

BEYOND *TESTIMONIO*:
The Woven Discourse of
Rigoberta Menchú Tum in
Towards A Culture of Peace

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DEDICATION

*To the cause of Peace
and to its messengers, past, present and future*

*To the ancestors and the women of my family who have inspired and
sustained me from where ever in time and space they live*

To Rachel, Malka and Matthew, the trilogy of my opus magnum

To David, my reason

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ברוך השם.

ABSTRACT

Rigoberta Menchú first became internationally known after the publication in 1983 of her biography, *I Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, written as a testimony by Venezuelan anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos Debray. This book is credited with breaking the international silence on the genocide perpetrated on the indigenous people of Guatemala by its own government. The ensuing international pressure on the Guatemalan government forced it to start a dialogue with the opposition that eventually resulted in peace accords and brought an end to the longest civil war in the history of Latin America. In 1992 Menchú won the Nobel Peace Prize amidst swirling controversy about the veracity of her testimony. This on-going controversy has generated numerous works and yet a significant study of the nature of Menchú's non-mediated discourse has to date not been done. The present study proposes to begin filling this lacuna.

Menchú's book *Towards a Culture of Peace* is a diachronic sampling of a decade of Menchú's speeches pronounced from 1992 to 2002 that address the creation of a Culture of Peace and serves as the materia prima for the present analysis of Menchú's discourse. Using weaving theory and praxis, I develop a reading of this book that reflects Menchú's own vision of a Culture of Peace, a vision that is based on the interweaving of specific issues within a metaphorical loom built out of the Mayan concepts of *utzil* and *pixab*. This study clarifies Menchú's worldview and illustrates that Menchú's discourse concerning the creation of a world Culture of Peace is an oral reproduction of the Mayan textile so integral to Maya culture and its development. In the final analysis, I show that the nature of Menchú's oral discourse on world peace, as exemplified in *Towards a*

Culture of Peace is like a woven textile grounded on the two mutually supporting Maya concepts of *utzil* and *pixab*.

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INTRODUCTION

Rigoberta Menchú Tum won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 “in recognition of her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples.” However, she first became internationally known after the publication in 1983 of her biography, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, published in English as *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Compiled and edited as a testimony by Venezuelan anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos Debray and based on extensive taped interviews she had with Menchú, the book exposed the genocide against the indigenous people of Guatemala by successive military governments, and is credited with breaking the international silence on the civil war in Guatemala. The ensuing international pressure on the Guatemalan government forced it to start a dialogue with the opposition that eventually resulted in peace accords and brought an end to the longest civil war in the history of Latin America.

Since its publication, Menchú’s biography has elicited numerous accolades as well as its share of detractors. In 1999, US anthropologist David Stoll caused quite a controversy when he published *I, Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of all Poor Guatemalans*, a virulent attack against Menchú’s testimony. In it Stoll challenges Menchú’s motives, and version of events as well as the chronology of Menchú’s testimony. He alleges, among other things, that Menchú fabricated or exaggerated many events.

The controversy continues, even though different teams of independent forensic anthropologists have confirmed Menchú's overall account of genocide. Guatemalan author Arturo Arias has written extensively on this subject and in 2001 edited *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*, an anthology of essays dealing with the controversy surrounding *I, Rigoberta Menchú*.

Part of the controversy surrounding Menchú's testimony has to do with the authorship of the book. As mentioned above, it was compiled and edited by Burgos Debray based on extensive taped interviews she had with Menchú in January of 1982, but Burgos Debray has never released those tapes, nor did Menchú ever get a chance to revise the text before or since its publication. In fact, Burgos Debray to this day holds the copyright to the book, which means Menchú has been denied the royalties garnered from the book's sales.

One of the aims of this study is to go beyond this controversy by looking at *Hacia una cultura de paz (Towards a Culture of Peace)*¹, a text where there is clear authorship by Menchú. Therefore, this thesis does not attempt to add transparency or substance to the debate over Menchú's *testimonio* in *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, nor will it engage the debate between David Stoll and Arturo Arias. Instead, it will analyze the nature of Menchú's discourse by looking at a text that is composed of fragments of public speeches Menchú gave between 1992 and 2002.

Menchú's speeches in *Towards a Culture of Peace* and her *testimonio* share the common attribute of being based on oral narrative. The *testimonio*, as the speeches, are pronouncements that were captured and recorded. Although the spoken work is ethereal

and exists only in the moment it is pronounced, it may have a significant and enduring effect as Menchú's work exemplifies. The transcription of the spoken words into writing allows an opportunity to scrutinize and ponder at length their significance. While both the speeches and the testimony are similar in nature and have similar ends, the conditions of their geneses differ. The testimony in *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, was made by a young Menchú who had recently fled for her life from her country and was still struggling with the Spanish language. She was searching for a way to solve urgent regional problems plaguing her people and her country and was obliged to rely on the help of others. The speeches in *Towards a Culture of Peace*, on the other hand, are made by a Menchú who speaks in the capacity of a leader seeking to solve critical global concerns. In these speeches she speaks as the voice of conscience, admonishment and advice. However, she also speaks as a leader with hope, a vision and the conviction that the goal of a Culture of Peace is attainable.

Using the theory of weaving, I develop a reading of this book that reflects Menchú's own vision of a Culture of Peace, a vision that is based on the interweaving of specific issues (or threads) like justice, respect, peace, and equality, self-determination, democracy, and development within a metaphorical loom built out of the Mayan concepts of *utzil* and *pixab*. In this reading, the loom corresponds to the Mayan concept of *pixab*, which means, roughly, practical and spiritual wisdom and instruction; while the specific issues mentioned above correspond to the all-inclusive vision of harmony and balance that is *utzil*.

The study is organized as follows:

I begin in chapter 1 with a theoretical framework for the analysis of Menchú's discourse based on weaving praxis and the use of weaving theory in literary analysis. In chapter 2 I give a brief description of Menchú's life and work providing a backdrop and context for this study. In chapter 3 I place Menchú's work within a historical tradition of indigenous writing in Mesoamerica in general and within the tradition of Maya textual production in particular. In Chapter 4 I show that Menchú's *Weltanschauung*² is based on *utzil* and *pixab*, the two Maya concepts she presents in the introduction to *Towards a Culture of Peace*. In the final analysis, I show that the nature of Menchú's oral discourse on world peace, as exemplified in *Towards a Culture of Peace*, is structured like a Maya textile, grounded as it is on a metaphorical loom built on the two mutually supporting Maya concepts of *utzil* and *pixab*. All translations in this study are my own.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In her Nobel acceptance lecture Menchú used a weaving metaphor to theorize about how to overcome ethnic and social divisions in Guatemala.

Combinando todos los matices ladinos, garífunas e indígenas del mosaico étnico de Guatemala debemos entrelazar cantidad de colores, sin entrar en contradicción, sin que sean grotescos y antagónicos, dándoles brillo y una calidad superior como saben tejer nuestros artesanos. Un güipil genialmente integrado, una ofrenda a la Humanidad.



Combining all the shades and nuances of the *ladinos*, the *garífunas* and Indians of the Guatemalan ethnic mosaic we must interlace a number of colors, without raising contradictions, without their being grotesque nor antagonistic, but we must give them brightness and a superior quality the way our weavers weave. A *güipil* blouse, brilliantly composed, a gift to Humanity.³

Menchú uses the weaving metaphor and puts forward the work of indigenous weavers to propose a solution for a viable, new social order in Guatemala that may serve as a model to the rest of humanity. Her proposition is not a naïve calling for a homogenized society but rather one where diversity is respected and coexists in balance and harmony and is integrated into a larger whole. In the same way a weaver might weave together bright colors, juxtaposing them without one color overpowering another to create a balanced, harmonious effect that brings out the best of all the composing elements and achieves a stunning result, likewise would the society Menchú proposes include all sectors of Guatemalan society to achieve a superior outcome.

Given the tradition of weaving among the Maya, and Menchú's own use of the weaving metaphor to describe her vision of a national ethno-textile, it is only fitting to use weaving theory and its practice to analyze the discourse in *Towards a Culture of Peace*. Indeed, in observing videotaped interviews and analyzing Menchú's *Towards a Culture of Peace*, I realized that her oral discourse is truly a weaving of multiple themes that she manages to interconnect without leaving any leftover hanging threads. As an experienced weaver of textiles myself, I am convinced her ability to mentally and orally work several strands simultaneously stems in part from her experience as a textile weaver. In fact, when weaving, a weaver may work several individual threads that will eventually fit into an overall design. For this she must simultaneously keep in mind the final outcome and the specific function of each individual thread relative to the total desired effect as she works it. Moreover, *The Hand*, a recent book by neurologist Frank R. Wilson, gives a scientific backing to this conviction by demonstrating how the movements of the hand that are required in executing various tasks develop neurological pathways affecting one's ability to synthesize thought. Wilson explains:

It has been said that language is the prelude to the coming of man. That may be, but even before language comes *thinking in terms of tools*, i.e., the realization of mechanical connections and the invention of mechanical means for mechanical ends. To put it briefly, before the advent of speech, action comes to have a *subjective meaning*, i.e., it becomes consciously purposive. (194)

Throughout the book Wilson maintains the importance of the human hand in our development as a species and with scientific findings illustrates and supports his assertions. He further comments on the hand-thought-language connection saying:

At about the age of one year the child's hands are rapidly becoming manipulative organs with fingers that will soon be able to move independently. The world of objects, and knowledge of the action of those objects, will increase rapidly, and distinctive actions which can be taken with objects in the hand will also increase. In other words, the thought-language nexus is becoming a hand-thought-language nexus. (195)

I would even go beyond Wilson's focus on the individual and claim that the complex Maya weaving tradition is inseparable from collective discursive practices, of which Menchú is only its most famous example.

Since at least Descartes' use of the Deus ex Machina metaphor to describe human psychology, the machine has been used as a central metaphor in the Western world. This makes sense as the machine has come, ever increasingly, to occupy a central role in Western society and culture, a role that persists even after the Industrial Revolution. We speak of the war machine, for example, and think of the human body as a machine. Similarly, the Maya world has its own central metaphors or paradigms, one of which is weaving. In fact, weaving is not only integral to Mesoamerican culture; it helped define, perpetuate and preserve it.

Weaving is both the act of interlacing of threads to create fabric and the product of this action. Moreover, the term "weaving" is used to describe how words or objects are fitted together, combined or intertwined into an intricate whole. In fact, our language is infused with expressions from the art of weaving. If someone is a good storyteller, she can spin a fine yarn.⁴ A n erratic driver will weave in and out of t traffic. W e might follow the thread of a narration where the speaker attended to all the details and has left no loose ends. T houghts c an t angle, u n ravel or fray. T o create a complex whole by

combining or inserting various elements calls for weaving of the various components. A film, for example, may weave the dialogue, music, cinematography and performance of the actors to create an emotionally charged moment. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the words *text* and *textile*, the product of weaving, are so similar, given that the Latin word *textus*, or a written account, comes from the past participle of *texere*, to weave.⁵ A further link between weaving and text is their connection to the body. We sometimes speak of the *body* of a text. But body also refers to our physical, human form that is made of tissue. In fact, the word *tissue* comes from the Latin *texere* as well.⁶ Our language, then, expresses the connections we create between the production of texts (oral, written and woven) and the human form. They are, one could say, interwoven.

More literally, textile weaving is accomplished with the use of a loom. Looms can be categorized as either hand, which are manual, or power looms, which are mechanical. Although there are some differences in execution, hand looms are comparatively equal. Of the different hand looms, the backstrap loom is the oldest and most widely used throughout the world and is the type of loom used since antiquity in Mesoamerica. In backstrap weaving, two sets of threads are used: parallel vertical threads called the warp and horizontal threads called the weft or woof. See figure 1 below. In reality the warp threads on a backstrap loom are placed much closer to each other. The number of these warp threads placed side-by-side per inch is called the thread count. For the purpose of illustration the loom is shown with a low thread count.



Figure 1 illustrates the basic components of the backstrap loom and shows that the warp thread is actually one continuous thread wrapped in a figure eight between the two end bars. At one end of the loom is the upper end bar (A) which has a piece of rope attached to one end. This rope is wrapped around a tree or post or another stable, stationary object (B) and then attached to the opposite end of the upper end bar (C). At the other extreme of the loom is the lower end bar. The warp is strung between the upper and lower end bars. A band of leather or woven fabric (D), about four inches wide and one and a half to two feet long, is fastened on either end of the lower end bar by rope. This band of leather or fabric is placed behind the weaver's back when weaving as shown below in figure 2.

Other basic parts of the loom shown in figure 1 are used to facilitate the weaving process. These are a *shed roll*, one or more *heddles* and a *batten*. The shed roll (E) serves to separate alternating warp threads that cross over it from those beneath it and creates a *shed*, or space, through which the weft can pass. The heddle (F) is secured to the warp that passes under the shed roll. Pushing the shed roll back and lifting the heddle raises the warp attached to it and creates a second shed. When lifting the heddle, all the alternating warp threads are raised at once creating this second shed between the top and bottom warp threads through which the weft can be run. Plain-woven fabric is created when the weft is passed through the warp threads alternating between the first and second shed. Patterns can be woven into cloth by sequentially lifting additional heddles attached to differing series of warp thread. The batten (G) can be turned on its side to widen the

shed through which the weft will pass and is used continuously during the weaving process to beat the weft into place.

