


And the Word Became Indigenous... Indigenous Christian Theology Today

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Abstract: Among the strong criticisms made to the Catholic Church is the ideological and religious imposition over centuries on the native peoples, which, as a consequence, undermines their culture, worldview and religiosity. During the second half of the 20th century, some Catholic sectors changed their perspective and began to understand indigenous peoples' religious diversity and defend these values and cultural traits. Despite the opposition among the most conservative sectors of the Church, this movement is still in force; it is called Indigenous Christian Theology (ICT). It is essential to discuss and analyze the origin and current relevance of ICT so we understand this topic. Consequently, based on a recent literature review which is complemented by one example of religiosity of indigenous Chuj people in Chiapas, Mexico, this paper explores the emergence of ICT, demonstrates ICT as a pastoral care movement that recognizes indigenous identity through dialogue, respect for religious diversity, and the assertion of the right to non-discrimination. As a result, we try to present a broader perspective of current ICT as a movement that empowers

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ethnic identity and indigenous religious expression, that allows indigenous religiosity and Christianity to coexist in parallel and, therefore, promotes interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: Indigenous pastoral care, Indigenous Catholic theology, Indigenous worldview, ethnic identity, native religiosity

Introduction

During an interview, Francisco Reyes Ochoa, the general vicar of the Archdiocese of Antequera-Oaxaca, affirmed that indigenous pastoral care (IPC) has not vanished from the Mexican Catholic Church.³ He stated that it is a fundamental part of the Church's mission to promote the identity and rights of indigenous communities. The Catholic Church aims to raise awareness and promote the integral development of these communities (Vélez 2018). In the past, though, Catholicism did not acknowledge other forms of indigenous religion and identity. However, due to the influence of secular liberal policies in Latin American countries and the current supranational normative frameworks based on human rights that propose pluricultural policies, Catholicism has had to adapt and change. Thus, IPC has long been a movement based on other movements with a common goal: the liberation of people living in disadvantaged situations either because of a highly stratified social structure, a racist ideological base, or a global scenario with a "modern" economic and political dynamic that increases the gap of social inequality (Bourguignon 2017). However, what stands out in IPC, besides this common goal with other movements, is the recognition of cultural diversity and the valuing of different worldviews and ways of thinking, and not just contemplating widespread inequality and injustice.

In the 1970s, IPC emerged in Latin America during the Cold War, opposing colonial domination and oppression. The Latin American Episcopal Conferences organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano y Caribeño*; hereinafter, CELAM) discussed this in 1968, 1979, and 1992. In this context, not only did Liberation Theology emerge, but Indigenous Theology (IT)⁴ did as well. Eleazar López when interviewed by Liliana Villegas defines IT as "the rich religious wisdom — the result of millennia of searching for divine and spiritual realities — of the indigenous peoples of the continent now called America" (Villegas 2023, 7; our translation). Although there are conflicting

³ The focus of this article is on the Catholic Church, without denying that IP and indigenous theologies are also present in the pastoral care of other Christian Churches.

⁴ The initialism IT will be used to refer to indigenous theology, a term that, though phrased in the singular, refers to a range or grouping of different variations or applications of indigenous theologies. It is important to say that IT is a general term that encompasses different types of IT. In this article we focus on Indigenous Christian Theology (ICT) and Indigenous-Indigenous Theologies (IIT). Further, we will use the initialisms ICT and IIT.

views within the Catholic Church regarding the acknowledgement of cultural and religious diversity, IT has significantly impacted Latin America. This is due to its proximity to indigenous communities, its commitment to fighting against their oppression, and its recognition of the need for pastoral dialogue and reconciliation with these communities. IT acknowledges and respects their cultural characteristics, social practices, and religious beliefs.

Recent literature on the subject is increasingly scarce. However, pastoral praxis manifests the relevance of this subject, such as the adversity towards the indigenous peoples and the interest in recognizing an indigenous worldview and religiosity. It is, therefore, vital to generally reconsider the role of IT and the Catholic Church and thereby, more specifically, to discuss and analyze the origin and current relevance of IT.

