COMMUNITY INITIATIVE AS MANAGEMENT MODEL IN THE RESCUE OF PALENQUE LANGUAGE

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SUMMARY:

The patrimonial wealth in preserving the linguistic legacy can be seen in the Colombian Caribbean region of Palenque de San Basilio, as declared by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** (UNESCO) as a *Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. Palenque is a town founded in the 17th century by runaway slaves, in which the Palenque language emerged. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the language was on the verge of extinction due to racism and linguistic discrimination. The population of Palenque constituted a paradigmatic case in the process of self-management to rescue language. The community self-organized in order to preserve their intangible cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

After the colonization process that took place in Latin America by Spain, Spanish became the official language for everyone in the colonized territories. This imposition meant, beyond the lack of awareness of the ancestral native languages, a hegemonic linguistic domain that lasted after the liberation campaigns, since the just-created republican states started the collective construction of knowledge in an attempt to legitimize the new political entities.

The case of Colombia is an undeniable example of what was mentioned in the last paragraph. Since the Constitution of 1886, the Colombian population was recognized as mixed-race, in an attempt to homogenize the overall population, in detriment of the minority communities whose settlements were built on national territory. This situation resulted in the cultural contributions of these populations being ignored during construction of the Colombian nation.

It would be in the last few years of the 20th century, and after the composition of a new constitution, that Colombia would recognize the existence of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, not only of the indigenous population but also of the afro-descendant population established after the nation's independence. Despite the creation of laws and decrees that tended to promote and safeguard the culture of minorities, these groups worked with great effort to recognize and appreciate their worldview within the communities themselves.

This text explains the reconstruction process conceived by the community of San Basilio de Palenque in the restoration of their language which, according to linguistic studies, is one of the two creole languages originating from Spanish that have survived until present days. This restoration process went through different stages until it reached recognition in 2005 by UNESCO as *Master Piece of the Oral and Intangible Patrimony of Humanity.*

I. The creation of a legal framework for the recognition of multiculturalism in Colombia

At the beginning of the 1990's in Colombia, the Constitution's renewal was conceived. This process resulted in the creation of the new political map after the substitution of the last one that dated back to 1886. The new Constitution not only was about giving response to a globalized world but also, above all, it was based on the recognition of the inclusion of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity in the broadest sense of the term.

In 1991, in the framework of the creation of a new Constitution, Colombia was declared for the first time in history as a socially multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. This declaration implied, among other things, to leave behind the hegemonic vision of a mixed-race nation which the social and political development arose in the second half of the 19th century, a vision that was generated from the exclusion of the Afro-descendant and indigenous communities in the construction of a nation-state. Since these communities were discredited as populations that did

not constitute "suitable material" for the national construction, ergo, they were considered antagonistic barbarian communities to the progress and civilization.[1]

This exclusion of the Afro-descendant and indigenous communities came from the political idea of the existence of an Unitarian state based on the ethnic-mono cultural homogeneity, which, in turn, worked as a promise for the creation of the laws that referred to the population without making distinction and without establishing positive differences. In other words, racial uniformity was not supposed to be necessary in the creation of laws that favored the minority groups, which, due to different historical process, were disadvantaged in relation to the rest of the population.

In this direction, with the composition of the Constitution of 1991, there was a change to the paradigm of recognition and protection of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant population. For the first time, the legal concept -Ethnic group- was used, making the difference to these populations as collective subjects of law. Linked to the inclusion of this term, a dozen more laws were decreed that included differential protection and emphasized that, beyond the sum of the individuals that form an ethnic group. This ethnic group should be defined in function of the social, political, cultural and anthropological configuration. This last aspect was vital since it defended the right to cultural identity, expressed as the preservation and the autonomy of the ancestral lifestyles of each community in relation to regulate their own political, social and economic organization.