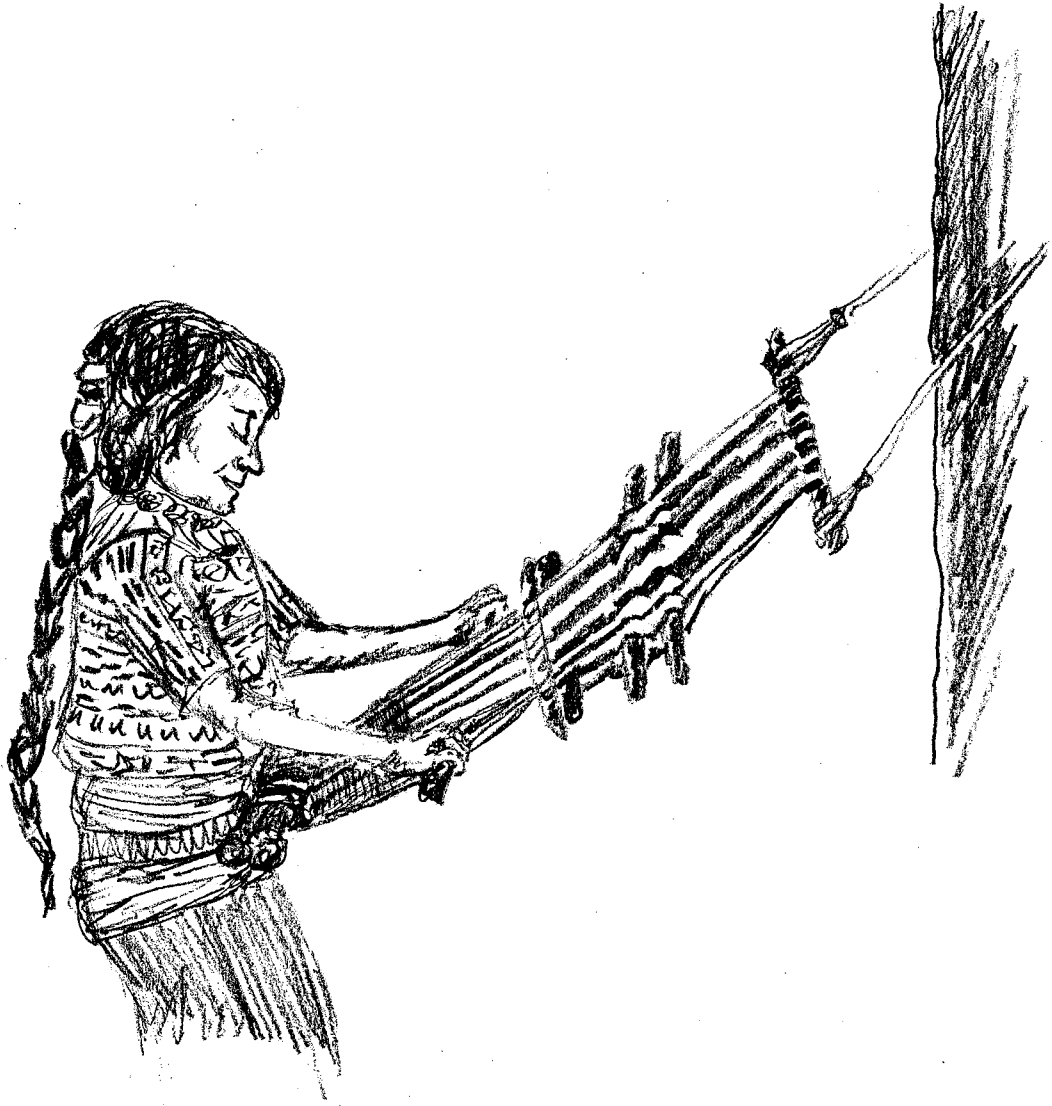


Figure 2: Woman Weaving on Backstrap Loom

When warping, or placing the warp on the loom, the thread count, or density of the warp, is higher at the edges. This increased density serves multiple purposes as explained below. Once the warp is set, the weft can be interlaced with the warp threads to produce cloth. In the simplest type of weave, a plain weave, the weft passes over the warp in a repeated pattern of over one thread and under the next, alternating this pattern for each row. This process is facilitated and expedited by the use of a heddle. As mentioned above, patterns can also be woven into cloth. This is achieved by lifting different sets of warp threads and or running different colored weft threads across the warp.

Unlike the floor or table looms of western tradition where the actual mechanics of the process is self-contained within the frame of the loom, the backstrap loom is fully integrated to the weaver who keeps the warp threads taut by pulling back on the lower end bar with the backstrap. Without this tension the warp threads collapse onto themselves and it is not possible to weave anything coherent. Thus, when weaving with the backstrap loom the weaver herself becomes part of the loom. The weaving process thus depends not only on the skill of the weaver's eyes and hands and her imagination, but also on her body as a whole. The connection of body (tissue) to weaving is literal here. I suggest that the relationship between the body of the weaver that is required for weaving and the backstrap, the oldest and most commonly used loom in usage since antiquity, allowed the body to become synonymous with text, the weaving. See page 8.

In my analysis of Menchú's *Towards a Culture of Peace*, I compare the function of the Mayan concept of *pixab*, that encompasses a holistic conception of practical and

spiritual instruction, wisdom and knowledge, to the function of the backstrap loom, and the concept of *utzil*, which encloses an all-inclusive vision of well being, harmony and balance between all forms of life, to the warp threads through which the weft is run. In this reading, the multifaceted and comprehensive concept of *utzil* is like the vertical warp threads on which the crossing “threads” of justice, peace, respect, and equality are supported. *Pixab*, acting as the loom, gives form to and supports the warp while the warp, *utzil*, provides a sustaining space for the loom. Consequently, the warp and the loom are vitally associated. Furthermore, the weaver is such an integral part of the production of the textile that she cannot be separated from the textile being made. Thus, in Maya tradition the weaver is the creator of reality and identity, and therefore an integral part of the framework necessary for the production of that identity and reality.

For example, when weaving, the weaver takes great care, pays attention, to the margins or selvages of her textile. These selvages are denser in composition than the center of the fabric. This is due to a higher thread count of the warp. The effect this has on the fabric is multiple. First, it strengthens the edges, which in turn defines the limit and the shape of the textile; and second it protects the integrity of the textile against fraying. Thus, continuing the weaving metaphor, it is in the strength of the warp, or sustaining concepts, that the tapestry of society is defined and preserved. Similarly, in Menchú’s book, it is in the strength of *utzil* that the tapestry of her discourse is defined and preserved. An alternate meaning of this metaphor is that marginalized indigenous cultures that retain values based on ancient concepts have a strength that can help define, shape and preserve the fabric of society. ⁷

Recently, several feminist critics have been attracted to the gender-specificity of weaving. For them, the praxis of weaving lends itself to many applications and is a useful method to understanding, among other things, literary practices. Although a textile is a stable fixture it holds the possibility of being unraveled and reworked into something else; it is a stability that encloses multiple possibilities and multiple significations. Additionally, a textile may be modified by linking it to another textile. In fact, the term “intertextuality”, from the Latin *intertexto* (meaning to intermingle while weaving) was first used by Julia Kristeva in her book *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) to elucidate her theory of the text as a network of sign systems in relation to other systems of meaning in a culture.⁸

Another feminist critic, Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, has stated that one of the purposes of writing her book, *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production*, was “to argue that we cannot consider the heritage of the written text without including in this history its ancestor, the textile, and that the ancient production of texts first occurred in the form of textiles” (13). Indeed, writing was invented around fifty-five hundred years ago, whereas weaving dates back between nine and twenty-five thousand years. And it is only in the last four hundred years that writing has become a widespread practice (Kruger 12). Thus, according to Kruger the origins of weaving predate and most probably influenced writing.

When writing was developed it was the practice of a few privileged men. Writing was used to record events and transactions important from the viewpoint of the men who used this method to inscribe a tangible and more permanent version of memory. Women,

however, had for millennia been creating texts. Their texts were embedded in and were the very cloth they wove. This cloth preserved the mythology, customs and identity of their people in symbols integral to their culture's religious and social beliefs and practices. Furthermore, it informed not only on the natural changes in their environment but economic, and social changes as well.⁹ In *Weaving the Word*, Kruger asserts that weaving was not marginal to the development of culture and civilization; rather, it helped shape and define them. This is especially true of weaving in Mesoamerica.

The production of cloth is labor-intensive. The tremendous amount of time its production requires makes cloth a valuable commodity. Weaving was already a well-established practice in Mesoamerica long before first European contact. In fact, every woman in Mesoamerica contributed to the weaving process. The manufacture of textiles preserved and perpetuated cultural knowledge, practice and identity in the patterns and symbols imbedded in the cloth, thereby helping shape the development and continuation of civilization. Women wove cloth not only to clothe their families but also to barter for necessary goods. Additionally, cloth was used to pay tribute to the state. Thus, women's production, especially textile production, was integral and vital to the day-to-day existence and survival of the family as well as significant in preserving identity and shaping the economy of the state.

Rigoberta Menchú has talked about this connection between women's activities and the production of knowledge in the specific case of Guatemala:

Entre los rasgos que caracterizan a la sociedad actual está el papel de la mujer, sin que por ello la emancipación de la mujer haya sido conquistada plenamente en ningún país del mundo.

El desarrollo histórico de Guatemala refleja ahora la necesidad y la irreversibilidad de la contribución activa de la mujer en la figuración del nuevo orden social guatemalteco y, modestamente, pienso que las mujeres indígenas somos ya un claro *testimonio* de ello. Este Premio Nóbel es un reconocimiento a quienes han sido, y todavía lo son en la mayor parte del mundo, las más explotadas de los explotados; las más discriminadas de los discriminados; las más marginadas de los marginados y, sin embargo, productoras de vida de conocimiento, de expresión y de riqueza.¹⁰



Among the features that characterize society today is the role of women, although the emancipation of women has not been fully achieved by any country in the world.

The historical development in Guatemala now reflects the need for the permanent, active contribution of women in the configuration of the new Guatemalan social order, of which, I humbly believe, we Indian women are already a clear example. This Nobel Prize is a recognition to those who have been and still are in most parts of the world, the most exploited among the exploited; the most discriminated among the discriminated, the most marginalized among the marginalized, but nevertheless those that are producers of a world of knowledge, of expression and richness.

In her Nobel acceptance speech Menchú declares that the new Guatemalan social order must include women and puts up indigenous women as an example of the role women can play in the formation and function of a new and better society. Indigenous women, in spite of cruel conditions and against logic make meaningful and sustaining contributions to their society; there is no doubt, as Menchú states, that they produce knowledge, expression and riches. Textiles are perhaps the best example of this production of cultural meaning in the Maya world. The production of these meaning-laden textiles by Maya women occurs in visible, public spaces. Unlike the floor loom of European origin that by necessity dictates women be confined to inner spaces, out of sight as they weave, the backstrap loom is used by Maya women to create their texts in full view of society.

Their contribution to society and the culture is both visible and impacting. Menchú advocates following the example of Maya women, that is, the visible and active participation of *all* Guatemalan women in the creation of a new society that will transform the country.

Textile production, as noted earlier, was (and is) multifunctional. In the Maya world, specifically, it preserves and perpetuates cultural identity, and has significant economic value. And as I hope to have shown, its impact transcends the physical production of textiles by serving, for example, as the structural basis of discursive practices. Viewed from this perspective, we can revalorize the role of women in general (and Menchú in particular) in the creation of a society where their work creates, sustains and transmits cultural principles and meaning as much as economic and political value.

CHAPTER 2

LIFE AND WORK OF RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ

On December 10, 1992, Rigoberta Menchú, the survivor of genocide and of several attempts on her life, stood before the king and queen of Sweden and a host of international dignitaries to accept the Nobel Prize for Peace. The first indigenous person to be recognized with a Nobel Prize, Menchú was also, at 33 years of age, the youngest person to be so honored. The Norwegian Nobel Committee was well aware of the symbolic significance of giving this honor to an indigenous person on the fifth centennial anniversary of the first contact and subsequent colonization of the indigenous peoples of the Americas.¹¹ As Menchú expressed her gratitude for the recognition, and acceptance in the name of all indigenous people across five centuries who have been part of the struggle for a life of peace, acceptance and equality, and conveyed what the Peace Prize meant to her personally, she took the opportunity to inform the world of her country and its people. Menchú spoke about the rich cultural heritage and beauty of her country, the accomplishments of the Maya peoples and the present conditions in Guatemala that motivated her years-long struggle and once again brought international attention to the deplorable situation still existing in her country. Yet the indictment of her beloved country also held a message of hope for the future, a vision full of possibilities and a call to action toward a better future for every citizen of her country and for the rest of humanity as well.

Rigoberta Menchú was born on January 9, 1959 in the Q'uiiché region of Guatemala, the sixth of nine children born to Juana Tum K'otoja' and Vicente Menchú Pérez, both Maya Indians. Menchú grew up in a close-knit community where neighbors

were part of her extended family. The Menchú family lived in Chimel, a small settlement in the highlands of Guatemala, where both parents served as leaders of the community. Vicente, a farmer and activist for land rights, found himself many times confronting the authorities to speak out for basic rights for himself and for others. Juana, a midwife and medicine woman, served the needs of the community and the surrounding area. From infancy Rigoberta had the example of leadership and responsibility from both of her parents. Like most Mayan peasant families, the Menchú family scraped out an existence on the land they had to farm. The land they and the few families of Chimel worked did not produce enough to sustain them throughout the year. Therefore, in order to eat and supplement their income, the Menchú family, as many other Mayan families, would make annual migrations to the large plantations located on the western coast of Guatemala to work as laborers picking cotton and coffee. There, even the small children worked for meager wages. As a result of her experiences, when Menchú was a teenager she became involved in social reform activities through the Catholic Church, was active in the women's rights movement,¹² and in 1979 joined the Committee of the Peasant Union (CUC)¹³.

Tragedy would soon violently and unexpectedly hit her family. The following year her youngest brother was killed by the Guatemalan army, her father was burned alive when government security forces stormed the Spanish embassy where he and other peasants were protesting, and her mother was murdered after being raped and tortured. Consequently, Menchú became increasingly active in the CUC, joined the radical 31st of January Popular Front ¹⁴ and taught herself Spanish as well as other Mayan languages in

an effort to educate the Guatemalan peasant population on how to resist massive military oppression.

In 1981 Menchú had to go into hiding and later fled to Mexico. In Mexico she became part of the exiled resistance to the Guatemalan dictatorships and continued her struggle for the rights of indigenous peasants. In 1982 Menchú helped found the opposition body, the United Representation of the Guatemalan Opposition (RUOG)¹⁵ That same year she was interviewed by anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos Debray in Paris and out of those recorded interviews Burgos Debray wrote *I, Rigoberta Menchú*.

