

GUATEMALA - When Mayans and Peasants Resist Dying for the Development of the “Developed”

Ollantay Itzamná

Saturday 28 June 2014, by [Riley Pentico](#)

The Mayans, equal to other aborigines of the world, are profoundly quiet and cozy, except when pain becomes too sharp. The contemplation, which is born from the interconnected silence with the environment, is a permanent act of the ever hospitable Mayan people.

This mysticism of the silent contemplation, was and is stigmatized by many as Mayan indolence, indifference and resignation. Guatemalan “Thinkers”, in their mental limitation and their obsession for “progress”, catalogued those and other millennial virtues as biological and cultural addictions to annihilate. Furthermore the State carried out political fallacies of assimilation and elimination, via eugenics and genocide, always in name of progress and modernization.

During the invasion and Spanish colonization, the Mayan people didn’t give much resistance. Its philosophies of life, centered in non-appropriation and in hospitality, permitted that the foreigners inhabited by the metal god invaded their territories. Matínez Peláez, in his work “Rebellious Indians”, speaks of some local mutinies of Mayans against the abuses exacerbated during the colonization, without greater significance.

In that period, to secure the payment of the King’s Fifth, and available manual labor for the plantations of the invaders, the Crown established reductions of native peoples (more than 700 villages, according to Martínez Peláez). Those villages of prisoners destined to forced labor and to religious indoctrination, counted on communal lands to live on and cultivate.

During the Creole Republic, in the words of Martha Casaús, racism was considered a technology of power, to the limit of systematically applying genocide, in the 1980’s, to genetically and culturally annihilate the Mayan peoples. The managerial elite of the State would have promoted an internal war with the end to wipe Guatemala: eliminate the Mayan people completely, appropriate all their goods and establish a modern capitalist system on the ashes of the aborigine peoples. But, they couldn’t. The indigenous peoples survived the internal war and the unfulfilled and paralyzing Acuerdos de Paz (1996).

During colonization and the republic, the Mayan peoples “accepted” individual naming of their lands, the education systems of the colonies, Christian indoctrination, obligated military service, intoxication of mass medias of information and the immoral “democracy” of their bosses. Such “acceptation” was only a strategy of survival; A type of Mayan autism. Deep down, this ancient people continued believing in the heart of Heaven and the heart of Earth.

In recent years, when it was believe that life in Guatemala had lost the final battle before neoliberal death, the indigenous and peasant communities declared simultaneously in resistance and headlined the opposition of the violent invasion of the wounding capitalism. In different corners of the country peaceful resistances were permanently formed to repel and impede the path of the operators and machines of the hydroelectric companies. In 298 municipalities in the country (out of 336) natives and peasants alike refused to pay the cost of electric energy by abusive costs, thus kick starting the nationalization of that service. These resistances, for the moment, fill the streets of the main cities with their mobilizations, even though the heads of companies and pro oligarchists try to minimize them.

Just when it was believed that all was lost in Guatemala, natives and peasants alike whom displaced and dispossessed of their bodies and goods, ignite candles of hope and dignity in this almost petrified neoliberal obscurity. La Puya is one of them.

But, these stoic acts of defiance, coming from deep within Guatemala, are even ignored by many academics and organizations on both sides of the political spectrum. Maybe because even though they don't believe that anything good can come out of the godforsaken Mayan Guatemala. The truth is that in this country of death and exploitation, where every moment of life is almost an act of faith, natives and peasants constitute the moral reserve and active bastion of the dignity of a whole people resisting death.

Both peasants and indigenous Mayans know, by personal experience, that they myths of prosperity, the infinite development and the private investment to the development of a village is just that. Legends always retold by the same charlatans.

For this reason voices are being released from their long silence to activate the unprecedented, simultaneously resistance in different areas of the country because the beat of the heart of Heaven and of Earth is pulsing once again. Furthermore, many professionals, intellectuals, analysts, academics, university students, and ONGs are in the rearview stupefied by what they see. Maybe because they don't believe that natives and peasants can be nouns or maybe because this reality surpasses the knowledge they learned in the colonial universities. The truth is that this social resistance advances without a manual or guides to transform it into a political force.