The translation to these political rights in the everyday life of these minority groups was shown in the recognition of the autonomy their internal authorities had in the community to apply their rules of coexistence in the protection of the natural territory that became a collective possession and not a possession of the Nation. In the social aspect, the evidence of these rights began with the teaching of the ancestral tongues, the revaluation of the uses, social customs and the practice of traditional medicine. The same happened in the economic field, where the rights of

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[1] Cfr. Samper, José María (1861) Essay on the political revolutions and social status of Colombian republics (Hispanic-American), with an appendix on the terrain and the population of the Grenadine Confederation. Publishing House E. Thunot and C., Paris. - See more at: http://www.bdigital.unal.edu.co/5232/#sthash.QKQNlOFg.dpuf

ethnic groups were recognized on their own terms. This was accomplished through the relationship with the land (Mother Earth), whereby, their land could not be expropriated in favor of the mercantilist policies.

This legal context, which favored the recognition of multi-ethnicity and multi-culture, generated the creation of ethnic, political and academic movements that re-evaluated the participation of these communities in the construction of the national identity. Among other more important achievements it is the preservation, promotion and cultural recognition of, tangible and intangible heritage as a measure to counteract the process of "Invisibility" that these communities had historically suffered.

An example of the cultural recognition process is represented by the official recognition of the 68 languages that are spoken in the Colombian territory, which come from 13 different linguistic families, and testify to the existence of more than 200 languages spoken in this territory when the Spaniards arrived in the time of conquest and colonization.

In this direction and as part of the preservation process of the oral intangible patrimony of the nation in the year 2010, Legal Act 1381 was enacted for the protection of the native languages. This Act defined the state politics that contributed to the research, preserving and spreading of the languages present in the national territory. But, beyond the recognition of the right of the ethnic groups to make use of their own language, the "Law on Protection of Native Languages" looked for the explicit recognition that they were a valid communication channel in public spaces and in official documents. An example of this is the right of the members of the ethnic communities to register for official government identification with their given names in their native language, or be able to refer to geographical landmarks by their native or indigenous names.

As a complement of the measurements already mentioned, the law looks for the preservation of the native languages through different mechanisms. Those that can be highlighted are the ethno-educative programs that include the native language in the curriculum of the official educational institutes located in the communities'

territories, and the use of translators to act as intermediaries within the communities that do not speak Spanish.

However, it is important to mention that, in spite of the creation of the political administrative framework, the implementation of these policies in the school system and the media did not occur at first. As a result, the mechanisms of dissemination and implementation of native languages had to be increased. Precisely, paying attention to this situation in the year 2013, the Native Language Advisor National Council took place. This is an entity created with the purpose of providing advisory work to the Ministry of Culture on creation, adoption and orientation on the plans on protecting and strengthening of the ethnic groups languages present in Colombia, from which the Ethno-linguistic Protection Program (PDEE for its acronym in Spanish) derived.