Rigoberta Menchú had, at the tender age of 21, come to play a prominent role worldwide as an advocate of human and indigenous rights. However, in 1980 this outspoken defender of human rights was one of thousands of indigenous refugees fleeing for their life from Guatemala where the military government had a general policy of genocide against its indigenous population. Realizing that pressure on the Guatemalan government from the world community was necessary in order to have indigenous demands for decent living conditions, basic rights and justice be heard, Menchú took her story to the outside world to try to draw attention to the situation in her country. She also used established means of affecting change such as describing what was happening in her country to people who had political influence, to diplomats at the United Nations, and to those of Western democracies who might be able to help by putting pressure on the rightist military regime in Guatemala. However, the politics of the Cold War had created an international bipolar dynamic in which the fear of socialism and communism “justified” Western backing of repressive right-wing military dictatorships like those in

Guatemala. In this setting few in power were willing to listen to indictments against the Guatemalan government and no one was willing to act. The failure of this strategy to end the repression and genocide led Menchú to seek another solution. So it was in January of 1982, in a new attempt to break the silence surrounding the social and political situation in Guatemala, that Rigoberta Menchú gave her *testimonio* to Elizabeth Burgos, an anthropologist, in a series of taped interviews. The interviews were arranged and written up by Burgos who published Menchú's testimony in Spain in 1983 under the title *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, listing herself as author and excluding Menchú's.

In this *testimonio* Menchú describes her culture, her community and their way of life and exposes the atrocities being perpetrated against the indigenous population of her country. She explains that although this is her story it is also the story of an entire people who have had the same experience. Until the publication of this book the world community was largely unaware of the genocide perpetrated by the U.S.-backed military government of Guatemala against its indigenous citizens. However, a year after its initial publication in Spanish, the book was published in French and English and has since been translated into German, Italian, Dutch, Japanese, Danish, Norwegian, Russian and Arabic, thus shattering the silence on the situation in Guatemala. Additionally, it was incorporated into the educational curricula across the United States. Primarily as a result of this book world attention was focused on Guatemala. The pressure put on the Guatemalan government by the world community made it accept the United Nations-

sponsored peace talks which eventually ended the armed conflict between government forces and insurgents in December of 1996

In *Against Literature* Beverly describes testimony as a first-person narrative that revolves around personal experience. Beverly goes on to explain that *testimonio* relates events experienced or personally seen that the narrator wants to record in order to leave a testimony of what happened and to denounce problems of repression, poverty, exploitation or subalternity. Moreover, the situation described by the narrator is representative of a group or social class and includes the voices of many. Testimony is the medium used by the marginalized person who does not have a voice in mainstream society. It is not a fiction, and by nature, *testimonio* has a political bent.¹⁶ In *Authoring Ethnicized Subjects*, Arias writes:

A *testimonio* was assumed to exercise a formative influence and thus play a pedagogical role analogous to that of slave narratives in the United States before and during the Civil War. This role was necessarily contingent, since it exceeded the symbolic dimensions from which it originated, marked by violence and conflict. Inasmuch as the genre was developed as a means of empowering subaltern subjects and hearing their voices, one can hardly be surprised that it was a tool for political agency. (76-77)

Testimonio, therefore, derives its political character from exposing and denouncing the structure and policies of a government or state that permits the situation it describes to persist. Menchú's first book reveals and denounces the repression, poverty, and exploitation backed by the Guatemalan government. Moreover, the situation it describes is representative of a large sector of Guatemalan society. Her *testimonio*, then, is typical of the genre.

Although testimonial literature dates back hundreds of years, *testimonio* as the genre we know presently began to coalesce during the cultural and political movements of the 1960s. Further recognition of *testimonio* came when Cuba's Casa de las Américas began awarding a prize in its annual literary contest in this category in 1970. Because of its wide distribution Menchú's *testimonio* had a significant impact in Latin America and even popularized the *testimonio* genre beyond Latin America.

Since the publication of Menchú's *testimonio* there have been journalists such as David Horowitz and New York Times reporter Larry Rohrter who have tried to discredit her account.¹⁷ More recently, in 1999, a North American anthropologist, David Stoll, published *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of all Poor Guatemalans*, a book calling into question many of the facts in Menchú's biographical book. Although Stoll himself has failed to disclose sources or corroborate the facts that he presents, his book has generated an ongoing controversy about the truthfulness of Menchú's testimonial account. However, what Menchú actually said cannot be corroborated or challenged because Burgos, the anthropologist who interviewed Menchú for *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, has never released the tapes of the interviews and has kept the copyrights for herself. Menchú neither authorized the version of the story that came out nor has she received any royalties from the book.

Numerous essays have been written about Rigoberta Menchú herself and of the controversy surrounding her *testimonio*. Guatemalan author Arturo Arias has written extensively on this subject and edited *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* in 2001, an anthology of essays dealing with the controversy surrounding *I, Rigoberta Menchú*.

Remarkably, however, a critical analysis of the corpus of Menchú's other written works has not, to this date, been performed. This essay does not attempt to add significantly to the debate over Menchú's *testimonio* nor will it engage in the debate between Stoll and Arias. Instead, the intent of this essay is to focus on a text that Menchú herself has authored, *Towards a Culture of Peace*.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT

Indigenous textual production parallels indigenous history, a history that is distinct from that of the *criollos*, or descendants of Europeans born in the Americas. While the history of *criollos* is that of the conquest, the colony and independence, the history of the indigenous peoples of Latin America follows a separate path. Martin Lienhard in *La voz y su huella: Escritura y conflicto étnico-social en América Latina 1492-1988* suggests the following five stages 1) preconquest and first contact; 2) conquest and colonization; 3) insurrections and reforms of the eighteenth century; 4) second conquest or establishment of systems of exploitation in the nineteenth century and lastly, 5) modern ethno social movements and intellectual indigenism (Lienhard 55-6). In its course paralleling history, indigenous textual production reflects and responds to contemporary needs and the socio-historical context in which it is produced. The type of literary production varies significantly from one historical juncture to the next, and within each period, from one region and ethnic group to another. Thus, in the various regions of the Americas, literary production responds to the similar but also particular situation of indigenous peoples. For example, in the case of the Maya, their conquest came much later and was less decisive than that of the Aztecs. Consequently, Maya textual production retains preconquest elements well into the colonial period. Nevertheless, the overall general historical junctures were the same throughout Latin America. Therefore,

to set a literary foundation, in order to contextualize Menchú's work, it is necessary to consider not only indigenous textual production as a whole during these five stages of history, but also Mayan textual production specifically.

In the following paragraphs I summarize each of the five historical periods following Lienhard's description in *La voz y su huella* (55-93) as well as indigenous textual production in general. Within this general historical and literary context I deal specifically with the rich, abundant and varied Maya literary tradition that encompasses more than 2000 years of history. This tradition is comprised by sacred texts, fables and poems extracted from the oral tradition, historical narratives, songs and incantations, prophecies, dramatic literature as well as contemporary works.

3.1 Preconquest and First Contact

Writing and the concept of making a tangible recording of information was known to the indigenous peoples of America long before 1492. However, the means, type and purpose of production of texts were to change with the coming of the Europeans. Writing to record information or to communicate was an integral part of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican societies. In fact the Olmec, Nahua and Maya cultures used writing to record historic events, religious matters and business transactions. The Nahua and Maya inscribed this information in various forms, one of which was in book form. These books or codices were in use for many centuries before European contact. The vast majority of preconquest literary production in the form codices, however, is lost to us because of wholesale burning of entire libraries by overzealous Catholic missionaries. Only a few of

these codices survived. Consequently, much of what is known about the Maya codices and their contents is based on glyphs that were cut in stone and painted on pots and cave walls.

As integral as writing was to preconquest societies, only a few elite participated in graphic documentation. Conversely, among the general populace the tradition of oral transmission of customs, mythology, genealogy, history and folklore predominated. This oral tradition was to play a significant role in the preservation and continuation of indigenous chronicals, rituals and customs and serve as the foundation for written texts.

3.2 Conquest and Colonization

The arrival of the Spaniards in the 15th century initiates a transition period in which the history and customs of the indigenous centers of power are transformed from their oral form into a written account. During this time precontact annals and other texts written in native script were also transcribed into the Latin alphabet. As part of the venture of colonization, young indigenous men from the ruling class were taught Spanish, Latin, reading, writing and Church doctrine by Catholic friars. Eventually, a generation of indigenous men was trained in the use of the Latin alphabet and the Spanish language. This training was meant to be a means of indoctrination into the Catholic faith as well as a method to acculturate and assimilate the young men and through them the remainder of the indigenous people for the purpose of furthering the project of colonization.

However, the education given the indigenous youth in the project to indoctrinate them had unexpected ancillary effects. The new skills empowered them, giving them the

means to lodge formal protests as well as document ancient rights and possessions in writing and in Spanish. One example is that of Pablo Nazareo a gentleman of noble lineage from Xaltocan. Nazareo writes three letters to the king of Spain outlining his contribution in promoting the Christian faith and translating Catholic texts into Nahuatl. He lists the towns from which his family had rights of tribute and documents his genealogy and that of his wife who was related to Motecuhzoma. Nazareo declares his petition for goods and privileges is based, not on his accomplishments in helping the project of colonization, but on his and his wife's noble lineage and his ancestral tributary rights.

Indigenous men were not the only ones to take advantage of empowering skills learned from the colonizer. Women also participated in textual production in the form of petitions, complaints and testaments, albeit through male mediators. Their actions were precipitated by injustices perpetuated against them, or a desire to protect their material wealth. Indigenous women were subjected to exploitation of their work and often abused physically and sexually. Adding to their troubles was the practice of being held accountable for their husbands' debts and crimes. It was common practice among local indigenous or Spanish authorities to jail an indigenous woman for debt or crimes committed by an absent husband (Haskett 148). Haskett further adds in his essay, *Activist or Adulteress?*:

Vigorously facing life's misfortunes, the region's indigenous women had petitions written on their behalf to complain of the unjust arrest or mistreatment of their husbands by others, or of their own abuse, and sometimes rape, at the hands of indigenous men, Spanish civilians, civil officers, and even friars and priests. (148)

Maya women additionally participated in textual production in the form of last will and testaments in a desire to protect and preserve their material property (Hunt 232).

Indigenous men with their acquired skills in the use of the Latin alphabet and the Spanish language, were able to write official complaints to colonial representatives of the king of Spain and to the king himself that documented and protested injustices and human rights violations. They were also able to record the boundaries of their ancestral territories and their tributary rights. Putting the boundaries and tributes into writing served at least two purposes. The first was a symbolic one of affirming or confirming of their identity, their genealogy and ancestral territory. The second was a practical, pragmatic purpose of legitimizing their claims to their lands, that is, to define and establish the boundaries of what was theirs by tradition long before the coming of the colonizers. Empowered by the means intended to acculturate, assimilate and domesticate them, these men used their writing skills to write letters of protest, demand, and solicitation to Colonial/Royal authorities thus undermining the colonial landholders. They created documents that established their identity and confirmed their land rights in a form of resistance thereby recording the collective history of a people.

Parallel to the production of these written texts were the continued production of oral and woven texts. During the conquest and colonization the ancient oral tradition continued to develop and operate. In this non-privileged form of textual production women actively participated. Additionally, women continued to record a collective social narrative in cloth, via weaving textiles. The cloth they wove inscribed the

mythology, customs and identity of their people in symbols integral to their culture's religious and social beliefs and practices.

In Mesoamerica textual production continued as a medium for maintaining identity. Postconquest lowland Maya develop two simultaneous traditions. One was public and overt, intended to record and present indigenous affairs to the outside. Petitions, complaints, testaments and other legal documents are examples of this. In the 16th century these documents show an intersection of indigenous and European rhetorical elements and the use of pictorial elements which, over the course of the colonial period, disappears. The other tradition that develops is created exclusively for the indigenous communities. The *Popol Vuh* and *Chilam Balam* form part of this covert tradition. The *Popol Vuh*, likened to a bible of the Maya, containing myths, legends, history and ethics, is clearly based on Mayan oral tradition. It was transcribed after the conquest, in the 16th century, into its written form using Latin script. This "Bible of the New World" and the books of the Chilam Balam priests enclose the wisdom and worldview of the Maya. They are considered classics as they deal with origins and first beginnings and thus are foundational to the culture. After the conquest, Maya textual production reflects their sustained and relatively successful resistance to colonization. In the Yucatan peninsula, for example, the continued production of codices in the pre-Hispanic style is maintained well into the colonial period.

3.3 Insurrections and Reforms

In the 18th century indigenous textual production expressed ethnic identity and pride as a form of resistance. Petitions by the indigenous leadership to the King of Spain reflect the emerging consciousness of a peasant class as these petitions denounce the ruin of indigenous people due to colonization. Indigenous writing is no longer solely from the viewpoint of the privileged indigenous elite but rather from a more general populace viewpoint. For example, in Peru an increase in textual production preceded armed uprisings. Also produced were poetry inspired by the oral tradition, plays (*Ollantay*, for example, written in Peru in Quechua), and letters of protest to the various colonial authorities (Lienhard, 75). By this time the indigenous population had adopted the European style of written expression.

Concurrently in Mesoamerica a new genre of writing, that of medical texts, started among the Maya. These texts included European medical lore that had been translated into Maya and were interwoven with indigenous curing practices (Karttunen, 432). Additionally, at this time the need for documentation of status and indigenous land rights against the pressure of a growing European population was met with the (re)creation of documents. For example, the chronicle of *Yaxkukul*, a Maya text, purports to be an 18th century “copy” of an eyewitness account of the conquest of Yucatan and was offered as evidence in support of a claim to *hidalgo* status. Similarly, the need for documentation supporting land rights resulted in the production of fake land titles and a market for these folk documents (Karttunen, 433).

3.4 Second Conquest

In the 19th century there were indigenous uprisings throughout Latin America as a response to the new republics' attempts to destroy indigenous communal land holdings. The first conquest in the 16th century converted indigenous populations into semi-autonomous subclasses but recognized communal landholding by individual groups. This second offensive, however, sought to destroy this economic base of the indigenous populations and thus threatened their very survival. As a response, two forms of scriptural practice which had fallen into disuse at the beginning of the century were revived: letters of protest and transcription of the oral tradition into written text. Those signing the letters, however, no longer claimed legitimacy by reason of their pre-Hispanic noble lineage but by their leadership abilities. Fittingly, there is a marked change in the character of these letters, which do not plead but rather demand (Lienhard, 81-2).

