The Art of Sewing, Spinning, Weaving, and Embroidery as Violent Coexistence?

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Received date: October 7th, 2024
Approval date: June 28th, 2024

To cite this article

Boleaga-Ocampo, P. I. y Sandoval-Hernández, F. (2024). The Art of Sewing, Spinning, Weaving, and Embroidery as Violent Coexistence? *(Pensamiento), (Palabra)… Y Obra,* (32), e22131. https://doi.org/10.17227/ppo.num32- 21847

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Abstract

For centuries, knowledge theories have been based on Eurocentric and androcentrism viewpoints. This study challenges patriarchy, racism, and expressions of sexuality to demonstrate how class issues, socioeconomic context, and, above all, gender, take part in knowledge production in only one sense. It has been evident that dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge, omitting the Amuzgas (omndaa), Mixtec (Na savi), Tlapanec (Me'phaa), and Nahua women's right to conceptual authority, by denying academic validity of their knowledge and the way in which they conceive the world from their cosmovision. Structural violence is deeply rooted in cultural and the way how society is socially constructed, resulting in the daily lives of spinners, weavers, and embroiderers from Indigenous communities being marked by violence across multiple spheres. Globalization has deepened cultural differences, adding to those of class, gender, and racial condition, leading these women to perceive violent coexistence as a natural whole, that comes from the pre-Hispanic era. Although Indigenous women carry out their productive activities within the private sphere, this does not diminish the value of their knowledge and artistic labor, and therefore, the recognition of their epistemic value. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, which considers sensory experience as the basis of knowledge through observation and direct experience, elements are introduced that contribute to the demand and reappropriation of Indigenous women's knowledge from Guerrero, where their textile arts serve not to harm them, but rather to empower them epistemically and propel them forward in this new century.

Keywords: epistemology; violence; Indigenous; art; embroiderers

A Arte da costura, da fiação, do tecido e do bordado como convivência violenta?

Resumo

As teorias do conhecimento foram baseadas durante séculos em pontos de vista eurocêntricos e masculinos. Por isso, questiona-se o patriarcado, o racismo e o exercício da sexualidade, com o objetivo de demonstrar que os problemas de classe, o contexto socioeconômico, mas, sobretudo, o gênero, interferem na produção do conhecimento de forma unilateral. Tem sido evidente que as concepções dominantes e as práticas do conhecimento ignoram o direito de autoridade conceitual das mulheres Amuzgas (**Ñomndaa**), Mixtecas (Na savi), Tlapanecas (Me'phaa) e Nahuas, ao negar a validade acadêmica aos seus saberes e à maneira como concebem o mundo a partir de sua cosmovisão. A violência estrutural tem raízes na cultura e na forma como a sociedade é estruturada, fazendo com que, no cotidiano das fiadeiras, tecedeiras e bordadeiras de povos originários sofram violência cotidiana em diversas esferas. A globalização tem aprofundado as diferenças culturais, somando-se às de classe, gênero e condição racial, fazendo com que essas mulheres assumam a convivência-violenta como um "todo" natural, que remonta **à época pré-hispânica.** Embora a mulher indígena realize sua atividade produtiva na esfera privada, isso não desmerece seus saberes e labores artísticos, por isso busca-se o reconhecimento de seu valor epistêmico. A partir de uma perspectiva feminista pós-colonial, que considera a experiência sensorial como base do conhecimento por meio da observação e da experiência direta, introduzem-se elementos que contribuem para a reivindicação e a reapropriação dos saberes das mulheres indígenas de Guerrero, onde suas artes têxteis não as violentam, mas, epistemicamente, as empoderam e impulsionam neste novo século.

Palavras-chave: epistemologia; violência; indígenas; arte; bordadeiras

¿El arte de la costura, el hilado, el tejido y el bordado como convivencia violenta?

Resumen

Las teorías del conocimiento se han basado durante siglos en puntos de vista eurocéntricos y masculinos, por ello se cuestiona al patriarcado, al racismo, y al ejercicio de la sexualidad, para con ello probar que los problemas de clase, el contexto socioeconómico, pero sobre todo el género; intervienen en la producción de conocimiento en un solo sentido. Ha sido evidente, que las concepciones dominantes y las prácticas del conocimiento, omiten el derecho de autoridad conceptual de las mujeres Amuzgas (Ñomndaa), Mixtecas (Na savi), Tlapanecas (Me'phaa) y Nahuas, al negar validez académica a sus saberes y la manera en cómo conciben el mundo desde su cosmovisión. La violencia estructural tiene raíces en la cultura y en la forma en que se conforma socialmente, haciendo que en la cotidianidad de las hiladoras, tejedoras y bordadoras de pueblos originarios sean violentadas desde múltiples

esferas. La globalización, ha profundizado las diferencias culturales, sumándose a las de clase, género y condición racial, por lo que estas mujeres asumen la convivencia-violenta como un "todo" natural, que proviene desde la época prehispánica. Aunque la mujer indígena realiza su actividad productiva en la esfera privada, esto no demerita sus saberes y labores artísticas, por lo que se busca el reconocimiento de su valor epistémico. Desde una perspectiva feminista poscolonial, que considera la experiencia sensorial como base del conocimiento por medio de la observación y la experiencia directa, se introducen elementos que aportan a la reivindicación y la reapropiación de los saberes de las mujeres indígenas guerrerenses, donde sus artes textiles no las violenten, sino que, epistémicamente, las empodere e impulse en este nuevo siglo.

