

## **Shamanism: Tradition and Biocultural Heritage in San Mateo Río Hondo, Oaxaca, Mexico**

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### **Abstract**

The connection between shamanism and the individual is significant, as from an early age, many turn to these traditional shamanic practices to alleviate physical or emotional discomforts. This knowledge is transmitted through language, starting from the family nucleus and extending over time through direct dialogues "towards the past" with parents and grandparents, or "towards the future" with children and grandchildren (Toledo, 2009). In Oaxaca, those who practice these healing arts and possess the power to heal are called shamans or healers. Many of them recognize the importance of passing on this knowledge to future generations, understanding that biocultural heritage includes vital material and symbolic elements for the community, consisting of ancestral knowledge, natural resources, and biological diversity. According to Toledo (1993, 2001), these activities focus on productive practices and traditional knowledge, linking the interpretation of nature with the symbolic system, connected to rituals and origin myths. Shamanism and biocultural heritage share the appreciation of the connection between human beings and nature, as well as the transmission of spiritual and cultural aspects through oral tradition. This study examines shamanic practices in San Mateo Río Hondo, Oaxaca, to illustrate the impact of the market on biocultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Shamanism, Bio-cultural heritage, Traditional medicine

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## **Introduction**

The cultural richness of San Mateo Río Hondo in Oaxaca unfolds in an intricate network of shamanic practices rooted in tradition, passed down through generations. In this context, shamanism stands as an essential pillar that not only addresses physical and emotional needs but also plays a crucial role in preserving the biocultural heritage of the community. The latter is defined by its unique set of ancestral knowledge, natural resources, and deep connection to local biodiversity. This article delves into the complexity of San Mateo Río Hondo, exploring how shamanic practices and biocultural heritage interact in an environment marked by change and continuity. Inspired by the works of prominent authors such as Toledo (1993:2001), we will examine how these practices are organized into a repertoire of traditional knowledge and how interpretations of nature intertwine with symbolic systems, rituals, and origin myths. Furthermore, this analysis ventures into the influence of the modern market on these cultural spheres. How does contemporary commerce affect shamanic practices and biocultural heritage in San Mateo Río Hondo? We will discover how the intersection between tradition and the market shapes the current landscape of this community, either preserving or transforming its rich legacies.

## **Study Area**

The state of Oaxaca is located in the Mexican Republic, divided into eight geographical regions comprising 30 districts, which, in turn, consist of 570 municipalities. These regions include the Coast, the Isthmus, the Central Valleys, the Cañada, the Mixteca, the Sierra Norte, Sierra Sur, and the Papaloapan, each with diverse customs, traditions, and its own form of governance. In the Sierra Sur lies San Mateo Río Hondo (Image 1), a municipality with a territorial extension of 233.58 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 0.24% of the state. As of the year 2020, it had a population of 3,208 people. The region is characterized by a subhumid temperate climate with summer rains (61.54%), subhumid cold (21.01%), humid semitropical with abundant summer rains (16.45%), and subhumid warm with summer rains (1.00%). (INAFED, 2019)

**Image 1. Mexico, State of Oaxaca**



**Source: Self-made using Arc Map 10.3 software**

According to the 2020 report, as shown in Table 1, the municipality reports a high level of social deprivation, with an index of 1.214320, ranking 303rd in the national context. This indicates that indicators of social deprivation such as education, health, basic services, and living space are limited (CONEVAL, 2020).

**Table 1. Index and Degree of Social Deprivation in San Mateo Río Hondo, Oaxaca, 2020**

Municipality	Social Deprivation Index	Degree of Social Deprivation	National Ranking
San Mateo Río Hondo	1.214320	High	303

**Source: Self-made, information from CONEVAL 2020**

As shown in Table 2, it is reported that 86.8% of the population lives in conditions of poverty, with 53.7% experiencing extreme poverty (CONEVAL, 2020).