MAPA DE LA DIVERSIDAD LINGÜÍSTICA DE COLOMBIA
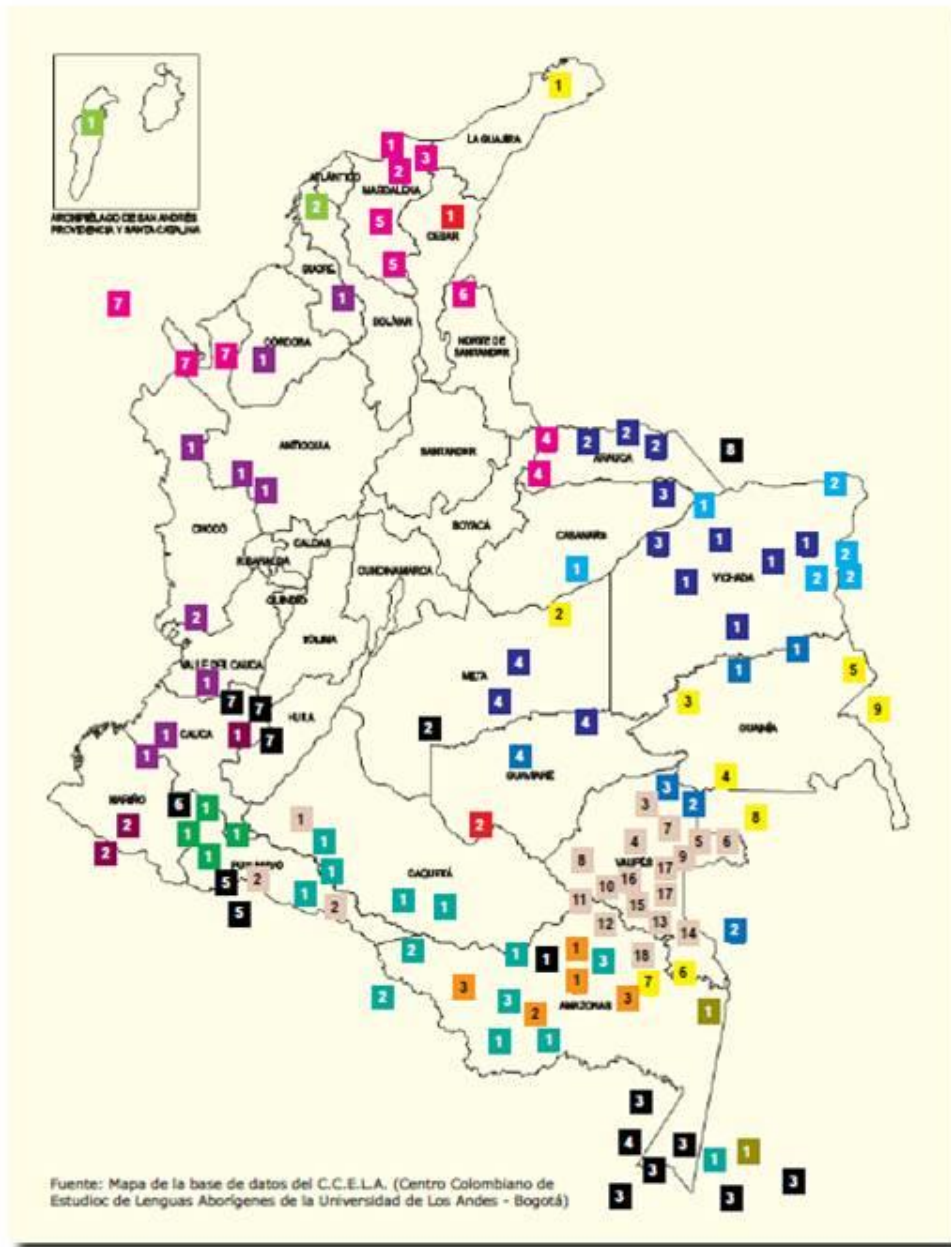
FAMILIAS LINGÜÍSTICAS

ARAWAK
1. Wayuu
2. Achagua
3. Piapoco
4. Curripaco
5. Baniwa
6. Kawiyari
7. Yukuna
8. Tariano
9. Baniba

BORA
1. Muinane
2. Bora
3. Miraña

CARIBE
1. Yuko
2. Karijona

CHIBCHA
1. Kogui
2. Ika
3. Damana (Wiwa)
4. Uwa-Tunebo
5. Chimila
6. Bari
7. Cuna

CHOCÓ
1. Embera
2. Waunan

GUAHIBO
1. Sikuani
2. Hitnu
3. Kuiba
4. Guayabero

MAKU
1. Puinave
2. Yuhup
3. Cacua
4. Nukak

SALIBA
1. Saliba
2. Piaroa

WITOTO
1. Uitoto
2. Okaina
3. Nonuya

QUECHUA
1. Inga

CRIOLLOS
1. San Andrés
2. Palenque

TUPI
1. Cocama

TUKANO
1. Coreguaje
2. Siona
3. Kubeo
4. Pisamira
5. Piratapuyo
6. Wanano
7. Dsano
8. Carapana
9. Tucano
10. Tatuyo
11. Taiwano
12. Barasana
13. Bará
14. Macuna
15. Tuyuka
16. Yurutí
17. Siriano
18. Tanimuka