Palabras clave: epistemología; violencia; indígenas; arte; bordadoras

Introduction

According to Ferguson (1940), it is widely recognized that the loom "originated in the Middle East and China in antiquity with the purpose of producing silk" (p. 117); although other sources attribute its origin to the Egyptian people. The author Borrego Diaz (2003), based on the definition by E. Broudy, defines the loom as a device in which parallel threads, known as warp threads, are arranged, and these must be fastened at both ends to keep them taut. There are several types, with the most used in Latin America are backstrap looms, or mobile looms, and the fixed looms, which are spaced by the length of the blanket. In mobile looms, the warp is tied to two thin horizontal rods called *enjulios*. The upper part can be attached to a tree, a post, a column, or a hook, in such a way that it allows tensioning the work; while the lower part is fastened around the weaver's waist (Quiroz, 2012). On the other hand, the fixed loom is positioned either horizontally or vertically, being a solid structure like a parallelepiped shape that holds a central part that can move (Valero, 2021, p. 18)."

Magán Lampón (2016) argues, in his doctoral thesis titled "*Costura, de la reivindicación política a la creación poética*", that this original procedure in which the personal creativity of each plastic artist intervenes in sewing is important for the production of the works, understanding this procedure as a plastic resource that provides aesthetic experiences, having then that sewing works can be considered as unique artistic works. Sewing has ancient antecedents, Rodríguez Peinado (2003) mentions that there is evidence that long before Christ, linen and cotton were cultivated to carry out spinning processes that were converted into woven threads. In Mesoamerica, data on the use of looms date back to pre-Hispanic times; according to data from the National Museum of Anthropology and History, the designs are preserved by the cosmogony shared from generation to generation and can be considered works of art for their originality (Sanchez Santa Ana, 2019).

According to INEGI (2020), Guerrero is one of the states in Mexico that has experienced the least population variation throughout history. Settlements date back to pre-Hispanic times. Ethnicism, derived from territorial control, where indigenous communities are established, is deeply rooted in those local chieftains and landowners by "natural" inheritance of the land. Although the percentages of indigenous communities are measured by the type of language spoken, the inhabited territories are multiethnic: 35.60% speak Nahuatl (Nahua); 29.21% speak Mixtec (Tu'un Savi); 24.66% speak Tlapanec (Me'phaa); 9.60% speak Amuzgo (Ñoomnda); and 0.94% speak other languages."

Between the Costa Chica and the lower mountain region, bordering the highlands of the state, where the life story of the main actors, the Ndyob'a family, unfolds. In this area, the predominant population is Mixtec (*Na Savi*). San Luis Acatlán is a semi-urban region where municipal authorities and the main sources of income and employment for neighboring residents interrelate. Its communities bear a strong Mixtec influence, as they are located within the area known as the Mixteca Region. For this reason, landowners are generally Tu'un savi, or native Mixtecos, who hold greater influence in the area as well as larger extensions of land.

Within the communities, being of pure blood is highly appreciated, although this is merely a subjectivism, with descendants of indigenous people who tell their history through their manual work, farming, culinary traditions, and religious festivities.

The specialty of Tu'un Savi women, Mixtec women, is spinning on the loom, where they produce the fabrics for their dresses, huipiles, tablecloths, and napkins. They are considered to have a higher social rank due to those looms, although they are not modern machines, require a certain level of specialization to craft, and the spinning of fabrics such as cotton manta is considered a higher-paying job.

They also participate in decorating fabrics through stitch embroidery, or cross-stitch, with the characteristics of free embroidery of elements such as flowers and animals that are characteristic of the region. In contrast, the Amuzga women, who represent a smaller portion of the population in this southern area, are traditionally seen as the ones responsible for embellishing the fabrics with geometric designs. However, their status within the community is considered lower than that of the native women who specialize in loom weaving. They are often stereotyped as having less value due to their lower level of specialization in textile arts.
In this context, many weavers-embroiderers are not Mixtec, as their veins carry Amuzgo blood. They are also not originally from the place where they carry out their activities, as their condition has forced them to be immigrants, driven by the poverty conditions they have faced since birth. The condition of their parents, and later their own, leads their daughters to emigrate, something they consider an "unfortunate destiny", as argued by Itan de Güi Ndyob'a in a free interview held on March 30, 2015.

None of the members of this family have ever owned any property, and their levels of specialization are limited to embroidery, hand sewing, and household chores. This perpetuates the violence against indigenous women, which is closely related to the social violence that permeates society due to their condition of not being natives of the land they inhabit.