**Table 2. Poverty and Extreme Poverty Index in San Mateo Río Hondo, Oaxaca, 2020**

Municipality	Poverty Rate	Extreme Poverty Rate
San Mateo Río Hondo	86.8%	53.7%

**Source: Self-made, information from CONEVAL 2020.**

One of the features that best characterizes San Mateo Río Hondo is its climate and forests; however, its high level of social deprivation and poverty has an impact on the quality of life for the residents, leading to a high rate of migration at very early ages. In summary, in our study area, we can affirm that shamanic practices find a conducive environment due to its biodiverse natural surroundings. The intrinsic connection with nature is essential, as shamanism often involves interaction with natural elements and the interpretation of their symbolism. Moreover, these practices value the healing properties of plants and herbs that thrive in this biodiversity-rich environment. The population of San Mateo Río Hondo carries a rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Shamanic traditions are often passed down from generation to generation as an integral part of cultural heritage, with knowledge intertwining with myths, rituals, and specific spiritual practices of the region. Shamanism is typically a deeply rooted practice in the community. Social cohesion and connection among community members are crucial elements for many forms of shamanism, as the practices often involve communal rituals and active participation from local inhabitants. The connection with biocultural heritage, encompassing both cultural and biological aspects, is evident in shamanic practices. This involves not only the transmission of traditional knowledge about plants and natural remedies but also an understanding of the relationship between the community and its natural environment.

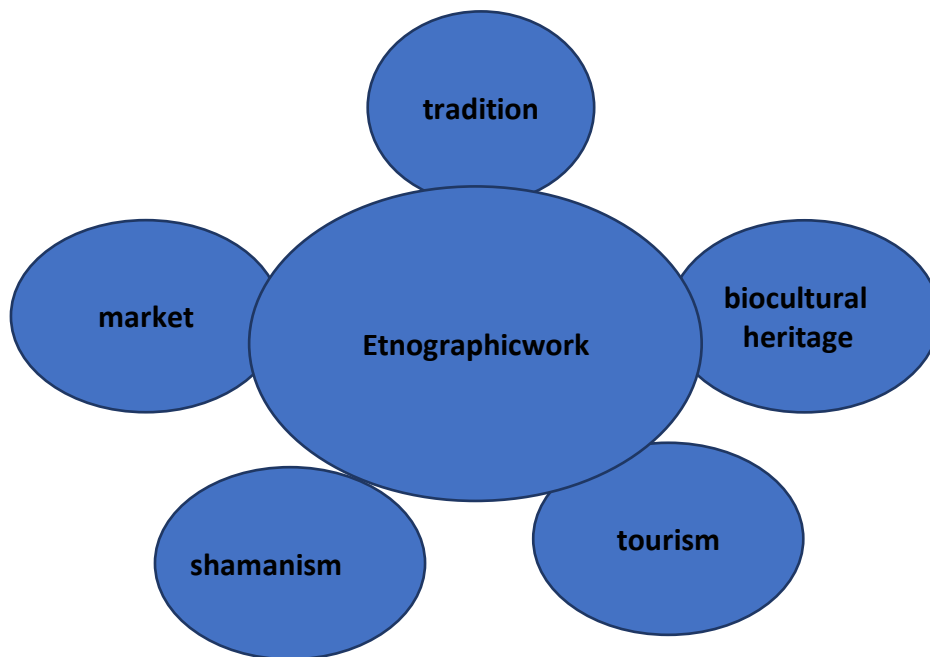
### **Theoretical-Conceptual Framework**

As depicted in Figure 2, the proposal and analyses of this study are grounded in the theoretical-conceptual aspect, employing a qualitative approach and gathering information from scientific works that establish a strong connection between the market, tradition, biocultural heritage, tourism, and shamanism.

Regarding biocultural heritage, within its multiple definitions, we find that it is "the set of significant material and symbolic elements of a community, and it has a close relationship with shamanism because these practices are based on the deep-rooted traditional beliefs of a social group. Speaking of biocultural heritage is about articulating natural or environmental sciences and social sciences, reconnecting knowledge and concepts about territory, ecosystems, biodiversity, the relationship

between humans and nature, forms of use and exploitation; it also considers the cosmogonic and symbolic elements established by humans in their habitat or territory" (Patrimonio et al., 2012:83).

**Image 2. Link of Ethnographic Work with Investigative Themes**



**Source: Self-composed**

In San Mateo Río Hondo, there are sacred places like their forests, as that is where they find the mushrooms used in their shamanic practices; the waterfall and the lighthouse where they express gratitude through offerings. Unlike other municipalities and localities near San Mateo Río Hondo, the hills and forests do not have sacred names; however, for them, every meter of the forest holds cultural and ancestral value. Shaman Braulia mentions that her grandparents taught them the importance of caring for nature because "Mother Earth gives us the teachers (mushrooms) as a gift, but we must repay her by being grateful and taking care of every natural resource".