BARBACOA
1. Guambiano
2. Awa-Kwaiker

AISLADAS
1. Andoke
2. Tinigua
3. Tikuna
4. Yagua
5. Cofán
6. Kamsá
7. Paez-nasa
8. Yaruro

Fuente: Mapa de la base de datos del C.C.E.L.A. (Centro Colombiano de Estudioc de Lenguas Aborígenes de la Universidad de Los Andes - Bogotá)

In Colombia, the National Day of Native Languages is commemorated on February, 21st as a mechanism to contribute to the preservation of those languages since they are considered intangible goods. Also, the Ministry of Culture, through the Institute Caro y Cuervo, motivates the sustainability of the

languages through scholarships on research, preservation and spreading of native languages.

II. Language as Patrimony of Humanity.

The complexity that is articulating the linguistic rights of the communities—that since ancestral times have used their own languages— with the state politics of preservation of the native languages means a great effort that transcends the tribal territories frontiers and even the national ones. Since it is recognized that language does not circumscribe to a geographical space and what makes any language to maintain its vitality depends on the use and recreation of the speakers, including those that, through exile, migration or relocation, live outside the historical settlement territories.

To guarantee the worldwide applicability of the linguistic rights and the de facto exercise of them, in the year 1996 in the city of Barcelona, Spain, the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* was approved in an assembly formed by 61 non-governmental organizations (ONGs), 30 PEN centers (The PEN club International is the only International society of writers) and 40 linguistic experts from all around the world. These groups wrote the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* with the purpose of generating policies of equity and equality facing the diversity of languages that exist in the different corners of the planet, to favor a stage in which the hegemonic languages and the non-hegemonic ones would coexist in an environment of respect, tolerance and, of course, equality.

This is an important aspect because, in many countries (like in the case of Colombia); the hegemonic tongue determined for centuries the structure of the linguistic community and also the segregation of the minority communities' speakers. That´s why, in the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights*, a series of rules are established that serve to identify the existence of a linguistic community, in which they highlight: the development of a common language, the historicity, the belonging to a shared territory, the self-recognition as a town based on their worldview, and the beliefs and communitarian cultural practices.

Similarly, one of the particularities to highlight of the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* is the one that puts in an inseparable level, the collective and individual dimensions of the linguistic rights.

Now then, the group of policies contemplated in the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* served to emphasize the effort that should be done to preserve the languages of the linguistic minority communities and in that way, avoid their extinction. However, what is therein established in the Declaration is not binding for the governments, which is why many communities had to start their own visibilization process to give worth to the common patrimony contained in the language.

Towards this direction, nowadays, it is easy to verify the acceptance of the languages along with the beliefs and other cultural manifestations that form what is called Intangible Cultural Patrimony. However it was not always like this. The process of turning language into heritage went through a discussion that lasted about a decade from UNESCO, which was looking to broaden the concept of cultural wealth so that intangible manifestations had a place. At the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000s, the *Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Patrimony of Humanity* program was created to identify the worldwide practices and expressions of the intangible patrimony that required urgent measures to guarantee their preservation and transmission.

As a condition to achieve the recognition from UNESCO, these programs, projects and actions were created to preserve all the cultural manifestations and joint community and government action to design the plans for the protection of the intangible patrimony. Additionally, they looked for international support and cooperation to preserve languages.[2]

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[2] Cfr.: *"The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding consists of intangible cultural heritage that communities and States Parties consider require urgent safeguarding measures to ensure its transmission. Inscriptions on this List help to mobilize international cooperation and assistance so that interested parties take appropriate safeguarding measures."* UNESCO official website, Retrieved from: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=es&pg=00107

At this point, it is important to mention that, in Colombia's case, this safeguarding preservation and diffusion process was not always promoted by the State. In multiple occasions, the communities themselves were the ones that took the initiative to create the process aimed for the rescue of their material and intangible patrimony.

