

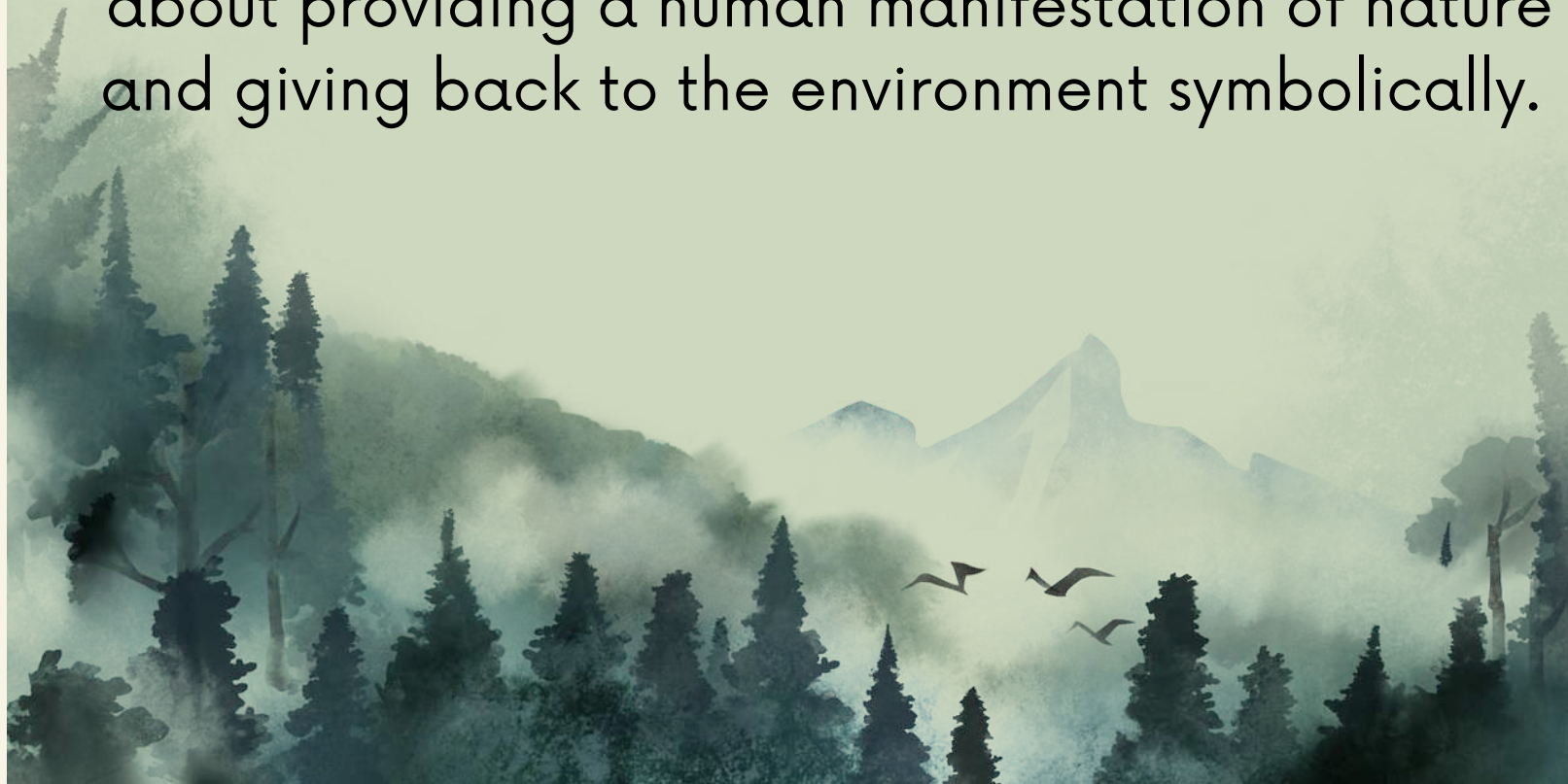
# The Otomi Indigenous Community

The Otomi are an indigenous group who inhabit the central Mexican Plateau region which is mostly made up of temperate forests. The Hill of Ñädo is specifically regarded as the most important natural space and is a protected natural area by the government. It is located in the trans-Mexican volcanic belt and is a mixed pine-oak forest.



## The Cultural Significance of the Forest

The Otomi community demonstrate the cultural significance of the forest through a mutualistic relationship with nature as they preserve, and appreciate the natural elements, protecting all living beings. It is because of them that the area has been preserved to this day despite the populous cities that demand more and more resources for their development. Moreover, art forms such as dance and pottery are ways in which this community expresses their appreciation for the forest and it is not just about having a job to them, but more so about providing a human manifestation of nature and giving back to the environment symbolically.



