# Guardians

## of the sacred land

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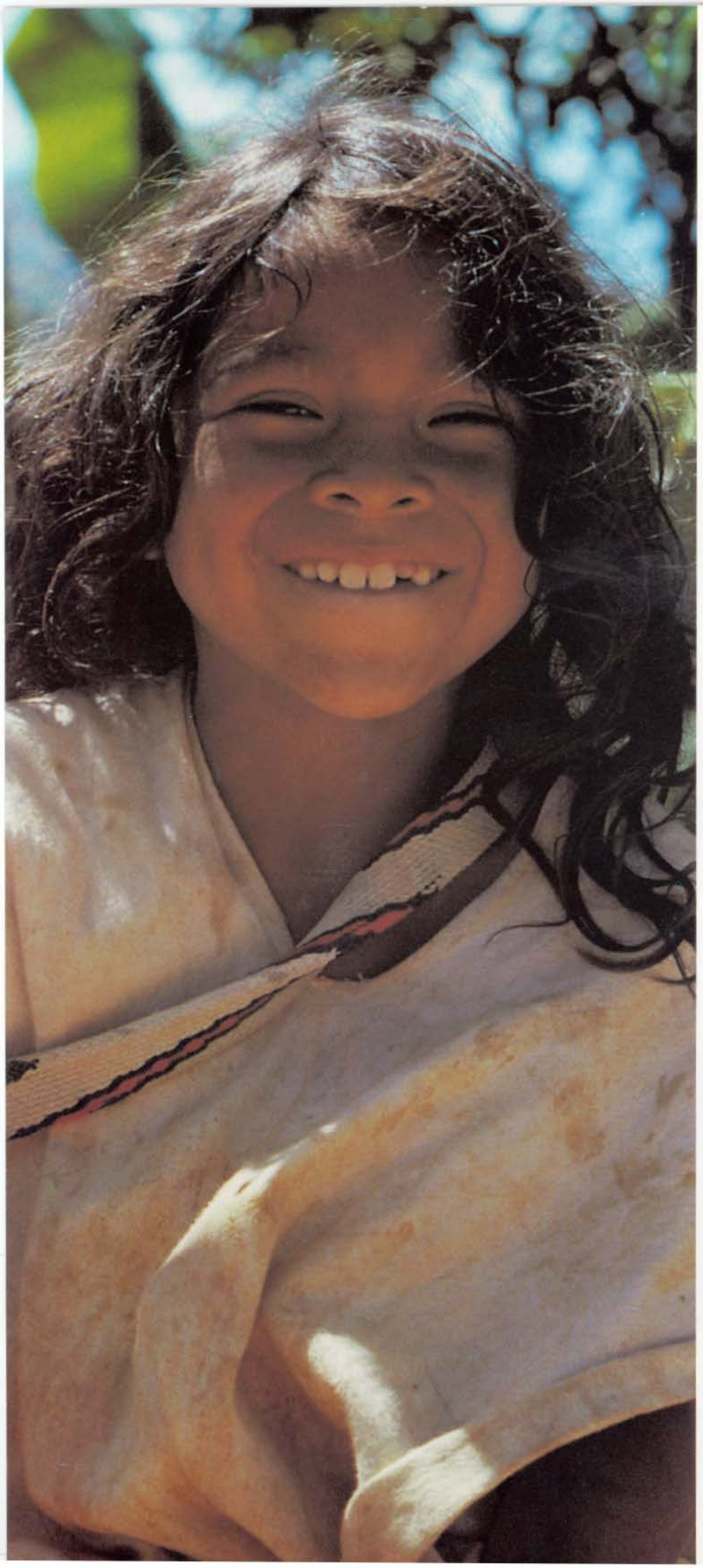

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Printed by Beacon Press





ISBN 0 946592 02 0
Also available in French, Italian and Span



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# Guardians of the sacred land

**Foreword by Stephen Corry**

*Tribal peoples are viable, contemporary societies with complex ways of life and progressive ways of thinking that are deeply relevant to today's world.*

It is too easy to assume that tribal peoples will inevitably be absorbed into our own consumer society. While some tribal people do undoubtedly seek conformity and material prosperity, many of them have no wish to adopt the way of life and the ambitions of the 'civilisation' which they see around them.