An example of the self-management of the ancestral knowledge of the community is the population of Palenque of San Basilio, an Afro-community in the Caribbean region of Colombia that was declared a *Masterpiece of Intangible and Oral Patrimony of Humanity* by UNESCO in 2005. This population is the center of this reflection because it is an example of the way the population has organized itself with the goal of preserving and empowering new generations with their intangible legacy.

III. Palenque: a historical look.

During the colonial period, the slave trade in America was a legitimate and general practice that gave Spain important revenue earnings. In some contexts, for example in the Caribbean, it became a central element in which a form of domination, exploitation and social control was executed.

The enslaved Africans came to America as a response to the necessity to provide a workforce for the mining industry, which was being affected by the decrease of the indigenous population. This same population were also, put to work in the plantations at the end of the 18th century. The importance of the enslaved in the colonial economic framework was so immense that, according to Montiel (2005), "A few years before 1600, in Brazil, there was more than 20,000 African slaves; in the French plantations in 1700, the African population worked in more than 400 sugar factories. In the same era, in the English colonies there were 800,000 slaves." (p. 138).

These numbers discerned the central role of the enslaved population in the colonial territories in America. In the case of New Granada, this trade started very early,

according to Tovar (1994) "Approximately 123,000 slaves came to the New Kingdom of Granada between 1550 and 1792. These slaves provided different services from work in the mines to domestic work in the farms and in the cities."

The treatment that was given to this great number of Africans that arrived as slaves to America, and especially to New Granada, was characterized by violence. Their owners, protected by the laws of the era, handled them as merchandise, beating them with whips as they would a beast of burden. According to Javier Laviña:

> "Physical punishment was the standard in the master-slave relationship. It was indiscriminate, it was used to stop any resistance from the slave and show them their master´s power. The punishment deified the person who applied it because it would show the limitless and arbitrary power of the master, and on the other hand, it would leave the receiver without any kind of reference because he or she could be punished without any motive at any given time." (2005, P. 20)

In this context of dehumanization, survival became the main focus of these populations. This is how slaves would come up with survival mechanisms on the sidelines of the rules of the hegemonic society. Since the arrival of the African slave to America, one of the most relevant phenomena in the colonial history began: the runaway slave. This became a logic and spontaneous action as a response to a very unsustainable situation, and was so important that during the 16th century, it was one of the main concerns of the colonial authorities. In very specific cases, for example in Cartagena, Colombia, documentation can be found from 1570 which provides evidence regarding the concern the colonial government had around the proliferation of Palenques alongside the route of the Magdalena River and the way they minimized trade around this essential route during this historical moment[3]. However, beyond the incidents recorded by the Spanish authorities about the inconvenience of the Palenques, what is worth highlighting in this text is the particularity that summons up Palenques. Which, due to the particular dynamics, a culture, a society, and an economy radically distant from the colonial State were developed. In this new space created by Palenques, the runaway slaves had the opportunity to practice their rites and customs in their own language, and with that, they avoided its extinction and added their cultural

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[3] Cfr. Vilar, Enriqueta (2001) Social Aspects in the Colonial America, Publishing House Instituto Caro y Cuervo; Bogotá.

heritage in the course of the syncretic cultural process that allowed the preservation of their African roots.

The wealth of heritage present in the preservation of linguistic heritage as a tool for cohesion and preservation of identity can be seen in the Colombian Caribbean region emblematically in Palenque de San Basilio. A town founded in the 17th century by runaway slaves led by an enslaved African king, Benkos Biohó. In this context and through the process of cultural syncretism, emerged what has become known as Palenque language. A language, which highlights the linguistic elements of Romance languages,(Spanish and Portuguese), and languages from the Bantú linguistic group. Even though it has been recognized by UNESCO as intangible heritage of humanity, the Palenque language had to travel a winding road in the recovery of its forms before enjoying the recognition it has today.

IV. Process of Recovery of Palenque Language.

The first point that should be mentioned when referring to the recovery of Palenque language is that after the formation of Palenque de San Basilio and settlement of liberated Africans, the Palenque language was about to disappear. This was due to racism and linguistic discrimination suffered by Palenqueros, who were affected by the very consequences of the process of inculturation when looking to find economic alternatives for survival. The consequences of this process were moving to surrounding cities and the subsequent disqualifying judgment of those because of dominant prejudices; they failed to recognize the difference as a value.