The structural violence of a society (Alteridad and García, 2012) comes from the social structure that emanates from culture, so this everyday violence has an impact on the daily life of indigenous women who are weavers and embroiderers. A stereotype is de facto generated, attributing the desire for affective work, such as taking care of the

household, lineage, or the collective in general, as part of women's nature. Thus, the constant exploitation of most women is "maliciously disguised" (Srnicek and Williams, 2017, p. 164).

In this research, the words of Celia Amorós (2012) have been substantially considered in relation to an alternative epistemology "because knowledge empowers us, because all power has to do with a genealogy, because to justify ourselves we need a genealogy, to narrate… Because to conceptualize is to politicize, it is to move from anecdote to category". This is primarily where the importance lies in recovering, from the experiences of indigenous women embroiderers, the significance that embroidery holds for them, what ties them to a heteronormative construction of gender, but which also gives them power through the creation of knowledge.

Feminist epistemology, argues Falconí (2022), is the diverse and alternative counterpart for creating, practicing, and generating knowledge with scientific validity. This epistemology considers how doctrines are understood and verified to be elevated as true knowledge, in a dynamic in which conceptions of knowledge are definitively influenced by gender. The dominant ideas as to who is attributed and how knowledge is acquired and how it is justified have been prejudiced against the knowledge of indigenous women, in this case Amuzgas (ñomndaa), Mixtecs (na savi), Tlapanecas (me'phaa) and Nahuas. The Western and Eurocentric posture in academia, at least in Mexico, has denied the epistemic authority of their ancestral knowledge, reducing it to popular knowledge or beliefs without depth.

Throughout history, theories about women have been produced and reproduced, considering often portraying them as flawed. An interesting approach to this epistemic denial is offered by Schongut Grollmus (2012), based on the proposals of Bourdieu, Demetriou, and Connell, analyzes the "socially constructed dominant masculine model." In this context, several postulates of diverse social manifestations have been produced and reproduced that do not include the activities or needs of Indigenous women, thereby exposing the unequal power dynamics among heteronormative genders (Guterres, 2020).

Embroidery and weaving are among the many traditionally female tasks that have been systematically excluded and relegated to the realm of superficial knowledge, turning a blind eye to the millennia-old symbolic knowledge embedded in the textile creations of indigenous women.

From a decolonial feminist perspective, Southern feminisms have gained strength: proposals such as community feminism in Bolivia emphasize the condition that women constitute half of every community (Paredes, 2017). In Argentina, El Salvador, Colombia, and Peru, the feelings and experiences of women from the Southern Cone are addressed through their experience as embroiderers, as part of the cultural resistance that is strongly pushing forward in this 21st century. In this sense, it is believed that common sense is being reclaimed, as "half of a whole cannot be excluded". Women in Guerrero, like South American women, have been detached from this whole called society (Boleaga, 2021).

It is the responsibility of the new generations of women researchers through proposals by Falconí (2022) or Chaparro (2021) to continue building to what Blázquez (2010) proposed, that is, to keep nurturing a feminist epistemology, where progress is not only cognitive but social, as substantial transformations have been made in all areas of the epistemic realm from a feminist perspective.

Methodology

Blázquez (2010) has mentioned that in a certain way science has been tailor-made, that is, sexist assumptions have been imposed in most concepts, theories or methodological approaches, since the socio-historical or political-cultural contexts in which all human activities are carried out have not been considered. There is a debate that, both in the exact sciences -or so-called hard sciences- and in the sciences focused on the humanities, epistemology has been based on a single universalized and androcentric point of view. Authors such as Comte or Durkheim provide the context of the elements that are considered "apt" to be analyzed and elevated to the category of scientific knowledge, so that the knowledge of minorities has not been seriously considered.

The hegemonic patriarchal system has discarded everything that implies femininity, half of this is excluded and systematically eliminated. Women around the world possess vast knowledge to contribute from multiple perspectives such as social and emotional phenomena like communal well-being, care for the family, rural areas, urban areas, and love for others. All of these are part of the complexity of social interactions that are in constant interaction (Asfora, 2015).

These seemingly visible or foreign traits should be attributed as fundamental aspects of how life itself is organized. Against the insensitivity of science, which has taken over knowledge throughout history, treating people as soulless, spiritless objects, the feminist epistemology and methodological approaches from qualitative perspectives emerge as a critique of how the social world has been observed without considering subjectivity, emotions, or the consciousness of each human being. The exalted scientific objectivity has been endlessly reproduced and, in many spheres, constitutes a means of patriarchal control. In this context, feminist epistemology provides a response toward a more complex and complete understanding of knowledge that was presumed to be universal, singular, and irrefutable (Blázquez, 2010).

Feminist epistemology has been addressing multiple gaps in human knowledge because looking at the world through the relationships among genders, diverse visions and perspectives, imaginaries, and theories are obtained, marking a difference from traditional paradigms.

In an initial research project that began in 2013 and concluded in 2015, a mixed methodology was considered to provide quantifiable elements but also qualitative case study approaches to analyze the historical, sociocultural context, as well as the relationship and perception of structural violence in the Cumiapense territory in a generalized way (Boleaga, 2016).

