

### **The way Kogui peoples conciliate at the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**

At the north end of the South American continent stands the world's largest natural pyramid near the sea. This territory is known as the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

In this mini cosmos inhabit four ancient tribes (Kogui, Wiwa, Kankuamos and Arwakos), who meet the mandate to protect and preserve ancestral Sierra Nevada or Gonowindua, a place they consider to be the heart of the world and the universe. For this purpose, the elders left them "The Law of Se" or "Law of The Origin", to rule and protect the cultural and territorial integrity of the peoples of the Sierra.

Along with "*Gonowindúa Tayrona*", an organism established by the indigenous of the Sierra to regulate and mediate the relations of these people with the State and others national and foreign NGO agencies, came a widespread feeling of exclusion in some *Kogui* populations. For this reason, on February 16th of 2011, all the *Kogui* population around the Sierra Nevada gathered with their *Mamos* (Spiritual and material leaders), deputies, women and children, along with representatives of the Ombudsman, the Attorney General's office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the "Pro Sierra Nevada foundation" (as civil fee) in *Mukuawinaka*, a *Kogui* settlement located at the basin of *Tucurinca's* river, about four hours away by truck from the black road that passes through the towns of *Fundación* and *Aracataca*, and goes all the way to Santa Marta.

Once they are organized in *Munkuawinaka*, and setting an example of a peaceful and harmonious way to resolve conflicts, adult men, deputies and *Mamos* gather in the most sacred site of the settlement. They sit on the ground next to some huge rocks, while the *Mamos* use *Zhatukwa* (a method of divination dominated only by them), to consult the spiritual fathers and mothers on these processes at the material world. It is during this spiritual ritual that they begin to discuss the difficulties experienced with *Gonowindúa Tayrona*.

The whole process of conciliation begins at nightfall, while indigenous men Poporeando (an symbolic action that includes includes chewing coca leaves). The conflicting parties expose their arguments and consult with their *Mamos*, while they in turn consult with *Zhatukua* and then communicate to all the thinking that comes from the spiritual world. Everybody replies as one voice *wawa* as a sign of acceptance, while an interpreter explains to us what just happened.

After a night and half day of deliberation and divination, Kogui peoples of the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta* decide to maintain their representation in the hands of Jose de los Santos Sauna, current Director of the NGO *Gonowindúa Tayrona*. Also, a special delegate

power to represent the *Kogui* people is given to Ade Ramon Gil, who is an important leader of the *Wiwa* population of the Sierra Nevada; new forms of representation for each river basin in the NGO are proposed, and finally they schedule a subsequent meeting in one of the *Eizumas*, sacred places around the Sierra where the *Mamos* can consult the spiritual world for specific issues related to “The Law of Sé”, and continue re-evaluating and re-directing the objectives and functions of *Gonowindúa Tayrona*.

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Photo 1. Indigenous “Poporeando” act that includes chewing coca leaves.



Photo 2. Kogui Deputy



Photo 3. Kogui Mamo, Kogui Mamo Romualdo Gil



**Photo 4. Kogi children**



**Photo 5. Women and kids**



Photo 6. Jose de los Santos Sauna (director of Gonowindwa) talking to the Kogui people.



Photo 7. Ade Ramon Gil



Photo 8. Jose de los Santos Sauna consulting with a Mamo of the Palomino river's basin.