That is how, in urban context of the Cartagena of last century, speaking a different language with African roots became for Palenqueros a synonym of rejection by the inhabitants of the city who, far from appreciating the value of bilingualism present in Palenqueros, considered the Palenque language "broken Spanish." The same happened when trying to find alternative employment in other settings such as sugar mills, because as Bernardino (2014), professor of Palenque language and pioneer in the management for the recovery of the language has stated: "The problem of culture shock and

rejection element was lived most intensely by black Palenqueros for being black, palenquero and speaking a different language."

These discriminatory practices managed to embarrass many palenqueros, who, in an attempt to fit in this new social context in which they moved, opted for the concealment of their linguistic roots, including even banning their children and grandchildren from speaking their own language.

However, to achieve a thorough understanding of this reaction to these discriminatory attitudes, it is necessary to note that, in an agrarian society which Colombia was in the last century, the marketing of products forced those who grew them to move to urban markets, and the effects of rejection reached the point of implying that it made no sense for the community to speak a language that was limited to the geographical area of the inhabitants of the township and thus would not reach beyond the limits of said town.

We should also add that, in the specific case of the city of Cartagena because of its past as a major slave port of Spain, very particular social dynamics emerged that, together with the socioeconomic differences, brought about racial discrimination, which would eventually permeate the ways of perceiving the social-cultural expressions of Afro communities. This did not end with the independence and subsequent Republic, but instead remained in force in different ways through the 20th century. An example of this is what Nina de Friedemann (1984) called "invisibility", a concept coined by the anthropologist to describe the situation of rejection suffered by the descendants of the Africans in the Colombian Caribbean.

The situation described above, together with the economic and political crisis in Colombia in the 70s and 80s, gave way to a slow process of recovery of the identity of the inhabitants of San Basilio de Palenque. This process, generated pride and interest in speaking the Palenque language, and which was expressed in actions that allowed the younger generation not only to take pride in their language but also take pride in all of its symbolic universe, consisting of music, dance and cuisine, among other cultural manifestations.

This process started with the reflections conducted by a teacher of the community who was known as Pedro. Pedro saw with concern, the situation of linguistic risk looming over the community for not speaking the language outside of the township —for the reasons already mentioned—, yet more worrisome was that the language was not spoken within the community either. The exception being in those cases where it was required to deal with confidential issues which relied on the Palenque language at the level of an encoded language, exclusive to older people in the community, spoken only among peers and not by the whole community. This situation led to the Palenque language being used at the bare minimum, because the elderly who held the ancestral knowledge of the language refused to show it to the new generations of Palenqueros to prevent them from suffering the stigma and ridicule the community members who had left the boundaries of the township had suffered.

Upon the threat of the disappearance of the language, and after reviewing historical archives (bibliography) on Palenque written by outsiders, and noting the differences between what is written about the community and what the elderly reminisced, a group of young people previously exposed to folklore, realized that much of what was written did not interpret the idiosyncrasies of the Palenque community, and belonged to a rather alien, positivist perspective on their way of life and their feelings.

The combination of these situations helped, beyond the desire of the elderly to protect younger people from discrimination, young people of the community take the initiative to take the first steps in the recovery process of the language. In doing so, according what Bernardino (2014) described, an autonomous work of reflection began, that is to say, without the mediation of any state or private institution to regain confidence in the use of Palenque language.

After this first exercise, the group of young people that started the process of rescuing the language urged their parents and grandparents to increase the use of it not only in domestic spaces, but also in the daily tasks of the community. The next step, according to what the authors of this process

reported, was to transfer the use of the language to schools. This decision has been taken, in part, because, as it is evident, the new generations were learning their culture, but also as a way to repair years of antiquated learning designed elsewhere, which become a tool that neglected Palenque tradition in favor of assimilation of practices from the outside society.

