

"Pagamentos" and Balance

Mamo Zeukukuy (Norberto Torres)

Every existing being today originated in our sacred abode of La Sierra Nevada; and here are the fathers and mothers, embodied in hills, lakes, and sacred relics. This is no secret, and is a part of our ancient thought, which is universal and is maintained by the Mamos through generations.

The world is ruled by nine masters, and it is them who make the balance of the Universe possible. These nine masters keep to the Black Line territories, and from here they irradiate for all our younger brothers: for whites, for all our native brothers who look after La Sierra Nevada with us: for the motilon, and wayu or guajiro, whom we should not forget, for we ought to share in harmony our territories.

Some years ago, in one of our sacred peaks —the Inarwa Tana (called "alguacil" by the whites)—, the Government installed, like a stab, a series of antennas and a permanent military station. They also plundered the relics lying there, and took them to a museum. That is what the soldiers told me some years ago.

This peak is a very important one for all the Mamos of the four castes that dwell in the Sierra Nevada. It was put under our care, and we should offer it the due "pagamentos"; but we cannot, because of the militarization of our peak. This situation has brought violence to Colombia. And this is not all: the Government has always been trying to destroy our thought, our own ideology. But we still exist to keep watch over the last remains.

Tourism is another evil to us, for it is destroying our lakes and Chunduas or snowy peaks, which are very important to us. Because if the father and mother who dwell here are destroyed, the same will happen to Colombia and the whole planet. But we still guard Nature in the Sierra, because everything was born here, here is everything, and the Mamos are the keepers of Nature. And that is why the world still exists. But the world is going out of balance because only a few Mamos are left; but we feel the need to rescue it, and have enough energy to do it.

I want to insist upon this matter of Inarwa Peak, for long ago the government promised a solution, but up to now nothing has been done.

Our thought is universal, for it encompasses all that exists; that is, the visible and the invisible; the great mysteries hidden in Nature, and which until the present most of humankind have been unable to know, since they turn everything into chemistry and science, ignoring that everything, plants and stones included, has its spirit. And all this composes a thought that pervades the Universe; all is united like a breath.

This is a thought that has not been made up by me; it is thousands of years old.

If the Government does not help us to recuperate the nine sacred relics of Inarwa Peak, and if we are not permitted access to it to offer the "pagamentos", annihilation will soon befall. For violence and catastrophe is what we see in the world today. Therefore it is necessary that whites become aware of the importance of making the "pagamentos", which have been neglected, and in this way see how we can find a solution for all this.

The sacred relics that have been pillaged from us have various colors, since every stone embodies its own mystery, and they are nine masters who are the spirits of every sacred stone, each one with its own symbolism. These nine sanctities represent the mother of all foods and plants that nourish us, giving rise to the existence of all kinds of corn and beans and foodstuff. And they are all represented in the nine sanctities; but without them, how will the Mamo have powers? How is he going to offer the "pagamentos"? How is he going to take care of Nature and crops?

Diseases will strike the food. The plants already have many plagues, and they are extinguishing. Because we cannot relinquish our "pagamentos", since the House is empty and we do not have whom to offer our pagamentos to, and in this way there can not be balance.

It is necessary that the Government take appropriate measures, for Mother Nature owns all plants that nourish us, and therefore if our sanctities are given back to us, there will always be food. But if they are not given back to us, crisis will soon befall, food would fail, there will be no production, plant diseases will strike; and we mamos will not know what to do, for we have no fathers.

January 4th, 1996

We head towards self-destruction

Mamo Seinenkwa (Otoniel Mejía Izquierdo)
Kankurwa Kurina

I want to begin with a self-criticism concerning the traditional authorities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. We should start by inwardly cleansing the Sierra Nevada, including the traditional authorities composed by the councilmen and deputies, the ruling council and others. Because they are more of a bridge for the National Government, since our internal authorities are being led in a way that suits better the civil authorities than the native ones. We see the same picture at schools, in our children, who should just be the buttress, the power of our internal organization. Instead, they are being brought up with methods more suitable to the civilized than to us natives.

I ask myself, are really these traditional authorities and the so-called traditional teachers prepared to instruct, to transmit our bilingual, bicultural teachings? Do they know in depth the Mamos' thought? Do they have a real awareness of what loss of identity means? As a Mamo, I consider they do not. These persons are not prepared for that task. So, I think a horrible harm is being done to our community. And therefore, in my opinion, I do not agree with the rules being issued by the cabildos, by the deputies, and by the so-called Mamos who serve as advisors to the schools. For they do not have the deep knowledge needed to rule. Had they it, then our trees should be more, our rivers should be plenty, there should be more snow in our Chunduas and a wider variety of plants, and there should be a greater projection of balance. But what I see is the opposite: they are running schools for our destruction. I see they are opening lands for more and more haciendas, and they are using agricultural methods that are harmful to our traditional crops, introducing educational procedures, like the famous family orchards they are now promoting among us, that suit the Bunachu, the civilized. They are also introducing medical practices like injections, which are right for the Bunachu but not for us.