Building on this background, field experiences from the first stage were deepened, which led to the distinction, examination, recognition, and identification of the expressions, evidence, social impact, and mechanisms of denaturalization that the members of the Ndyob'a family adopted in response to gender violence as a form of social exclusion. For this analysis, a qualitative ethnographic methodology was chosen, utilizing instruments such as in-depth interviews, free interviews, sketch drawings, participant observation, daily logs, and qualitative data analysis, which allowed for the generation of life stories during the period from 2015 to 2019.

In this scenario, the present research proposes, in response of the findings, a deconstruction of qualitative methodological paradigms, starting from a proposal in which participant observation not only integrates the subject as an object of research but, from the diverse, analyzes the different intersections that complement the identity of the indigenous woman, with a methodology that self-manages and channels her own ways of generating knowledge (Martínez, 2021).

Starting Point and Endpoint

The starting point of this research was the inquiry into whether the art of sewing, spinning, weaving, and embroidery are carried out within a context of violent coexistence. Considering that women have held and continue to hold, as mentions Blázquez (2010), "multiple positions in the social structure, organized by socioeconomic class, ethnic origin, generation, and sexual orientation" (p. 30), all women can and should interpret reality both as it is and it could be.

The differences that determine human relationships and behaviors among people—such as the condition of being excluded, rejected, marginalized, unwanted, or disadvantages make it possible to analyze dominant culture through the patterns, principles, and norms imposed on society. In this way, difference becomes more significant than sameness itself, challenging the idea that being different is equivalent to being inferior.

Calvente (2017), from the perspective of David Hume's empiricist theory, argues that the best way to legitimize knowledge is through direct experience. Therefore, only women—through their experience, as Blázquez (2010) mentions, "either as a marginalized group or because they possess different ways of understanding" (p. 34)—can legitimize the knowledge they live, feel, and produce. From various perspectives, positions, or schools of thought, "feminist epistemology focuses, highlights, and suggests an authentic transformation in knowledge through the inclusion of a perspective that benefits women" (Blázquez, 2010, p. 38).

In the binary oppositions found in the community of Arroyo Cumiapa, such as man/woman, mestizo/indigenous, locals/migrants, weavers/embroiderers, superiority has been attributed to the former, while the opposites are described as weak. However, it should be clarified that both terms can be complementary. As Joan W. Scott and Marta Lamas (1992) point out, "the alternative to the binary construction of sexual difference is not equality, identity, or androgyny" (p. 104).

It is not about losing the specificity of the variety of female experiences and women's lives, that is, it is not an option to return to the time when the history of the "male gender" was defined as the history of all humanity, because the female gender was "forgotten by history, when the feminine acted as a negative contrast—being the Other" (Scott and Lamas, 1992).

It is in favor of constructing a more complex diversity that allows for different expressions, different purposes and contexts. Therefore, the ancestral traditions of indigenous women, through their productive tasks, are a perfect example of the difference that contributes to the integration of a better society. In such a society, women, men, young people, and the elderly can

express themselves in a way that builds us as human beings, without limitations, for the benefit of new generations.

In embroidery, now largely forgotten, there may be the thread that is needed to integrate the full knowledge of humanity. Along these line, this research aimed to contribute to the reclamation and reappropriation of the knowledge held by Indigenous women of Guerrero, so that their textile arts do not serve as instruments of violence but instead become epistemic tools of empowerment and progress in this new century.

Arguments

Through fieldwork carried out in case studies and life histories, it was found that the textile arts of the Mixtec, Amuzgo, and Nahua communities settled in San Luis Acatlán have deep-rooted traditions. Among these arts, the hand-embroidered *huipiles* are the most visually striking and representative of each community. These *huipiles* come in a variety of designs and colors, with round or square necklines, made from white cloth or natural cotton fabric. They display a variety of representations, and the combination of thread colors represents different motifs. The stepped fretwork, geometric patterns, and depictions of local vegetation and animals are part of the artistic expressions rendered through textiles used to adorn their bodies, homes, ceremonies, and religious festivities, creating a bridge between the earthly and the mystical.

In this context, the roles of each member are presumed: men are dedicated to the commercial world in the public sphere, while women are idealized in the private sphere as guardians of the home. Thus, embroidery becomes a reflection of the innate tasks of women in protecting household goods (Malagón, 2021).

The differences may be imperceptible; however, each ethnicity has specific characteristics in its *huipil* embroidery technique. Embroidery is therefore considered, as Magán (2016) quotes Floriano Cumbreño (2015), "a sewing technique in which adornment is created using different types of stitches" (p. 36) and "any needlework in which decoration is added to a fabric or material that allows penetration" (p. 16).