Maya textual production during this historical junction includes sacred, dramatic and political texts. Separatist Maya Indians created their own society and produced a sacred literature based on the divine utterances of the "Talking Cross" after *La Guerra de las Castas*, the war of classes between Ladinos and Maya Indians in the Yucatan peninsula. This period of upheaval also saw the transcription of the *Rabinal Achí*, a piece of dramatic literature of precontact origin in the form of a play. It contains aspects of Maya life, attitudes about war, sacrifice and loyalty, and was meant to record historical events as well as to teach and entertain. Political texts such as the *Title of the Lords of Totonocapan*, a narrative paralleling the *Popol Vuh*, tells the story of the Quiche nobles obtaining the insignia of authority from Nacxit Quetzalcoatl and settling in their land. Derived from the oral tradition and indigenous codices, it is written in support of

indigenous claims to communal land. What is evident is that the textual production of this period addresses the contemporary needs of the Maya.

3.5 Modern Movements

Latin America's profound socio-economic changes in the first decades of the 20th century and its further integration into the Euro-American world system affected the relations between hegemonic societies of European origin and those subordinate societies of prehispanic lineage. In terms of indigenous literary production, a diversity of new literary practices was created and used along with old ones. The resultant works were often times executed in indigenous languages. In the 20th century, literary production includes the transcription of oral narratives and folktales, poetry in indigenous languages, letters and manifestos, as well as fictional literature such as novels and short stories.

The traditions of Mayan literary production and of indigenous literature as a whole are characterized by their predominantly male authorship in part because it was the men who were educated in Western literary traditions. In the introduction to *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, Susan Schroeder writes that Indian males used writing and other skills acquired from the Spanish to conserve key elements of their culture. In native languages or Spanish or both, they produced testaments, petitions, censuses, bills of sale, and *poder* (power of attorney) and *cabildo* (city council) records (8). However,

Schroeder also explains:

Few, if any of the extant indigenous sources were actually written by Indian women, although there is evidence that women participated in the manufacture of pictographic manuscripts during the pre-Hispanic period. Unfortunately, this charge did not carry over to the colonial era (4).

In this predominantly male arena, however, indigenous women also produced texts in the public as well as private spheres. “The agency of women is reflected repeatedly in such documents, as they carried out business transactions, registered protests against transgressions, or hired notaries to record their wills so as to secure their legacies for their heirs” (Schroeder 8). In the Maya region of Mexico, indigenous women took advantage of the judicial system and had wills and petitions drawn up. Although they were the authors of such documents in the sense that they initiated the inscription of their wishes, requests and protests, these texts that entered into the official and public record were mediated by male scribes. However, there were other types of texts over which they had sole authorship. These were the stories, myths, and cultural accounts of the oral tradition and, just as important, the weaving of textiles. Every indigenous woman wove regardless of social status¹⁸. As is explained previously in the theoretical framework, textile production was central to the social and cultural economy and formed a type of historical and identifying narrative.

Although women’s influence in the public sector has been considered minimal, indigenous women influenced politics significantly, if indirectly, through the men who were allowed to hold offices in town and parish administration. They also influenced politics through participation in public rioting by adding critical mass through their presence. For example, in southern Mexico when indigenous rebellions broke out in

response to the abusive *repartimiento* system¹⁹, the appropriation of women's cotton textile production and illicit trading in these, women participated by the hundreds. William B. Taylor states in *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion*, that "Militiamen called in by Spanish authorities were likely to encounter hundreds of women brandishing spears and kitchen knives or cradling rocks in their skirts (116). And, in 1693, in the riot that broke out in Tuxla, Chiapas over the *repartimientos*, women were prominent in the mob that stoned to death the governor, the *alcalde mayor* (chief magistrate) and another royal official (Gosner, 228). Finally, women influenced politics and society through their active participation in ritualized public feasts (Gosner, 223). Food and drink central to these feasts were prepared by the women and were also obtained in part by the sale of textiles, a commodity produced by the women; it was women's work, then, which made possible the acquisition and preparation of the food and drink central to these communal feasts. Therefore, though perhaps not as visibly as the men, Maya women were influential in the construction of public values.

Rigoberta Menchú's work both parallels and deviates from the post-contact tradition of indigenous textual production. Similar to other autochthonous people throughout the history of Mesoamerica, Menchú did not have the privilege of a formal education in childhood. Furthermore, her most famous protest, her *testimonio*, in the form of a book, was mediated by anthropologist Burgos, the contemporary equivalent of colonial scribes. Like Indian women of early Mexico who broke the silence on unjust situations by exposing them via mediated written petitions to the government, Menchú also exposes injustices and breaks silences in her mediated biography. From that point,

however, her writing has been of her own authorship. As did the first generations of indigenous men after the conquest, Menchú uses the tools of writing and language of the oppressor to empower herself and her people by exposing and protesting injustices.

Conversely, however, Menchú goes against more than five hundred years of indigenous literary tradition by being a woman author, entering directly into a male-dominated public sphere, addressing subjects traditionally proscribed to women, and directing her discourse to an international audience. Originally concerned with the situation confronting her people and her country, Menchú has gone beyond national and regional concerns to address global problems. Her work on behalf of peace includes both oral and written texts. Concerning her written textual production, Menchú has written books for the general public to expound on her personal views and to educate on Maya ways. What's more, she continuously writes letters of protest or solidarity to the most powerful heads of states about local as well as global issues.

Indeed, after the publication of the biography that launched her into the international scene, Menchú has authored a great variety of works. Her prolific production reflects the evolution of her dynamic role as an advocate and defender of peace. She has written articles for the printed media, for example journals and other periodicals, and the interviews she has granted form the basis of additional articles and videos. Many of her numerous lectures, speeches and interviews also have been filmed. Some of these, in fact, can be found on the Internet. In addition to writing introductions to books, Menchú has collaborated on books and authored some on her own. The first of her coauthored books addressing indigenous peoples' issues was *Voice of Indigenous*

Peoples: Native People Address the United Nations, published in 1994 (Ewen, et al). This was followed by *Return of the Indian: Conquest and Revival in the Americas* in 1996, written with Phillip Wearne; *A Mayan Struggle: Portrait of a Guatemalan People in Danger* in conjunction with Vince Heptig in 1997 and *Searching for Equity: Conceptions of Justice and Equity in Peasant Irrigation* in 1998, coauthored with Rutgerd Boelens and Gloria Davila. In 1992 Menchú authored *El clamor de la tierra: luchas campesinas en la historia reciente de Guatemala*, a history of indigenous resistance to cultural, political, social and economic oppression in Guatemala. Then, in 2001 Menchú published *Limin, una niña de Chimel*, a book suitable for children wherein she recounts fables that were part of her childhood. Her latest book, *El vaso de miel*, released in October 2003, is also a children's book of Maya legends. In 2002 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of winning the Nobel Prize and the work she has carried out as a Nobel laureate, Menchú published *Hacia una cultura de paz (Towards a Culture of Peace)*, an anthology of speech excerpts taken from speeches she pronounced during the preceding decade.

Out of this varied and abundant corpus of works authored directly by Menchú I will be focusing on this last text. I will use it to examine and determine the nature of Menchú's discourse concerning the creation of a Culture of Peace because as a diachronic sampling of Menchú's work it will illustrate the nature of her work as a whole, that is, give a more complete elucidation of her discourse which is the primary object of this study.

**RECEIVED
AS
FOLLOWS**

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF PEACE

Towards a Culture of Peace gathers together excerpts of speeches Menchú pronounced over the decade 1992 to 2002 relating to creating a World Culture of Peace. Consequently, this book can be included as part of the Culture of Peace movement. The Culture of Peace initiative within the United Nations (UN) began to coalesce in 1997 when the UN passed a resolution proclaiming the year 2000 as the “International Year for the Culture of Peace”. This was followed by additional resolutions pertaining to the creation of a Culture of Peace. In November of 1998 the United Nations passed a resolution proclaiming the period 2001-2010 as the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World”. It was preceded in January of that same year by the passing a resolution stating:

The culture of peace is based on the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations and on respects for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral approach to preventing violence and conflicts, and efforts aimed at the creation of conditions for peace and its consolidation.²⁰

The Culture of Peace Project is a transdisciplinary project of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that seeks to promote values, attitudes and behaviors in people that will lead them to seek peaceful solutions to

problems. UNESCO's project engages a wide range of partners hoping to advance a global Culture of Peace through development of innovative activities and projects that foster this new culture. In October of 1999 the UN general assembly adopted, not coincidentally, the manifesto for this Culture of Peace project entitled "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace", resolution 53/243. This manifesto describes the nature and purpose of a Culture of Peace, how it can be attained, what is required and who needs to be involved in creating it. It addresses the same issues Menchú mentions in her 1992 Nobel lecture and proposes some of the same strategies Menchú speaks about in speeches throughout the intervening years. For instance, both the manifesto and Menchú identify social and economic inequality, impunity, development, and racism, among others, as issues needing to be addressed in the process of creating a Culture of Peace. And both propose the same strategies such as education, peaceful dialogue and the inclusion of all people, particularly women, in the process. Menchú's foundation, Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum, has signed the manifesto and is a participant in the Culture of Peace movement. In fact, the movement's website, http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_navig.htm has a link to Menchú's foundation under the "who is involved" section.

However, the speech excerpts in *Towards a Culture of Peace* and Menchú's Nobel lecture in 1992 show that Menchú was envisioning possibilities as she speaks to urgent issues such as racism, inequality, justice, development and democracy and was suggesting approaches that could be used in the solving of these critical problems and in the creation of a Culture of Peace many years before UNESCO's formal declaration.

Nevertheless, because Menchú has been involved in various committees of the United Nations, mutual influencing is a possibility. However, determining the exact nature of this intersection, although interesting, is not a primary concern of the present work. It is possible to assert, though, that Menchú's book is paralleled and supported by the Culture of Peace movement.

In *Towards a Culture of Peace* Menchú includes a brief biography followed by 18 sections of thematic excerpts from speeches. These excerpts are framed by an introduction to the Mayan concepts *utzil* and *pixab* before and a conclusion where Menchú restates her vision and hopes for a future Culture of Peace. In the introduction Menchú defines and explains *utzil* and *pixab*, the two concepts which underlie her own and the Maya's worldview. For the purpose of clarifying these and corroborating Menchú's elucidation, other sources were consulted in search of a pan-Mayan definition of these two complex concepts. The explanations of *utzil* and *pixab* provided by two of the sources consulted are juxtaposed to Menchú's description below.

4.1 Two Maya concepts: *Utzil* and *Pixab*

Utzil and *pixab* are the filters through which Menchú understands, experiences and addresses the world. To open the book with an introduction to these concepts is a reminder that although Menchú has mastered the Spanish language and is quite articulate in expressing her thoughts in Spanish, her worldview is solidly Mayan.

Utzil deals with a comprehensive well-being based on peace and balanced

relationships while *pixab* addresses a holistic version of instruction. This holistic and integrated vision of instruction supports and guarantees a holistic peace, that is, *utzil*, while *utzil* assures a space for *pixab*. Thus the relationship between *utzil* and *pixab* is circular, complete and mutually supporting.

Judith M. Maxwell of Tulane University, an authority in Maya linguistics, and Juan José Guerrero Pérez, physician and life-long resident of Cobán, Guatemala and a speaker of Maya-Kekchí, confirm the meanings of these two concepts that embrace a comprehensive way of understanding the nature of life on this planet and the relationships between all things. While Maxwell offers an epistemological definition, Guerrero Pérez gives usage and Menchú provides a philosophical/theoretical explanation.

4.1.1 *Utzil*

According to Maxwell: (personal communication)

Utzil can be loosely translated as ‘favor’. However, *utzil* can vary from context to context, like any word. The root *űtz* in Kaqchikel, and *utz* in K’iché mean simply ‘good, well, okay’. The *//-il//* suffix makes an abstract noun out of the verb/adverb form, something like ‘goodness’.

While Guerrero Pérez adds: (personal communication)

Utzil viene de *favor*, pero va más allá. *Utzil* se refiere también al favor en el sentido cosmovisionario de la creación... el favor de la vida, el favor de la creación, el favor de la existencia, del aire, de la luz, etc. y se refiere a la bondad y a lo bondadoso, la presencia de la bondad entre nosotros, en una imagen no real pero que allí está.



Utzil comes from favor, but goes beyond it. *Utzil* also refers to favor in the Cosmo visionary sense of creation... the favor of life, the favor of creation, the favor of existence, of air, of light, etc. and it refers to goodness and goodwill, the presence of benevolence between us, in an intangible but real image.

And Menchú herself explains:

En idioma maya-quiché, *utzil* es el bien en todos los ordenes y las dimensiones de la existencia. Implica un código de ética basado en el respeto y en el equilibrio para garantizar la coexistencia armoniosa entre todas las formas de vida del planeta, donde la diversidad cultural debe ser el espejo de la diversidad natural. Cada vez que se arrasa un bosque, se violenta una forma de vida, se pierde un idioma, se corta una forma de civilización... se comete un genocidio y se alteran todas las reglas naturales de la convivencia. Cualquier tipo de guerra y de violencia es un atentado contra la paz integral, trastorna todos los estilos de vida y rompe el equilibrio de la humanidad. (7)



In the Maya-Quiché language, *utzil* is well-being in all the aspects and dimensions of existence. It implies a code of ethics based on respect and balance in order to guarantee the harmonious coexistence between all forms of planetary life where cultural diversity should be the reflection of the diversity in nature. Each time a forest is destroyed, violence is committed against a form of life, a language is lost, a form of civilization is cut off... genocide is committed and all the natural laws of coexistence are altered. Any kind of war or violence is a crime against comprehensive peace; it disrupts every life form and ruptures the balance of humanity.

Menchú explains that the word *utzil* signifies well-being on all levels of existence; it addresses all aspects of being. It is a code of ethics based on respect and equality so there is a balance and harmony in the relationships between all living beings: self, others, nature. *Utzil* also implies a natural diversity. This concept of an all-encompassing well-being incorporates a sense of a peace that also is comprehensive. There is a circular nature to these concepts and to Mayan philosophy and understanding where all things are

interconnected, much like the textiles woven by Maya women where multicolored threads are interwoven into one cloth that bears a complex but balanced design.

4.1.2 *Pixab*:

According to Maxwell: (personal communication)

Pixab is ‘advice, counsel’. Only certain persons are socially suited to give this kind of serious advice to someone: spiritual leaders, heads of household, sponsors at rites of passage, or those participating in instruction to those about to undertake new duties such as those of a wedded person, or those of a civil-religious position.

Guerrero Pérez says: (personal communication)

Pixab significa concejo, pero también consejo. Siempre se refiere a aconsejar, pero es en relación a reunión de ancianos o sabios que reunidos en concejo dirimen sobre algo o alguien.