The idea that there may be merit in remaining outside the mainstream has in recent years gained wider and wider acceptance. But it still remains shocking to those who believe that everyone's primary ambition revolves around their own wealth and power, and that society is moving inexorably from the stone age to the space age. Indeed, to many people, this idea is so alien that it is written off as the romantic fantasy of a naive fringe.

It does not occur to these people that tribal concepts of the interdependence of life may well be worth listening to at a time when industrialised society's response to the world seems so volatile and troubled.

> two civilisations which view the world with the most sensitive and insightful intelligence and which have a profound respect and responsibility for life

So what is the reality of tribal lives and beliefs, and to what extent do they confirm or contradict this idea? This report looks at these questions through the examples of two Indian peoples in the Americas – two civilisations which view the world with the most sensitive and insightful intelligence and which have a profound respect and responsibility for life. They are not the remnants of a past era, left behind in the human race because they refuse to get up to date. If they are remnants, it is only in the sense that they are survivors. Far from being the dejected residue of an invasion which still threatens them, they, or at least some of them, are facing the twenty-first century with a self-confidence which many in the industrialised world would envy. How have they achieved this?

## The Hopi and Arhuaco

The Hopi live in the southwest of what is now the United States. Five thousand kilometres away, in Colombia, live the Indians of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: the Arhuaco and their neighbours, the Kogi and Arsario.

The Hopi (the word means 'peaceful' and refers to both their outlook on life and their homeland) live in a world of desert, canyons, and the flat-topped, low mountains called 'mesas'. At first sight this is an austere, desiccated world where agriculture looks difficult, if not impossible. In spite of this, for centuries the Hopi have lived from their maize and beans and their herds of sheep and goats.

The Sierra Nevada could scarcely be more different. It is a mountain range, rising steeply from the sea to an altitude of 5 800 metres (19 000 feet), where the peaks are locked in permanent snow although they are only 45 kilometres from the Caribbean. The lower Sierra is a lush tropical world where a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables thrives. The Indians live from their crops and a little hunting, and they also keep pigs, goats, and sheep.

> They are societies of the here and now, not museum pieces preserved in specimen jars

The two environments have little in common, and the Hopi and Arhuaco have no contact with each other. Nevertheless, the people share a number of remarkable qualities: their thinkers feel that humankind may destroy the world; they believe that they are the guardians of deep truths; and they think that they could avert the impending disaster if only they were listened to. But perhaps the most notable and conspicuous feature which characterises them both is that they reject integration with 'whites' absolutely. They have retained an unassailable, even fierce, pride in their 'Indian-ness' – in their culture. This is especially impressive as they have been living close to outsiders for many generations. The strength and independence of their spirit is remarkable.

They have not kept their self-esteem easily. Their neighbours treat them with contempt. Both the Hopi and the Sierra tribes face the same kind of assaults that all Indians confront, and which have destroyed so many. The principal problem for all indigenous peoples is the theft of their lands and resources.

> If there are one or two Hopi who don't forget the old laws then maybe there is hope in saving the world.
>
> Hopi elder, 1993

*Kogi in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*

*The hat worn by Arhuaco men represents the snow peaks of the Sierra*

## Many beliefs

But the main purpose of this report is not to focus on their problems, nor to put forward ways that people can stand with the Indians to oppose the violation of their rights. Though these topics are not ignored, 'Guardians of the sacred land' has a different primary objective.

'Guardians', as already suggested, seeks to sketch something of what these peoples think about the world and their place in it. These beliefs are expressed through many facets of their cultures and are consummated in their spirituality, religion, and rituals. It is these which provide the unshakeable bedrock that has held them together as vibrant communities, guiding them through their volatile history and enabling them to stand up to the onslaught which has threatened them for generations.

But, before beginning to look at these things, it is important to highlight the inevitable limitations of this brief report.

**They show that even small-scale, apparently fragile societies *can* survive in the face of overwhelming devastation**

We are Indians and we understand that you do not need our friendship. But, just as all people are equal before death, so nature itself has taught us that human equality should exist without discrimination. Discrimination arises from the spirits of the gods of ambition and of the avarice which pits brother against brother. For our mother, the Earth, we are one.