Consequently, based on a literature review which is complemented by testimonies from conversations held in 2021 with indigenous Chuj people in Chiapas, this paper explores the emergence of IT. The article demonstrates IT as a movement that recognizes indigenous identity through dialogue, respect for religious diversity, and the assertion of the right to non-discrimination. The conclusion is that now, after over four decades, one can have a broader perspective of IT as a movement that empowers ethnic identity and indigenous religious expression, that allows indigenous spirituality and Christianity to coexist parallelly, and therefore that promotes interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Origin and evolution of Indigenous Theology (IT)

To understand how IT arose, one must consider Latin American social, political, and economic context in a turbulent era such as the 60s and 70s. Hajduk explains that IT originated not only in indigenous peoples' resistance to external pressures and their struggle to preserve their historical identity, but also in the "dynamism generated by the Second Vatican Council towards inculturated evangelization and dialogue with other religions" (Hajduk 2023, 143). IT, thus, is not a folkloric expression of Christianity based on indigenous cultural traits, but rather a theological current and a resistance movement that emerged within the context of liberation theology. It is also the result of an ecclesiastical reform intended to relax the rigidity of its canons and promote dialogue with religious diversity.

This scenario of liberation theology involves critical reflection and practice among Christians who belong to marginalized communities, as well as theologians who are committed to the "liberation" of these communities and "who make use of the instruments of knowledge of the reality of the social sciences as discerned by the tradition of the Church" (Costadoat 2021, 10; our translation). This marks a criticism derived from the social consequences of modernity, which, above all, affects native

peoples and leads to "exclusion as perpetuated by the majorities from the goods of modern progress" (Sánchez 2007, 52; our translation).

Until a few decades ago, native peoples were often ignored and excluded, even considered as "minors" who were incapable of conducting productive lives without the assistance or guidance of governmental, non-governmental or Catholic Church authority (Tomichá 2013). In the last two decades of the 20th century, however, native peoples have gained more recognition and prominence in Latin America. A critical movement with important bases in liberation theology, as is the case of IT, is understood as a pastoral practice and a committed militant theology that is no stranger to local and global conjunctures that sustain relations of oppression and exclusion but focus on native peoples. Being so, IT obeys a political and social discourse as well as praxis to recognize the cultural and religious diversity transforming Catholic theology and its pastoral care activity (Merino 2010).

Since the end of the 20th century, the concern for recognizing ethnic and identity diversity and guaranteeing cultural rights, among others, has gained more and more strength. For the Catholic Church, there has also been a concern for the recognition of a world that is not homogeneous, and through the IPC and the Indigenous Christian Theology, the Church aims to concretize this view in a praxis that not only fights for the liberation of the indigenous population from these oppressive relationships but also works to discern the indigenous worldview and religiosity. Along these lines, when Hajduk (2023) refers to the Second Vatican Council (VC II), which took place between 1962 and 1965, as a starting point for IT, this ecclesiastical reform meant opening up to other forms of cultural expression. In the 1970s, Marzal (1973) and Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972) emphasized that the central message of VC II is that the Church should not impose a strict uniformity in doctrine and pastoral care action, as well as ecclesiastical praxis in general, but respect the genius and wisdom of diverse native peoples, as long as it does not affect the faith or the good of the community.

Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972) starts from the idea that the Gospel and evangelization were not isolated factors but part of a defined cultural context and that the missionary becomes an agent of change who transmits a culture (that of the Christian message). The problem is that what is different from that culture is denied (e.g. a creed). As Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972) further argues, the origins and development of the Christian message over the centuries are interconnected with the cultural traits of the missionary. Therefore, evangelization is not separate from the socio-cultural characteristics of the evangelizing process; on the contrary, it can displace the cultural traits, thoughts, and religiosity of the people being evangelized. The problem, according to Reichel-Dolmatoff, is the ethnocentrism that underlies this pastoral and evangelizing practice (1972). Consequently, under the guise of spreading the Word of God, ethnocentrism can destroy other cultural forms of worldview and religiosity. Both Marzal (1973) and Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972) are highly critical of a liberating pastoral praxis that does not recognize specific cultural traits, speaking only of attending to "the poor" while

not recognizing their identity traits. These criteria, shared by many social scientists in the 20th century, VC II, and the foundations of liberation theology are the prelude to a pastoral approach that dialogues with cultures. However, Pablo Suess emphasized that this dialogue should not be "conditioned to cultural uniformity or folkloric adaptations" (Suess 1993, 160; our translation), but aimed to create a Church that is no longer foreign to non-Western cultures and is more grounded in reality. Thus, since incarnation is the purpose of salvation and the Word became incarnate, the Church should become incarnated and engage in dialogue to propose rather than impose pastoral care action.

