

**Cosmvision versus Neoliberalism: An Indigenous Alternative to  
Modernist Development in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta\***

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## Abstract

This paper contrasts indigenous worldview and identity with its invasive counterpart modernity/capitalism in The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in northern Colombia. Focusing the construction of the Besotes Dam by the municipal and state government, I examine the way that the Ika, one of four indigenous pueblos in the region, use their worldview and spirituality in the struggle to maintain control over their territory.

The Ika way of thinking does not fall into a "Western" framework, and understanding how the Ika view the world, and the invasion of their territory, is important in understanding the larger picture of colonization and cultural invasion taking place in Colombia, and all over the world. I highlight the differences in these dichotomous worldviews in order to put them in context of identity in politics. The paper evaluates the foundations of the opposing Ika and "western" worldviews and how this drives these cultures in opposite directions. While the tug of war between ideas of nature, law, human rights and cultural sovereignty traditionally falls on the side of those with the strongest economic and military power (usually "The West", as this is what it values), it is unfair for these ethnological invasions to continue in the light of the contemporary political climate of globalization. I argue that because the prospective developers of the region do not understand or act in accordance with the indigenous worldview, they are more liable to offend human rights, and cultural sovereignty. Autonomy is vital for the Ika, as it attempts to keep invading forces off of indigenous peoples' territorial and epistemic turf. Central to this paper is the idea that the Ika have a spiritual culture, and their methods of resistance are part of their singular worldview – not that of the modern hegemonic force that invades their territory.

*"Para nosotros es extraño que una ley cambia, Como es el caso de la ley de los Bonachis o civilizados, nos es extraño pero los respetamos. Debe ser así para ellos*

*pues cambian también de vestidos, cambian de autoridades y gobiernos, cambian también su sentir forma de ver el mundo, cambios y mas cambios, como si no tuvieran algo bueno para hacerlo perdurar."*

Mamo Kuncha Naviquumu  
Mamo Apolinar Torres  
Autoridades Tradicionales de Seinimin

## **Between Two Worlds**

*An introduction to Umunukunu<sup>1</sup> and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*

Sitting in the EMDUPAR<sup>2</sup> building in Valledupar, Colombia discussing the planning and construction of the Besotes Dam with its chief architect I asked what he was planning on doing about the indigenous people living in the proposed flood zone. "We'll move them." He flatly answered. When I ask how, he gets itchy and defensive, telling me that the government has tried to work with the Arhuacans, but there's "just no dealing with these people." We change topic, and he continues telling me how the damn will work, and why it is necessary. Far from this office, filled with phones, computers and workers, working on the government's dime to build the dam, eight hours a day, five days a week, the opposition is working. Mamos, Ika spiritual leaders, perform spiritual payments to the mountain in order to influence the dam construction - to stop it. As an activist, I want to help the indigenous cause, but what do I do? How can I help? For people resisting colonization for five hundred years, I cannot propose an alternative to their methods of resistance without further colonizing on my own part. And why would they listen? When they speak to the west, what does it hear?

Specifics

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<sup>1</sup> Umunukunu is the Ika name for the Sierra.

<sup>2</sup> Empresa de Utilidades de Valledupar (The utility company of the municipality of Valledupar)

There are four pueblos in The Sierra, the Ika (Arhuaco), Kankuama, Kogui and Wiwa, collectively the Four Pueblos, or the Tairona. My good friends, the Ika, were my primary informants for my fieldwork and my ideas are largely based on their ideas, especially those of the political Authority. I also spent time with leaders from all four pueblos, and while it is important to try to speak of the Four Pueblos collectively to strengthen their unity, this paper has only the knowledge at hand to speak of the Ika singularly.

### *The Black Line*

The History of the Ika begins with creation. As everything was created in this world, so were the Ika, but before the physical creation of the natural world that we see with our own eyes, there was a world of thought, and in that world the Black Line was created. The Black Line is a supernatural border that encircles the heart of the world, the Sierra. Before there were a physical mountain (mere protrusion of earth), or animals, plants and humans on it (physical representations of supernatural beings in the primordial), there was a designated sacredness where the balance of the natural world would be centred.<sup>3</sup> Its current, physical manifestation (the mountain) is a natural phenomenon on its own. It contains every possible climate and natural habitat possible. It is a very old mountain (much older than the Andes). If any place could be considered a primordial, microcosmic representation of the world – the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta would be an ideal candidate. The law of creation states that The Sierra (the lands within the black line) is the sacred place given to The Four Pueblos. This line is still intact, and the four pueblos care for it. There are two indigenous resguardos within the black line, and the indigenous control most of its

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<sup>3</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

territory, but there is also much of it that it is control of non-indigenous, and this goes against the law of origin of the Indigenous.

### *Brief History*

For centuries, the Ika structured their society around the principles presented in their creation story, and acted as stewards of the natural world, which they believe they are to keep in balance. Since the European invasion began in 1501, the Ika have been in a constant state of invasion, conquest and colonization at the hands of the bunache, and have been resisting. For the Indigena, all non-Indigena, "civilized" people are bunache (pronounced boo- nah- chay). Spanish rule, wars for independence, Simon Bolivar, the Colombian State, El Bogotazo, The Civil War – for the Indigena, this is the history of the bunache. Theirs has been one of a single invasion, one that started 500 years ago, and continues today. The gold that the Spanish conquistadors sought in the sixteenth century is still in the Sierra; there is also a plethora of other rich minerals that the bunache seek to extract, also water in the form of rivers, Caribbean beachfront property, and one of the most bio-diverse regions of the world – all sought by bunache prospectors, who still invade the Sierra. Along with the static motive for invasion – resources – is the static method of invasion – violence.

In the Sierra are over 10,000 armed actors, including members of the Army, Guerrilla, and Paramilitary forces. All of the armed actors are bunache and the overwhelming majority of the victims are Indigena. This physically violent cultural invasion is possibly the strongest that the Indigenous have faced at any point in the five hundred year invasion. This in light of the Indigenous being the strongest they have been since the invasion began.

Since the beginning of the invasion, colonization has taken on such forms as religious, economic, cultural, and territorial. The Ika have steadily lost ground for hundreds of years, but in the last thirty years or so, the Ika have been making a comeback. The expulsion of the Capuchin mission, established in 1916, from Ika territory, the recuperation of lands within the Black Line, and the strengthening of ties between The Four Pueblos, have all contributed to the new found sense of pride and cultural revitalization taking place amongst the Ika. In reclaiming land, so have The Four Pueblos reclaimed Tairona culture. Much as the pan Mayan movement in Guatemala, The Four Pueblos are now claiming their Tairona ancestry as a unifying point for them, and as an anchor to their land and to the past. Western scholars debate this ancestral connection. Cultural resistance, and the ties that the indigenous have with the natural world, are central to their resistance of the ongoing imperial invasion.