There are two types of embroidery: typical and popular. In the typical *na savi* (Mixtec) embroidery, the characteristic weaving that represents animals and flowers is appreciated. In the life history collected, the main participant, Itan de Güi (2017), mentioned that her designs were created with freer and more open strokes, "as if based on feeling." In the typical *ñomndaa* (Amuzgo) napkins, A. Pedro (2021) notes that one can see the distinctive colors and fabrics, as their characteristics allude to fretwork, diamonds, and flowers.[1]

Quiroz Ruiz (2012) states:

> Spinning, weaving, and embroidery have been considered as essentially feminine tasks, in which creation, history, and life are represented, conceived as multiplication or reproduction from a thread. The thread, the fabric, the embroidery, and the tools used to create them are symbols that indefinitely open and close the original cycles of a community", a magical blend connected to religious beliefs, cosmogonies, foundation myths, creation myths, among others. (p. 16)

This naturalized feminization of embroidery work is said to be exclusive to women. However, this perception can be reconsidered through Claude Lévi-Strauss's hypothesis that woman, in all respects, is an example of nature. Therefore, their generic appropriation with embroidery is more a cultural construction of gender, as a social object, than truly as a naturalized or imprinted act in individuals from birth. The gendered association with embroidery is more a cultural construction of gender, as a social object, than a truly naturalized act or something inherent from birth. In the words of Celia Amorós (Amorós, 1991): "society itself has formed and structured its internal divisions in such a way that one social group is destined to occupy a specific space" (p. 31).

In this sense, the construction of gender has multiple vehicles; among them, embroidery can be considered a daily activity of Indigenous women, not only as a "duty to be," but also as a "true self" as it forms part of a communal identity that goes beyond the individual. This identity becomes embedded in the collective imagination of the communities as inherently feminine.

While the activity is indeed part of this construction, the "place each person occupies" that defines this identity, granting hierarchy and social power to those associated with so-called useful tasks, and stripping power from those

1 Free interviews recorded in WMA format, June 19, 2015, and July 20, 2020.

deemed trivial, to paraphrase Parker (1996). All that relates to economic remuneration and professional work belongs to the public sphere, traditionally assigned to the masculine domain. In contrast, activities tied to delight, joy, rest, leisure, or recreation are situated within the private sphere and associated with the feminine domain, even though women are also responsible for producing household sustenance, preparing offerings, participating in communal labor (tequio), making family clothing, and crafting festive garments for dancers, among others.

Therefore, it is established de facto with the induced adjective of "public" or "private". The devaluation of women's knowledge and chores, despite their role that they give identity to a community, are marginalized in the anonymity of the superfluous, the insignificant, the disposable, the other, thus establishing the oppressive division of labor developed by a heteronormative and paternalistic society, a system imposed by endogenous factors of colonization and acculturation.

There are various causal scenarios that explain why Indigenous women start out on the embroidery path**.** Some are compelled to take up this work because it is imposed by a father, husband, grandmother, or mother. Others do it for the pleasure of engaging in a manual and creative activity. Still others, removing all romanticism, embroiders engage in this activity for economic remuneration, aiming to achieve parity with men in relation to the public sphere.

However, there is another scenario that relates to sense of belonging to a territory or a collective, many of them consider this task, "which is learned and performed from generation to generation", as part of a peculiar identity that defines them as a people and native nation in the state of Guerrero, since the weaving and embroidery are designed from a particular worldview, a practice that adheres them to a territory, to a whole of which they are part. In effect, with these so-called "feminized" practices, community identity is sustained, as a counterpart to what is assumed through hegemonic epistemology, which is established in the collective mind of most societies. Rousseau proposed, in *Emile, or On Education*, an educational model for the male child based on natural laws, with the intention of forming sovereign and independent individuals who could be autonomous in the social framework. This author considered that society that corrupted the nature of human beings (Rousseau, 1762).

Excluding the female population from this ideal, since he considers that the preparation or education of women is developed on a superfluous level, which is exclusively oriented to satisfy the needs of men, describing the female sex as virtuous in "the tasks proper to their sex". Rousseau himself, in his previously mentioned work, considered that the manual activities of beautification or care were natural qualities of women, which references have contributed to the persistence of inequality and marginalization for centuries.

On the other hand, Wollstonecraf (1790) pointed out this incorrect naturalistic vision of what it meant to be a woman, from her own perspective, setting aside the partial visions of what it was to be a woman in her time and her capabilities as an expert in the manual arts. Social representations, in which the gender roles of subjects are self-confirmed, produce individual identities on the outside that are easily recognized in communities, but also occur towards their inner self (Cantoral, 2013).

The versions of the practices of the embroiderers of Arroyo Cumiapa in San Luis Acatlán (Guerrero, Mexico) show us how these diverse stories about their activity emerge and develop, while the western feminist perspective does not consider the diverse socio-cultural references. Perhaps this is why many of them are currently divided between being women and belonging to an ethnic group.

According to Segato (2003), it is in the female body and its control by the community that ethnic groups inscribe their mark of cohesion (p. 140), while the Western patriarchal construction of gender suggests that women should be employed and entertained in tasks that require attention to detail to avoid falling into licentiousness.

These sewing techniques, in the popular sphere, have historically been associated with the neatness and diligence traditionally attributed to femininity. In Latin America, textile activities such as sewing, spinning and indigenous embroidery, go beyond a popular pastime; in other words, they are practices that carry a distinctive cultural imprint generating of indigenous communities, fostering pride and a sense of belonging.