Since the 1960s, the image of indigenous people has become more defined, thanks to the creation of the Department of Missions of CELAM, which organized several pastoral meetings for indigenous peoples. During the meetings of Ambato in 1967 and Melgar in 1968, indigenous peoples' cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity was appreciated. One of the most notable of these CELAM meetings was in Medellín in 1968. This meeting laid the foundation for part of the liberation theology and recognized the Church's presence among indigenous peoples. However, despite this recognition, the Church still considers indigenous peoples as poor and subjects of evangelization, with a negative view of their cultures, ways of thinking, and religiosity. This is why the IPC meeting in Melgar was particularly revealing, as it resisted the evangelizing practice as ethnocidal and highlighted the Church's negative impact on indigenous peoples (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972). Eleven years later, during the third CELAM meeting held in Puebla in 1979, there was a shift in perspective towards the native peoples. Instead of being viewed as the "poorest of the poor," their cultural values were recognized, and the need to respect and understand them was emphasized. This marks the emergence of IT and a greater appreciation for indigenous communities' unique perspectives and contributions (Tomichá 2013).

Thereafter, during the fourth CELAM meeting in Santo Domingo in 1992, the recognition of indigenous wisdom stood out. One can read, nevertheless, the Church's fear of IT in some of its speeches, as in the fifth CELAM meeting in Aparecida in 2007. In its concluding document of the 2007 meeting, CELAM invites the evangelized indigenous peoples to collaborate in preventing any indigenous individuals from renouncing their Christian faith. Richard (2007) explains that there is a fear to IT "that seeks creatively and coherently to strengthen the evangelizing work of indigenous peoples, carried out by the indigenous people themselves" (18; our translation).

Richard (2007) also highlights the speech of Pope Benedict XVI, who recognized the wisdom of the original peoples who achieved a synthesis between the Christian faith and their cultural traits (popular religiosity). Nevertheless, he warns that the "utopia of giving life again to pre-Columbian religions, separating them from Christ and the universal Church, would not be progress, but a step backward" because "in reality, it would be an involution towards a historical moment anchored in the past"

(V CELAM 2007, 9; our translation). This past perspective or position is still held by one part of the Catholic Church which continues to promote the discourse of the native peoples as 'minors,' who are subjects of evangelization, and who do not have sufficient conditions to be subjects of their own history and to practice their religion, be it Christian or some other creed. Another part of the Catholic Church, however, supports IT as a resistance movement based on liberation theology and upholds the impact of the ecclesiastical reform of VC II, which centers its origin on a theological, political, and socioeconomic reflection of the unequal world in which native peoples survive. The sectors of Catholicism that value and promote indigenous forms of religious expression are, in general, pastoral agents, priests, and clergy members who have more significant contact with the native peoples when working in situ. For them, IT has a method similar to that of liberation theology, called *see-judge-act* (Valtierra-Zamudio and López-Gopar 2024; Orozco and Orozco 2015). This method has a series of steps that begin with praying while exposing some problems experienced among the community members (*see*). Afterward, the community members reflect on how Jesus Christ would act in an adverse situation similar to the one they have expressed, that is, how to respond to the problem (*judge*). Finally, the community members plan and organize to solve the problem (*act*). However, this method in IT has a special characteristic: being close with the indigenous communities.

Costadoat (2021) explains that this method, which follows the three steps of *see*, *judge*, and *act* and which is based on critical reflection and IT praxis, privileges the theological work of the communities since "it is these that do theology [although] professional theologians collaborate with the communities, always at the risk of betraying them with conceptualizations that are far from their reality" (Costadoat 2023, 14; our translation). As previously explained, IT emerged in this context of oppression; it is important to point out that we have described an IT from the view of the Catholic Church, that is, an Indigenous Christian Theology (ICT). Although it entails a proposal for dialogue, defense, and recognition of indigenous peoples, it must still be done from the Westernized and spiritual perspective of the Church. On the other hand, there are other forms of religious expression that are not Christian and should also be recognized. This is the case of the so-called Indigenous-Indigenous Theologies (IIT). In the following we will develop the theme based on the example of Chuj religiosity.