### *Besotes*

There are eight proposed dams being planned in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.<sup>4</sup> The proposed dam Besotes is being planned by the city of Valledupar in order to provide the city with water. The dam, set to tap the Guatapuri River, is to create the smallest man made lake in the continent, in the foothills of The Sierra, just outside of the city. Currently situated within the flood-site reside forty Arhuacan families, native to the area. The site is outside of the indigenous resguardo<sup>5</sup>, but does fall within their traditional territory, and is designated as a sacred site for them. The Arhuaco, as well as the three other pueblos of the Sierra have come out against the building of the dam. Under Colombian law a consulta previa<sup>6</sup> must be carried out before any development

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<sup>4</sup> This is according to both indigenous and governmental sources.

<sup>5</sup> A resguardo is indigenous territory as allocated by the Colombian government.

<sup>6</sup> Previous consent agreement

takes place in indigenous lands. How the law is written and how it is practiced, are two different matters entirely.

### **Roots of Culture**

#### *Differing Conceptions of Reality*

In the context of the Besotes dam, the issue is about water, territory, identity and legality. In defining these things, problems arise, because something as seemingly solid as water may have several completely different meanings. Beyond water, all concepts of nature are likely to vary greatly amongst different worldviews, but among the indigenous and the industrialized they are complete opposites. "Western" society, based in modernity, coloniality, capitalism, is out for change and control, while indigenous culture, rooted in tradition, spiritual connection to the earth and community, is for preservation. The differences reach back to the dawn of these respective cultures, and reach out to touch upon important facets of understanding each other, and the situation of struggle between them, such as conceptions of law, territorial rights, and political structure.

Looking at two different realities (euro-centric/modern and indigeno-centric/de-colonial models to be specific) we see that humans' relationship with nature is of utmost importance, and at odds, possibly, more than any other aspect of this dichotomous relationship; namely a modern notion of nature being something separate from humans, and Indigenous notion that humans are part of nature. "In many non-modern cultures the entire universe is conceived as a living being with no strict separation between humans and nature, individual and community, community and the gods." <sup>7</sup> The Ika are no exception; their creation stories and worldview place

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<sup>7</sup> Escobar 'After Nature' pg8

them in a reciprocal relation with all beings and their mother Earth. "Local models also evidence a particular attachment to a territory conceived as a multidimensional entity that results from many types of practices and relations. They establish links between worlds (biological, human, spiritual; bodies, souls and objects which some have interpreted as a "vast community of living energy")<sup>8</sup>. For the Ika this living body of energy has many replications (micro and macro cosmos of the body, mountain, universe, etc.) and the balance between them is indeed maintained by their religious cultural practices. In fact, the natural world cannot function without specific cultural practices being carried out by the Ika<sup>9</sup>, and these are the very rituals and cultural practices that the indigenous use to fight against the invasion to their land. The Ika spiritual and culture specific ideas and actions are resistant to an invasive worldview.

When the indigenous are resisting by simply being, they are enacting cultural politics. "Culture is political because meanings are constitutive of processes that, implicitly or explicitly, seek to redefine the social power. When movements deploy alternative conceptions of woman, nature, development, economy, democracy or citizenship that unsettle dominant cultural meanings, they enact cultural politics. Cultural politics are the result of discursive articulations originating in existing cultural practices."<sup>10</sup> The Ika redefine more than political ideas, however, their definitions of everything are entirely outside of the western/modern conception.

### **View from the Mountain**

#### *An Indigenous Understanding of Their Place in the World*

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<sup>8</sup> Descola 1[992:117] Escobar After Nature pg8

<sup>9</sup> Mamo Kuncha Naviquimu, Mamo Apolinar Torres, Traditional Authorities Seiminin, Umunukumu (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)

<sup>10</sup> Escobar, 'Whose Nature? Whose Knowledge' pg64

To begin to understand the Ika world, one must begin where they themselves do so, with the creation myth.<sup>11</sup> This creation gives rise to indigenous religion/worldview that sees the universe of a set of reproductions of itself existing in different modes simultaneously. The world is a micro-cosmo of the universe, the mountain as well, the human body still further; these are not thought of as resemblances but actual forms of the same unit. The Sierra is the heart of the world/universe, and each individual is a representation of this mountain.<sup>12</sup> At this point in the game most westerners, even open minded ones, are unwilling to believe that a person is a mountain, or that a mountain is a universe. Westerners view people as either sacred images of god, separate from nature or once animals that have grown out of being natural long ago, and view the universe as an external thing that exists in outer space. The Ika believe in their world very much. It is their reality, and it sets the stage for all of their beliefs. Whether or not two alternate ideas of human existence can cohabitate the same space is to be seen, but on their own turf, the Indigena should be able to play by their rules.

The replication of the separate cosmos of the universe is applied throughout daily life among the Ika, most visibly in how humans represent the mountain. Every Arhuacan man can be recognized by a traditional hat he wears at all times; without serving any utilitarian purpose (it provides no shelter from the cold, rain, or sun), it carries purely spiritual significance<sup>13</sup>. Woven out of plant fibres, it is cone shaped and bleached white. The mountain upon which they live is glacier capped, and since the people are the mountain, they too are capped with a white point<sup>14</sup>. This, along with the rest of their traditional clothing, which is always worn, is mere exterior in the deep paralleling of all parts of the body with the mountain. Most importantly, in my

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<sup>11</sup> See The Black Line above.

<sup>12</sup> Reichel - Dolmatoff, Los Ika pg165

<sup>13</sup> Reichel - Dolmatoff, Los Ika

<sup>14</sup> See image pg 40

research, is that the water flowing through the rivers is the blood running through their veins. Water, according to the Ika, is the substance of life, the spirit; the ocean is the soul of the world, and the water in the human body is where a human's soul is kept (thus leaves the body upon death).<sup>15</sup> When a river is tapped, polluted, diverted, dammed etc. it is more than an offence to land – it is an act of violence on every person on the mountain. This is a violation of their Human Rights. While it may be difficult for a westerner to accept, it is reality for the Ika. Differing fields of science (biology, chemistry) are more likely to aid of the indigenous perspective in this argument (not that they would be necessary), though to westerner, a river is not blood, its bread and butter.