Pixab means council, but also counsel. It always refers to to advise, but with respect to a gathering of elders or wise ones that gather in a council that makes a resolution about something or someone.

And Menchú explains:

Pixab es otro concepto Maya-Quiché, que reúne una visión integral de la enseñanza, en donde la educación, la salud, la política, el uso y el disfrute de los recursos naturales y materiales; los conocimientos y el saber; la espiritualidad y la cultura ocurren en un mismo espacio. No es posible separar y fragmentar la relación entre uno y otro. Los principios de una visión integral de la enseñanza que aún viven y practican los pueblos indígenas sustentan y garantizan la paz integral, *utzil*. (7)



Pixab is another Maya-Quiché concept that unites a holistic vision of instruction where education, health, politics, the use and enjoyment of material and natural resources, knowledge and wisdom; spirituality and culture exist in the same space. It is not possible to separate and fragment the relationship between one and the other. The principles of a comprehensive vision of instruction that indigenous peoples still live and practice sustain and guarantee a comprehensive peace, *utzil*.

The concept of *Pixab* gives a comprehensive view of instruction that includes education, health, politics, use and enjoyment of natural and economic resources, knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, and culture and interweaves them in as part of an inseparable whole. *Pixab*, a holistic view of instruction supports and guarantees a comprehensive peace, that is, *utzil*.

Both of these concepts together address the intellect, the emotion and the intent or will of individuals. Expressed in a different manner, they speak to the head, the heart and the hands, that is, the entire individual, thus implying complete involvement just as the Maya weaver is completely absorbed into the process of creating.

4.2 Speech Excerpts

As stated previously, each of the 18 sections in the book addresses issues directly connected with *utzil* or *pixab* or a combination of the two. These concepts, the foundation of Menchú's discourse, act as the loom and warp that sustain, hold together and simultaneously keep distinct the cross threads, or weft, that run through them. On the other hand the specific issues Menchú addresses in the 18 sections are the weft threads in the discourse she weaves. With these weft threads, supported by the warp of *utzil* and the loom of *pixab*, Menchú creates motifs, patterns and designs for a World Culture of Peace.

For convenience and clarity of reference I have given numbers and titles to the separate sections, which are not part of the original text. To the right of the title line I have indicated the principal Maya concept(s) on which the section is founded. All English translations are my own.

1. The Earth (*utzil*)

Here Menchú reminds us of our relationship to the earth, that we do not own the earth. Rather, we are a part of it and like the other elements of nature have a part in the equation that must find a balance. We must use the Earth's resources responsibly and give back to the Earth even as we take from it in order to maintain terrestrial balance and the rhythms of life on Earth. That is, we must take what we need of the Earth and also give back so that the rhythm of the rain and the cycles of the seasons, the winds and the insects and the birds can pollinate, and so that every living being can be guaranteed a universal communal respiration.

This passage relates to *utzil*, to balance, well-being, harmony and respect. It is a reminder of our place in a rich and complex system. It is also a call to humility since we are not above nor beyond the other components of nature. This excerpt reminds us of our responsibility as part of the whole. The balance of give and take speaks of a simple or "tabby" weave, sometimes over, sometimes under, all in balance. The resulting cloth is the most basic of all woven patterns, like the most basic necessities of life.

2. Planetary and Human Ecology (utzil)

There is a warning in this passage that the present path we are on is putting the planet on a course of self destruction and risks the rights of the present inhabitants as well as those of future generations. In this excerpt Menchú links the ecological imbalance of the planet that is leading to its self-destruction to the imbalance of power among people. She asserts that there must be a mutual respect among individuals and all peoples and everyone should be active in making the decisions that will affect our common future. Menchú states that this different approach on how to understand and live in peace requires us to construct a new Culture of Peace. Dialogue and negotiation are the tools to be used to reach solutions to the inequalities, that is, the “structural conflicts” that are the causes of so much suffering. Menchú is stating that with a mutual respect of rights and dignity there will be inclusive dialogue and negotiation; everyone must have a role in making the changes for the common future. This calls for a sharing of decision-making power at the highest levels where globally-impacting decisions are made.

Utzil underlies this passage that addresses well-being and balance in the relationships between people and the planet as well as interpersonal ones. The connection Menchú makes between the imbalance of humans with the planet and the imbalance between people is not one usually drawn in the Western world. From this perspective we can see that two seemingly different concerns are actually separate but connected facets of one issue.

This excerpt is a warning and a reminder to those who now have the power to make the decisions that will affect the common fate of their own future generations as

well as for the rest of the planet. It is also a call for the construction of a Culture of Peace based on the understanding and implementation of peace built on a foundation of mutual respect. Furthermore, Menchú speaks of what compromises the structure of this new construction or prevents its creation and she offers the tools that can be used to solve the problem. By tying together the imbalance of our relationship to the Earth to the imbalance in how we humans relate to one another she exposes an overall pattern. In this excerpt Menchú brings together the seemingly different, unrelated threads of disparity, and respect, to reveal a pattern of imbalance that must be corrected.

Similar to poststructuralists who wanted to undo the existing structures that structuralists had outlined a generation before, Menchú seeks to undo, unravel, present structures and processes to construct new and harmonious ways of relating.

3. Structural Violence (*utzil*)

A Culture of Peace is an ethical strategy against inequity. Here Menchú addresses the imbalance of power and wealth. Hers is a call to two sectors: to those who have the power and the resources for a show of willingness to help solve the pressing problems and to the rest of humanity for proactivity:

La Cultura de Paz es una propuesta ética en contra de la inequidad, el hambre y la depredación, sinónimos de la violencia estructural impulsada y sostenida por instituciones, gobiernos y sectores que han hecho de ella su forma de vida. Es nuestra tarea exigir a estos actores de la violencia una demostración verdadera de su voluntad política para buscar soluciones viables a los problemas que afectan nuestra dignidad humana. (12)



A culture of peace is an ethical proposal against inequality, hunger, depredation, all synonymous with the structural violence advanced and sustained by institutions, governments and sectors that have made a living off of it. It is our task to demand a true show of political will from these agents of violence in order to seek viable solutions to the problems that affect our human dignity.

Menchú continues to run the thread of equilibrium through this section as in the previous one. She equates Peace with equity and balance, and violence with imbalance. Furthermore, by speaking of *structural* violence Menchú denounces the global power imbalance among peoples and points out that this imbalance is one of human invention.

It is not enough to re-arrange the threads that currently make up society. Rather, it is imperative to change the very structure of that society, to use a different loom altogether, one built on *utzil* and *pixab*. This way, Menchú suggests, instead of structural violence, we would achieve structural peace.

4. Individual Responsibility (*utzil* and *pixab*)

In this excerpt Menchú declares her deep commitment to her people, her country, other indigenous peoples and Humanity at large and expresses her hope that everyone can give of themselves for the good of all. Everyone's active involvement is needed for constructing a Culture of Peace. Peace is every person's responsibility, women, men, children, youth and future leaders. Peace is an endeavor that implies concrete actions. It is every person's responsibility to struggle for his or her rights and to recuperate, preserve and promote the values of respectful coexistence; one cannot leave it up to others. Lastly, Menchú expresses a hope that those who decide the future of the majority of the planet's

inhabitants, that is, those in power, will develop their compassion so they can be a source of hope.

Both *utzil* and *pixab* provide the foundation to support the overall theme or motif being woven here of action, action based on the awareness of our interconnection to each other. This excerpt is a reminder that we all contribute to the world's situation, therefore, we are all responsible for creating peace through "concrete actions". This action Menchú calls for on local, regional, national and international levels, that starts with the individual, would translate into a pattern of concentric circles that repeat and expand from a common center.

Menchú's reference to well-being as a result of balanced and respectful relationships refers to the concept of *utzil*. This result, however, is dependent upon the recuperating, preserving and promoting values of respectful coexistence which will come about through education and the teaching of values both of which are based on *pixab*.

5. Ingredients for Holistic Peace (*utzil* and *pixab*)

The interrelatedness of *utzil* and *pixab* is well illustrated in this section. In order to have *utzil*, peace and well being, we must also attend to *pixab*, educating. Whereas in the previous section Menchú speaks about relationships and education, *utzil* and *pixab*; here she focuses on *pixab*, instruction. She asserts that for peace to be the result of a culture of harmonious coexistence and respect that offers spiritual and material well-being to humanity, we need to promote (teach) a new code of ethics.

Interwoven and mutually supporting each other, one step affecting and determining the next, Menchú states how she understands the ideal of a holistic peace:

No hay paz sin justicia.
No hay justicia sin equidad.
No hay equidad sin desarrollo.
No hay desarrollo sin democracia.
No hay democracia sin el respeto a la identidad y la dignidad de las culturas y de los pueblos. (16)



There is no peace without justice.
There is no justice without equality
There is no equality without development.
There is no development without democracy.
There is no democracy without respecting the identity and dignity of cultures and nations.

This can also be seen as a proposal, the steps to be taken to start building a future World Culture of Peace. In fact, Menchú has adopted the above blueprint as the motto of the foundation that bears her name.

The design we see emerging as Menchú weaves her discourse for holistic peace is cyclical in nature with repeating patterns. Repeating patterns have the effect of interrelating the whole to the parts and at the same time creating a striking impact. According to Menchú's understanding of peace there can be no peace if there is no justice. But justice depends on equality which in turn depends on development. Development is contingent upon democracy which Menchú defines as respecting the rights and identity of peoples. Menchú's definition of democracy, couched in terms of the collective, is therefore different to a Western definitions of democracy which are based on the rights of the individual.²¹

Given these definitions, democracy exists where there is respect for others. If respect exists between peoples we will seek justice. The effect of justice will be to

produce equality. Equality will affect democracy and so on through the other components mentioned, finally resulting in peace. The motifs of justice, equality, development, and democracy combine to form the circular and interconnected design for/of peace. While the warp of *utzil* supports these values, *pixab*, the frame on which *utzil* is strung, is essential as well. This excerpt is significant because in it Menchú links the seemingly separate issues of justice, equality, democracy, development and respect and illustrates how in reality they are interrelated and mutually-affecting components of a larger cultural whole that is not universal but rather pluralistic.

6. Recognition of Indigenous Values and Rights (*utzil* and *pixab*)

Speaking of the cultural and linguistic diversity that exists on our planet, the importance of mutual respect and the need to recognize indigenous values and rights Menchú states:

Cobra fuerza el reconocimiento a los valores ancestrales plasmados en la cultura de los pueblos indígenas. (19)



Ancestral values rooted in indigenous cultures are beginning to be recognized.

The assertion here is that humanity's ancestral values still exist in indigenous cultures. She points out that the mere fact that indigenous nations exist after centuries of exploitation, discrimination and genocide perpetrated against them is evidence of the need to recognize and respect the diversity and the grandeur of these civilizations that "coexist at the heart of our humanity".

Concerned with the destiny of all humanity, indigenous nations struggle on multiple fronts for recognition not only of their cultures but recognition of the contribution they could make to the world's common future. Menchú connects the recognition of indigenous cultures with the construction of a better, intercultural world. She ends by saying:

En particular, los pueblos Mayas creemos en la tolerancia, en respeto mutuo que hemos heredado de nuestros abuelos, la capacidad de soñar un futuro mejor para nuestras próximas generaciones. (19)



The Maya nations in particular believe in tolerance and mutual respect that we inherited from our ancestors, and the capacity to dream a better world for our future generations.

There is an allusion to *pixab* when Menchú says, “we inherited from our ancestors”. These values and abilities are a result of teaching and educating succeeding generations.

In this excerpt Menchú moves the indigenous nations from the margins toward the center. Rather, Menchú is calling attention and esteem that normally is directed towards the center (hegemonic cultures), to the margins (the indigenous). The margins, or selvages of a textile, as explained in the theoretical framework, are what define the shape and extent (limits) of the textile and protect the integrity of the center and of the whole. Menchú points out the contribution the margins have in defining and protecting the body by being the repository of ancient values which have helped ancient, indigenous cultures survive. If the marginal indigenous have been able to survive against multiple assaults of

the severest sort, then their values must be recognized since their coexistence is at the very heart of civilization; the center is connected to and exists because of the margins. By working to attain the recognition of rights, indigenous peoples contribute toward the creation of an intercultural world, a world where diversity is respected.

A subtle thread is being woven in this section that with scrutiny points out a lack in the functioning of the world. The thread is that of the natural diversity that exists in the human race. Menchú points out that despite the multiplicity of languages spoken in the world (over 6400) and the diversity of people that exist (in the Americas alone there are 400 different indigenous peoples) only seven languages are recognized at the United Nations.

This section is based on *utzil*, a wellness founded on harmonious, balanced relations of mutual recognition. It also sets Maya culture as a positive example. The threads connecting the margins to the creation of an intercultural world, takes the form or motif of recognition of indigenous rights and values.

7. The Time is Now (*utzil*)

“**Enough!**,” Menchú says; enough silence, enough waiting for change. Menchú points out that indigenous people have been patiently waiting but patience has run out. Change must start, now, to end the prejudice that is the cause of subjugation. The time is now to demand that justice be done, to end impunity and demand the trial and punishment for the genocide committed against indigenous peoples; it is now time to end the contempt towards the existence of indigenous people. Indigenous people want to live

in peace. However, Menchú reminds us that there can be no peace until justice is done, until those responsible for genocide are brought to trial. She declares:

No es posible, entonces, construir la paz sobre los cimientos de la impunidad.
(20)



It is not possible, then, to construct peace on a foundation of impunity.

Menchú's expression of hope for justice and reparations as a result of world reaction suggests lessons learned from the publication of her *testimonio* about the importance of world participation and what breaking the silence about injustices and criminal actions can accomplish. The patterns of justice and respect being worked on the base threads of *utzil* are held by the loom of instruction, *pixab*. By the loom of instruction society will be educated to see the injustice and be moved to use the batten of politics to beat into place the threads of justice.