Indigenous-Indigenous Theologies (IIT): The other face of the Indigenous Church

As stated before, the ITs are a critical movement and promoter of interreligious dialogue in a pluricultural context. In the 1970s, Marzal alluded to the need to create an indigenous Church through which the incarnation of the Gospel was put into

practice in the cultures of the original peoples (1973). He argued that an indigenous Church was mandatory to make Christian pastoral care faithful to the indigenous cultural roots for their survival. Nevertheless, this would imply accepting the current indigenous religious forms since this is how they communicate with the divinity. These indigenous religious forms are those practiced among the 826 native peoples in Latin America. Although not all of these peoples practice their religion, and Christianity is deeply rooted in their religiosity, many religious practices are linked to their (natural) environment, customs, and community perspectives while maintaining some or many Christian traits.

There are cases in which some indigenous peoples have resisted Western Christian forms. Although they may present some Christian traits in their religious practice, they do not accept Christianity as part of them. This is exemplified by Mayan spirituality, a movement of some Mayans to reclaim their Mayan identity and "recover" their Mayan religiosity, while resisting the imposed Christianity (Esquit 2004). There are also many cases in which Christianity is the religion the indigenous communities profess. However, in parallel and sometimes intertwined, these same communities carry out practices that symbolically express a series of beliefs that come to be respected by Christianity and are part of their cosmovision and spirituality.

The following are examples of this last characteristic related to the Chuj people in Mexico. The first consists of a petition to the thunder (*chawok*) to ensure rain and harvest and the salt (*atz'am*) materializing the Chuj community's sacred history.

IIT: The Case of the Chuj People's Devotion to Lightning and Salt

The term "indigenous theologies" is used in the plural not singular form because there are different forms of indigenous religiosity and not only one that, in general, is Christian and historically an imposition of the Judeo-Christian and Eurocentric vision (Urdapilleta 2023). Thus, we speak of Indigenous-Indigenous theologies (IIT) as those before Christianity. The religious expression of the native peoples through ritual is permeated by a series of more or less Christian elements. However, symbolic aspects outside Christianity are intimately linked to the environment. In the southeastern region in Chiapas (Mexico), on the border with Guatemala, there are several indigenous Mayan settlements, such as Q'anjob'als, Chuj, and Tojolabals, among others. Some of them worship the *chawok* (lightning man or thunder) (Piedrasanta 2009), who is said to have the power to steal the breath (*altsil*) of corn, beans, squash, or tomatoes, so this would affect the harvest (Ruz 2023). Invoking and praying to the thunder or lightning is necessary to survive and ensure the whole year's meal. There are several myths like this one "that shows the links that, according to local religiosity, the saints have with the "owners" (and incidentally with the cross), and the one they observe with the lightning, through the rain" (Ruz 2023, 17; single

quotes and parentheses in original, our translation). In a conversation with “Daniel,”⁵ a Chuj leader, explained:

“Here, the Tojolabals still go to Zapaluta [now La Trinitaria] to do their prayers. They go to this hill called Zacatepec, near Nuevo Porvenir. I have seen that they take their demijohn of salt water, water it there on the hill, make the sign of the cross, pray to the hill, take their offerings, which are ten sacks of corn, and continue their way to San Mateo [Ixtatán, in Guatemala] to pray to the lightning. Last year [2020], Chuj families from Guatemala went from there to the hill to pray to the lightning as well.”

On the follow-up question, “Why the lightning?”, he added:

“Well, the lightning is related to rain. Without rain, the essence of the corn is lost, and the harvest is lost. So we pray to it and offer corn and salt so there will be corn during the year. Furthermore, salt is used to heal, protect, and generate abundance. We, Chujs, come from the salt (“Daniel”, interviewed by author December 22, 2021; our translation).

In this conversation, salt stands out, which, like lightning, is related to nature. For Chujs and other culturally close groups such as Tojolabals salt has a meaning that can be better understood from other testimonies, but to do so, it is necessary to first briefly explain the history of the settlement of this group in Chiapas.