The Guatapuri River represents a potential source of water for the irrigation, drinking, and energy for the bunache of the region. The Ika see the river as a part of them, and as a part of everything else. When the bunache divide the idea of the river into A. a natural source of water, and part of the ecosystem of the mountain, B. a potential for irrigation, C. a job to be done/ problem to be dealt with, and D. a potential source of capital, they are stripping the river of the spiritual significance that the river holds for the Ika. The Ika could no more divide the river in these terms as they could cut off a part of their body and sell it.

### **View from the Valley**

#### *How the West Understands Its Place in the Universe*

If the history of the indigenous begins with their creation myth, perhaps the west does so as well. Whether to mark the western man's beginning with his creation myth or with his transformation from being non-modern to modern is tricky. While I think

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<sup>15</sup> Personal conversation with Alirio Torres Torres / September 2006

that it is important to examine the way the Christian creation myth has shaped "The West"<sup>16</sup>, I think it is more significant to focus on the beginnings of modernity, and the myth therein, to understand the West's relationship with the Earth and its resources.

A good opening to understand where 'Western Culture' came from is with Marshall Berman's 'All That Is Solid Melts Into Air'<sup>17</sup>, which explores the birth of modernity, what could be called the driving force for the modern western culture. Taking place during the dawn of 'modern times', the turn of the nineteenth century, Berman analyses Goethe's 'Faust', and his journey through three transformations. Berman highlights the way that Goethe chronicles the changes happening to the people of Europe as they transform from a pre-modern, feudal, Christian society to a modern, capitalist, godless one.

Most pertinent to this paper is when Faust, the protagonist, transforms from a man of science, an observer of the natural world, into a developer, a manipulator of nature. Further he "finds a way to act effectively against the feudal and patriarchal world: to construct a radically new social environment that will empty the old world out or break it down."<sup>18</sup> In a pivotal point in the work, a pivotal point in the history of human kind is highlighted when Faust ("using post 1789 language") asserts "Why should men let things go on being the way they have always been? Isn't it about time for mankind to assert itself against nature's tyrannical arrogance, to confront natural forces in the name of "the free spirit that protects all rights?"<sup>19</sup> This phrase projects what is to come, development against nature, that which has persisted ever since that

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<sup>16</sup> The Christian creation myth begins in the Garden of Eden, where human life began according to The Bible. The paradise that humans inhabited before original sin had them banished to the world we live in now, is marked by humans gaining a particular knowledge that all other things lack, thus they cease being animals and start being people. In this story, human beginnings are rooted in being removed from the "natural world".

<sup>17</sup> Berman, Marshall All That is Solid Melts into Air

<sup>18</sup> Berman, Marshall All That Is Solid Melts Into Air pg 39

<sup>19</sup> Berman, Marshall All That Is Solid Melts Into Air pg 39

time. What drives the nail in the coffin of the old system is the loss of the idea of nature as sacred. When natural resources are used for development purposes they are no longer sacred, but a void does not replace this loss in the heart of the new modern man – the sacred then becomes that which replaces nature – development. It is necessary for modern society to develop, to constantly look 'forward'; development is the modern sacrament, and nature has usurped the position of the altar. Here, the modern world and the indigenous world are most likely to butt heads – it is vital to destroy for one, what is vital to protect for the other.

### **The Expansion of the Self**

#### *Modern Culture Existing Through Its Exteriors*

While the society that moves forward is the central point of the essay, Berman briefly shows another side of the story, that of the society left behind. Faust takes place in a time where "The vast majority of people still live in little worlds" and "these little towns are beginning to crack."<sup>20</sup> Through outside agitators and the development of the young, the conservative structure of the feudal towns collapse – "In the two centuries between [their] time and ours, thousands of little towns will be emptied out, transformed into hollow shells, while their young people head for great cities, for open frontiers, for new nations, in search of freedom to think and love and grow."<sup>21</sup> This uplifting language follows the accepted historical western account of this time, progress lifting people to a higher place - but how would the indigenous read this? I imagine that they would see the dominating forces invading the peasantry, abolishing their autonomy, and forcing unwanted economic system upon the people in a different way, and very close to home. Berman reminds us "[Goethe's] portrait should etch in our minds forever, the cruelty and brutality of so many forms of life that

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<sup>20</sup> Berman, Marshall [All That Is Solid Melts Into Air](#) pg 59

<sup>21</sup> Berman, Marshall [All That Is Solid Melts Into Air](#) pg 59

modernization has wiped out." <sup>22</sup> The destruction of these cultures has shaped 'Western Culture' as much as anything.

Conquest has been a part of many cultures for approximately the last ten thousand years<sup>23</sup>. As long as there has been a disparity in land and resources and a means to fight over them, there has been war, exploitation, and repression. Besides shifting to an industrial scale with the birth of modernity, however, the way that modern culture views its own expansion is different, in that it at once attacks all other cultures, and the natural world, while holding itself as entirely benevolent meanwhile. When, describing values of the modern European culture, Hegel writes that "Custom and tradition are no longer of value; distinct rights need to be founded on rational principles"<sup>24</sup> here he not only attacks non-modern practices in his own world, but he places all culture as opposed to rationality and modernity. It is as if modernity is not a culture at all, but an anti-culture – a singular, destructive force, opposed to diversity. Just as Christendom argued that all pagan religions of the New World had to be exterminated, because they were created by the devil, during the conquest of the Americas<sup>25</sup>, Hegel builds on this with the idea that all non-European cultures/religions are irrational and non-modern.

According to Hegel, Europe (Germany, Holland and England principally) bears the spirit of humanity and reserves their rights as rulers of the world as such. The rest of the world has no rights.<sup>26</sup> This puts in place pure euro-centralism as a tool of power structuring, but as the world turns toward modernity and progress, the backdrop of otherness that is so necessary for this brand of hierarchy becomes anti-modern i.e. in

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<sup>22</sup> Marshall Berman All That Is Solid Melts Into Air pg60

<sup>23</sup> Diamond, Jared Guns, Germs and Steel

<sup>24</sup> [Hegel] Dussel, Enrique The Invention of the Americas pg25

<sup>25</sup> Canizarrses Eguerra, Jorge Puritan Conquistadors

<sup>26</sup> Dussel, Enrique The Invention of the Americas pg.37

constant state of development. Development/exploitation of this part of the world then becomes essential to the euro-centric worldview<sup>27</sup>. What is sacred then becomes, not only development itself, but also, destruction of the impure non-modern culture. It becomes the necessary duty of the modern culture to invade and to colonize and to develop all other culture. A staple of modernity has always been to stand in opposition to the existence of 'non-modern' cultures since. "The claim that conquest is "for the good of all" and of "great benefit" for the dominated, vanquished one, perfectly expressed the myth of modernity. One defines one's own culture as superior and more developed and the other as inferior, crude, barbaric, and culpably immature." <sup>28</sup> The exact same language is being used all over the world today, as neo-liberal economic policies seek to develop what have been so aptly named 'developing countries'. That their title (developing) insinuates these lands' implied colonization is evidence alone that the 'Western' world still sees the world in these terms.