The process of tourism entering some cultural territories has allowed for a rapid commodification of various elements of life. As an example, we find shamanic practices, which not only play the role of the ecstatic and sacred but also produce the experience that tourism seeks. Tourism, according to Smith (1977), is a person who moves away from their common or ordinary habitat in a process of mobility that

involves not only physical displacement but also of imaginaries, which are reconfigured from leaving the common habitat to the encounter with the other; in this case, the exotic or "noble savage." This interaction implies relationships, based on the host/guest paradigm, developed by anthropologists (Smith 1977:15). At specific times of the year, tourism arrives in San Mateo, with the purpose of learning about their culture, their forests, and especially the shamanic practices based on hallucinogenic mushrooms.

On the other hand, in the definition of tradition, Miranda defines it as the process of transmission that comes from the past to the present, carried out through a chain of repetitions that are not identical but present changes and innovations (Miranda, 2005:123). It is important to note that tradition is a construct of ideas, symbols, and knowledge that are interconnected in a society. The intersection of shamanism and the market in San Mateo Río Hondo has been studied through a qualitative approach where information collection techniques involved semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The significance of studying shamanism lies in its potential to offer a historical perspective on its transformation. From Eliade's point of view (1976), shamanism is situated at a kind of ground zero of the religious (Eliade, 1976:14). In other words, it is not a religion; however, it is a set of religious practices. An example of this is San Mateo Río Hondo, where they do not consider shamanism as a religion, but they have faith in the shaman and the mushroom for healing. In our understanding, shamanism is a system based on ancestral traditional beliefs aimed at diagnosing and curing human suffering. This system is generational and ancestral, with the neurotropic mushroom of the *Psilocybe* genus, and its three species: *P. caerulescens*, *P. cubensis*, and *P. mexicana*, serving as the managing device (Table 1).

**Table 1. Taxonomic List of Neurotropic Mushrooms in San Mateo Río Hondo**

Family	Gender	Species	Traditional name	Anthropocentric category
Strophareaceae	<i>Psilocybe</i>	<i>Mexican Psilocybe</i>	“Birds”	Neurotropic
Strophareaceae	<i>Psilocybe</i>	<i>Cubensis Psilocybe</i>	“The teachers, saint/magic boys or San Isidro	Neurotropic

Strophareaceae	<i>Psilocybe</i>	<i>Caerulescens</i> <i>Psilocybe</i>	“Collapse”	Neurotropic
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**Source: Self-made, using the methodology of Hawksworth et al. (1995)**

In our opinion, this system forms a set of traditions, beliefs associated with illnesses, and the healing power held by certain individuals. These beliefs, whose source is lost in the darkness of time, blend with others that are already institutionalized, such as those of Catholicism and those emanating from a civil or ethical source. Thus, the belief that nature has its own life and will is articulated with Catholic beliefs such as punishment, blessing, penance, punishment, or consecration, as well as secular beliefs like respect, morality, and prudence. Nature is attributed certain self-management powers for its control and defense, so that production not only depends on human activity but also on the relationship between taboos, rituals, and the natural order. These beliefs are framed within a set of worldviews that relate the body and human activities to the autonomous functioning of the cosmos, subordinating to the moods of nature, which presses or punishes based on their assessment derived from an interpretation of human activities.

In shamanism, these neurotropic mushrooms are relevant to the community because they are considered a means to find answers to evil, with the mediator being the shaman. It is a natural resource provided by "Mother Nature" to healers or shamans to perform shamanic practices. In the study by Lara-Vázquez et al. (2013), wild mushrooms constitute a non-timber forest resource in different rural communities during the rainy season, due to their cultural, food, and economic importance. Therefore, in San Mateo Río Hondo, mushrooms are referred to as "sacred/magical children" due to the respect they deserve. We have observed that the relationship between shamanism and the individual is substantial because from a young age, they turn to these shamanic practices to cure any physical or emotional discomfort. This knowledge is transmitted through space and time through language, starting in the family nucleus and being shared and reproduced through direct dialogue between the individual, their parents, and grandparents "towards the past" or between the individual, their children, and grandchildren "towards the future" (Toledo, 2009).

When talking about shamanic activity, it is necessary to touch on tourism, considering it as the study of a person who moves away from their common or ordinary habitat in a process of mobility that involves not only physical displacement but also of imaginaries, which are reconfigured from leaving the common habitat to the meeting point with the other; in this case, with the exotic or "noble savage" (Alcántara, 2019:52).

The arrival of tourists to San Mateo Río Hondo began to increase in 2019 with the first Annual Mushroom Fair (Image 3), whose objective was to showcase the culture, gastronomy, and crafts of the area. This was achieved through the sale of dehydrated mushrooms, coffee, mushroom consommé, T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, and a forest hike for mushroom picking. This commercial activity stimulated the local economy, as visitors purchased the offered items while getting to know the local culture.