As it is a process led by members of the community, its development was conducted in a consensual way, as the entire community participated. The new methodology relied on the elderly members of the community going to school to teach the language to the young. This was not only a practical utilization of the elder members of the community, but it also provided greater emphasis that the language should be implemented at home in order to successfully use the language in all aspects of life. So, in line with the shared vision of the value they had to rescue—appropriation and use of the language—, the tacit agreement underlay that the language learning could not be taught only at school, but the parents and grandparents had to teach the language. This, like the transmission of social customs, was a source of pride. In this way they were creating a "language space", a term coined by the managers of the movement of rescue and cultural renewal.

As authentication of these processes, it is necessary to mention the implementation of the Ley 70 [Act 70], which includes ethnic education programs for native communities, and the already aforementioned "Law on Protection of Native Languages" to protect linguistic diversity in Colombia. However, the mandate exercised by the community in compliance with these laws has been more important than the making of these laws. They incorporated subjects such as Palenque Language and African-American History. In addition, due to the fact that the transmission of the language in the community was purely oral, they sought tools that serve to articulate the verbal component with writing and grammar. Complementing the above and as a means of ensure the conservation of intangible heritage, they created a "Code of Ethics" which establishes that the investigations conducted on Palenque should be supported by the community, before coming to light, specifically by

the Community Council, which is the highest political and administrative authority of Palenque.

Finally, within the activities planned for the assimilation, preservation and safeguarding of Palenque language, it is planned that all teachers in local educational institutions be bilingual, and that any document referred to Palenque also be bilingual. It is one of ways to make the work of recovery of the language visible. The collected texts and other texts related to the community are being translated to the Palenque language for the projected creation of a library in the future.

V. Teaching of Palenque Language in Schools

As mentioned hereinbefore, a key factor in the recovery process of Palenque language was the school. It became a privileged space to ensure that the ancestral language is not only rescued and preserved, but also used both in daily lessons and daily life. To do so, in the 80s, the Palenque community began to create an educational model, the purpose of which was to rescue ancestral knowledge.

This pilot educational model, based on the rescue of Palenque language and the recovery of ancestral knowledge, was held at first in the city of Cartagena, specifically in the neighborhood of Nariño, because it is a place where a large amount of the diaspora of Palenque population settled. Also, because it was a clear example of the loss of identity of the new generations of Palenqueros suffered, who were not in touch with their roots. The structure of this first educational model gave way to the realization of others, including one in the Educational Institution of the township itself, in which, prior to the project implementation, it was necessary to sensitize the elderly population, who in light of the new revaluation of their culture, contributed to its transmission to children and young Palenqueros. In this regard, Simarra Obeso, citing Hernandez, states that:

> We have to point out that the safeguarding of the language of the palenqueros is a concern that came from the young people of San Basilio, without any advisers or references, from the point of view

of youth work of this kind that had been previously made. It was a very dynamic work and these youngsters motivated many elderly to assume an important and decisive role in raising awareness in the rescue of the Creole language. [...] Indeed the process was a community effort but it was inspired by the youth (2015, p. 63)

From that moment, the elderly who carried ancestral knowledge began a process of articulation with the Educational Institution, and the transmission of the language and topics of the subjects contained in the curriculum, such as Biology, took shape. In Biology, for example, they took the students to the homes of traditional healers who explained the healing properties of various plants found in the vicinity.

This process not only promoted the rescue of ancestral knowledge within the Palenque population but also served as a spearhead for a macro process which consisted of implementation from the government agency of ethnic education, which was a key element for recognition of ethnic and cultural identity as an essential component in the training process. With ethnic education, the formal redefinition of the traditional education model came about, because it was sought that communities select those cultural, autochthonous elements to be incorporated into the educational content to foster both cultural preservation and development of communities.