To think ones homeland and culture is the center of the world is not reserved for Europe however; the indigenous of the Sierra Nevada proclaim their mountain as the heart of the world and their duty as keepers of this mountain as vital to all human existence. The difference is that the Indigenous are trying to protect the Earth, while the West is trying to invade it. These diametrical opposed rationalities of humans' place in nature appear irreconcilable. The issue at hand then becomes what kind of world system we would like to live in, one of diversity or one of homogeneity.

### **How 'The Other' sees the Other**

#### *An Indigenous View of Western Conquest*

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<sup>27</sup> Dussel, Enrique The Invention of the Americas pg.37

<sup>28</sup> Dussel, Enrique The Invention of the Americas pg64

How do the indigenous view the force that's been invading them for the last five hundred years; the force that seems to have no connection to the earth and little concept of human dignity, and has stooped to unimaginable horrors in their invasion? Not well. If you tried to make them understand where this came from, what would you tell them?

"While the conquest depicted itself as upholding the universal rights of modernity against barbarism, the indigenous people suffered the denial of their rights, civilization, culture and gods. In brief, the Indians were victimized in the name of an innocent victim and for the sake of universal rights. Modernity elaborated a myth of its own goodness, rationalized its violence as civilizing, and finally declared itself innocent of the assassination of the other."<sup>29</sup> For the indigenous peoples of the world, the last five hundred years remain as a single conquest, and they see their invaders as foolhardy, violent, and greedy. They believe that "humans have utilized thought to manipulate elements and gain mastery over them – leaving them defenceless." And that "we now live in a world where humans only view themselves as important, and fight each other for plants, animals, and minerals. Full of humans, everything else is dying – the planet is in a brutal and fatal imbalance."<sup>30</sup> While the west sees "the suffering of the conquered and colonized people as a necessary sacrifice and the inevitable price of modernization"<sup>31</sup>, the indigenous see this as the end of the world, and depending on your idea of the world – it is. Somewhere between these two worldviews there is the mass violation of Human Rights, these violations are written into separate ideas of history and law.

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<sup>29</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas* pg.50

<sup>30</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

<sup>31</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas* pg.51

## **Global Designs**

### *How the Global Community Weighs These Two Conceptions*

The debate between sameness and difference (homogeneity vs. diversity) is played out on a global scale every day. "Areas that are rich in languages also tend to be rich in biodiversity. Biodiversity is concentrated through the tropics and tails off towards the poles, just as linguistic diversity does".<sup>32</sup> The tropics are greatly threatened by large development projects, and Colombia, and the Sierra fall therein. However, while the loss of biodiversity, which has been a constant effect of development for centuries, is now considered a global problem, the loss of culture is not. While industrialized nations see a potential profit in bio-diversity in the form of pharmaceuticals, tourism, and other products, they see little value in the perseverance of cultures. Just how the industrialized and modern global community sees the situation in The Sierra, and the larger issue of indigenous territorial rights, can be analyzed in the way that the global community chooses to convey and deal with territory versus the way that the indigenous do so.

The question of how the world sees the world is a loaded one. The modern, industrialized, developed world is the dominant view as it holds power through governmental, corporate and military power structures, while opposing worldviews are sidelined as primitive, backwards, or developing notions of the world. Concerning questions of globalization then, the dominant model of economic development, neo-liberalism, begins and ends with a firm separation of people from land. Pulling people away from their land on a global scale translates in a mass colonization of alternative ideas of peoples' connection to land.

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<sup>32</sup> Nettle & Romaine *Vanishing Voices* pg. 43

Understanding the "commodification of nature linked to capitalist modernity"<sup>33</sup> is essential in recognizing the primary rift between Indigenous and non-indigenous ways of viewing territory. Escobar cites landscape art, modern science and clinical medicine, all "Western" inventions, acting to deprive nature of agency, as well as a totalising male gaze, which seeks to dominate and objectify women and nature.<sup>34</sup> "But the most fundamental feature of modernity in this regard is what Heidegger has called the creation of 'a world picture' within which nature is inevitably enframed, that is, ordered as a resource for us to use as we wish." He continues, "This separation of nature and society is one of the basic features of modern societies."<sup>35</sup> This separation has let modern societies view nature as a singularity apart from themselves, and in the modern political climate concerning biodiversity and land use, the singular idea of nature/biodiversity is used as a colonization tool by the industrial world that attempts to solve the perceived crisis of environmental degradation due the industrial development of the natural world, by dictating what actions are to be taken by colonized nations. This globalocentric model of resource management, which is touted by the industrialized world as an answer to environmental degradation, can be seen as "a form of bioimperialism"<sup>36</sup>. The idea reads that the entire world shall be treated as a separate and singular entity apart from its entire people, and its resources, also separate, are to be used by those that have the ability to capitalize from their existence. Even conservationism from a western perspective, sees people and nature as separate, a limiting perspective if one's goals are to influence the intrinsic functionality of their society's relationship with natural world.

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<sup>33</sup> Escobar, Arturo *After Nature* pg 6

<sup>34</sup> Escobar, Arturo *After Nature* pg6

<sup>35</sup> Escobar, Arturo *After Nature* pg6

<sup>36</sup> Escobar, Arturo *Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature?* Pg 87

The aforementioned connection of biodiversity and linguistic/cultural diversity can be compounded in indigenous worldview, with the idea of biodiversity as "territory plus culture"<sup>37</sup> one existing only with the other. The Ika and the Sierra are such a case. The Black line divides territory based on a cultural worldview, not on geological or political formations. The Black line indeed does represent a singular and somewhat isolated location, the mountain, but for the Ika they (their culture, and each individual) is a parallel of this physical territory and one cannot exist without the other. A modern view of their land as another piece of dirt, seeks to separate them from their land and their culture simultaneously. Resistance to this conception of land as separate from culture, and claiming their autonomy puts the Ika in line with the global anti-globalization movement's rejection of neo-liberalism. "The goal of many (not all) of the anti-globalization struggles can be seen as the defence of particular place based historical conceptions of the world and practices of world making – more precisely, as a defence of particular constructions of place, including the reorganizations of place that might be deemed necessary according to the power struggles within place."<sup>38</sup>