I think they are attempting against tradition, and though they may think I am narrowminded and alienated from the other Mamos, what I see is that what is being promoted is the destruction of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

I can not, then, agree with that sort of methods, nor would I be ready to back any type of program leading to the destruction of the Sierra Nevada. I shall be a parenthesis, I shall be here, wrapped in my conviction of what I think I can do for the Sierra. But I shall not agree with such ways, which I consider noxious.

The same applies to those religious sects, such as the Evangelicals, who also practice these noxious teaching methods. For this education is another injurious element, since we are not using a methodology dependant on the deep wisdom of the Mamos.

They say they summon us for every decision. They say they need the Mamos' opinion to take decisions on education as well as on any other matter, but that is only a saying, because they treat us like clowns. They call upon us just to approve their plans, but in fact that does not have anything to do with our spiritual practices, the spiritual reflections we are constantly engaged into.

Where are, then, those original forces, those traditional forces which have been giving us our methods? Where are our ancestors, our great-great-grandfathers, our great-grandfathers?

A Sierra for the whites is being prepared. They are now promoting commercial systems good only for the Bunachu. And now, even among women, they are promoting the opening of shops. Our bag knitting, which in olden days was a traditional system to enrich a woman's husband, is now being exploited as a handcrafts business.

Therefore, we must take all these matters in a realistic way: is it truly injurious, self-destructive, or just the opposite? I do not agree with all that, and I want to be heard, because if we go on with these systems and methodologies, I think we head towards self-destruction, and to the total disregard of our Mamos.

However, I would be ready to truly collaborate with you, for I think you are an important commission, interested in gathering some part of the Mamos' experiences. But you have to face it yourselves —that reality we are living in the Sierra Nevada—, because I do not believe in the cabildos and the deputies, nor in any kind of authority under which we are now living in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

We have been appointed to different commissions. We take part in all sorts of commissions for everything. I hear about governmental land-reform and aboriginal affairs commissions. And what is the use of all these commissions, when our livelihood is getting worse instead of better? To us, those commissions are not needed. What we need is for us Mamos to unite all in our strength, in our works and our Gunamu. That our Mamos be the true authorities in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, for that is how it has been for thousands of years.

The day I see, as an actual reality, the practice by the Mamos —through their Gunamus— of authority, healing and education that will give our children what they really need, then shall I begin to believe that something is being made in favor of the Sierra Nevada. Otherwise, I shall go on thinking that what is being done is self-destructive.

Therefore I will be on my guard as to this situation.

January 17th, 1996

We speak the way our forefathers taught us.

Mamo Bunchanawin (Jesús Izquierdo)

With my experience, my studies, and research, we want to say that not all Mamos are equal; they all have their own specialty: Some specialize in Eyza; others, in baptisms; some in calling forth the water; others, in fertilizing the soil; others, in making "pagamentos"; some others, in searching for harmony in the Universe, with Nature. Everything has its own specialty.

We may also say that the Mamos are seers, clairvoyants, telepathists, clairaudients; they can foretell the time, and have in their own memory all that has happened through the centuries. It is as if someone talked to them.

Among our traditional rites, we have the Eyza: the "pagamento" to the dead. It is meant to help the dead to detach from their families —their wives and children— in order for the spirit to be freed. Its like the novena practiced by the Catholics.

All what dies is Eyza. If a leaf falls from a tree and decays, or even the trunk of that tree decays, that is Eysa as well. It does not apply only to humans who die and are buried. No, it does not; it is a wrong interpretation.

Eyza is all what falls and is transformed by the earth, being purified and thus following the process of new seeds and new trees for the benefit of the whole community; of all living beings. We, as Mamos, understand that the Yukunumas are spirits. And there are different apparitions in particular places like pits or hills. In any place may the Yuikunuma appear, and they have a particular meaning which is only known to the Mamo.

That spirit may be announcing the dry season, an earthquake or disaster; it might tell the Mamo about the death of another Mamo. Anyway, I mean that the Yucukumas have their mystery, and that it is the Mamo who knows and interprets that mystery.

What we are saying now we have not made up —we are teaching what we have been taught, so that the light may come some day. Therefore we speak the way our forefathers taught us.

Purvieju (Pueblo Bello), January, 1996.