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Zanisah Man

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Reseñas (sección no arbitrada)

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Zanisah Man * zanisahman@ukm.edu.my
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malasia



García Segura Alí. *Se' dör stë. Somos arte: las enseñanzas del awá. We are art: the teachings of awá.* 2021. San José, Costa Rica. Impresos GIK. 114pp.

The book *We are art: the teachings of Awá* is written in multiple languages, English, Spanish and Bribri version title as *Se' dör stë*. Written by an Indigenous Scholar, Alí García Segura brought the audience to the knowledge of Bribri's community in his eight carefully selected stories, portraying the values, the struggles and the wisdom of the *Awá* (medicine man) describing their world and its surroundings.

Before he begins, Alí García Segura highlights the importance of words in the Bribri culture. The same word could imply different meanings that illustrate the way of life, and the community's identity. The word *Se'* for instance, is defined as a gathering of a group of people in a particular place (an action), but it could also refer to the term humanity (in complete beings). Therefore, the act of being together, narrating stories (the words), and passing it down from one generation to another generation is crucial, because it contains the wisdom of life that carries the community's culture and identity (as well as the humanity).

From an academic perspective, Alí García Segura criticizes the concept introduced by the State in their attempt to assist the Indigenous people such as the word "development", "cultural production" and "right", labelling it as "word with empty promises". From his point of view, development in its beautiful vision aims to help the Indigenous community, but it does not guarantee them an adequate life, except the dispossession of their identity and language. Projects introduced by the State under the terms "cultural productions" failed to recognise the values and traditional code of respects to the owner of the knowledge such as the teacher within the communities it serves, the Bribri and Cabécar, thus making it an economical disaster ventures. Likewise, the word "rights" may equips the Indigenous community in their struggles against the outsiders but it does not understand the way the community organises and conducts their everyday life, i. e. the essence or the true art

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of living with the word. The stories highlighted here are the examples of the Bribri's wisdom, described by their demonstration of their culture and identity.

The first short stories explains the important journey of becoming an *Awá* –the medicine man. To be an *Awá*, an individual, regardless of its gender, needs to spend his or her lifetime learning from the elders through observing, listening and imitating the teacher's words and actions. An *Awá* sacrifices his or her life to serve the others. The second story is about *Sa' ká páppée* or preparing the land for sowing. It reveals the life of the Bribri before the arrival of the outsiders and their relationship with their land. The third story illustrates the Bribri as the work of art or *Se' dör stè*. Like an art (*stè*), human life, including the qualities and character is moulded by Sula' (the potter of *Sibò* god), as it did to the other beings. Described by the Bribri as creature that has life and produces it, *stè* is also a sacred word used in *Awá's* healing treatment, and has a significant rules and taboos associated with it. The fourth story is about *Klòskú* or the bag with double compartment; use to carry the sacred stones of the medicine man. The fifth story is about *Siò'skú*, another special bag crucial to the healer's work. The sixth story revealed the origin of the hunter's knowledge of specific plant known as *Namala*, particularly used to forge Bribri's special weapons in order to catch or avoid certain animal; the felines. Pleasurably, the seventh story speaks the significance of *Se' tsè* or lullaby created by the Bribri's women for their kids. The lullaby songs carry the Bribri's knowledge and wisdom of their culture and the people. Finally, the story of *Ditsò* or the Seed. The Bribri believe that human and the other beings are created from the same root; the seed. Narrating the seed is important in Bribri culture because the seed carries its specific origin, function, identification and the language itself.

In conclusion, the book's emphasis on the lifetime learning process or the art of life through the words of wisdom in Bribri everyday life. Like any other Indigenous people around the world, the *Awá* or the elders play a vital role in protecting and transmitting the knowledge to their younger generation, particularly when their wisdom, and ultimately their culture and identity, are constantly challenged or undermined by the outsider's definition.

References

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Notas de autor

- * Zanisah Man is an Indigenous scholar from Malaysia. She is born in one of the Orang Asli ethnic subgroup known as Semelai. Orang Asli refers to Indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia.

Malaysian. Ph.D in Anthropology from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Teaching at Anthropology and Sociology Programme, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia. E-mail: zanisahman@ukm.edu.my ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1259-0979>