**Image 3. Poster of the Mushroom Fair 2019**



In the Mushroom Fair, healing rituals with shamans and neurotropic mushrooms were also showcased. Consequently, tourists began to show interest and wanted to learn more about the subject. The integration of the population with commercial activities occurred through this dynamic, which continued each year, along with the construction of the road connecting the municipality to the main Highway 175, expediting the arrival of products and tourists. It's worth noting that before these events, the inhabitants already



had contact with foreigners requesting shamanic practices and other individuals involved in mycological research or related work.

The shamanic system of San Mateo Río Hondo residents revolves around the link between the individual and shamanism; for shamans, their world is governed by the sacred. The coexistence between them must be conducted with respect and rewards. But, what is shamanism? According to Pelcastre-Villafuerte (1999), shamanism is a practice that is part of the traditional medicine structure and is defined as the technique of ecstasy, as it is precisely this experience that distinguishes the shaman from other therapists. Contributions to the study in the region are diverse. However, understanding the insertion process in the relationship between shamanism and the market is crucial. Tourism in certain cultural territories has allowed for the rapid commercialization of various aspects of life. As an example, shamanic practices not only play the role of the ecstatic and sacred but also produce the experience sought by tourism. Similarly, the figure of the shaman in San Mateo Río Hondo and the implications of shamanic practices have been expressed by foreigners visiting throughout the year from various places, making it a significant point to visit the location. According to Mircea Eliade, "the shaman dominates 'his spirits' in the sense that he, being a human being, manages to communicate with the dead, 'demons,' and 'spirits of nature' without becoming their instrument" (Eliade, 1976: 5). Therefore, a crucial reason for tourists to visit San Mateo is to meet a shaman.

In this regard, shamanism and the market have been studied in San Mateo Río Hondo using a qualitative approach where data collection techniques involve semi-structured interviews and non-participatory observation, as seen in the case of Valdivieso et al. (2017). The goal is to understand the relationship between employment and income concerning the primary sector's economic activities performed by individuals in San José del Pacífico, belonging to the municipality of San Mateo Río Hondo, Oaxaca. This municipality has ancestral traditions that attract tourism and consequently generate economic income. Magali Demanget (2020:47) mentions the objective of the work, which is to raise awareness among foreigners arriving at hotels and connect them with the "practitioners of tradition," of which they are ignorant, ignorance that these practitioners fill by feeding their knowledge through their readings.

The literature by Valdivieso mentioned earlier found that forest exploitation is the main source of income, especially for men living on the outskirts of the locality. However, this activity poses problems for the population, such as deforestation, water scarcity, pests, among others. One of the findings is that agricultural activity has been completely abandoned due to the lack of mechanization and subsidies to produce in the field (Valdivieso et al., 2017:14). In conclusion, digital inclusion is introduced as an opportunity to diversify primary sector economic activities, boost local economic development, and prevent population migration. Subsequently, Demanget(2020) shows results indicating that investors are primarily chosen based on kinship. Moreover, the selection of businesses, paid services, or any kind of trade is always done based on the merchant's position within the family. Within this same "economic economy," we witness a perpetuation of the social bond of kinship, meaning within the same family nucleus.