In opposition to the globalocentric model of resource management, which emphasises change in "developing" parts of the world in order to maintain biological stability, an indigenous model of conservation actually puts more emphasis and responsibility on themselves than anyone else – with the idea that they must protect the world through their cultural practices. The only thing that they need is their mountain, the lands within the black line intact and left alone by invading developing forces. Because the Ika's territory is of value to the industrialised world (it has minerals and water), their collective and community rights are undermined to suit their invasion at the hands of

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<sup>37</sup> Escobar, Arturo *Whose Nature, Whose knowledge?* Pg. 70

<sup>38</sup> Escobar *'Death of the Third World'* 223

the industrialised world. If their land were of no value to industry, it would be less threatened, but as the indigenous usually inhabit tropical, bio-diverse regions<sup>39</sup>, their cultural value is undermined on a global scale. Because, "the unspoken criteria for the value of human lives is an obvious sign (from a de-colonial interpretation) of the hidden imperial identity politics: That is, the value of human lives to which the life of the enunciator belongs becomes the measuring stick to evaluate other human lives who do not have the intellectual option and institutional power to tell the story and to classify events according to a ranking of human lives; that is according to a racist classification"<sup>40</sup>, there are few options for the indigenous to be recognized on a global scale.

The options left available for the Ika, are those presented to many indigenous around the world, to either submit to some form of co-colonization of themselves, whether it be selling their resources, eco-tourism, adopting some modern culture traits in order to retain other indigenous ones, etcetera; but the Ika don't want to do any of these things. They don't want to change. They have repeatedly spoken their message for the preservation of the natural world to "the west", and "although some attention is now given to local knowledge biodiversity debates, this attention is insufficient and often misguided to the extent that local knowledge is rarely understood in its own terms or it is refunctionalized to serve the interest of western style conservation."<sup>41</sup> It seems as though, their singular culture may have to exist as a singularity for the time being, granted that they are able to steady the constant invasion of their territory, both land, and ontology.

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<sup>39</sup> Nettle, Romaine *Vanishing Voices* pg.43

<sup>40</sup> Mignolo 'Epistemic Disobedience' 7

<sup>41</sup> Escobar, Arturo *Whose Nature, Whose knowledge?* Pg. 61

One way in which the Ika have expressed their connection to the land takes place in the site of the proposed flood-zone of the Besotes Dam. This potential place of destruction has been occupied by Ika families and is used as a meeting place for the four pueblos when strategizing against development. Recently they invited the UN High Commission of Human Rights to explain the significance of this place and how land is tied to rights.

Usually the case concerning industrial development on indigenous peoples traditional lands, national governments and multinational business come from a different place, even live in a different world, than the inhabitants of the lands they exploit. The way that the Ika see territory, as a part of their body and as a part of the entirety of the world, is alien to a system that sees territory as money. This dilemma seems to have no resolution, save abiding by the national and international laws that grant autonomy and right to cultural sovereignty to the Ika. Where to draw the lines as to where a singular culture can exist inside a globalized world is likely to be difficult in many places in the world (the U.S. is not about to give back lands established under original treaties with the indigenous of North America), but in the case of the Sierra, the line is already drawn. It is black, and it older than this world.

## **Dissecting Universes**

### *Epistemic Disobedience & the Creation of Indigeno-Centricism*

Addressing an international group of human rights observers last September, the four pueblos of The Sierra united for the opportunity to explain to foreigners their ideas concerning the construction of the dam Besotes, and development in general. The sentiment that was repeated over and over by indigenous of each of the pueblos, both of the spiritual authority and the political authority, was that of there being a very big

difference between their culture and the west. One Kogui mambo put it this way: "Development projects are very serious business. They threaten our human rights. There are two visions: one side fights with arrows. One side fights with poporo. One side fights for preservation. One side fights for development. I invite those who want to collaborate, to see how our models work." Or as the secretary general of the Ika, Jerimias Torres Izquierdo put it "we don't fight with arms or arrows, we only use thought." The repeated idea that 'the indigenous do it differently' was easy to accept, that they use thought and poporo to counter invasion was harder to accept. Over the course of several hours, as the indigenous explained their plight, the foreigners repeatedly asked them for specifics, numbers, documents, proof, and plans in order to better mobilize and help however they could. This was met with frustration on the part of the Indigenous. There was an obvious barrier in relating what the course of action was to be. This barrier was cultural, the Europeans and indigenous tried to understand each other, and in many respects did so, but there was always something missing – they still exist in different universes, and these distinct places have different rules. It is as important to answer 'why worry about specifics?' for the indigenous as it is to answer 'how does one fight development with thought?' for the non-indigenous.

### *Decolonising the Debate*

In order to understand the situation in The Sierra, it is important to look at it from a position of de-colonization. "De-colonization, or rather de-coloniality, means at once: a) unveiling the logic of coloniality and the reproduction of the colonial matrix of power (which of course, means a capitalist economy); and, b) de-linking from the totalitarian effects of Western categories of thoughts and subjectivity (e.g., the successful and progressive subject and blind prisoner of consumerism)."<sup>42</sup> From this

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<sup>42</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. *Epistemic Disobedience* pg27

perspective, one can more clearly ask pertinent questions about the situation in The Sierra, such as who the actors are, what are they doing, where is this happening, and what are the context that these things are taking place? Under this mode of thought, there are two answers for everything, beginning with two very different world visions – "Western" and indigenous.

In *Epistemic Disobedience: The De-colonial Option and the Meaning of Identity In Politics*, Walter D. Mignolo asserts that "identity in politics is crucial for any de-colonial option"<sup>43</sup> since all identities which form political theories have been allocated from the perspective of Western Thought, and that "All other ways of thinking (that is intervening in the organization of knowledge and understanding) and of acting politically, that is, ways that are not de-colonial, means to remain within the imperial reason; that is, within imperial identity in politics."<sup>44</sup> This ingenious way of looking at identity in politics is perfect for analysing who the Indigenous peoples of The Sierras are, who are the invading forces, and how these two worlds come together in conflict, from two distinct points of view. Understanding things from an indigenous perspective is de-colonial thought. Under this rubric of non-western constructs of identity, it is important to ask not only what identity a de-colonial identity group would ascribe to themselves, but also what identity they would ascribe to the "west". Therefore, there are two ideas of who the indigenous are, and there are also two ideas of who the westerners are.

According to Mignolo "The de-colonial option is epistemic, that is, it de-links from the very foundations of Western concepts and accumulation of knowledge." "...by Western I do not mean geography per say, but the geo-politics of knowledge.