In Mexico, most Chuj communities are about four-decades old. Many Chujs fled Guatemala to Mexico because of life-threatening violence during the military dictatorship of Efraín Ríos Montt (1982-1983). The main town from which the Chujs fled is San Mateo Ixtatán, in the Cuchumatanes mountain range. The presence of salt mines characterizes this place. The spiritual base of many native peoples, such as Chujs, is their natural environment and its elements (salt, corn, water, among others). Together with the imposed Christianity, these sacred elements have become rooted and interwoven in their religious praxis, which materializes in symbolic objects such as their clothing, mythical stories, ritual elements, and so on. For example, images related to salt can be seen in the Chujs’ clothing. The design of their clothing becomes part of their cultural identity. Because the Chujs fled from Guatemala to Mexico, as

⁵ Since this area of Chiapas has become extremely dangerous due to organized crime, we decided to safeguard the name of the Chuj leader, even with his consent to use his real name. We will call him “Daniel”. We have been working with him for 15 years in projects whereby he supports us with the translation of Chuj, Q’anjob’al or Jakalteco into Spanish. The last work we did with him and his family was in December 2021 to design Chuj and Q’anjob’al signages.

they were persecuted and massacred, they got rid of this symbolic element to avoid being recognized. Even in Mexico, they were in danger of being killed by paramilitary groups crossing the border. Thus, the Chujs in Mexico stripped themselves of part of their identity by burning or hiding their traditional clothing.

What distinguishes this clothing is the embroidered design that alludes to their history and the sacred element of salt, which has its oral narrative. Although they no longer wear this clothing in Mexico, its importance can be seen in their memory, as to the history of their origin as a people as well as the recent history of their flight from Guatemala. This importance of clothing, as manifest in the Chujs' memory, can be verified by our fieldwork experience with the Chujs in July and December 2021, which we now recount.

In the Santa Rosa El Oriente community, the researchers and the Chuj research participants met to fine-tune some details of a linguistic strengthening project in Chuj. We were looking for an element representative of the Chujs' identity to be placed on signage (Figure 2), and two of the Chujs with whom we spoke chose to use the figure of a woman wearing the Chuj *huipil*. They called an older woman in the community who kept one of these huipils and brought it out for us to take a picture (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Traditional Chuj huipil



(Photograph by the Authors, July 21, 2021,
Santa Rosa El Oriente, Chiapas, Mexico)⁶

⁶ The image highlights the figure of stars with different colors, each of which has a meaning. When the woman was asked about the meaning of these, she responded that she did not know, but that her now deceased mother had known. (field notes, Santa Rosa El Oriente, July 21, 2021). This huipil is found in the community of Santa Rosa El Oriente, Chiapas, and is the one that the woman used when she lived in San Mateo Ixtatán, Guatemala, before she fled from Guatemala to Mexico. This model inspired the design of the signage (see Figure 2).

This huipil has a figure similar to three stars, which, may represent the salt; that is, it is the materialization in the embroidery of the flashes of light reflected by the salt from the mines and caves of San Mateo Ixtatán when a ray of sunlight filters inside it (Córdova-Hernández and Pérez 2011).

When the signage or sign announcing the welcome to the community was designed in the Chuj language, it was to recognize that the population was from that culture (see Figure 2). The signage includes the image of the huipil as a representative cultural element of the Chuj identity, which was selected as an identifying element of the community. As mentioned above, the huipil demonstrates a natural and sacred element such as salt to make a ritual for Mother Earth and lightning to ensure food for the rest of the year.

Figure 2. Signage design in the Chuj-Spanish language for the Santa Rosa El Oriente community, Chiapas, Mexico.



(Reyes Cruz Hernández 2021).

In both examples — the prayer to the *chawok* and the use of salt in that ritual — we can observe features of a cosmovision, a sacred perception and a mythical and symbolic background that is materialized in a precious garment, as well as a ritual practice in which salt and other elements such as corn are offered to a divine entity. These examples show the complexity of Chuj religiosity, which is different from Christianity. However, Chuj religiosity is not far from Christianity since in Chuj rituals one can usually see some Christian symbolic elements such as the cross, making the sign of the cross and the invoking of God along with other sacred beings.