Arhuaco letter to the government, 1974

In many religions there are almost as many interpretations as there are believers. Amongst the Hopi, for example, each clan refers to its own stories and rituals, which co-exist within the wider corpus of belief. Furthermore, to attempt a meaningful summary of oral traditions (which do not refer to a sacred book) can only be, at best, very selective if not crudely simplistic.

In fact, the 'keepers' of these religions, the Hopi elders and Arhuaco priests (known as *mamos*), say that their wisdom cannot be conveyed through the written word. In both Hopi and Arhuaco culture, many of the essential teachings are disclosed only to serious students who have the necessary vocation, humanity, and endurance. Trainee mamos, for example, spend long periods living alone, or accompanied only by their teacher, in the highest reaches of the Sierra. Deprived of any comfort and forbidden many foods, they tune their body, mind, and spirit to a calling which will last their lifetime.

These partly secret, very complex world views may be fascinating, but do they have any relevance for the world at large?

## A special path

The Sierra Indians call themselves *hermanos mayores*, 'the older brothers'. They believe that they have a mystical wisdom and understanding which surpasses that of others. (They refer to other peoples as *hermanos menores*, 'the younger brothers'.) The Arhuaco believe that they are responsible for ensuring the world is in balance: the whole planet depends on what happens in the Sierra Nevada. They regulate natural events and prevent catastrophe through a complex system of 'payments' to the Earth. When they hear of flooding or earthquake in some distant country, they believe it is a result of their own failure to keep everything in harmony.

The Hopi also think that they have been charged with fulfilling a unique spiritual duty: to walk hand in hand with all life towards stability and healing on a world-wide scale. They think that if they fall prey to lethargy and decadence, they will be destroyed and with them all life on Earth. The destiny of the planet is in their hands and they, together with all humankind, stand at a crossroads, facing the choice between responsibility and selfishness, whether to be or not to be – a critical time which was predicted to the Hopi by their deities in the distant past. The danger can only be avoided if they, or at least some of them, hold true to their wisdom.

## Ancient and modern

The Arhuaco and Hopi religions are complex, living systems subject to constant change and adaptation; and their thinkers have an opinion about the world which is considered and appropriate as anyone's. It is a common misconception to think that these peoples are pursuing beliefs which have remained the same for centuries or millennia. They and their experiences are relevant to people today precisely because they are societies of the here and now, not museum pieces preserved in specimen jars. Both the Arhuaco and the Hopi have adapted very successfully to the profound changes they have had to face since the European invasion of the Americas. This is partly what makes them so pertinent for the future. They show that even small-scale, apparently fragile societies *can* survive in the face of overwhelming devastation.

They, themselves, feel that it is vital that their message is known as widely as possible. They think they can and should influence the choices which humankind faces. They are

know that they have many friends in the outside world, and that a growing number of people believe in human values over and above economic ones.

### Accepting responsibility

The West's new environmentalism posits a natural world spoiled by people. The Arhuaco and Hopi ideal is very different: it is a world held in balance by people. They have no concern with reducing consumption; they use little enough as it is. Neither do they judge that consumers, or human beings in general, are necessarily 'guilty'. These Indians place people centre stage, and human society, their society, remains the most important thing to them. At the same time they accept the responsibility for 'repaying' the world and the cosmos for all it gives us: for putting something back in for each breath we take out.

They know that the Earth's cycle is intimately connected to the birth and death of all living creatures. They have elaborated beliefs, rules, and rituals which imbue them with the duty to ensure that those cycles continue revolving without upset. Although they perceive this in a very long time-scale, they do not regard their obligation as a burden. Rather, they see it as the most intelligent way to meet life and death. It is no less, and perhaps no more, than a way of accepting responsibility, on a very deep level, for the widespread and long-term effects of one's life.

Perhaps this is the really meaningful and challenging message which tribal peoples have for the world. Perhaps this is at least as important as the hope that more miracle cures are to be found in their pharmacopoeias, waiting for us to 'discover' (and steal?) for our own use.

