaries and locales for healing, health, and life. Water is one of the vital elements for survival and precious among agrarian societies.

Another example relates to the healing rituals performed with the water collected from the *jagüey*. In the documentary video the Ngigua community included how the immersion of *agaves* and *cactus* purified the water of the *jagüey* for healing purposes. Members of the community received the water as part of the ritual that connects the ancestral belief of connecting Mother Earth with health, healing, and well being:

¹¹ A. García Cook y L. Merino Carreón, "Proyecto arqueológico del sureste de Puebla", en *Notas Mesoamericanas* (México: UDLAP, 1988) 94-109.

...[T]he use of *agaves* and *cactus* undertake the process of purifying the water through their natural properties they capture bacteria and other organic material which enables the flocculation process. This process makes the water ready for domestic use and healing purposes [e.g., cleansing rituals, wound healing, and healing purposes in general]. Moreover, the water in the *jagüey* is also used for agriculture but also for cooking, washing and bathing (interview with Juan Flores, 2019).

As stated by Juan, “these rituals are performed by Elders and healers in a semidesertic region, where water is scarce and the rain unpredictable with our climate change”. The *jagüey* represents a water collector with a double purpose on the one hand, it is a water *reservoir par excellence* for agricultural purposes and living conditions; on the other had, it is used for healing and ritual purposes. The latter connects with ancestral deities and the recognition of Indigenous grassroots constructions of health and healing.

Following this trend of thought the rituals follow narratives surrounded by:

care and equilibrium with the forces of nature known as *Chijni teki ni ngigua* which are the givers of life according to our Ngigua culture. Also Elders emphasized this equilibrium as the symmetric relation with nature which is not exploitation but living in harmony and respect (interview with Saúl Gámez, 2020).

Here we want to connect with Saúl who mentioned the young man in *¿Tinnu diataunxi ncha'on?*¹² where a search for answers floated while trying to understand “where the sun rose?”. This search obliges the individual to understand different worldviews as well as cultural and bio diversity. Martínez Juárez¹³ urges non-Indigenous people to build relations of dialogue and not of dispossession, violence, exploitation or ethnocentrism while using and exploiting natural resources.

The importance of the *jagüey* for the Ngiguas can also be seen in legitimizing their defense while occupying the former Bonafont bottled water plant along their communities in Puebla. In recent months, the Ngigua community has supported the takeover of the Bonafont bottled water factory in the neighboring municipality of Juan C. Bonilla. Together with activists from many communities and organizations from different regions, they have

¹² R. MacNeish, *The Origins of Agriculture and Settled Life*. (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

¹³ S. Martínez, Juárez, *Chijni teki ni ngigua. Cuentos y leyendas ngigua de San Marcos Tlacoyalco* (México: El errante editor, 2014).

occupied the company's facilities and have denounced through various forums the importance of fighting against the commodification of life and the environmental deterioration caused by the overexploitation of mother earth. Even what was once a bottled water company has now been founded by this peaceful occupation of Indigenous peoples what is known as "The House of the Peoples" or *Altepelmecalli* in one of the native languages, the Nahuatl of the volcano region, which evokes principles of the Mesoamerican community such as the word "*mecatl*" which means union or "*altepetl*" community of life (see Figure 4).

Becoming a cultural center and a locale for resistance against the extractivism of all forms of life. We want to point out that Indigenous people make use of their religious images with deep religious syncretism where the "Virgin of Guadalupe" is actually *Coatlicue* or mother earth and "San José" is *Tlaloc*, the giver of rains.

Figure 4. Altepelmecalli



Source: López Varela personal elaboration

This occupation represented a frontal critique of the commodification of life and the possibility of organizing daily subsistence with millenary values such as collective work and use values that have been placed at the forefront of community resistance against the multiple forms of capitalist extractivism.

It is very important to emphasize that water for the Ngigua culture is not an object to be administered or a resource to be manipulated, but a force of nature which is possible to converse, a historical subject to whom it is important to learn, to listen and the foundation of community life. For millennia, the Ngiguas have conversed with the different manifestations of water as the lord and lady of water. These forces are present in the lives of those who tell stories about their influence on community life.

The forces of the untamed nature that often burst among the community in the form of people who speak, relate and share other ways of living the world, as in the case of the story

Kuxenkji¹⁴ where the tutelary god/goddess of the Ngigua culture, the so-called "water serpent" a whirlpool that anticipates the rainy season and cleans the crop fields, is embodied by a ragged man. He asks to collaborate in community work and for this purpose adopts the form of a man from the community to work collaboratively and continue to prodigy the Ngigua culture:

The whirlwind asked the lady for corn, bean, squash and bean seeds to sow. She, very happy, gave him all that, plus food and pulque¹⁵ so he could go to work. The whirlwind went to the field and began to sow the seeds. When he finished sowing, he turned into a whirlpool and went to look for clouds in the sea to bring them back and make it rain on the land. That's what he did every time he needed moisture. When he got home he would tell the lady how the crop was coming along. The lady was very happy.