They have found many services in the forest due to the resources it provides. For example the trees provide wood to cook their food and they provide logs which they harvest for the burning of clay figures as an art form, the foothills of the forest where the water begins to drain provides them with shelter, and the mushrooms in the ground provide a source of food and medicine, as well as a source of income when they sell it.



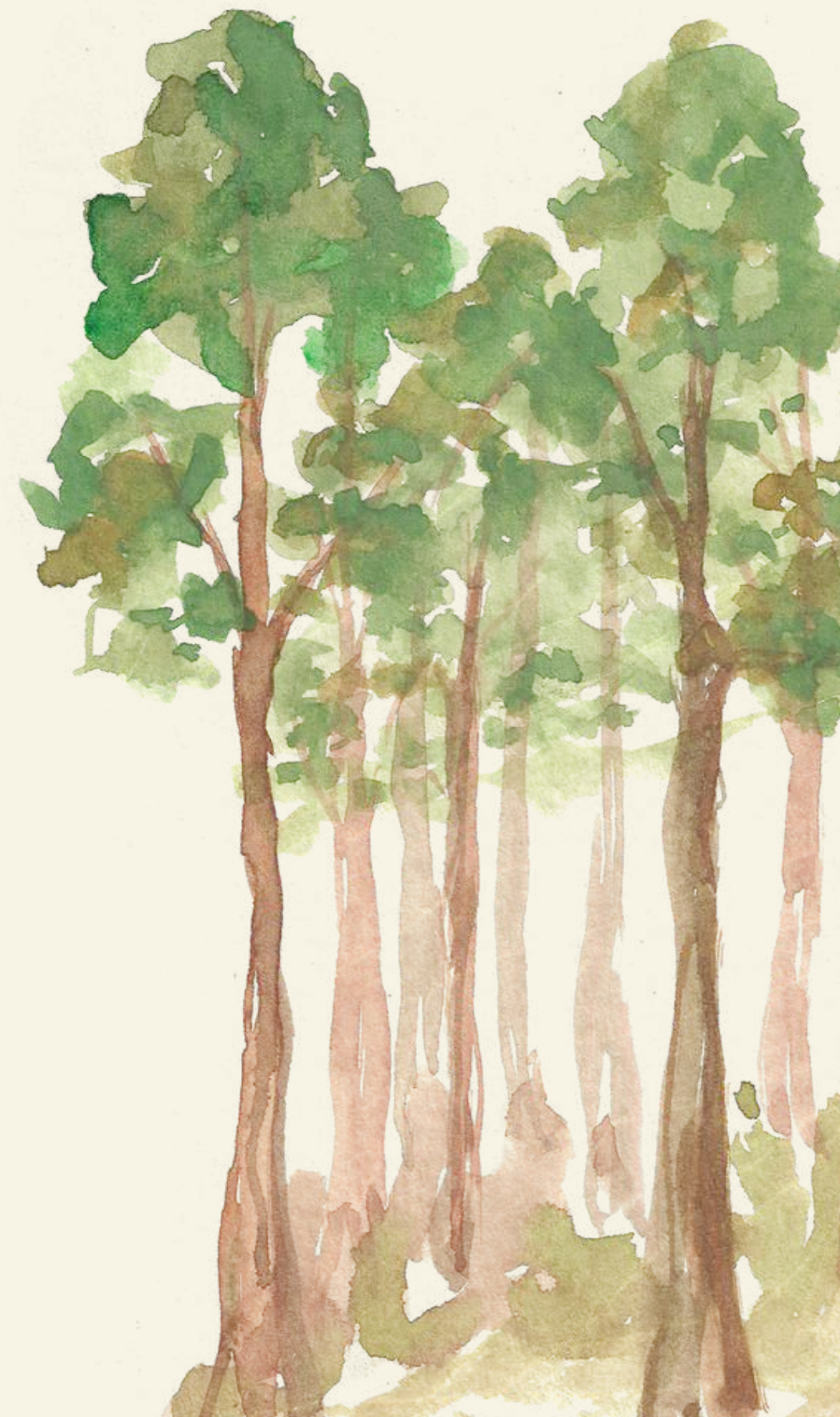
# How can we learn from them?