Again, the work of cultural preservation through education should be supported by legislation in order to have continuity in time and government support; hence the first Law on Ethno-education enacted in this direction emphasizes that:

Education for ethnic groups is part of public education services and it is based on a commitment of collective devising, where various members of the community, exchange knowledge and experiences, in order to maintain, recreate and develop a comprehensive project in compliance with their culture, their language, their traditions and their own autochthonous privileges "(Law 115 of 1994. Chapter I, Article 1.)

It is worth noting the importance of this law gives to collective work of educational restructuring. Recognizing that it is the communities who can identify the knowledge and cultural values to be transmitted to future generations, as well as what outside knowledge and values are to be integrated into their culture in order to contribute to interculturality, to promote respect for differences, and to generate good practices.

One of the most outstanding achievements of the ethnic education policy was the creation of the Afro-Colombian Studies, which opened a production and stimulating academic space, which strengthened the research on African themes being done in the country. This helped consolidate the issues within the academic agenda of Colombia permanently. In this sense, Afro-Colombian Studies led to the incorporation of issues on the African population that had been historically marginalized in academic research. Thus, writers like Oliver Bardory, Hector Fabio Ramirez, Fernando Urrea and Doris García include within their research lines, aspects such as socio-demographic, socioeconomic studies and rural/urban migration, which account for a new perspective to address the African topic (Hurtado, nd, p.74).

Finally, we should mention that the government's action in the institutionalization of an ethno-educational component was decisive for the sustainability of the process to safeguard the culture of ethnic and linguistic minorities. Although, as noted above, the cornerstone of the process of rescuing ancient knowledge in this case was the Palenque community, to the extent that laws and decrees were created to standardize the inclusion and rescue of ancestral knowledge to education, the language rescue project was strengthened. It gave the first educational leaders a tool to create an educational community to put the cultural issue in the forefront, not as an isolated initiative, but as the articulating axis in building the Institutional Education Project (PEI). Thus, the design of curricula and planning of course content were built with integration of the historical memory of the community as direction. In this sense, the school played and plays a key role in the transmission of language to new generations, thus strengthening the process that begun at home by parents and being a mediator space between dominant culture and ancestral culture.

Conclusions

The rescue of Palenque language provides a glimpse on how community management led to the revitalization of ancient culture and the ability to value it against the hegemonic culture that was about to make ancient culture disappear. In

this sense, the success of the experience of Palenque is due largely to the ability people had to integrate their ancestral knowledge with the teaching-learning without generating tensions with the hegemonic knowledge.

In light of this experience, we can state that in the case of the community of Palenque, language, rather than a vehicle for transmission and preservation of culture, was the glue that allowed uniting ancestral knowledge to the education of the new generations, generating pride and perpetuating what the first founders of the town, runaway slaves conquered a few centuries before.

Well beyond the identifying ethnic features common to Palenqueros, it has been the work of community management that has contributed to social and individual development through the incorporation of ethnic education and standardized teaching of Palenque language. So, had this linguistic ability not existed, the use of the Palenque language would have been limited to an increasing minority of speakers, and thus, exposure to cultural assimilation by the dominant language would be systematic.

With the loss of a language, lifestyles are lost, because as it is well known to speakers of minority language communities; there are aspects of the worldview that one can only communicate in their own language. And although the Palenque language, at any given moment, was about to disappear as a result of the processes of discrimination and stigmatization suffered by Palenqueros outside their village because of its very particular dialect features, it was the realization that what disappeared with a language was not only the set of phonemes and graphemes used to communicate, but also what was lost was the set of ways of being and representing themselves. Because, according to the inhabitants of the community, thought flows better in Palenquero than in Spanish, which had been the imposed language in the days of slavery.

In support of these processes, a constitutional framework was created, because the laws are of little use without the de facto support of institutions and even less without management community, as in the case of San Basilio de Palenque. In Palenque, the community went through different stages to overcome the distortion

of the value of their own language and to implement effective actions that resulted in the recognition of identity, cultural and heritage value present in the language.

Finally, the work of preservation of linguistic diversity is the living expression of legitimate cultures that have contributed to the construction of a common culture in which the coexistence of bilingualism or even multilingualism is possible.

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