Though Menchú emphasizes that change must start now, she is realistic. Her comment:

Tal vez nuestra lucha de hoy sea solamente para defender nuestra memoria, reivindicar nuestro derecho a la vida, y las nuevas generaciones sean quienes vayan a cultivar y cosechar el bienestar que tanto soñamos. (21)



Perhaps today's struggle will be only to defend our memory, to claim our right to life and it will be up to new generations to cultivate and reap the well-being we dream of so much.

reflects her awareness that although change must start immediately, change takes time.²²

Speaking as a leader, a representative and voice for indigenous peoples and for "the

humblest of our people”, this statement she makes as a spokesperson connects directly to her Nobel acceptance speech where she said, “I wish to say a few words on behalf of those whose voice cannot be heard or are repressed for speaking an opinion”. It demonstrates a consistency and continuity in the threads she weaves and has been weaving over the last decade.

This section ends with Menchú saying:

Construir una paz con justicia y equidad, con desarrollo y respeto a la grandeza de las culturas milenarias, sigue siendo un anhelo por el que vivimos y luchamos.
(21)



To construct a peace with justice and equality with development and respect of the greatness of ancient cultures continues to be a desire for which we live and struggle.

This statement picks up the threads from section 5 (Ingredients for Holistic Peace) where she defines peace as based on justice, equality, development and respect. The overall theme or pattern is justice which is constructed with the motifs of respect, equity and balance, all of which are supported by the base concept of *utzil*, well-being.

8. **Indigenous Self determination** (*utzil* and *pixab*)

Menchú asserts:

Los pueblos indígenas tienen hoy plena capacidad de determinarse libremente, con un bagaje cultural y de valores que aportar a una humanidad cada vez más confundida sobre su destino común, cada vez menos solidaria y consciente de su responsabilidad en la preservación del equilibrio natural, y cada vez más impotente frente a una minoría que cree poder imponer sus designios a costa del bienestar y la dignidad generales. (23)



Indigenous peoples have the complete ability to freely determine themselves having cultural resources and values that they can contribute to a humanity increasingly confused about its common destiny, increasingly less unified and less conscious of its responsibility in the preservation of the natural balance, and increasingly powerless before a minority that believes it can impose its will at the costs of the general well-being and dignity.

According to Menchú, not only can indigenous peoples figure out what is best for themselves, they have something to offer the rest of humanity, which is floundering and being manipulated by a powerful few. An underlying message is that ancient values will sustain and guide just as well in today's world as they have for indigenous cultures over the centuries. Fortified with this ancient wisdom indigenous people should participate in all decisions having to do with their future as well as contribute to solving world problems.

This call to self-determination is additionally, an offer to help solve world problems and thereby help determine the future of humanity as Menchú says:

Retomando la sabiduría de los pueblos milenarios, buscamos participar en todas las decisiones que tengan que ver con nuestro futuro diverso, así como aportar soluciones a los problemas mundiales, partiendo de nuestra riqueza multiétnica, pluricultural y multilingüe. (23)



Claiming once more the wisdom of ancient peoples, we seek to participate in all the decisions that have to do with our diverse future as well as contribute solutions to world problems basing ourselves on our multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual riches.

Menchú ends this section very positively going on to state it is possible to look for answers based on values and principles that will help construct a system of laws and rules that the State can support.

The motif being woven here is one of self-determination, which is supported by the concept of *utzil*, a wellness based on respecting others' rights and abilities. Defense for the right to self-determination is interwoven to the motif (assertion) that indigenous peoples have the supporting network of values and resources to be able to do this successfully. Moreover, based on these values and resources, indigenous peoples have something to contribute to the rest of humanity and Menchú, as a spokesperson, offers that help. A dynamic is proposed where indigenous peoples take decision-making power and give back to humanity from their resources.

Pixab, the responsibility of counsel, also underlies this section. This suggests a dynamic that requires not only a giver but a receiver as well. If indigenous cultures can teach us, it is our responsibility to be receptive. According to Menchú there are valid reasons why it is possible to seek solutions in indigenous values and principles for constructing a system of laws. The call to action for the construction of this new culture where everyone- the whole body of society- is involved in the creation, refers to the

weaver-creator who is completely involved (mind, hands and body) and absorbed into the creative process.

9. **Resurgence of forgotten values** (*utzil* and *pixab*)

The role of the individual in changing society is placed in the center here. According to Menchú there is a resurgence of forgotten values. The thread of ancient values that was mentioned in section 6 (Recognition of Indigenous Values and Rights) is worked here in relation to the individual. To claim a “resurgence” is to imply a common ancestral heritage of values the western world and indigenous peoples share but that the western world has forgotten. This resurgence of ancient values will require comprehensive and significant changes in all aspects of personal and social life. However:

... no hay cambio si no interiorizamos los valores, las actitudes y los comportamientos que sustenta la paz. (24)



there will be no change if we do not internalize the values, the attitudes and the behaviors that support peace.

Once again there is an allusion to thinking, feeling and willing, that is, total involvement of the complete being. This call to action is directed to the individual. Menchú asserts:

Esto es posible a través de la educación entendida como un proceso en donde el sujeto va asumiendo control de su futuro. (24)



This is possible through education, understood as a process where the subject starts assuming control of his/her future.

A change through education, where the individual assumes control over his or her future places the responsibility on the individual and is also a reference to self-determination, a thread brought forward from the previous section and pulled through to the following one. We must be willing to learn, make changes and take action. Although the individual's responsibility in making necessary changes is addressed here, the focus is not on the individual per se. What is being required is individual action for the common good.

The issues of peace and education Menchú addresses here are supported by *utzil* and *pixab*. When Menchú speaks of values, attitudes and behaviors that support peace she is implying balance, respect, *utzil*. Education, which will provide the values and attitudes, that is, the structure on which the warp of well-being and peace will be supported, is about *pixab*.

10. The New Millennium's challenges (*utzil* and *pixab*)

Menchú speaks of constructing a Culture of Peace through investing in children, youth and their families, of the imminent challenges this poses and a course of action to follow.

El reto del Nuevo milenio es garantizar que la niñez y la juventud no se formen bajo los esquemas de la prepotencia, el individualismo y la destrucción, heredados del siglo pasado, sino que proyecten su futuro siendo protagonistas de los cambios de su presente. (26)



The challenge of the new millennium is to guarantee that children and adolescents are not raised under the systems of arrogance, individualism and destruction inherited from the last century but rather that they project their future being protagonists of the changes of their present time.

The unifying thread between the excerpts in this section is the theme of the future vis-à-vis children and youth. Menchú speaks of the need to reach out into the future by connecting with and (re)educating today's youth, nurturing, and healing their psychological and spiritual wounds left by "the reality of confrontation lived by our countries in the past century ... the memory of death, destruction, the horror of genocide, wars and violence in the minds and hearts of children and youth" (26). Strategies for creating a Culture of Peace must be to invest in children and youth, our link to the future. This can be done by strengthening the family unit and reeducating children and youth in order to break the destructive and negative cycle of the past. Menchú is laying out what challenges lie in store in the new millennium, challenges that stem from the confrontations and conflicts of the past millennium. She emphasizes connecting to the future by eradicating, from the roots, destructive behaviors and the causes of discrimination, oppression and injustice. Additionally, she prescribes what strategies must be used to create a future Culture of Peace. Namely, being proactively involved in decisions that will affect the common future of peoples, teaching our children and youth

positive values different from those self-centered and destructive ones of the past century and strengthening the family unit.

Menchú weaves together active participation, self-determination, and (re)education at the same time she unravels by devaluing the structure of inherited systems that have brought us death and destruction. When she speaks of constructing a Culture of Peace it implies undoing the old structures that are not peaceful and not functioning for the majority of the Earth's inhabitants. In this speech in particular she illustrates the failure of the present systems when she enumerates the effects and consequences of these systems on the present generation of children and youth. However, using our resources in a new, enlightened way we can have a better, harmonious, healthier world. What is necessary is to unravel the old threads and reweave them into the cloth of a society that has balanced, healthy and respectful relationships between all living beings and the planet and insures a future of well-being by perpetuating these values through instructing, educating and nurturing the succeeding generations. *Utzil*, an equilibrium achieved by the active involvement of all sectors, and *pixab*, the teaching of positive values, support the ideas in this section.

11. A New Global Education *(utzil and pixab)*

Menchú asserts that humanity's hope and future lie in a new education, a global education. This education will raise consciousness so everyone will understand that the cooperation of all sectors of society is needed to avoid the evils that afflict humanity. An intercultural education will convey cultural values like holistic views of nature, the

community and the family and will widen the consciousness to recognize and respect the diversity in other cultures, those found locally as well as those worldwide. This idea repeats the thought pattern woven in section 5 (Ingredients for Holistic Peace) where Menchú speaks of a widening circle of influence.

Menchú demonstrates her forward thinking by saying we must shape, influence and guarantee a better future now by constructing a balanced and comprehensive intercultural education that will not only (re)educate today's populations but also change the future. The theme of education continues from the previous section as a solution to today's problems and an assurance for a better tomorrow. The idea of (re)educating will require the unraveling of old structures and reweaving the resources into a new, balanced, comprehensive and intercultural future.

Menchú alludes to the prevention of future colonization when she says that through this new education new cultural values will be transmitted:

no sólo de la cultura propia, sino de las otras que conviven en el mismo espacio territorial y en el resto del planeta. (29)



based not only one's own culture but including others that coexist in the same territorial space as well as those from around the planet.

This implies a respect and appreciation for other cultures, which would prevent a superimposition of one culture over another, that is, a colonization.

Menchú speaks of *pixab*, education, instruction, and of *utzil* as well when she speaks of respecting the rights, identities and diversity of indigenous peoples. Through

pixab we can affect *utzil*. It will be the loom of *pixab* (comprehensive education) that will provide the structure to support the threads of *utzil* and the reweaving of freed resources from old structures, thus resulting in balanced and harmonious relationships on all levels.

12. New Ways (*utzil* and *pixab*)

Menchú starts by explaining that intercultural education is produced and nurtured by the complex social fabrics that shape and create societies. Other generations are going to have to think and do things differently so that indigenous and non-indigenous peoples alike can have a beneficial role in society. She insists that the Culture of Peace and Education for Peace should reclaim and reestablish the social mission of science and technology and moreover, human wisdom and values must be immediately incorporated into them. This assertion implies a failure on behalf of science and technology, as they presently relate to society, to accomplish their social mission and be at the service of the nations. The prescription is the immediate injection of human wisdom and values. Influenced by and under the auspices of a Culture of Peace and an Education for Peace, that is, based on the principles of *utzil* and *pixab*, science and technology could fulfill their social mission.

These assertions by Menchú have a dual function. First, they propose an undoing of the way things are currently done so they may be done differently. Second, they are concrete strategies on how and what to do. It is a call to unravel what we have now that is not working and reconfiguring, reweaving it so it serves all sectors and fulfills its

original intent. Menchú's comments that science and technology are "our universal heritage" and "incorporat[ing] human wisdom and values so they can fulfill their social function and be at the service of the nations" (29) makes clear that all peoples should be included, as opposed to the present situation where science and technology are not universally accessible.

Menchú also addresses globalization and instructs us to globalize our way of seeing, to take notice of the global mistakes that have been committed so we can "give a more human face to that phenomenon", that is, to see the human cost of globalization and hopefully be moved to correct it. She draws attention to the fact that the world is in crisis and points out the actors at opposing ends of confrontation: those whose daily reality is not one of peaceful coexistence and those unwilling to give up the benefits of war.

Society generates education and in turn education influences society. By attending to education and changing it so we are teaching up-coming generations a different way to understand and act, we can affect society. Once more, the pattern Menchú weaves illustrates the circular and comprehensive nature of her characteristically Maya thinking. The lack of harmony in the relationship of science, technology and globalization to humanity as a whole refers to *utzil*. And (re)educating ourselves to see the urgent problems facing us and educating new generations in a new and better way refers to *pixab*.

13. **Breaking the Silence** (utzil)

Poverty and exploitation are the underlying themes of this section.

Es necesario romper el silencio sobre la realidad de vida de los pueblos en África, América y Asia, donde se concentran los mayores problemas de pobreza en el mundo. (32)



It is necessary to break the silence about the reality of life in Africa, America and Asia where the greatest problems of poverty in the world are concentrated.

Menchú makes known the extent and severity of poverty in Africa, America and Asia by citing astonishing and disturbing data. Half of the population of Africa, America and Asia “lives with less than two dollars daily. Of those, half survive daily with less than a dollar” (32).

This shocking reality precedes the revelation of the high number of human deaths occurring as a result of crossing national borders attempting to find better living conditions. Plagued by pervasive poverty and seeking ways to make a living, Menchú explains:

Más de 2.000 mexicanos han muerto en el límite entre su país y Estados Unidos entre 1998 y 2002. (33)



More than 2,000 Mexicans died on the border between their country and the United States between 1998 and 2002.

Additionally:

El fenómeno se repite más al sur, en la línea divisoria entre México y Guatemala. Este año han muerto allí, al menos, 100 personas, en tanto que en el año 2000 esa cantidad llegó a 565. (33)



This phenomenon repeats itself further south at the dividing line between Mexico and Guatemala. This year at least 100 persons have died there while in the year 2000 that figure reached 565.

The need to look for decent living conditions derives from “the unjust international order imposed on more than four fifths of the world population” (33). This international migration has spawned illicit trafficking in human lives leading to the deaths of hundreds of persons. What abounds, however, is:

ausencia de una auténtica voluntad política para enfrentar estos retos, así como de corrupción e impunidad que defraudan la confianza ciudadana y alientan el escepticismo y la impotencia. (33)



the absence of a genuine political will to face these challenges as well as the challenges of corruption and impunity that erode citizen trust and promote skepticism and powerlessness.

Menchú points to the imbalance in the world order, the economical and political hierarchy that exists and the disinterest in righting or challenging the status quo. Against the backdrop of *utzil* Menchú points out the threads of apathy, corruption, impunity and poverty to reveal the motifs of death and disrespect, all part of an overall design of exploitation and economical inequality caused by and perpetuated by present political

and economical structures. Such is the present cloth of society. By exposing these evils, by breaking the silence, Menchú hopes to elicit action and bring pressure to bear on those responsible for keeping the present situation as is. Her revelation seeks to unravel the present unjust and immoral structures in order to create a more equitable system and serves at least two functions. First, raising consciousness serves as the first step to unraveling the present system in order to create (reweave) a just and harmonious system. Second, exposing the underpinning of the present systems serves to counteract the naturalization of poverty, that is, to shock people into realizing that the pervasive poverty that exists is not natural but rather created by the structures, “the unjust international order imposed on more than four fifths of the world population, created, perpetuated and imposed on peoples” (33). This strategy of recognizing structures and seeing “how they might be undone so that the energies and potentials that they held in place might be liberated and used to construct an altogether different kind of society” (Rivkin and Ryan, 334) were objectives of the poststructuralists including feminists who have used the latter strategy, the “un-naturalizing” of attitudes that justify and help perpetuate an unjust system. Not unlike feminists who have sought to illustrate that the feminine is not inferior by nature, rather it is a construct, so too Menchú illustrates the role of world structures in the making of poverty.