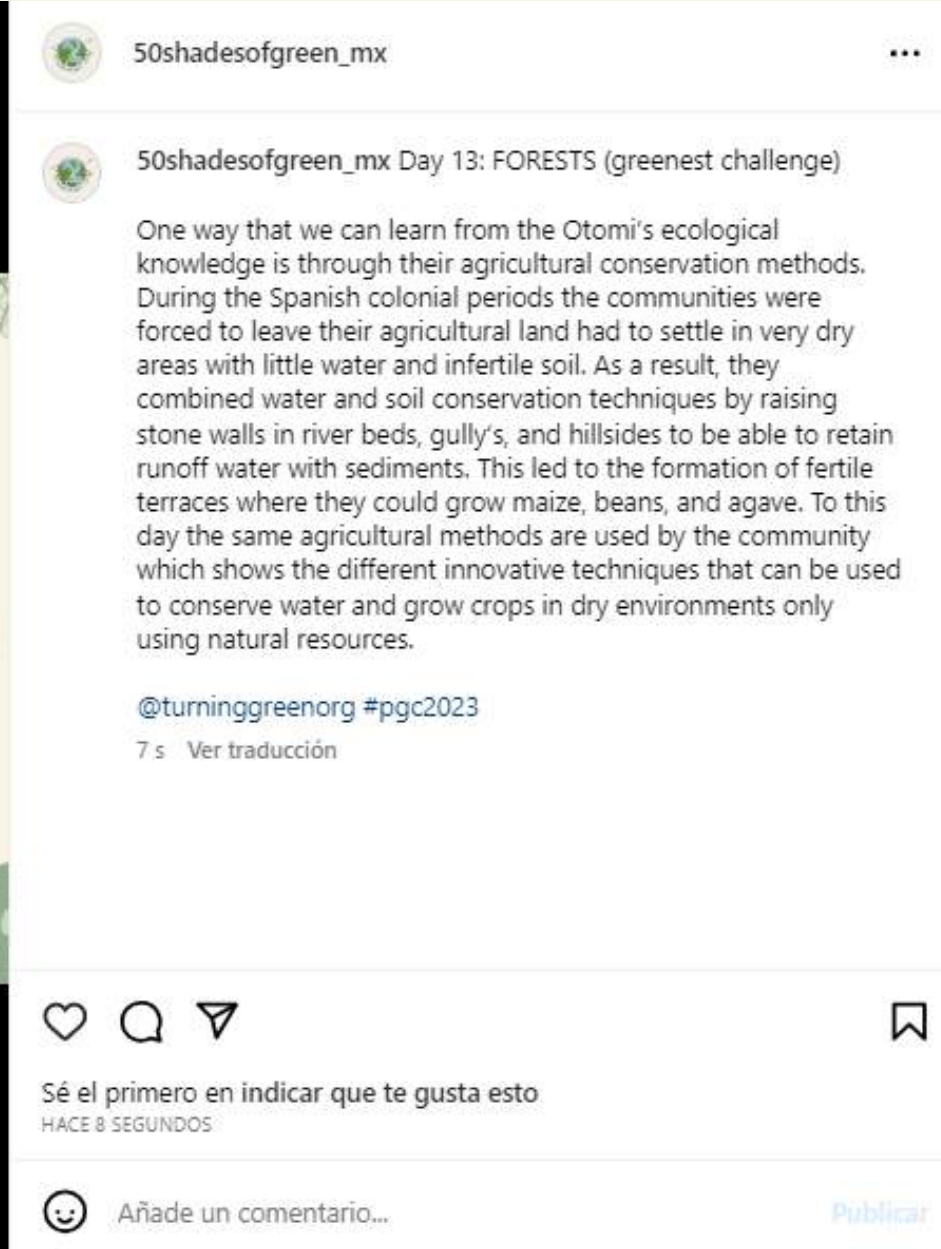
One way that we can learn from the Otomi's ecological knowledge is through their agricultural conservation methods. During the Spanish colonial periods the communities were forced to leave their agricultural land had to settle in very dry areas with little water and infertile soil. As a result, they combined water and soil conservation techniques by raising stone walls in river beds, gully's, and hillsides to be able to retain runoff water with sediments. This led to the formation of fertile terraces where they could grow maize, beans, and agave. To this day the same agricultural methods are used by the community which shows the different innovative techniques that can be used to conserve water and grow crops in dry environments only using natural resources.



# Our Takeaway

The biggest takeaway we can have from the Otomi community is to work alongside nature and to give back as much as we take. We need to have a deep appreciation for the natural resources that the earth gives us and be truly mindful about where everything we have comes from. We also need to continue to find sustainable agricultural methods where we take advantage of as many natural resources as possible such as rainwater and sediment just like the Otomi community does.





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