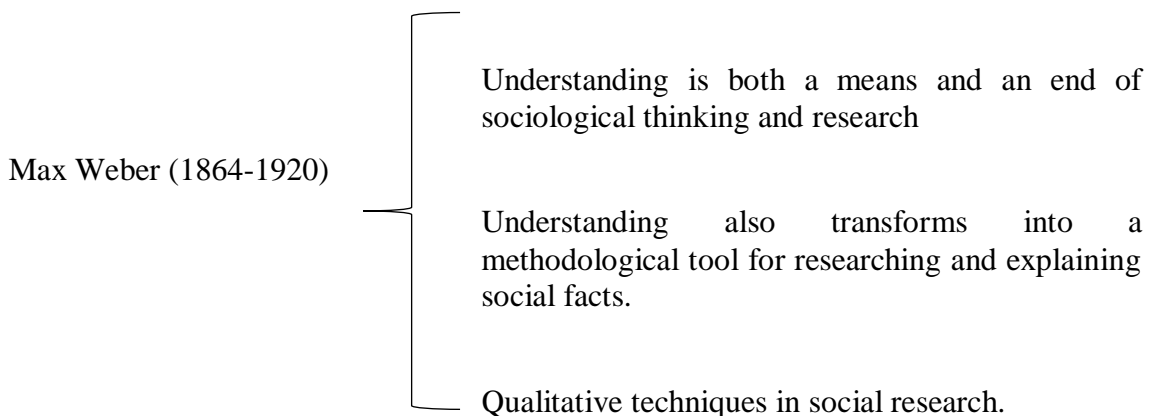
The economic exchange appears to juxtapose with the symbolic exchange. Demanget expresses, "After all, no one forces you to go shopping with a particular merchant or to choose a certain person as an investor over another, but the reciprocal exchange underlying among members of the same lineage" (Magali Demanget, 2020:20). Personally, an example of exchange, and concluding from the aforementioned readings, it is understood that the ritual implies that the intake of "mushrooms" comes at a cost. A ceremony costs 150 pesos for the Huaotecos and up to 300 pesos for foreigners, which is more than double the cost of a visit to the doctor. However, the wise men and women refuse to charge for their knowledge because it is a gift from God, and God does not charge. The wise men and women define themselves as healers for the poor, as poverty prevents them from having resources for modern medicine. The mercantile exchange is thus transfigured by the absence of direct contact and the suggestive tone in which the fee is discreetly established. In this unacknowledged business, where the mercantile relationship is diluted under the effect of euphemism, everything tends to establish the "clients" as the sole actors of their donation. Philip Kotler (2021) defines the market as "a set of potential consumers who share a specific need or desire, willing and able to make a trade that satisfies this need or desire." The presence of money in shamanic practices does not necessarily contradict customs if one reconsiders the opposition

between the two types of wealth, one in a state of fructification, the other trapped in an accumulation process doomed to sterility (Magali Demanget, 2020:54).

### **Methodological Strategy**

The research is grounded in the principles of Weberian Comprehensive Sociology. Weber states that the sociologist must grasp the sense and meaning of social action to explain it in its development. According to Weber (1984), Comprehensive Sociology should be understood as "a science that aims to understand, by interpreting social action, to explain it causally in its development and effects" (Weber, 1984: 5). In Image 4, the way Max Weber conceives and defines Comprehensive Sociology is shown.

### **Image 4. Comprehensive Sociology**



**Source: Author's own compilation, based on the Sociology book, number 70, May-August 2009:214."**

In the Sociology book, Weber describes, through qualitative techniques of social research, how explaining is understanding. Using the methodology of causal imputation or ideal types, he identifies regularities that determine one or more social behaviors. It involves interpreting the sense of actions, explaining them in an intersubjective way. As ideal types, Weber's identified actions do not exist in reality but methodologically help explain any possible real action (Farfán, 2009:203). Thus, through the observation and understanding of semi-structured interviews, social behaviors in San Mateo Río Hondo can be interpreted.

## **Ethnographic Work**

During the months of February, April, and August 2023, diagnostic visits were made to San Mateo Río Hondo to understand the increase in tourists and the growth of businesses or activities demanded by visitors. In March, 40 interviews were conducted with tourists and visitors to the area. The interviewees were selected using the simple random sampling method (Otzen and Manterola, 2017). Each interview covered four important aspects: market, tradition, biocultural heritage, and shamanism. Additionally, interviews were conducted with four shamans practicing in San Mateo Río Hondo. Visits to the municipality were documented through a logbook where observations of social behaviors were recorded. Interviews were also recorded and photographed; it's important to note that not all tourists or shamans agreed to be recorded.

## **Data Collection**

Statistical data necessary for the research were obtained from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), the General Directorate of Population of Oaxaca (DIGEPO), the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), and the Ministry of Well-being. This allowed gathering economic, social, political, and cultural information about the study area. An archive of works by recognized authors was compiled, providing information on market, tradition, biocultural heritage, tourism, and shamanism for the integration of the theoretical framework. In the field, valuable information was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were coded and recorded in an Excel database. Subsequently, using the AtlasTi software, data analysis from interviews with tourists and shamans was

visualized.

**Image 5:**



**Interview to Braulio Shaman**

**Source: Photograph taken on April 21, 2023**

### **Interviews with Shamans in San Mateo Río Hondo**

Interviews with shamans, also known as healers in the study municipality, were crucial instruments for this research. These interviews were conducted through four field visits, where the purpose of the interview was explained, and their perspectives and views on this ancestral practice were obtained. As shown in Image 5, the interview began by requesting their personal data to get to know them and have a temporal reference based on their age regarding changes that have occurred in relation to this practice. Subsequently, questions were asked about the cultural and traditional importance of the biocultural heritage linked to the market of shamanic practices, to understand their perspective on this practice and any challenges they face. Later, questions related to the importance of tourism were incorporated since it is crucial to understand the origin of those seeking to participate in these practices and comprehend the role tourism plays in their territory. Finally, questions were asked about the strategies for preserving and conserving their biocultural heritage.