In this fragment we find the strength that sustains the struggle in defense of water and springs the communities which turn to defended and continue to do so. Caring for earth in regions of semi-desert, means to work against the interest of larger corporations that use water for extractive industrial production. The future horizon includes disputes and resistance between modernity which perceives nature as a resource and other alternative modernities that see it as a force that sustains life are looming. In this order, we identify three different, yet intersected, moments of the expansion of capitalism within the region of San Marcos Tlacoyalco and Tlacotepec de Benito Juárez: the imposition of mono crop farming, forced pork and poultry production, and transnational land rental.

First, the growing imposition of mono crop farming relates to the on-going exploitation of the land by agroindustries. A good example is the farming of blue agave azul for industrial manufacturing of tequila. One of the major concerns among Indigenous communities pertains to the extinction of plants endemic to the area including, but not limited to, agave and corn. The latter was the first domesticated grain in the Tehuacan Valley, as research has demonstrated through the archaeological record.¹⁶

Second, forced pork and poultry production result in conflicts over water supply and environment pollutants. To produce a kilogram of pork meat it is necessary to collect 12 thousand litres of water. In total, pork meat production accounts for the usage of 4% of fresh water available in Mexico. Furthermore, an increasing number of complains documented the

¹⁴ S. Martínez, Juárez, *Chijni teki ni ngigua*, 26-29.

¹⁵ Pulque is an ancestral alcohol beverage

¹⁶ A. García Cook. *Proyecto Norte de la Cuenca de Oriental*. (México: Archivo Técnico de la Coordinación Nacional de Arqueología-INAH, 1997).

lack of healthy procedures in handling animal feces, which has led to the contamination of water and soil, low quality of air, as well as an increase in respiratory illnesses and epidermis irritations.¹⁷ In addition, the emission of gases prevailed within the animal industry (mostly related to pork and poultry production) where other diseases added complexity (e.g., H1N1 virus). In San Marcos Tlacoyalco, the access to drinking water is vital for human consumption and animal industry; however, animal waste disposal still represents a challenge in the region. The lack of an animal waste management plan delves in increasing the number of infectious diseases within and beyond the Tehuacan Valley (for instance, the influenza H1N1). The community is currently undergoing negotiations with managers of the animal industry and community representatives in order to find solutions to animal waste disposal.

Third, the increasing transnational land rental to Chinese entrepreneurs who most of the time, use toxic fertilizers which in turn, damage the local ecosystem and their traditional native crops.¹⁸ [13]. This practice could be termed as the global expropriation of land and resources for economic dependence and exploitation of Indigenous workforce. The president of the National Council of Peasant Societies and Units (*Consejo Nacional de Sociedades y Unidades con Campesinos y Colonos -CONSUC-*), Israel Garzón Martínez, noted that over 40 thousand hectares within the municipalities of Tehuacan, Tlacotepec de Benito Juárez and Tepanco de López, have been rented over 30 years to Chinese businessmen. The latter hired the owners as agricultural labourers to produce corn, beans, sugar cane, and vegetables which are exported to China:

What is at stake is the vulnerable position of these peasants who are the owners of their lands [who may be Indigenous as well] and who are being exploited under the contracts of their rented land.... [I]n reality the land is a business, because we all eat, and buy farm products[.] However, the middleman gains the surplus of the production while the producers remain exploited and underpaid.¹⁹

The increasing processes of land rental in the Valley of Tehuacan to Chinese entrepreneurs provide an unknown area to

¹⁷ Regina Martínez (2009).

¹⁸ Yomara (2019).

¹⁹ Y. Pacheco, "Campesinos de Tehuacán rentan a chinos sus tierras y sus peones". *Municipios*. (2019), <https://municipiospuebla.mx/nota/2019-10-03/tehuacán/en-tehuacán-chinos-rentan-campesinos-sus-tierras-ahora-son-peones> (Consultado el 3 de Octubre de 2019).

explore given the lack of formal research conducted within the area. We now turn to analyze the decommunitization of water resources by looking at the protection and revitalization of the *jagüey* as an act of Indigenous governance and autonomy.