As industrialised society moves further towards a selfish individualism in which everything, from life's genetic blueprints to human body-parts, is given a price tag, the Arhuaco and Hopi are a vital reminder that people can choose other priorities and other ways of living.

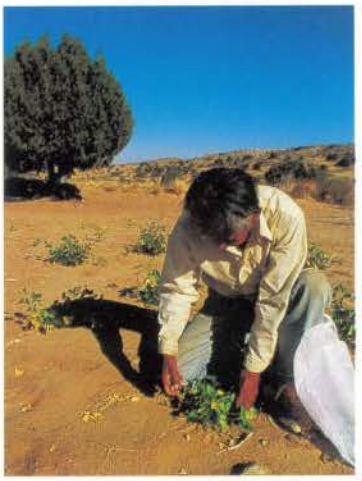
The Hopi live in the 'richest' country in the world, less than 400 kilometres from that Mecca of dollar worship, Las Vegas. But many of them have no desire to become American. Likewise, most of the Sierra Indians do not covet the monetary wealth they see in the cities of Valledupar and Santa Marta, nor do they have any interest in the sort of power which they see the government and guerrillas killing each other for.

### A simple message

When Arhuaco representatives travelled to Europe in 1993, using Survival International to present their case to the outside world for the first time, their spiritual leader did not even bother to get a pair of shoes to cope with the pavements of London and Madrid. Of the goods on offer in these world capitals, he wanted absolutely nothing.

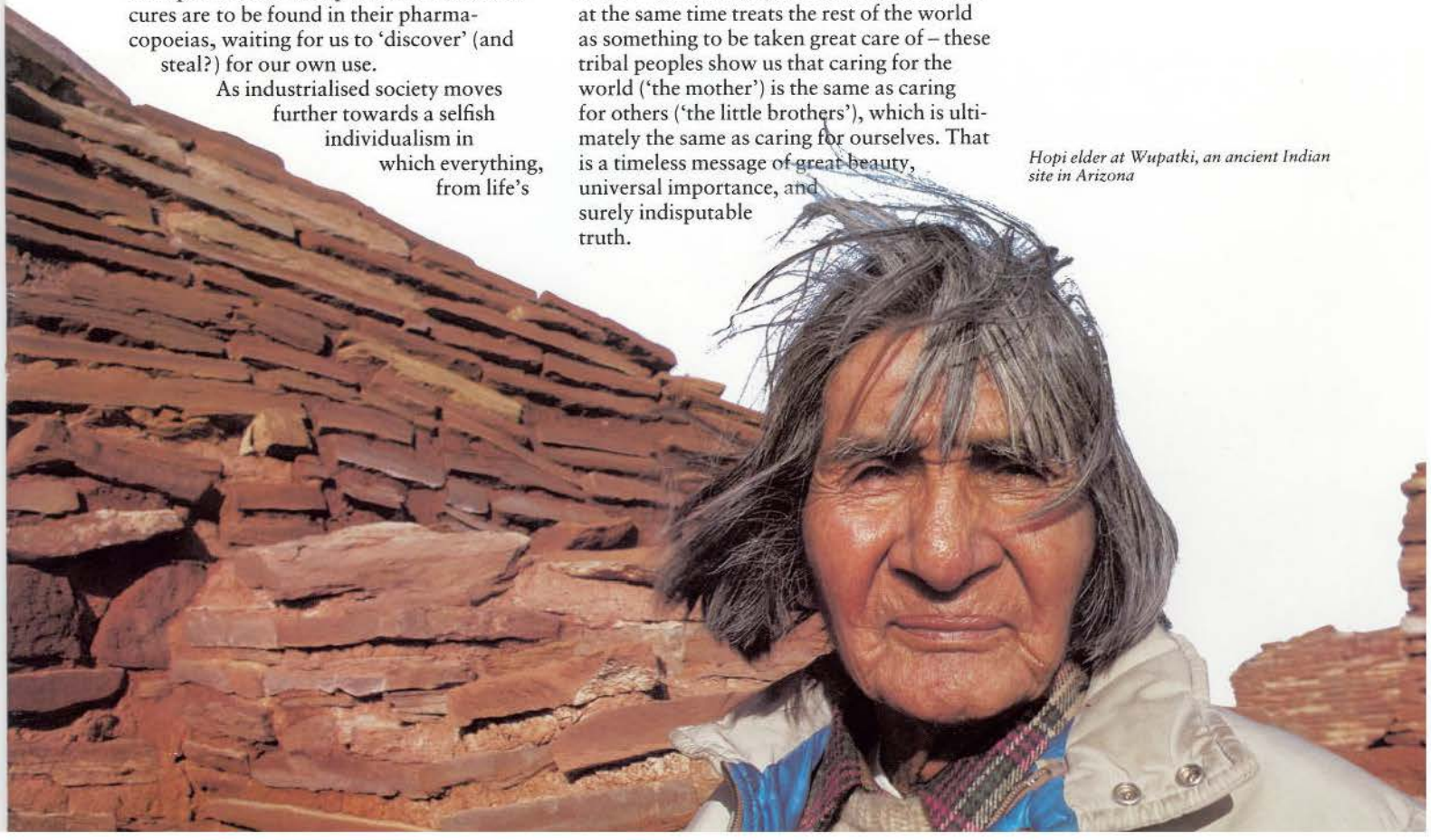
In spite of the West's materialism, in spite of what the politicians, economists, and development experts preach, there will always be people in the world who do not want to become like them. There will always be those who hold fast to a different way of life, whose own answers to the problems of life and death lie along a different path. It may be that the message coming from these extraordinarily complex and sophisticated tribal societies is really as simple, and as important, as that.