While it is true that, for westerners, embroidery is seen as a fundamental part of identity and a key point in women's lives (Parker, 1996). For Indigenous nations, apart from being essential, it provides historical content, since each garment is transmitted through stories and practical

teachings from generation to generation. Thus, preserving cultural traditions, accumulated knowledge, and ancestral wisdom, considered tangible and intangible historical and cultural heritage.

These textiles, considered as folk art, have mythical and symbolic values that come from the socio-territorial identity of each community, such as the territory rich in flora and fauna. Thus, each region and ethnicity have distinct aesthetic visions with styles defined by their own tradition.

Embroidery and spinning are a form of primary art, recorded as part of history. Garments allow us to learn about their technology and their unique worldview, as they converge a symbolic style that is intimately related to nature, which can be appreciated through various types of textures, colors or wefts. Quiroz Ruiz (2012) mentions that "these can be understood as a codex, a language that refers to what is around, of nature, of life, of the emotions and longings of the women who thought and generated them" (p. 15).

In Indigenous communities there is absolute respect for the clothing worn, as it carries specific meanings that, according to the customs and traditions of these communities, are inalienable values stemming from their particular and unique way of being. The women embroiderers of Arroyo Cumiapa

have specific designs featuring geometric patterns and free-form elements. Quiroz (2012) points out:

> The geometric patterns symbolize the ascent to the sky and the metamorphosis of the wind, as well as day and night, or life and death, symbols that form a cycle that ends but begins again. Therefore, in the embroidery, the sky is depicted as a horizontal tricolor band: yellow, red, and blue. (pp. 28-29)

The Amuzga-Mixtec embroiderers of Arroyo Cumiapa, in open conversations, reinforced this statement, although they have differed in the creation of the sky element, since the colors they use are chosen based on the season they wish to represent in their tablecloths, napkins, and *huipiles*, which narrate the history of their people and community through stitches, loops, drawn thread work, weaving, and embroidery.

Rodríguez (1995) asserts that "for human beings, the sky is unfathomable, its altitude has no limits, and its constant presence has influenced human thought, creating the idea of the unattainable" (p. 302).

In various regions, a common design is used. For example, Carrasco (2001) argues that "in general, Triqui and Mixtec communities design horizontal stripes with geometric figures on their *huipiles*" (p. 232). However, there are also free forms extracted from nature, including flora, fauna, or human figures. These come from ancestral knowledge and daily observation by the community, resulting in representations that may be free-form, conventional, or more natural.

Momprade (1976) states that "communities near the coastal area represent in their embroideries or textiles elements of the marine flora and fauna, but also the terrestrial one that surrounds them in an expert and subtle way" (p. 251), so that, to know the origin of the garments, it is necessary to observe the design and analyze the techniques with which they were elaborated and the ancestral knowledge of these indigenous communities.

In the construction of an epistemic system of the arts of the native nations, some interesting observations are distinguished in this respect, so it is necessary to consider that these Mesoamerican arts exist within a context of cultural resistance and language preservation. These arts are a type of specific composition distinct from common expression. Thus, the indigenous arts acquire dimensions that will be manifested, in different ways, such as in clothing, storytelling, theater, plastic arts, pictorial textiles, textiles, music, glyphs, petroglyphs and ideograms, among other expressions, in which nature, cosmovision, belief system are manifested in a persistent way, with the aim of preserving and recreating ancestral knowledge.

The art of composition in these nations reflects the transformations that took place during the pre-Hispanic tribute, the viceroyalty and independent Mexico, under the persistence of the pre-Columbian religious and artistic world.

Hence, in the Mesoamerican region, the composition of chants, prayers, healings, supplications, incantations, pictograms, and looms, among others are based on formulas, mental structures, ceremonies, festivities and diverse intonations that will be the basis of the dispersed compositions, amalgamated or in spectrum. In such a way that the times, tones and glottal closings will be highlighted, while these characteristics will be manifested in different ways in the artistic expressions of the original nations, but with a very strong tendency to prevail (Montemayor, 1999).

In the manifest narratives, not only linguistically, unequal and ambiguous elements are established in conversation and different stylistic developments, which have importance for the artistic communities of those nations, based on values and formal uses applied in the techniques of their various elaborations.

The historical-geographical method applied, in this direction, now requires classification criteria that contribute to the distinction of diverse cultural sources, but from a perspective of combinatorial artistic composition, ensuring their description, identification and comparison for analysis and connection with different cultural sources, whether they are African, European or Prehispanic.

The belief systems of the indigenous nations have a fundamental relationship with the mythical history and the real history, hence the artistic creation is a very important bond between them, manifesting itself in various artistic expressions, whether plastic, pictographic, petroglyphs, pictoral textiles, looms, clothing, ritual ornamentations of various types, festivities, musical expressions, or any other type.