14. Relating to each other in a new way to face the future (*utzil*)

Menchú declares that acknowledgment and respect of human diversity are fundamental to constructing new relationships of equality and peaceful coexistence

between peoples and nations. Today's complex problems will be resolved by the input and commitment of everyone: women, men, indigenous and non-indigenous. The synergy of everyone's efforts could put us, as peoples, as humanity, in a better position to face the future, making it less uncertain than it appears in the present moment.

This upbeat and optimistic summons to action is all-inclusive. The concept of *utzil*, that deals with respect, equality, balance, peace and harmony comes into play. There are no bold patterns or designs being woven here. Rather, what is evident is the evenness and balance of a plain weave. A plain or "tabby" weave is the most basic of woven structures, just as the most basic structure out of which the fabric of our societies is constructed is interpersonal relationships.

As explained in the theoretical framework, the backstrap weaver-creator is totally involved (head, eyes, hands, body) and with her body must create the tension, the support, that keeps the warp threads taut. The active participation of all peoples, the whole body of Humanity, in creating new, respectful ways of relating to each other based on equality and peaceful coexistence, that is, on the warp threads of *utzil*, will create a new cloth of society.

15. Peace, not just theorizing (*utzil* and *pixab*)

This section is a call to action. Menchú declares we cannot merely dream or theorize about peace; peace requires a constant effort: concrete actions that will transform the present norms of exclusion, intolerance and racism that continuously erode the relationships between peoples and generations. She is speaking of reeducating

ourselves, of changing the way we do things and how we relate to each other when she says:

Cambiar estas practicas por otras cuyo sustento sea un conjunto de valores, actitudes comportamientos, como sustento de la paz y la no violencia, es el reto de este milenio que iniciamos. (39)



The challenge of this millennium we now begin will be to exchange these practices for other practices which sustain a combination of values, attitudes and behaviors that will nurture peace and non-violence.

It is a call to take action. Both *utzil* and *pixab* are directly indicated. As Menchú looks to a future Culture of Peace she specifies what must be done to establish that culture: change the way we do things now and educate in order to transform the present norms of exclusion, intolerance and racism.

Once again, and very clearly here, Menchú is indicating an unraveling and reweaving of our social practices. We must unravel the old practices and values and rework the fabric of our societies so that they eliminate negative and destructive threads, practices, of exclusion, intolerance and racism. We must replace those with new threads. That is, the practices comprised by a combination of values, attitudes and behaviors that support peace and non-violence. Menchú's reference to values, attitudes and behaviors alludes once more to the thinking, feeling and willing of the human being, that is, the whole person. This complete involvement (not just thinking or theorizing) circles back to the beginning where Menchú says:

La paz no puede ser ni un anhelo ni solo una discusión teórica. Es una lucha permanente que significa acciones concretas que transformen. (39)



Peace cannot be just a dream nor a theoretical discussion. It is an enduring struggle that demands concrete actions that will transform.

16. **Constructing a Lasting Peace** (*utzil*)

According to Menchú the goal of actions that promote a Culture of Peace must be to pursue the construction of a lasting and far-reaching peace with justice. To construct peace requires building a world of intercultural relationships founded on cooperation, solidarity, generosity, equality and justice, at the center of which is the human being and his dignity.

Menchú states that the goal of actions taken to achieve a Culture of Peace is a lasting and extensive peace. This peace with justice is going to require a special relationship between peoples and these intercultural relationships will start with respecting the individual.

The picture Menchú is weaving here is one whose design radiates from a center outwards, much like that of a spider's web. At the center of this design is the individual and his dignity, suggesting respect toward that individual. Starting at the center with this individual the motifs of cooperation, solidarity, generosity, equality and justice will be the connecting threads between cultures. These constructions are based on and supported by *utzil*. The relationships constructed will be far-reaching and durable. This highlights the importance of the individual while emphasizing a global impact, just as Menchú's call

to action is directed to each individual with implications on a global scale. The overall design, again, is the construction of peace based on the concept of *utzil*, of balance, harmony and respect.

17. Peace based on balance *(utzil)*

Menchú asserts that the most important legacy we can leave future generations is the continuation of the right to cultural identity as the basis for coexistence and national unity, and taking responsibility to assure the conditions for a dignified life. The relationships between people and cultures must be more humane and we must work to create and maintain a just equilibrium in human relations that will generate comprehensive development for everyone and result in living together harmoniously and peacefully. Most importantly we must reject the policies driven by world powers that are antisocial and inhumane and therefore disruptive to achieving a state of *utzil* or harmonious coexistence. The major causes of the destruction we wreak on each other are greed and monopolization which are totally foreign to the common good.

Menchú contrasts the picture of a peaceful coexistence by giving startling and troubling statistics, the result of what she calls:

terrorismo criminal y la prepotencia belicista que hoy busca reafirmar su hegemonía al bombardear a pueblos indefensos y cuyas víctimas comparten con otros 800 millones de hambrientos la indigna categoría estadística no humana de “daños colaterales”. (44)



criminal terrorism, and the belligerent arrogance that now seeks to reaffirm its hegemony by bombing defenseless people whose victims share with 800 million

other starving people the indignant, inhuman, statistical category of “collateral damage”.

She states:

Mientras que en las guerras de hace 50 años, moría 1 civil por cada 10 soldados, hoy la proporción se ha transformado: 8 civiles por cada soldado. (44)



In the wars of fifty years ago for every soldiers that died there was one civilian death, today that ratio has changed: 8 civilians for each soldier.

Menchú asserts that continuation of cultural identity and national unity are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, she contends that respecting the right to cultural identity will be the foundation for a national unity. She takes this respect of identity beyond the national to a global level and states this same principle of respect and resulting harmonious coexistence holds true on a global scale. Overall, Menchú is looking to the future saying this is the legacy we can leave future generations, leaving them an example and making them responsible for assuring the conditions for a dignified life. She juxtaposes the alternative to respecting peoples' rights and having harmonious relationships with disturbing statistics of the present reality. That is, she instructs (*pixab*) by illustrating what we now have and how bad it is. She tells us we could do better and prescribes what must be done. It will take building good relationships (*utzil*) having harmony and respect on the local as well as global level. And she adds:

Pero la paz no debe ser entendida solamente como el silencio de las armas, sino como nuestro accionar diario en beneficio de las vidas de los otros. Una paz que nos acerque a la construcción de nuevas relaciones que garanticen el respeto total a la identidad, la dignidad y la cultura de los pueblos. (44)



But peace must not be understood solely as the silence of arms, but rather as our daily acting to benefit the lives of others. A peace that will advance us towards the construction of new relationships that guarantee total respect to the identity, the dignity and the culture of peoples.

Menchú weaves the motif of cultural identity, humane relations, national unity and international solidarity on the warp of *utzil*. She also exposes greed, aggression and death in the present cloth of society, juxtaposing them to the pattern of harmonious relations composed by the motifs of respect of cultural identity, just and balanced relations and multifaceted development, thus further accentuating the evils. This, along with section 13 (Breaking the Silence), is one of the more condemning speeches. However, the criticism is bordered by positive actions that can be taken. This serves to give direction thereby producing hope that the present situation can be meliorated.

18. **Peace, the responsibility of all nations** (*utzil*)

This is a two-fold call to action. The first is a call to actively not participate in wars, the second an appeal to use dialogue and diplomatic means to resolve conflicts. This call is not one made by a sole individual. Menchú speaks in a leadership role saying:

Estamos llamando a no participar de las guerras, a dar esperanza al dialogo, a la medicación diplomática que debe usar la humanidad para resolver sus controversias. (45)



We are making a call to not participate in wars, to give a chance to dialogue and diplomatic mediation that humanity should use to resolve controversy.

Menchú reiterates her message that it is everyone's responsibility, on the individual level to the national level, to take part in constructing a positive future. Stipulating the building blocks for that construction and on what foundation this construction will stand, Menchú states:

Es responsabilidad de todos los pueblos, las culturas, las naciones y los estados construir un futuro promisorio sustentado en una cultura de diálogo, donde prevalezcan el respeto, la no-violencia, el respeto a los derechos humanos y a la diversidad cultural. Así mismo, debe cimentarse en el fomento de la democracia, la justicia, la libertad, la tolerancia, el diálogo intercultural, la conciliación, la solidaridad y el desarrollo integral. (45)



It is the responsibility of all peoples, cultures, nations and states to construct a promising future sustained by a culture of dialogue, where respect, non-violence, respect of human rights and cultural diversity prevail. Likewise, justice, liberty, tolerance, intercultural dialogue, conciliation, solidarity and comprehensive development should be founded on the fostering of democracy.

When Menchú states "It is the responsibility of all peoples..." she refers to those on the margins as well as those with power. No one is exempt.

She ends by identifying who the "we" are in this call to peace and dialogue: the messengers of peace. She also ends by making an invitation, a call to solidarity:

Invito a todos a unirse a ella hasta convertirla en un grito que diga: ¡**BASTA!** (45)



I invite everyone to join in with this voice until we create a shout that says:
ENOUGH!

The balanced design comprised of repeating patterns of multiple motifs that recur throughout Menchú's speeches are interwoven creating a striking message. This last speech excerpt connects to and refers to the other, previous sections thus creating a cyclical and intertextual structure.

4.3 Dreaming the Future

In the concluding segment of the book, which I titled "Dreaming the Future", Menchú shares some of her personal visions, aspirations and beliefs and a wish for humanity. She confesses that one of her treasured abilities is the ability to dream, implying seeing something better, to have hope for a "more beautiful future" even in the most difficult of times.

She tells of the future she aspires to personally:

Quiero caminar sobre la tierra y quiero gozar sobre ella los pocos años que me queden para vivir en pro de una causa grande. (46)



I want to walk on the Earth and enjoy the few years I have left to live for a great cause.

The positive outlook she acknowledges she has is demonstrated when she says:

Creo que hay que sembrar nuevas utopías y reafirmar otras, para alcanzar la aspiración de justicia social y de dignidad humana que reclaman los pueblos. (46)



I believe it is necessary to sow new utopias and reaffirm others in order to reach the dream of social justice and human dignity that the peoples demand.

As if it were a personal letter to each reader of the book, Menchú signs her name at the end. And thus she concludes this anthology of a decade's worth of work- work that speaks out against injustice and the ills that befall humanity, advocates for dialogue and the respect of all humans and for peaceful, harmonious ways of relating to one another, all living creatures and the planet we inhabit - by speaking of her dreams and desires for a better future. Menchú subtly indicates that it is up to us to make this better future happen when she says:

Mis abuelos Mayas me enseñaron que los sueños nacen con nosotros, pero todo sueño necesita ser cultivado y cosechado. Yo sólo dejo que mis sueños caminen por el tiempo, para que la humanidad los cultive a su favor. (46)



My Maya grandparents [ancestors] taught me that dreams are born with us but every dream needs to be cultivated and harvested. I just let my dreams wander through time so humanity can cultivate them as they wish.

Menchú started this book by explaining two Maya concepts that are fundamental to her manner of viewing and understanding the world. She explained these to be the basis of not just her own personal outlook, but that of a people. These two concepts, *utzil* and

pixab, enclose positive, sustaining and inspiring values; they are the golden standard by which to aspire. In this final entry Menchú finishes by weaving golden threads of hope and positive, possible dreams and passes them on to us as a shining gift.

~w~

Towards a Culture of Peace contains the essence of the themes Menchú has addressed throughout her adult life. It is here that she reveals the underpinning of her reasoning and worldview, namely, two Maya concepts: *utzil* and *pixab*. The overall discourse she weaves is positive and optimistic while examining critically and exposing the problems that beset our world. She enters spaces historically and by tradition the exclusive realm of men. Menchú addresses subjects traditionally proscribed to women and aims her discourse to audiences ranging from local and regional to transnational and global. Her message is constant though her purpose has grown from a localized struggle to a global one. Her objective from the beginning was to find a way to end the genocide in her country and find solutions to the injustices and exploitation plaguing her people and to secure decent living conditions and basic human rights, above all the right to life. Menchú resolved that the way to do this was to break the silence, expose the evils besetting her people and thereby affect change. Her objectives have expanded to include advocating for rights and affecting change not only for her people and her country but also for indigenous people and all oppressed people wherever they may be. Menchú is grounded in her Maya tradition that encompasses a comprehensive manner to view and experience the world. Though she has learned to cross the ideological borders between

the divergent philosophies of Western and Maya thought, thus interweaving them, this Maya *Weltanschauung* is the basis for her reasoning.

Towards a Culture of Peace, a sampling of separate and interrelated speech excerpts, spans a decade of Menchú's efforts to create a Culture of Peace. It is here in the various interwoven, intertextual, tapestries we see recurring motifs, patterns and designs. The oral discourse Menchú weaves is intricate and multifaceted and makes associations Western thought normally does not connect as parts of a whole. Menchú brings together issues that logically correlate within the comprehensive Maya Cosmic vision but Westerners consider separate. The resulting fabric (text) Menchú weaves with her oral discourse is a comprehensive picture of how she envisions a future World Culture of Peace and its attainment. Her vision has depth as well as scope. It is positive, realistic but not naive. This overall positive image Menchú presents includes the challenges facing humanity in creating a future World Culture of Peace and viable solutions on how to deal with those challenges in order to secure this Culture of Peace for our posterity and for ourselves.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Some of the numerous essays that have been written on and about Rigoberta Menchú Tum and the controversy surrounding her *testimonio* claim to see hidden intentions, hidden meanings or inaccurate information in the first book that launched her onto the international scene. The purpose of this study was to go beyond the debate surrounding Rigoberta Menchú's mediated biography to look at work she herself has authored to get a true representation of her discourse. The primary text used for this study was Menchú's book, *Towards a Culture of Peace* (2002). This book, which is a diachronic sampling of speeches Menchú gave over the ten-year period between 1992 and 2002, gathers together speech excerpts addressing the creation of a Culture of Peace. This study briefly explains the history of indigenous literary production and contextualizes Menchú's work within that tradition. It also examines the themes Menchú addresses in speaking about creating a future World Culture of Peace and the proposals she makes for creating this new Culture of Peace. Finally, this study reveals the underpinnings of Menchú's discourse as well as the manner in which Menchú structures her discourse as disclosed in the primary text. This thesis is significant because it has taken the work of Rigoberta Menchú and given a different manner in which to contextualize and understand the person and her work.