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<sup>43</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. *Epistemic Disobedience* pg.65

<sup>44</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. *Epistemic Disobedience* pg.65

Consequently, the de-colonial option means learning to unlearn."<sup>45</sup> Of course, Mignolo is talking about "The West" when he suggests unlearning things – unlearn the euro-centric worldview as the only "factual" and "real" understanding of the world, in order to see it from another perspective (if just for a moment). If one is willing to step out of their understanding of the universe (which I imagine, most are not capable/willing to do), it is possible to see the world from another perspective, which is essentially seeing the world as you never have; a different world, a different universe. Logic, science, history, "the rules of the game imposed by imperial reason in its Greek and Latin categorical foundations"<sup>46</sup> that come from "the west", must be suspended in order for one to take in the scope of the indigenous universe. Whether or not this is possible in philosophy and/or dialogue is debateable, in practice it is probably less so.

While I feel it is important to hold de-colonized worldviews to a higher standard in their assertion of identity, we cannot ask that they be perfect just because they have endured subjugation under conquest, rather it would make sense to view their worldview as a particular and flawed space of thought: outside of the western, not free of their history of subalternization, but also as independent and as ethno-centric as their colonizing counterparts. I suggest an indigeno-centric view rather than simply a de-colonial view, as this understanding distances the root of the worldview away from the dichotomy of hegemonic identity politics and its 'otherness'. Therefore an indigeno-centric cosmovision, a common worldview all over the Americas, allowed breathing room to develop outside of globalized scrutiny is more valuable to understanding indigenous peoples' view of the world than a view that has been

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<sup>45</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. *Epistemic Disobedience* pg.8

<sup>46</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. *Epistemic Disobedience* pg.8

fostered as an epistemic olive branch reaching to a conquering force. The problem with this worldview, however, is that the majority of westerners are likely to reject it.

### **A History of Two Histories**

The History of the Indigenous of the Sierra is debated between the Indigenous and non-indigenous. It is difficult to approach this because of the disputed lineage of the four pueblos from the ancient Tairona civilization. Because the Indigenous claim that they are originally from the Sierra, and it is obvious that the Tairona lived there at some point (due to the archeological record), it is vital to their story that they are related to the Tairona, or, as they believe, are the Tairona. This connection has been disputed by the foremost scholar on the four pueblos Reichel Dolmatoff<sup>47</sup>, and is not accepted by the mainstream culture in Colombia. If you enter an Anthropology museum in modern Colombia, the dates that are given for the Tairona civilization is approximately 900-1500 AD. The Tairona, according to this history are extinct. Perhaps, even more insulting to the indigenous, is that according to this history, the Tairona came from somewhere else, or didn't exist before a certain time. They were around for a few hundred years, and now they are gone. Those who claim to be Tairona, obviously, view their history quite differently; though to dispute history doesn't necessarily work when you're dealing with people without history, or people with a very different conception of it.

In Enrique Dussel's The Invention of The Americas, the author has a chapter called "An indigenous perspective of history", in which he outlines a Western perspective of the migration and population of the Americas via the Bering Strait.<sup>48</sup> This "enlightened" perspective is one accepted by most learned westerners, and accepted

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<sup>47</sup> Dolmatoff, Los Ika

<sup>48</sup> Dussel, Enrique *The Invention of the Americas*

by some indigenous, but it is in no way, an indigenous view of history. Not to say that the realities presented by Dussel are incorrect, but that they exist within a western universe, and outside of an indigenous one. People's ideas about where they come from and how this affirms their place in the world is a very powerful idea, and when westerners write off indigenous perspectives of history because they don't fit in with their worldview they are closing their eyes to a much larger picture concerning perspectives of human relationships with time, territory, and ancestry.

*The history of people without history*

Because the history and historiography of the conquest of the Americas are heavily contested between indigenous and western perspectives of the truth, it is necessary to distinguish what the methods for understanding this truth are utilized by these opposing worldviews – the West's history, and the Indigenous' *not-history*<sup>49</sup>. History, "a continuous, chronological, record of important or public events" as described by Oxford<sup>50</sup> requires a preconceived notion of time, importance, and publicity that are not shared by Western and Indigenous cultures. While the West's approach is rooted in a Euro-centricism, "Eurocentrism doesn't name a geographical place, but hegemony of a way of knowing grounded in Greek and Latin and in the six European and imperial languages of modernity; that is modernity/coloniality"<sup>51</sup>, Indigenous models will be indigeno-centric, and essential to their singular worldviews, not attempting to fit into a larger global history.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Rasaba, Jose *The History of the History of the People Without History*

<sup>50</sup> Oxford Dictionary

<sup>51</sup> Mignolo 'Epistemic Disobedience'14

<sup>52</sup> Rasaba, Jose "The history of the history of the people without history" pg8

The indigeno-centric model of telling their story has traditionally been referred to as mythology and the obvious rupture of conquest creates an internal hurdle for the indigenous' continuity through time. As I mentioned, however, the indigenous trace their ancestry and history to the place where they live, and how they live is intrinsically tied to this idea on every level<sup>53</sup>. Because they live where the world was created, their duty is to protect the balance of the world. This ties in with other peoples' histories, only when these other people try to occupy the land, understandably so, otherwise, this history exists as a singularity.

"The West's" "universal" view of history has viewed the indigenous ties to the land from point of view of colonization, and currently neo-liberalism, which both have important reasons to deny the indigenous version of history. The West rejects the singularity of the Ika version of history "for it is part of the logic of neo-liberalism to recognize only forms of life that conform to the parameters of the West. In this regard, efforts to prove that "Europe's Others" have writing, history, science, and State reiterate the globalatinization that only recognizes forms that it can subsume under its categories. The "history of the history of the people's without history" would, then, correspond to the singularity of struggles that the state and its history cannot recognize because the discourses that resistance articulates remains unintelligible to those that presume that their categories are universal."<sup>54</sup> Historically, Christianity, Science, Modernity, Neo-liberalism have all been absolutist in nature, as they do not tolerate the existence of any other realities contrary to their own<sup>55</sup>. Rasaba, and others, have suggested that those resisting the hegemonic history, are waging a guerrilla war of resistance to this ethnological invasion<sup>56</sup>. Further, Rabasa states "this

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<sup>53</sup> Dolmatoff, Los Ika

<sup>54</sup> Rasaba, Jose "The history of the history of the people without history" pg9

<sup>55</sup> At least, that's the way I see it.

<sup>56</sup> Jose Rasaba "The history of the history of the people without history" pg7

guerilla will create space for knowledge production that invent practices for confronting the state and furthering the *without* history"<sup>57</sup>. In the case of the Ika, I would argue that their *without* history only confronts the state, as it enacts cultural resistance. Living in the Ika universe, and thus outside the "modern" universe, and its history, claims an epistemological space for the indigenous to exist and resist a conquering force. When actual events fall into these opposing histories, they pull the two worldviews in opposite directions.