### **Results and Conclusions**

Shamanism has generated various effects, including the convergence between mercantilism and the sacred, giving rise to what could be termed a "sacred market." This phenomenon involves a constant negotiation about what to offer and how to do it, all in order to meet the expectations of tourism seeking both healing and ecstasy. These processes trigger two interrelated phenomena: a significant economic flow and the preservation of cultural traditions. The magnitude of these effects has intensified with

the realization of the first Annual Mushroom Fair in San Mateo Río Hondo, Oaxaca. This event has acted as a catalyst, enhancing the interaction between economic and cultural aspects in the context of shamanism, generating significant impacts on the community. The first impact results from the tourist influx to the municipality, where the flow of money is evident from lodging to food consumption and participation in various activities. This phenomenon contributes significantly to the local economy. On the other hand, the second phenomenon is related to the preservation of the tradition of the shamanic system, which consolidates as an intangible biocultural heritage for the municipality.

On its part, the concept of biocultural heritage has been gaining relevance in the territories of indigenous peoples, especially from a perspective of social research. Every year, San Mateo receives visits from researchers and traditional healers exploring mushrooms for research purposes or to create medicinal infusions, which are then marketed online or locally. This external interest positions San Mateo Río Hondo as a recognized enclave for its mystical and healing properties, strengthening the ethnic identity linked to biocultural heritage. As shown in Image 6, in July 2023, the Mushroom Fair was held, with a significant number of tourists.

**Image 6: Mushroom Fair in San Mateo Río Hondo 2023**



**Source: Photograph taken on July 2023**

The increase in tourism in a community like San Mateo Río Hondo can have various effects, both positive and negative, impacting different aspects of local life. Here are some of the main consequences associated with the growth of tourism:

**Positive Impacts:**

1. Tourism can significantly boost the local economy by generating income through the provision of tourist services, the sale of local products, and job creation in sectors such as hospitality, gastronomy, and commerce.
2. The tourist flow can motivate investments in local infrastructure, such as roads, hotels, and other tourist facilities, improving the quality of life for both residents and visitors.
3. Tourism can promote the local culture, encouraging the preservation of traditions, customs, and cultural heritage.

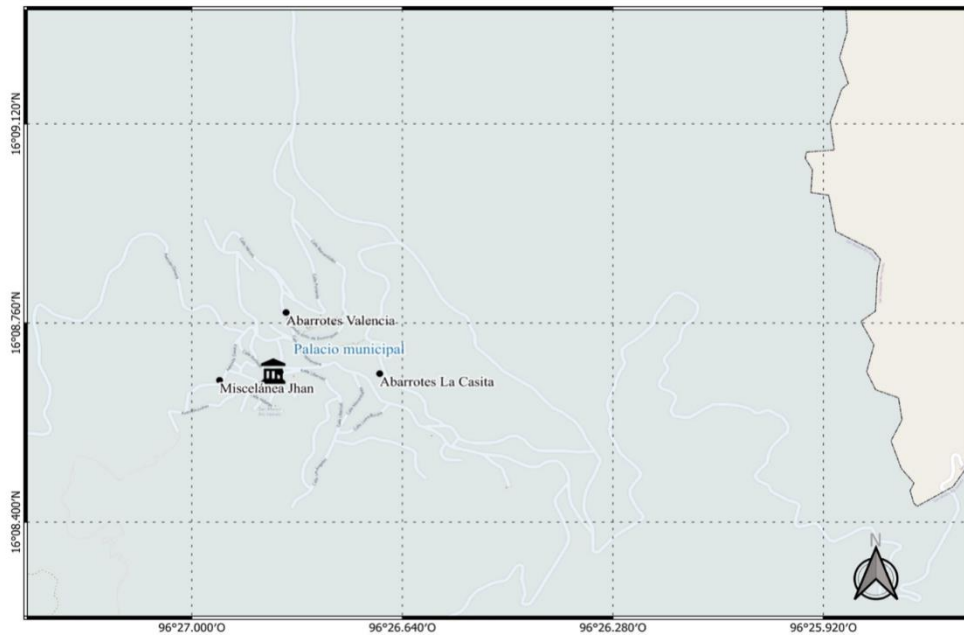
**Negative Impacts:**

1. The increase in tourism can jeopardize local natural resources, such as mushrooms and medicinal herbs, due to overexploitation and lack of sustainability.
2. Mass tourism can contribute to environmental pollution, ecosystem degradation, and waste generation, negatively affecting biodiversity and the quality of the environment.
3. Tourism's influence can lead to changes in the cultural identity of the community, either through the commercialization of local traditions or the introduction of external cultural practices.
4. Tourist demand can drive an increase in local prices, affecting the resident community and generating economic inequalities.

