**Silvestre Pantaleón**

Don Silvestre has been teacher and mentor to Jonathan since he first arrived to study in San Agustín Oapan three decades ago. They began to collaborate more closely—on language, natural history, and material culture—in 2000, when Jonathan built a house in Oapan to dedicate himself fulltime, with support from the National Science Foundation, to documenting the language and culture of this community. Perhaps in another life don Silvestre would have been an academic perfectionist: he demonstrates a perspicacity in his observations, a rigor in his instruction, and a sincere desire for his student's progress that is a model of professorial temperament.

For us who produced and directed this documentary it was a lucky coincidence that we met in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, where both of us were working on distinct projects with the indigenous collective Tosepan Titataniske. Jonathan invited Roberto to film a simple audiovisual register of don Silvestre's encyclopedic knowledge and his skills in fashioning material objects of daily use. But during the very first days in Oapan we perceived a beauty in the images and a lyricism in the situations and events that we were recording that surpassed what we had originally contemplated. Very quickly we shifted away from our original idea of documenting a culture and toward one of filming a cultural documentary. At the same time we decided to avoid the talking heads and background information typical of the documentary genre in order to tell a more direct story, trying to share with the viewer the daily rhythms and social spaces in which the life of don Silvestre and his family transpires. The story that has emerged was put together from the fragments of quotidian activities that we were permitted to share.

When we started to edit our footage we played around with various titles before deciding on what we thought at the time was simply a provisional solution: *Silvestre Pantaleón*. But soon we understood that this interim label was the best way of expressing what for us was the core of our experience: Silvestre Pantaleón, aided by his family and rooted in his environment, transcends the strictly personal, local, and cultural with a story both intimate and spiritual while at the same time universal.

Since we began this documentary we have received the comments and encouragement of many colleagues and institutions. We were able to shoot and edit thanks to the financial support of the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation and the collaboration of Ojo de Agua Comunicación as coproducer. And we consider ourselves particularly fortunate to have been to work with the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas, which has acquired three thousand DVDs of *Silvestre Pantaleón* to be freely distributed to bilingual schools and Nahuatl-speaking communities in the Balsas River Valley and other regions of Mexico.

Finally, during the filming of this documentary we were also privileged to have both the pleasure and the honor of enjoying the collaboration and confidence of all those who appear. We deeply thank them for having shared with us their difficult but beautiful life, one that beckons us to look in new way at the realities of indigenous families and communities.

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**Notes on the Nahuatl spoken in *Silvestre Pantaleón***

*Silvestre* *Pantaleón* was shot in San Agustín Oapan, the native village of the protagonist and his family. The Náhuatl of this community (and of some nearby, historically related villages such as Ahuelicán, Analco, and Tula del Río) is unique: it is the only Nahuatl variant that has become a tonal language and where the process known as "reduplication" can be realized by simple vowel lengthening. In regard to tone, there is thus a difference between *xkēwa* ‘he can't support it (a weight)’ and *xkēwá* (with a high tone on the final vowel, ‘¡store it!’). In regard to reduplication, instead of *nihtsohtsomōnia* ‘I shred it' one finds *nī́htsomōnia*, with a high tone and vowel lengthening on the first syllable instead of the reduplicated syllable *tsoh-*. For editorial reasons the high tones (for example, on the syllable *-wa* of *xkēwá* and on the syllable *nīh*- of *nī́htsomōnia*) are not marked in the subtitles, although vowel length is always represented. The long vowels (ā, ē, ī, ō, ū) last approximately 50 percent longer than the short vowels (a, e, i, o, u) and vowel length can be the only difference between two words. Thus, *tepētl* ('hill') is distinct from *tēpetl* ('someone else's straw mat') and *ma tlakwāti* ('let him [a person] go to eat') is distinct from *ma tlākwāti* ('let it [an animal] go to graze', this latter form with an unwritten high tone on the first syllable, *tlā-*. In other nearby variants of Nahuatl this second phrase would be realized as *ma tlakwahkwāti*.

In daily speech the 3rd-person object marker (*h-* or *k-*) is often not pronounced; in addition, some consonants are lost in intervocalic position. In both cases an apostrophe signals the loss. *T'mati* ‘you know it’ for *tihmati*, the form of careful speech. *Ōm'poloh* ‘I lost it’ for *ōnihpoloh*; *ni'ita*, ‘I see it’ for *nikita*; *ōchō'ak* ‘he cried’ for *ōchōkak*; *tōnkowaseh* ‘we will go to buy it’ for *tikonkowaskeh* (note that the loss of intervocalic /k/ in *tikonkowaseh* results in the lengthening of the /o/ in *tōnkowaseh*). Finally, the /h/ that exists in other variants of Nahuatl (e. g., *ohtli* ‘road’) has been lost in Oapan (*otlí*), where it motivates a high tone, and Ameyaltepec (*otli*).

Finally, the subtitles respect the distinct speech of individuals from different communities (e. g., ‘they eat’: *tlakwah* [Oapan] and *tlakwan* [Ameyaltepec] or ‘I went to see you’ *timetsitato* [San Juan Acatlán] and *nimitsitato* [Oapan]). Moreover, the Nahuatl subtitles are not a precise transcription of the dialogues but a transcription that has been slightly edited to facilitate subtitling. For the same reason, the English, Spanish, and French subtitles are not an exact translation of the Nahuatl but rather a representation of the basic meaning, with the liberties in expression that needed to be taken because of the limits of subtitles.

Note to Kathryn: Please note accent on macron

*nī́htsomōnia*