These features in the examples above are part of what configures IIT; in this case, the Chuj theology, in which other symbolic elements and religious practices are alien to the Chuj culture. Although Christianity has often rejected — even today — symbols and practices such as those presented here, the IT, particularly ICT, has sought to respect, recognize, and dialogue with this native (religious) wisdom. In this regard, the former archbishop of Antequera-Oaxaca, Bartolomé Carrasco, known for his sympathy with IT, has pointed out the need to deepen the dialogue with the creeds or religions rejected by colonization. The reason is that by recognizing these indigenous creeds or religions, one can stop perceiving those who practice them as

"Indians" and recognize them as Nahuas, Mapuche, Guaraní, or any other cultural identity (Arias and Carrasco, 1998). Thus, ICT and IIT take on a remarkable meaning of interreligious dialogue.

ICT: A path to the recognition of religious diversity

ICT is not an attempt to superficially recognize cultural and religious diversity, as there is a method behind it. Although similar to the *see-judge-act* method of liberation theology, ICT is different from liberation theology in that ICT exclusively focuses on indigenous peoples and their context, which is generally rural or semi-rural.

The significance of the context lies in the sacred and symbolic elements of indigenous spirituality. ICT, then, in addition to recognizing a situation of precariousness, marginalization, and discrimination against indigenous peoples, gives importance to their environment. This is part of the first step of the method *see-judge-act*.

At present, for ICT, recognizing the environment and symbols of indigenous religiosity is achieved by scrutinizing and identifying indigenous religious praxis, that is, its communitarian character, although in practice in Christianity, individuality predominates.

Judging is the second methodological step of ICT to promote indigenous knowledge and symbols in those communities that, due to the prevalence or proximity of economic, political, and ideological models, disarticulate or displace cultural traits, including spirituality and religiosity. ICT, however, does not seek to rescue or reimpose values and symbols conceived by the pastoral agent but rather to defend those of the community threatened by external factors.

Thus, the quest of ICT is to gradually assimilate into the spirituality and culture of the other and in favor of the other and to avoid, even within the Church itself, exclusionary actions towards different religions and cultures that have sought to "eradicate or ...transform to the point of remove their cultural characteristics for the sake of Catholic evangelization" (Barabas 2015, 7; our translation). On the contrary, ICT seeks to incarnate itself in other theologies and transform itself in favor of the poor, thus showing its liberating vocation and dialogue.

Another aspect that is important to point out is that ICT and IIT are not opposed to each other since symbols and their interpretation, beliefs, performative manifestations, or the materialization of this in some figures or materials found in nature is part of what configures culture, and is something natural in any society with its worldview. ICT and IIT comprise a dialogical and interreligious nature in themselves. What could endanger this dialogue is the discourse and the (theo) political intentionality that makes the interreligious scenario unequal because other elements of power are imposed that should be alien to the purpose of the dialogue

of cultures. Lastly, *acting*, the third and final methodological step of ICT, refers to the dialogue between Christianity and other forms of religiosity, which is the nodal point of a peaceful movement that resists the (symbolic) violence exercised towards that what moves away from the center. In addition to a pastoral action, the purpose is to strengthen the dignity of the native peoples.

Conclusions

This article has outlined the update of research on IT as carried out in different stages since 2008 in indigenous environments, particularly in the southeast of Mexico. Even though criticism was directed to Catholic Church and pastoral agents for engaging in cultural reinterpretation and folklorizing the religious thought of some native groups, IT has been modifying its forms and perfecting its methods in order to achieve a dialogue with cultural diversity. However, since IT in this article has been concentrated, mainly as a movement from Christianity, let us remember that we refer to an Indigenous Christian Theology as opposed to Indigenous-Indigenous Theologies (IIT).

In this dialogue, there have been advances and setbacks. As expressed by Panikkar (2007 cited in Urdapilleta 2023, 3; our translation), an understanding between parties in interaction and dialogue is the "result of a series of advances and possible setbacks, to be understood from a non-linear or ascending vision of history."

ICT, after more than five decades of debating about a pastoral care that dialogues with cultures, is still threatened by the fear of specific sectors and levels of the Catholic Church towards the original religiosity. However, it is the militant sector of the Church, the pastoral agents and lay people who are in continuous contact with the indigenous peoples, who have gradually discerned and revalued an indigenous spirituality and religiosity, not as a pastoral strategy, but as a way of life where a Christian message is not imposed but rather promoted and interpreted in the light of the existence and cosmivision of native peoples.