As shown in Map 1, in San Mateo Río Hondo in 2019, there were only three well-established businesses:

1. Abarrotes Valencia
2. Abarrotes La Casita
3. Miscelánea Jhan

**Map 1: Location of businesses in San Mateo Río Hondo, 2019**



**Source: Self-made with ArcMap 10.3 software**

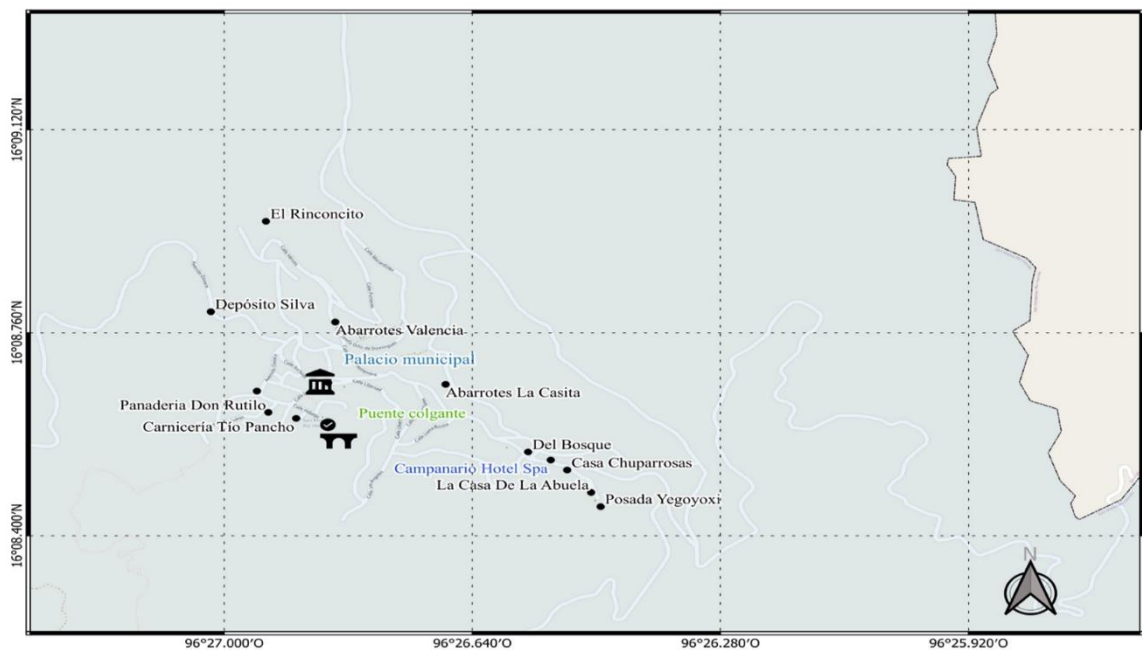
In comparison to 2019, as shown in Map 2, businesses in San Mateo Río Hondo have increased in 2023 due to the demand from tourists seeking shamanic practices for physical, mental, and emotional healing. There are currently eleven businesses catering to tourism:

1. Abarrotes Valencia
2. Abarrotes La Casita
3. El Rinconcito
4. Depósito Silva
5. Del Bosque



6. Del Chuparrosas
7. Posada Yogoyoxi
8. Carnicería Tío Pancho
9. Don Rutilo
10. La Casa de la Abuela
11. Campanario Hotel SPA

**Map 2: Location of commerce in San Mateo Río Hondo 2023**



**Source: Self-made with Arc Map 10.3 software**

It's important to note that tourists mentioned discovering San Mateo Río Hondo through digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. They come from their hometowns or places of residence seeking peace, harmony, and the opportunity to breathe fresh air. Most interviewees visit San Mateo Río Hondo due to its proximity to the Oaxacan coast, taking advantage of the visit to explore and relax before continuing their journey to their destination (Puerto Escondido, Puerto Angel or Huatulco).

During the interviews, participants shared valuable perspectives and enriching experiences, providing a deep insight into their perceptions and encounters. Their comments revealed a diversity of opinions and viewpoints, ranging from personal

reflections to profound cultural observations. Exploring topics from shamanic traditions to interactions with tourism, the interviewees offered a wealth of information crucial for understanding the complexity and richness of dynamics in San Mateo Río Hondo. The following is a synthesis aiming to capture the essence of their testimonies, providing a starting point for detailed analysis.