### **One Law and Many Laws**

#### *Opposing concepts of Rights, Duty, and Law*

The law of the indigenous states clearly (more so than anything else), that the territory within the black line is the territory of the four pueblos<sup>58</sup>. This is a non-negotiable reality that these people live. The Colombian government has different borders to mark the indigenous territory, the resguardo. When a place like Besotes (within the black line, but out of the resguardo) is under dispute, the government says "its not indigenous land." And the Indigenous say, "Who are you to tell me what is, and what is not indigenous land?" This dispute comes from two worldviews, histories, sets of laws, and is dealt with in two very distinct ways.

The international Human Rights declaration was drafted in 1948. It was put together after the Second World War, and sought to prevent the atrocities that were committed in the preceding years from happening in the future. Many well-meaning, intelligent and culturally sensitive Westerners put together this document. The world's indigenous peoples rejected it. The most important ideas in the declaration, the

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<sup>57</sup> Jose Rasaba "The history of the history of the people without history" pg9

<sup>58</sup> Mamo Kuncha Naviqumu, Mamo Apolinar Torres, Traditional Authorities Seiminin, Umunukumu (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)

sacredness of the body, the individual as the central point from where rights are derived<sup>59</sup>, all what was brought to the west by the enlightenment, meant nothing to the indigenous. The Indigenous were interested in the rights of the community. Ideas such as territory, identity, autonomy, rights to language, and cultural heritage, were what the indigenous felt should form the basis of human rights law<sup>60</sup>. Rights of an individual over that of a culture, runs counter to indigenous thought. These fundamental differences between Indigenous and Western conceptions of law come from very different places.

The Ika law began before the existence of humans; it is a spiritual law, which dictates the way that people should live. The law is singular as well. It is a principle. It states that the place of creation, the lands within in the Black Line are for the Four Pueblos to keep the balance of the rest of the world<sup>61</sup>. Everything else is based on this idea of balance. The balance of the natural world is dependent on two things: the balance of animals, plants, water, and land in nature, and the equilibrium maintained between the physical world and the spiritual world. Both of these are maintained by spiritual practices dictated through the order of the law of creation.<sup>62</sup>

All living things in this world have rights, and Human Rights are tied to the rights of all other things. The indigenous believe that to obtain rights, one must fulfil duties. Duties for the indigenous are to protect the Earth through maintaining equilibrium. What the Ika call the Right of Integrity is the binary of service and rights that exist in their universe. People are a microcosm of the universe – a representation. Nothing is

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<sup>59</sup> Almost every article begins with everyONE, stressing individuality. Universal Declaration Of Human Rights

<sup>60</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

<sup>61</sup> Mamo Kuncha Naviqumu, Mamo Apolinar Torres, Traditional Authorities Seiminin, Umunukumu (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)

<sup>62</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

isolated; therefore people must represent the integrity of the world at all times in order to keep it in its natural balance. The mission, since creation, of humankind is to watch over, conserve and balance the natural world.<sup>63</sup> That humans have thought and feeling, and can make judgement is what sets us apart from other animals, and it is for this reason that people are guarded with the task of keeping the world balanced.<sup>64</sup> This idea is perhaps deeper than it sounds at first glance. The Ika word *utanuya* means to break or interrupt harmony and equilibrium<sup>65</sup>. It is essentially the Ika meaning of a transgression; to make unbalanced the world is to break the law of creation. According to their understanding of law then, a poor man stealing food would not be a crime, because he is not moving things out of balance, but a rich business owner paying his workers unjustly would be a crime because it is out of balance. Western civilization makes up separate laws concerning everything, and individuals can pick and choose what is just and unjust. These are two very different ideas of law.

#### *How the Ika view western law*

As citizens of the nation of Colombia, the state decrees that the Ika have an obligation to follow the law. However, "The law that is important to [the indigenous] is not the written law, but the spoken. [Theirs] is an oral tradition."<sup>66</sup> So what they are decreed to follow by the government means nothing to them. They are sceptical of a law that changes, because they think that law is one thing that can never change<sup>67</sup>. Their one

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<sup>63</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

<sup>64</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

<sup>65</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

<sup>66</sup> Jaime Arias, Pueblo Kankuamo

<sup>67</sup> Mamo Kuncha Naviqumu, Mamo Apolinar Torres, Traditional Authorities Seiminin, Umunukumu (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)

law is the supreme law, and all against it (which is much of Colombian law) is against their law. These do not reconcile if Colombian law allows things which disequilibria the world, or infringe on the rights of others. In the "West", the rights of people are not tied to the rights of plants and animals, only other people. For the indigenous however, many things, which infringe on the rights of other living beings (which are legal in "The West") are illegal in their territory. Things like development, damming of rivers, indiscriminate hunting and farming, are against their law of origin, and throw the world out of balance. And on their turf, their law is the law of the land.

The Mamos believe that all of the new things entering the Sierra from the bunache are against the law of origin because they contaminate indigenous thought and create new problems and issues, which further throw the world out of balance.<sup>68</sup> It is an offence to the Ika that the Bunache think they should adopt Western ways. The Capuchin mission of The Sierra was dispelled because it was considered a great invasion to the Ika culture, and those Ika who were taught in the mission and still practice foreign religions and cultures in the mountain were considered invasive and dangerous to the Ika, and have since been dispelled too.<sup>69</sup> The more people and things that are against the Law of origin that are within the black line, make it harder for the indigenous to maintain the balance of the world. Because of their law of integrity, their action must represent the world, and since change in culture infringe on integrity, the one law the Ika have can never change.

Imposing the Western idea that Human Rights are reserved for individuals is a further disconnection of indigenous people from the land, and thus Human rights discourse

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<sup>68</sup> Mamo Kuncha Naviqumu, Mamo Apolinar Torres, Traditional Authorities Seiminin, Umunukumu (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)

<sup>69</sup> Mamo Kuncha Naviqumu, Mamo Apolinar Torres, Traditional Authorities Seiminin, Umunukumu (Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)

can be seen as a form of colonization. Asserting their connection to the land is central to the Ika in claiming their rights, and has the potential to expand existing Human rights discourse rather than being colonized by it.

### **An Unexpected Weapon**

#### *Coca, Poporro and Thought*

"Before the world was created, was the idea. The thought is the expression of the spirit of life. It is intact and invisible – the spirit of all things exists in the same way and cannot live without it."<sup>70</sup> In the Ika creation story, "first, there was the thought" and the entire world was created from it. They believe that they, individually and collectively, alter their world through thought, in some cases aided, internally and externally, through the ritual use of Coca and poporo.