This study has shown that Menchú's work connects to the tradition of indigenous textual production, but also deviates from the tradition in very significant ways. Indigenous textual production after colonization was written to expose and protest injustices, to claim rights and assert identity. Much of this production had to be mediated by scribes who were conversant in the language and method of writing of the colonizer. The texts produced were addressed to the imperial or colonial seats of power. Menchú's first widely distributed text, *I Rigoberta Menchú*, was also mediated. It also was directed to outsiders with power to make change and was written to expose, protest and claim rights, foremost among these the right to life. Although traditionally men produced the privileged written text, indigenous women produced texts outside of the public sphere that were influential. One type of text was tangible; the other was not. The tangible texts exerted influence by establishing identity as well as preserving and promulgating the collective historical legacy and culture through the inscription of meaning into cloth. Intangible texts produced by indigenous women were influential by imbedding the collective historical and cultural legacy into the oral tradition. This oral narrative is particularly significant as it is the source for foundational texts that were written much later. The oral tradition, then, was an enduring repository of indigenous cultural and historical heritage. Menchú, as indigenous women before her, has made a significant impact by imbedding ideas, possibilities, consciousness and communal values into the social fabric of humanity with her spoken discourse. This study revealed Menchú's spoken discourse to be an oral textile.

The speech excerpts in *Towards a Culture of Peace* were a performance, an etheric text, existing only in the moment they were pronounced. The written words are but the traces of speech acts, a way to extend those speech acts beyond the time-space restrictions of orality. In Western culture the written word must act as the preserving medium in lieu of the oral tradition. In the Maya culture, on the other hand, the oral tradition was and still is a fundamental repository of indigenous knowledge, values, wisdom and traditions. The collection of speeches in *Towards a Culture of Peace* connect to Menchú's biographical testimony as both were originally oral accounts that were transcribed into writing. The written words preserve speech acts and a worldview that are intangible in much the same way as motifs and symbols imbedded into woven cloth by traditional women are the means to record and preserve the memory of history, customs, values and knowledge. Although Menchú's speeches connect to the oral tradition they also deviate from it because unlike her predecessors, her discourse is in the public forum.

As a whole, indigenous textual production was male dominated and women were barred from being public figures and having a public voice. A woman's influence was in the home; customarily she did not voice her political opinion in public. Menchú deviates from the tradition of indigenous textual production because she is a woman, she publicly addresses subjects and issues historically proscribed to women, she enters spaces formerly forbidden to women, and, speaking as a leader, she addresses global audiences representing all sectors of society, from the poorest to the most powerful.

This study illustrates the themes Menchú develops and points out that the issues she approaches in *Towards a Culture of Peace* were already present in her Nobel lecture where she addressed concerns of a primarily national and regional nature. Over the subsequent years the scope of Menchú's concerns has expanded, however, to include a global vision for a future World Culture of Peace. She has been speaking over the years to these issues involved in creating a Culture of Peace and has participated in UNESCO's movement of a Culture of Peace. It was noted that Menchú's vision and proposals for a Culture of Peace intersects with those of UNESCO's Culture of Peace Movement. Her continuous and consistent concern of specific issues relating to basic human rights, social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation is illustrated by the diachronic sampling of her speeches collected in *Towards a Culture of Peace*.

Menchú's ideas about creating a Culture of Peace are not unique. UNESCO's declaration and manifesto of action on a Culture of Peace shows significant intersections with Menchú's ideas. However, Menchú began addressing these issues long before UNESCO's resolutions were crafted. Although creating a Culture of Peace is not an idea exclusive to Menchú nor are the elements that will promote, create and sustain it, Menchú founds her understanding and her plan to realize a Culture of Peace on ancient Maya values. This fact furthers Menchú's argument that ancient indigenous cultures have something valuable and essential to contribute, therefore they must be included in policy making. Similar to a textile whose margins preserve and protect the integrity of the whole, cultures by practice marginalized- ancient, indigenous cultures- have strength in their values that can help preserve our global tapestry.

This study is primarily significant because it has shown that the underpinning of Menchú's reasoning and worldview is composed of the two mutually supporting Maya concepts of *utzil* and *pixab*. It is significant furthermore because it shows that her oral discourse, intricate, complex and basic as a traditional Maya textile, is based on these two concepts. The concepts of *utzil* and *pixab* serve as the foundation, the values on which to base judgment. While others have used the weaving metaphor to explain or understand written texts, this study used both the metaphor and the praxis of weaving to reveal that the nature of Menchú's oral discourse is like a woven textile. Menchú structures her discourse in such a way that the various issues she addresses are like threads worked on the foundational warp of *utzil* that connects with and is supported by *pixab* thus creating an oral woven discourse. Menchú takes the issues she addresses and creates motifs by lifting varying sets of warp threads. It is here in the various interwoven tapestries that we see recurring motifs and patterns with an overall design of world peace. The multiple narrative threads she works in each speech are woven into the overall design without conflict or loose ends.

Menchú weaves a picture of a comprehensive world Culture of Peace. The structure of her discourse is coherent and interconnected. She makes connections between the existing structures that impede creating a Culture of Peace with environmental concerns that threaten the future of the planet itself and she explains that these are actually one and the same issue. According to Menchú's construction this new Culture of Peace demands the undoing of old structures, those that are not working for the majority of the inhabitants of the planet and requires (re)educating ourselves and

future generations. This destructuring of the present structures that Menchú speaks about connects to the debate between structuralists²³ and poststructuralists. The poststructuralists of the early 1960s questioned methods used to describe the world, declaring that the order the structuralists claimed existed were but strategies of power and social control that rather than giving a way to understand reality, ignored it. They alleged that the attachment of language onto structure and meaning by structuralists was integral to how rational capitalism maintained a repressive social regime that depended on a particular construction of reality. Post-structuralism²⁴ tried, then, to find how those structures could be undone, how they might come unraveled as principles of cognitive and social order so that the potential they held could be liberated and used to create a different kind of society. Similarly, Menchú outlines a process to create a Culture of Peace that calls for taking the resources used in keeping the present, unjust, unbalanced structures in place in order to build or construct a new, equitable and harmonious world society, that is, a Culture of Peace. Applying the weaving metaphor, what is needed is destructuring or unraveling the cloth of the old social order and using new threads reweave the creation of a supported and supportive, balanced and harmonious cloth of society. To accomplish this Menchú makes an all-inclusive call to action; she asks for the active, total and comprehensive involvement of all persons of the planet, those in power as well as those traditionally without. She also prescribes the use of dialogue to resolve disputes, the refusal to use violence, and reeducating ourselves using ancient values to create new ways of relating. Menchú assures us that with the commitment and involvement of all peoples and nations the creation of a Culture of Peace is possible.

In summary, this study shows how, in *Towards a Culture of Peace*, Menchú expertly, with the delicacy yet strength required of the accomplished weaver, weaves her discourse addressing the different components necessary for the creation of a Culture of Peace and the issues linked to them. She makes a critical and honest assessment of our world, its condition, its inhabitants and the unhealthy relationships we humans have developed with each other and with planet that sustains us. Menchú looks at the severity and weight of our planetary problems and yet has the capacity and courage to dream “new utopias” as she diligently works for and leads us towards a Culture of Peace.

ENDNOTES

¹ My translation.

² Weltanschauung (German) translates into English as “world view” and refers to any general outlook on life and humanity’s place in the cosmos. It is defined by Sigmund Freud in his lecture XXXV in 1932 as: “An intellectual construction which gives a unified solution of all the problems of our existence in virtue of a comprehensive hypothesis, a construction, therefore, in which no question is left open and in which everything in which we are interested finds a place...When one believes in such a thing, one feels secure in life, one knows what one ought to strive after, and how one ought to organize one’s emotions and interests to the best purpose.”

³ This and other translations throughout this study are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Spinning, the act of drawing out and twisting fibers into thread to be used for weaving, was often accompanied by storytelling. It is easy to see how the terms spinning and storytelling could become synonymous, how spinning a yarn could be substituted for telling a story, when both occurred in the same space and at the same time and the story itself could be drawn out with twists and turns to increase the entertainment value and enjoyment of the tale.

⁵ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 4th edition, 2000

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ See section 6 (Recognition of Indigenous Values and Rights) of chapter 4, pages 52-3.

⁸ Intertextuality contrasts with formalism and structuralism which explained signs as forms and codes of meaning that maintain themselves over time and outside history, by fixing the text to its sociohistoric meaning relative to the interaction of the different codes or discourses contained in the text.

⁹ Long-term environmental changes could affect the supply and quality of the materials used in weaving. Contact with different peoples and cultures through trade or invasion is reflected and recorded in textiles and can be traced through the changes in technique and materials.

¹⁰ From Menchú's Nobel Acceptance Lecture given December 10, 1992.

¹¹ The Norwegian Nobel Committee was well aware of the symbolic significance of bestowing the Nobel Peace Prize on an indigenous person in 1992. Francis Sejersted, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, pointed out in the presentation speech: "It is five hundred years this year since Columbus 'discovered' America, as we have been brought up to say, or since colonization began. The celebration of the anniversary has at least produced one benefit, in the spotlight it has so effectively focused on the worldwide problem of the rights of aboriginal peoples. Developments in America demonstrate the problem more clearly than anywhere else. This was a whole continent, the population of which in Columbus's day may have numbered as many as 100 million. Today only a fraction of these Indian people survive, and any truly Indian culture can only be found isolated in small pockets. Why was the Indian culture less able than others to resist the European pressure? Any processes elsewhere resembling the one in America have only taken place in more marginal areas of the world. Such processes are complex, and this is

not the place for a more detailed analysis. What is clear, however, is that at certain times and in certain places we are confronted by a different force from infectious diseases and mortality or the haphazard outcome of wars and rapacity, and that is the systemic 'ethnic cleansing' of the aboriginal population – better known as genocide. There is a most urgent need to define the rights of aboriginal peoples and to respect those rights in a manner which makes it possible to live in peace and mutual understanding. To succeed in this, we need people like Rigoberta Menchú Tum. For the Norwegian Nobel Committee it was a happy coincidence that it was precisely in the year of Columbus that she emerged as such a strong candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize." From the official web site of the Norwegian Nobel Foundation <<http://www.nobel.se/cgi-bin>>

¹² The source of this and the following biographical information was the Norwegian Nobel Foundation official web site <<http://www.nobel.se/cgi-bin>>

¹³ Comité de Unidad Campesina, CUC, (Committee for Peasant Unity) was formed on April 15, 1978. With 20,000 members it is the oldest organization of peasant and landless people in Guatemala.

¹⁴ Frente Popular 31 de enero, FP₃₁, (Popular Front of the 31st of January) is one of several different organizations formed in direct response to the assault on the Spanish Embassy, by Guatemalan security forces. Many Guatemalan peasants were burned to death including Menchú's father, Vicente Menchú. The Frente Popular 31 de enero was formed by the CUC on the first anniversary of the assault on the Spanish Embassy. It was a militant organization that advocated a policy of direct action for objectives in the

labor and the political arena. The FP₃₁ widely publicized a large repertoire of urban guerrilla weapons and tactics as self-defense techniques.

¹⁵ In 1982 the Representación Unitaria de la Oposición Guatemalteca (RUOG) was formed by a group of Guatemalans in order to bring to world attention the human rights situation in Guatemala. This group successfully lobbied governments at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to pass a resolution.

¹⁶ The term political is defined as “relating to or dealing with the structure or affairs of government, politics or the state” and “relating to or involving acts regarded as damaging to a government or state” in The American Heritage Dictionary.

¹⁷ David Horowitz has authored numerous articles on the subject of Menchú’s *testimonio* and its significance, one of which was the article “I, Rigoberta Menchú, Liar”. Larry Rohter’s essay “Tarnished Laureate”, found in Arias’ anthology *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*, originally appeared as “Nobel Winner Finds Her Story Challenged” in the *New York Times* on December 15, 1998.

¹⁸ In the Florentine Codex- a manuscript containing a handwritten, illustrated version of the encyclopedic account of Mexica society assembled by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún- a chapter in book eight dedicated to the training of young noblewomen contains an account of “the exercises of the ladies” and an illustration depicting a woman’s spinning and weaving tools. Additionally, Burkhardt writes, in *Mexica Women on the Home Front*, “Why spinning and weaving, even more than sweeping or cooking, defined a woman as a woman may be linked to the relative economic importance of these tasks. Whereas she

might prepare food only to feed her own household, a woman's textile production not only clothed her family but also involved her in the larger economy. Tribute was paid in cloth; cloth could be used as money in the marketplace" (46-47). As both of these sources indicate, women of the noble class as well as the peasantry engaged in weaving.

¹⁹ A system of coerced labor tribute imposed upon the indigenous people.

²⁰ Paragraph 2 of Resolution 52/13 that was passed on 15 January 1998.

²¹ Democracy, as defined in The American Heritage Dictionary: "Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives; the principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community".

²² Menchú's statement mirrors the thoughts of a second-century spiritual leader who said, "It is not for us to finish. But we are not exempt from starting". Credited to Rabbi Tarfon in the Pirke Avot (Neusner).

²³ Twentieth century structuralism began with a series of lectures given by Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, published posthumously in 1916. Structuralism, represented among others by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan uses linguistics to find order everywhere. It "is concerned with the relations constituting language and all symbolic or discursive systems" (Cambell 199). Structuralists believed that knowable structures underlie empirical events, knowledge operates according to procedures that are axiomatic, not open to question, and reality is not radically contingent, not a play of forces without order. It was methodologically conservative, a description of stable structures which justified their rationalization as being universal and timeless.

²⁴ According to Baross (158): “Poststructuralism and postmodernism are terms often used interchangeably...The term ‘poststructuralism’ entered critical theoretical usage in the 1970s, together with postmodernism...Poststructuralism is not a unified school of thought or even a movement; the term is most prominent in the external discourse of criticism”.

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