"I am retired, 70 years old, and come with my wife every year to the beautiful beaches of Puerto Ángel. We like to stop in San José to have hot chocolate, buy woven mushroom souvenirs for the grandchildren, and sometimes, we stay in the cabins in San Mateo Río Hondo, taking a relaxing walk" (Roberto, 70 years old, Oaxaca, 07/11/2020).

"I have never had experiences with shamans or healers, but it intrigues me a lot. I come here to learn because of everything I hear when people talk about coming to San Mateo or San José. I also come because I lost my grandmother and want to say goodbye to her, as I never did. A friend who managed to do it with her mom encouraged me to come" (Patricia, 31 years old, Terán Chiapas, 17/11/2020).

The ages of the interviewed tourists ranged from 24 to 70 years. Most visitors choosing San Mateo Río Hondo as a vacation destination primarily come from Mexican states such as Oaxaca, Tabasco, Morelia, and Chiapas. Notably, there is a significant international presence, with tourists coming from places like the United States (Los Angeles, California), Nicaragua (Managua), Colombia (Bogotá), and El Salvador. These tourists, mostly with stable employment, carefully plan their vacations, opting for a 3 to 5-day stay on the Oaxacan coast, including destinations like Puerto Escondido, Puerto Ángel, or Huatulco. In economic terms, they allocate a budget ranging from \$1,500 to \$5,000 Mexican pesos for their activities and experiences.

Their main interest focuses on exploring the forest, particularly enjoying hikes and capturing images of mushrooms encountered during their journey. Despite this focus on nature, many express genuine curiosity about participating in the local sacred ritual, demonstrating a deep respect for the community's ingrained beliefs. This desire to learn

more about the place and its roots reflects authentic interest in local culture and traditions. In the narratives of most tourists, shamans emerge as essential guides facilitating inner exploration and healing, both physically and mentally. These shamanic experts are perceived as guardians of ancient knowledge about the gifts provided by Mother Nature, such as sacred mushrooms and plants. Although many visitors express a profound interest in learning and exploring further, the lack of specific knowledge about shamanic rituals has led most of them not to actively participate in such ceremonies. The motivation behind their visit revolves around seeking knowledge and meaningful experiences that allow them to connect with the spiritual and healing richness of nature.

The main income for traditional healers comes from healing rituals; however, some have additional income sources, such as the healers in San Mateo Río Hondo who sell toasted tortillas, honey with mushrooms, or mushroom jam. Traditional doctors in San José del Pacífico have income streams such as charging for a humanized birth or cabin rentals. One healer in San Mateo Río Hondo charges 300 pesos for the sale of a bag of dried neurotropic mushrooms, including the healing ritual. Another healer doesn't set a cost for her consultations, but people sometimes give her 200 or 300 pesos. The shaman in San José del Pacífico charges between 200 or 300 pesos for the healing ritual, while the healer in the same location charges 200 for the ritual and 400 for giving birth.

All traditional healers agree that they receive up to 10 people per week during the high season, 5 during the low season, while they usually see around 7 people per week, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Income by season from traditional medicine practices in San Mateo Río Hondo**

<b>Months of the year</b>	<b>Number of persons received in a week</b>	<b>Income (mexican pesos)</b>
March -April (9 weeks)	7	\$18,900
July-August (8 weeks)	5	\$12,000
November-Dicember (9 weeks)	10	\$27,000

**Source: Self-made with information from the interviews**

The table above shows the different seasons of the year provided by traditional healers, indicating that in the months of March and April, which include the Easter celebration, the number of people attended per week increases, resulting in a total income of \$18,900 Mexican pesos. In the months of July and August, which are the summer vacations, they receive five people per week, making this season the lowest for them, resulting in a total income of \$12,000 Mexican pesos. Now, in the months of November and December, which is the Christmas and New Year celebration, it is the peak season. They receive up to ten people per week, consequently earning an income of \$27,000 Mexican pesos. The demand from tourism has led to an increase in commercial businesses such as cabins, eco-cabins, convenience stores, deposits, an SPA hotel, a suspension bridge, a viewpoint with food services, restaurants, and *temazcales*. This has increased the number of jobs for the residents of the municipality, such as guides for forest tours, waiters in restaurants, cooks, chambermaids, cleaning services, etc., providing opportunities to sell their handmade products.

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