V. Protection and revitalization of the *jagüey*

In order to understand the risk experienced within the region, we need to recall the official figures indicating that women, heads of household, represented the first incidence of deaths due to COVID19 in the Ngigua region of Puebla. Women who have historically played the role of care, attention, and maintenance of households are now dying in the region we are studying, leaving behind deeply fragmented families (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Mothers heads of household COVID's front line¹⁹

Tabla 1. Distribución de casos confirmados en población que se reconoce como indígena según ocupación, México, 29 de abril de 2021

Ocupación	Frecuencia
HOGAR	4,457
EMPLEADOS	3,879
TRABAJADORES DE LA SALUD	1,796
CAMPESINOS	1,799
COMERCIANTES DE MERCADOS FIJOS O AMBULANTES	842
JUBILADO / PENSIONADO	733
ESTUDIANTES	696
DESEMPLEADOS	631
OBREROS	559
MAESTROS	481
CHOFERES	374
GERENTES O PROPIETARIOS DE EMPRESAS O NEGOCIOS	99
OTROS	2,802
TOTAL	19,149

Fuente: SSA/SPPS/DCE/DIE/InDRE/Informe técnico COVID-19 / México - 29 de abril de 2021 (corte 09:00hrs)

Source: Ministry of Health of the Mexican Federal Government (Abril, 2021)

We cannot fail to mention that women are the heart of the Ngigua community who care about the vital processes, among which relate to the cleaning of the jagüeyes and springs. They have always been the first to advocate for community water and turned themselves to defend their territory (e.g., the documentary recorded by the brigade of historical community theater as aforementioned). The COVID19 pandemic demonstrated how women mothers, who went out for food gathering food, historically have the responsibility to care for their grandparents and the sick who were the first to die from this disease. It also demonstrated that confinement is the privilege of the few or that if some can be locked up it is because others have to go out.

In addition to the historical domestic duties referred during the last phase of our research process, we were able to find a profound paradox under a topic that should be debated and

related to the dimension of communality. In the words of the ngigua women, communal work sustained life in agricultural localities such as San Marcos Tlacoyalco, we have been able to detect a deep ambivalence that has to do with the fact that "nobody likes to look bad". Rather, it seems as if "those of us who are mothers are being "charged with the hand".

For example, in situations described by Catalina Varillas (August, 2021) it can be noted that society is not empathetic with Ngigua women who study because although they already have several academic activities, they are still burdened with activities such as community participation committees. For example, the drinking water committee, church committee and adding parent committees at their children's schools. And when they do not comply with the assigned activities, they are punished by society through fines and other intra-community sanctions.

The young students, try to adapt to the digital gap, the social sanction, family guilt, patriarchal violence and exceptional pandemic dimensions, to participate in this type of communal activities and they do it mainly by themselves. This is mostly due to men who migrate to work in other states or abroad and leave their family and household responsibilities behind. In addition, community members emphasized that the committees by themselves are articulated by other women, the support among women does not seem to exist because the hand is given to the one who is considered selfish, irresponsible and immature for dreaming a dream that no longer corresponds to them.

It is a very complicated time in every way, I have been depressed. I have cried because sometimes I no longer have the strength to continue, but seeing a smile and feeling their hugs from my little ones have motivated me to continue and not give up. Besides this confinement affected my family a lot and for everything... I have had to manage in the best way since relatives like my parents, grandparents, uncles and cousins have been sick some of Covid-19 others from other diseases and everything has been an expense. More than what I had and giving up is not the best solution or the way out, I just know that this pandemic has its advantages and disadvantages. At the end I will end up with something good (Catalina Varillas, 2021).

What we can evoke from the previous quote are the various issues faced by Ngigua women within the context of the pandemic. In addition for caring of family life and affection, Ngigua women, whose husbands have often migrated to other regions of Mexico or in the United States, took responsibility of their obligations including community gift. Belonging to

committees implies taking responsibility for certain areas including, but not limited to, education, health, security and maintenance of their festivities. Mothers, who are the head of their households, advocate for their territory which is being stricken by the greatest incidence of COVID-19 contagions, the history of our time included the voices and memories of these women who place their bodies to preserve the confinement as a privilege for just a few.

VI. Final Thoughts

The Ngigua community of San Marcos Tlacoyalco promoted the processes which questioned the way in which life turned to be commodified by the patriarchal and colonial system. The defense of community grassroots constructions included the *jagueyes*. Their community struggle included the ongoing occupation of the Bonafont water facility which clearly illustrate Ngigua's community resistance against extractivism. Ngigua communities witness multiple forms of extractivism which focus on the defense of the *jaguey* as the possibility that community life forms have a chance of future existence. The *jaguey* is the navel, the crack and the path that asks for the need to look at the present in daily resistance.

The defense of life must be against all forms of domination and it is illustrated through the ambivalent and contradictory role of the defenders of the *jaguey* who become visible in public spaces rather than invisible. Mother earth is not only related to the care of women's bodies, but also the defense of communality, what belongs and serves to the community. For instance, the defense of communal water (e.g., the *jaguey*, water reservoirs) is only possible if Indigenous people decolonize the knowledge restraining and constructing nature as a commodity rather than the giver of life and death.