But it may also be that by holding true to a spirit of living which places people at the centre – which is very self-interested, and yet at the same time treats the rest of the world as something to be taken great care of – these tribal peoples show us that caring for the world ('the mother') is the same as caring for others ('the little brothers'), which is ultimately the same as caring for ourselves. That is a timeless message of great beauty, universal importance, and surely indisputable truth.



*Hopi picking lima beans*

> The way one nation treats another serves either to strengthen or destroy the spiritual basis of peace in the world.
>
> Hopi, 1983



*Hopi elder at Wupatki, an ancient Indian site in Arizona*

# Every breath you take

## Arhuaco philosophy

We, the Arhuacos, believe that the Earth is mother, and as a good mother she will care for and protect us all if we abide by the law of origin, the source and order of all beings. The law of origin must be obeyed in order to preserve the equilibrium and ensure that life does not end; so that there is true harmony between day and night, cold and heat, summer and winter, life and death, man and nature, and among men.

Arhuaco statement to the United Nations, 1993

In the beginning of time, Kaku Serankua created the Earth. He made her fertile and took her as his wife.

The world was supported by two sets of four golden threads which were interwoven and attached to the four cardinal points. Where the eight golden threads cross, lies the heart of the world. This is our home, the Sierra Nevada, which is marked out by the 'black line' which defines its boundary and separates it from the low plains which surround it.

**When Kaku Serankua distributed the land, he kept the Sierra as a sacred place where wisdom would reside, so that one day it could be taught again to humanity**

The snow peaks and sacred lakes were placed in the middle of the mountains; this, the highest area, is *chundua*. The peaks are like people, like us in many ways, like 'guardians of honour'. They are like our parents, our fathers and mothers. They are also the fathers and mothers of the white man; for our god is his god. A mamo was put on every peak to be vigilant and caring. Every peak has a mamo, just as every house has someone living there. The peaks are like our temples or churches.

When Kaku Serankua distributed the land, he kept the Sierra as a sacred place where wisdom would reside, so that one day it could be taught again to humanity. This is where Kaku Serankua lives now, watching over his creation.

Before he made the world, Kaku Serankua created the water, which nourishes the Earth as the veins of man nourish his body. He also made the stars, the sun and the moon, and everything.

When he came to create the living beings, he gave laws to the four kinds of people – the white, yellow, red, and black. Their colours are the same as the four mantles of the earth: *bunnekän*, the white earth; *minekän*, the yellow earth; *gunnekän*, the red earth; and *zeinekän*, the black earth.