The relevant classification for identification, comparison, analysis and its connection with diverse cultural sources, is presented in an important way in tales, stories,

cosmogonies, supernatural entities, prodigies, foundations, nature of animals and plants, witchcraft, nahuales, etc., and they are represented with figures, colors and events, among others, both verbally and with diverse techniques and materials.

In the cosmogonic pictorial, the rituals about the origin of life or the foundation of human sustenance are staged. Sometimes they are not only characters but episodes, such as the child wrapped in a corn husk, suckled by a corn cob, and then raised by a turtle and an *acamaya* (a type of freshwater shrimp); he can be a hero like his father who was a musician as usual -that is, ceremonial-, from there the child resurrects his father who becomes a deer and sacrifices him, arrowing him; this hero is the sentinel of heaven and will function as an entity superior to those of rain and lightning. All this is represented in Mesoamerican pre-Hispanic stories and frescoes, is also expressed in some embroideries.

Other expressions can be episodes that reaffirm the attributes of the confronted entities. In the process, they personify *peyote*, *toloache* or hallucinogenic mushrooms, highlighting the mutations of the character into one or several animals, including the birth of the wind, in which reptiles and arrows are important symbolic elements.

The sun and the moon, as a creation that is reproduced through myths, appears bonded to the creation of human beings, language, songs and music, while the origin of languages are tied to the death of the lunar coyote creator.

Invisible entities

Christian superimposition operates when the entity is Indigenous, in other words, guardian lord of the mountain. But when the landowner who exploits Indigenous laborers over long harvest seasons appears, he is associated with the figure of the devil, spreading fear throughout the communities. The entities related to rain, thunder, and lightning are inseparable from the celestial serpents.

Flora and fauna

Here appears the dove, the squirrel, the birds, the bat, the vulture, the peyote, the swallow, the wind tree, the toloache, the cannabis, the flowers, the leaves, and fruits. So, the complex system emerges between vigor and weakness, existence and death, the balance between the visible and the invisible world. Horses and bulls also appear as part of the process of colonization and acculturation of the original nations.

Animals are also bonded to the creation of the world, of celestial bodies, rivers, even, as Chan Chuc (2022) proposes, of elements such as corn, which are part of the rites that are essential for the conservation of subway waters and springs, and which appear in hunting events and in the cults of opiate plants. For example, the rabbit appears as a relevant entity in the fertility of crops: this animal is crafty, perverse and victorious, from victim it becomes executioner. The jaguar also acquires cosmic relevance (Dehouve, 2002).

Tlamantines, shamans, healers and sorcerers

In this area, the belief prevails that human beings have from birth their Tona, an animal that lasts and accompanies and protects them throughout their lives, then

opens a wide range of animals bonded to these processes; while the healers enter as entities with supernatural powers, *nahuales*, who can transform themselves, only at night, into some kind of animal or monster, understood as the mutation of several animals into one at a time, besides having the ability to move great distances and perform undertakings impossible for ordinary human beings, an issue that may not be exclusive to the Mesoamerican region (Montemayor, 1999).

In the case of grandmothers, they are essential in Mesoamerican art, and are supported by tales, legends, stories, and writings such as the Popol Vuh (Anonymous, n.d.). Their role is fundamental, since they define the destiny of the communities and clarify the conjunctural circumstances they may be going through and the possible paths to follow, with the ultimate goal of protecting and keeping alive the indigenous nations.

Since part of what embroidery is, and its design has been exposed, it can be asserted that, although gender is a broad category, it is not enough to encompass what embroidery and weaving is for these women and their communities. What truly imprints a characteristic stamp on their embroidery style oscillates between class, ethnicity, religious and cosmogonic beliefs, spinning techniques, historical memory and the cultural heritage of their ancestors through oral tradition and customary practices.

This is why intersectionality takes on an extremely important value, as they have diverse histories and different gender positions (Viveros Vigoya, 2016). Feminisms, in Arroyo Cumiapa, have specific, personalized categories, as women belonging to a nation and language, whether Amuzga (ñomndaa), Mixtec (na savi), Tlapaneca (me'phaa) or Nahua.

It is through this identity that embroideries form part of a very particular experience. These intersectional perspectives are not a new category; Olimpia De Gouges had already made an analogy between colonial domination and patriarchal domination by establishing parallels between women and slaves (De Gouges, 1791).

The postcolonial Latin American context has pointed to this intersectionality, in which ethnic, racial and gender conditions generate diverse abuses against indigenous women. So, this principle of feminism that the "personal is political", not only entails the concepts of sex, race, class

and gender, but the experiences of women with their particularities must also be considered (Viveros, 2016).

There is no homogeneity in Latin American feminisms; to achieve the emancipation of women and their indigenous communities, the questioning of patriarchy, racism, sexuality, postcolonial contexts and class issues must be explored. In addition, the socio-economic context that affects these communities has also taken its toll on their daily lives and their way of embroidering.

In this 21st century, globalization, according to Gray (2000), "deepens and explores cultural variations" and has been accompanied by incessant advertising bombardment. On the other hand, Ianni (1996) points out that borders have dissolved as the market has become more agile and indiscriminate consumerism has become generalized, so that, according to Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2002), new dimensions are presented in the lives of these women through communication channels, such as the platforms of digital social media that create unattainable expectations, turning them into latent frustrations.