Coca is an intrinsic and vital part of many South American cultures. A small, inconspicuous looking shrub, with lime green leaf, exists in a variety of species spanning South America, has been used ceremoniously for thousands of years by cultures spanning the entire western half of the continent<sup>71</sup>. It is hardy, medicinal, and culturally interwoven with the cultures that use it as a powerful spirit. It is also used as the main ingredient in Cocaine, a drug that is central to the US foreign policy to Latin America. While cocaine is composed of over 30 other chemicals, all manufactured in the industrialized world. No other compound in cocaine is targeted as by The United States' War on Drugs; only this central element of South American Culture is persecuted through violent methods that leave destruction and obliteration of culture, land, and biodiversity<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Confederacion Indigena Tayrona, *Derechos Humanos, Pluralismos Juridicon Y Justicia Propia: Una Vision del Derecho desde la Cultura Arhuaca*

<sup>71</sup> Streatfeild, Dominic, [Cocaine: an unauthorized biography](#)

<sup>72</sup> Streatfeild, Dominic, [Cocaine: an unauthorized biography](#)

Coca, as is used by the indigenous in The Sierra, and throughout South America, only in its leaf form. It is chewed, or rather pushed between the gums, where it stays for several hours. It is also accompanied by poporo, a carbon compound, usually ashes of burned shells, which are kept in a small gourd. The ash is dipped out of the gourd with a stick, and placed on the coca in the mouth. The chemical reaction caused by the mixing of the coca and poporo releases compounds that create a relaxing and mentally stimulating sensation. It is essentially the drug of choice (or culture) in Andean and Sierran cultures.

The poporo is more than drug however; it is an integral part of the spiritual universe that the Ika inhabit. It lends the wisdom of ancestors, Mamos and collective knowledge to the individual using, letting his thinking become more potent and acute. Because the Ika understand they are connected as one amongst themselves, the coca/poporo acts only to lubricate the channels of their collective thought, and aid in their connectedness. The chemical reaction that coca and poporo has in ones mouth serves as a mental stimulant, and this stimulation can be considered the physical manifestation of the spiritual act of coca chewing. The coca and poporo affect the world externally as well.

According to the Ika there are three elements that make life in the world, water, fire and vegetation, and each has its place in ritual coca chewing<sup>73</sup>. Coca is vegetable, saliva is water, and poporo (made from ash) is fire. When these elements come together it serves as a replication of the creation of the earth and the essence of creative powers in the universe, thus coca chewing has an affect on the earth itself. Here, poporo enables a thought to have a stronger focus on an external subject, and

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<sup>73</sup> Personal conversation with Alirio Torres Torres / September 2006

alter the physical world. If one focuses on an object, or an idea, the poporo will direct the thought upon the object through the connection it shares with the Earth. Because all things are one in the Ika universe, the creation/thought of coca/poporo in the mind of a person is the creation/thought of a solid act in the physical world. The more people focusing on a particular idea, the more a desired outcome can thus be achieved, due to both, the connection that the people share through the coca, and the focusing and direction of their thoughts on the world. Their spiritual leaders, the Mamos, regulate all of this direction of thought from particularly spiritually potent places known as Kankuruas. This spiritual element of their culture is played out on another level of their physical world as well.

Every time that an Ika man greets another, they do so by exchanging coca from their bags. If they stop to talk, usually they will both pull out their gourds and begin using the poporo as well. And upon bidding farewell, they will exchange coca again. Important meetings and discussions are always accentuated with coca chewing; it serves as the central meeting point between people on a social and spiritual plane. This physical social togetherness coupled with the spiritual togetherness and collective power given to their thoughts makes poporo stand out as a marker of cultural unity on a spiritual and physical level. Poporro belongs to the Ika, it brings them together, it solidifies their culture, and it makes them more spiritually potent and powerful. This is their weapon; to remain bonded by things of their world and not torn apart by that which invades them.

Poporo is a specifically important facet of their cultural resistance also. It ties them to the spiritual side of the world as it ties them through one another through the cultural ritual of coca exchange. Their establishments as unified peoples, as part of

the creation of the Earth, and as part of their particular territory are all connected through coca/poporo. This gives them strength as a people on their terms, not just a "western" conception of a people. Also, the direction of thoughts, that the Mamos direct, is for the balance of the world and therefore specifically against development, and cultural invasion. The thoughts that the Ika are thinking collectively, the reality that they create with their thoughts, their mission, and their law – is to maintain their culture and to stop development.

### *Pagamentos*

In order to keep the world balanced, the Ika must repair the transgressions that pass on their mountain and in their world. The Ika call this act of repair *pagamentos*<sup>74</sup>. By ceremoniously paying the mountain with a type of rock, gem, shell, or herb in a designated location, and performing the proper spiritual rights and personal sacrifices, the Mamos are able to restore balance to the world in reparation for a particular transgression. The sacred places where these payments take place are situated in a web like formation, which encompasses all of the lands within the black line. If one sacred space is inaccessible, or one line is broken, the entire system of payments and balances is incomplete. For this reason, it is imperative that the entire territory within the black line is restored to the care of the Mamos. This *wholeness* is crucial in understanding the spiritual existence that is the Ika way of life. Their territory must be whole, their law whole, their culture whole, and they refuse to weaken any of these things. Their territory, law, and culture are all spiritual in nature, and are not separate entities to the Ika themselves.

### **What Does Spiritual Mean?**

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*In closing*

When I initially thought of and spoke to the Ika about the role of their spirituality, I was doing so from a western perspective. I saw spirituality as a set of ideas, concerning the supernatural and religious aspects of their culture, which was separate from the world of cold hard facts. I asked the Ika about the differences in using the law, or politics, in fighting against development compared with using spiritual methods of resistance. When the responses I received were varied, I imagined discordance amongst themselves in their understanding of the importance of these varied methods. I now see that it was their understanding of the western conception of spirituality being separated from actions in general, that the Ika were either able to speak to me about or not. I realize now that everything an Ika does is spiritual. Their culture is a spiritual one; there is no separation between spirit and physical.

The modern world was created with the separation of humans from nature. From this point, there are an endless number of separations until the world exists in isolated stocks of existence. It is in wholeness where spirituality resides. It is the connection of one thing with another where we see meaning in the world. It is no wonder that the Ika, who can still see the world as a whole, reject so firmly a worldview that divides and conquers every aspect of their sacred world. Their resistance is a spiritual resistance. Their cultural politics is to believe in the complete world, which is at balance because of their actions, because of the black line, the law of origin, coca and poporo, community, la Madre Tierra – all of which are one thing, the Ika themselves.

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