Thus, we propose to refer to many indigenous theologies and not just one to recognize that religiosity is diverse (López 1999). Nevertheless, we also urge to understand that these religions are not presented in a pure form but have traces of Christianity and other forms of faith, and vice versa. IT, therefore, is characterized by a reciprocal influence of forms of faith reflection. For example, the previous presentation of a minimal aspect of Chuj religiosity was not intended to separately expose some religious elements but to show that there are practices that are not Christian and are still carried out, and that ritual, myths, and memory are not entirely alien to Christianity. The story of the flight, for instance, is often equated with the biblical exodus. Thus, memory, vision, and decoding of symbols, as in the case of the Chuj huipil, can also have a Christian relationship or content today.

The importance of a movement such as IT is to recognize the diversity of religious manifestations far from *Christocentrism*. That is to say, there are three aspects to consider for future discussions. First of all, ICT is an attempt at dialogue and respect for cultures and other theologies, while not imposing a perspective nor a creed, and while not excluding, rejecting, or selecting what is or is not accepted from indigenous religiosity. Second, ICT considers that these elements and meanings in religious practice do not necessarily require an institution or liturgy to support them. ICT holds this view because, to the contrary, assuming what would or would not be religiosity or spirituality based on the presence or lack of structures had by the dominant religions in the world would denote a neocolonial vision. If religion is a system of symbols and beliefs that are transmitted and socialized, forming a moral community that establishes principles, which are socialized through rituals focused on the transcendent and harmonized to reinforce each other in a reciprocal manner (Garma et al. 2021), then a significant part of this system of beliefs and rituals of the native peoples would comply with enough elements to be considered a religion. Third and finally, on a broader level, the commitment to respect and fight for the guarantee of people's rights, such as culture, language, freedom of belief, among others, has led members of the Catholic Church who are in contact with indigenous peoples to act following these policies, covenants, and supranational declarations. However, many pastoral agents and lay people in the inertia of ICT have also assumed a commitment to discern the wisdom and spiritual and religious symbols of the native peoples with whom they interact. Above all, they try not to threaten their culture or interfere with their interpretation from their external gaze.

Thus, in practice, ICT is represented by a good part of the ecclesiastical and lay sector, which militates and opposes the circles of power, even within its institution. Ethnocidal actions, imposition of ideas and beliefs, or acculturation can be identified in pastoral action. It is also expected that the priorities of participation generated by a political, social, and economic context, as well as the *raison d'être* of many movements and groups of social activism, among which some religious groups stand out, can push aside other currents of struggle such as those focused on cultural, linguistic and religious rights. However, in five decades, the IPC must recognize that ICT has not ceased in its dialogic and collaborative purpose in favor of the dignity of indigenous peoples and their culture.

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И реч поста домородачка... Домородачка хришћанска теологија данас

Сажетак: Једна од најјачих критика упућених Католичкој цркви односи се на вековну идеолошку и религијску наметнутост домородачким народима, што је, као последицу, имало поткопавање њихове културе, светоназора и религиозности. Током друге половине 20. века, неки католички кругови су променили своју перспективу и почели да разумеју религијску разноврсност домородачких народа, као и да бране њихове вредности и културне особине. Упркос противљењу конзервативних струја унутар Цркве, овај покрет је и даље присутан; назива се Домородачка хришћанска теологија (ДХТ). Да бисмо разумели ову тему, неопходно је размотрити порекло и актуелну релевантност ДХТ. Стога овај рад, на основу прегледа релевантне литературе, допуњеног примером религиозности народа Чуј у Чијапасу у Мексику, истражује настанак ДХТ, представља га као пасторални покрет који препознаје домородачки идентитет кроз дијалог, поштовање религијске разноврсности и залагање за право на недискриминацију. У том смислу, тежимо да прикажемо шире разумевање савремене ДХТ као покрета који оснажује етнички идентитет и домородачко верско изражавање, омогућавајући коегзистенцију домородачке религиозности и хришћанства, и тиме подстиче међурелигијски и међукултурни дијалог.

Кључне речи: пасторална брига за домородачке народе, домородачка католичка теологија, домородачки светоназор, етнички идентитет, изворна религиозност