For the Amuzga (ñomndaa), Mixtec (na savi), Tlapaneca (me'phaa) or Nahua embroiderers, in the Costa Montaña region of Guerrero, particularly in Arroyo Cumiapa. Globalization has, in many aspects, devastated their traditional way of life. The materials they use for weaving and embroidery have transitioned from natural cotton fiber to the threads purchased at convenience stores in the municipal center of San Luis Acatlán, where synthetic or artificial fibers are now sold.

Globalization has brought a decrease in the value of female labor skills, in a context in which women's lack of access to the digital age and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) prevails, which aggravates women's circumstances due to their gender identity, social class and ethnicity, perpetuating the feminization of poverty (Valdivieso and Girón, 2009).

Morin (2011) points out that, starting in the 20th century, the paths of progress and development followed dichotomous directions: on the one hand, rationality prevailed, but was plagued by social and political upheavals that resulted in bloody wars costly for humanity; subsequently, with the globalizing economic system, a predatory order emerged in which ethical values such as cooperation or solidarity were exterminated and in which failure as individuals translates into poverty.

In the 21st century, people who are sick, poor, indigenous communities, and in conditions of extreme poverty are symbols of individual failure and weakness, as they do not demonstrate aptitudes for subsistence in a society oriented to economic success (Rodriguez, 2004).

The fight against poverty has been a key item on the global agenda, however, other perspectives, such as those of Sachs (2008), warn that on an overpopulated planet, extreme deprivation is a shared fate, as a large portion of the world's population remains trapped in conditions of poverty.

Thus, globalization is a vicious circle, in which the benefits it generates are not fairly distributed among all the social groups that make up the planet (Gutiérrez, 2002); in this sense, Gray (2000) points out that this imposed globalization causes gaps that are difficult to close, as inequalities in terms of well-being, education and citizen protection remain vast.

Inequalities are, and will probably, continue to deeply be marked, in a context where the State has failed to implement public policies that contribute to the free development of Indigenous women. As a result, their tools for succeeding in a competitive world are often displaced.

Conclusions

The most striking evidence of violence against Indigenous women, as a form of social exclusion, which affects the lack of original creations in their textile arts, includes limited opportunities to own movable and immovable property, the absence of educational opportunities that relegate them to low educational levels, the lack of quality healthcare services, making them prone to maternal and infant mortality, obstetric violence, and forced displacements that do not contribute to their growth. On the contrary, these displacements make them uncomfortable inhabitants within host communities.

However, it is not only this type of violent coexistence that they face. From a decolonial perspective, it can be asserted that, from their origins, Indigenous women have definitely been exploited and violated, depending on their position within the social structure and historical period—though there were other periods and sociopolitical and economic-military structures, such as matriarchy, in which women's status was higher. The fact that their textile arts,

for generations, have been undervalued is a sign of a prevalent social valuation of the women who make them.

The various ways of being a woman in Indigenous communities are defined by the specific constructions of gender that exist in each community to which they belong. However, it is undeniable that globalization has also had a significant influence on their lives. Indigenous women have been confined to areas lacking infrastructure and opportunities, which is why their textile arts, which once a source of pride and belonging, have become commodity in a globalized world (Boleaga, 2021).

In this context, Indigenous women have been invisible, as access to realms such as the global technological market is virtually impossible for them. Today, this situation disproportionately affects women. The rise of xenophobia, racism, and discrimination keeps Amuzga-Mixtec women from equitable development that could enhance their spinning, weaving, and embroidery. Furthermore, it hinders their direct entry into the global sphere, forcing them to depend on intermediaries who extract and exploit their textile arts.

Discrimination and exclusion, which manifest in the territorial and economic realms, have deeply affected their knowledge systems, as the artistic extraction of their designs has become a common practice for automated manufacturing companies that hold greater value in international markets. The online technology that replaces these women is more profitable due to the speed with which garments for personal, domestic, and ritual adornment are produced.

The opportunities in this technological revolution — which only benefits the elites — are scarce for Indigenous textile artists, pushing them toward an uncertain future.

Amuzga-Mixtec embroiderers remain in a constant struggle for the visibility of their textile arts. Although technological elements do not favor them, it is of utmost importance to recognize and reclaim their knowledge as unique art, and not as a simple craft, thereby empowering themselves from their communities.

Gender-based violence, invisibility, and the ethnocide of their knowledge as textile artists are elements that have marked them for generations. In this sense, the work of spinning, weaving, and embroidery continues to be part of a social coexistence that continues to violate them.

The spun, woven and embroidered stories that should contribute to feminist epistemology continue to be silenced by the mass marketing machine. Economic necessity forces them into forced displacements in which their textile arts are elaborated in a depersonalized context. Through the systematic exclusion of their manual arts, a violent cycle is then perpetuated in which class, ethnicity and their knowledge, as embroiderers, place them on the lowest rung of the social fabric of the host communities.

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