Our breathing is the same breath which springs from the world: the air, the winds, and the breeze. All the races of people are equal; to each was given their own rights and their own laws so that they did not violate their brothers and sisters. Each one of us has been given a path whereby we can come close to god and recognise and know him.

We were shown how to respect all of this. We did not create this law ourselves: it was given to us by Kaku Serankua, our father. He also taught us how to cultivate the land, how to share our goods equally, how to care for the forests, for the different species of animals, for the waters, for the hills; how to care for the sun, the stars, the moon, for the dry and wet seasons; how to cure sickness and treat illness. He gave us knowledge of earthquakes and of everything which comes to pass in the world. All of this was to benefit all of humanity everywhere: in every part of the Earth.

**Our breathing is the same breath which springs from the world: the air, the winds, and the breeze**

This is how we lived. We did not know selfishness; we did not abuse each other, nor covet our brother's things, nor devour his rights; we did not know pride, nor that some were lesser than others.

*The mamos regulate natural events and prevent catastrophe through a complex system of 'payments' to the Earth*

These laws were given to us so that we would help each other with equality, justice, and understanding. If one was weak, the other would give him strength.

Life, wisdom, and the law all have their origin in chundua, the snow peaks and lakes. We depend on nature to give us our own life, and every aspect of nature has, itself, a spirit life. We depend on chundua. But chundua also depends on us: to keep the balance. Each animal and tree, each river and stone, the sun, the moon, the stars – all have a spiritual life, all need sustenance, just as we need food. If they do not get it, they will die: the rivers will dry up, the trees will wither, the sun itself will die.

### The Priests

It is the mamos, our priests, our scientists, who sustain the spirit world. They keep all these forces in balance. They move between chundua, the peaks, and the 'black line' on the plains. They sing and dance, keep the ceremonies, and make payments to the Earth; they keep the sacred objects, the sticks, masks, and sacred stones. They are intermediaries who know how to move between the spirit world and the ordinary world. They cure sickness, and can locate the right places for us to bury the dead. They do this not for themselves, not just for us, but for all of humanity and all of life

These are the true laws which were given to each of the five continents. Every creature and every aspect of nature has its own law and, to preserve it, we must respect it. That is how it was ordered, and that is how it always was.

> **To know just enough of nature to be able to take advantage of her is easy, but it is difficult to appreciate the many different sides to her and to know how they co-exist**

This wisdom, this law, was not invented by us nor by any other person; it is knowledge which is based on the profoundest awareness and insight. The highest point of all lies beyond the four cardinal points. There, a knowledge resides which tells us of the past, present, and future times, of everything which affects the world, the waters, and the different planets. It tells us how to balance the many aspects of nature, so that everything is kept in harmony always. It has been handed down from mamo to mamo, from generation to generation, since the most ancient of times.

To know just enough of nature to be able to take advantage of her is easy, but it is difficult to appreciate the many different sides to her and to know how they co-exist. It is difficult to know how to tend them carefully for the benefit of humanity. All of this

Top *Arhuaco preparing the ground for planting*
Middle *Arhuaco preparing sisal to use for making bags*
Bottom *The Arhuaco grow coffee to sell*

*The Arhuaco women make these bags, or* mochilas, *using a knotting technique. While the men use their poporos and coca, the women knot their mochilas – even as they walk – and the finest ones take months to make. The mochilas are usually made out of sisal, although cotton and wool are used increasingly. The pattern refers to the position and character of the person who will use it, as well as to the place where it was made.*

is something which ambitious men cannot begin to know how to understand.

Kaku Serankua teaches us that nature is our mother, and that we must respect her and her laws. There must be this understanding, and there must be respect, justice, and equality amongst people. That is how we have always lived.

### The white man's laws

But the white man knows nothing of all this. Those who only know how to take life, rather than create it, will find all this impossible to believe. He has attacked his brothers, the Arhuaco, and has pushed us back from the 'black line'. He has cut himself off from nature, and because he does not know how to conserve her, he has used his knowledge to destroy her. He has separated himself from his fellow. He has no respect for his own brothers, and he makes laws which persecute them and take their lands from them.

If the white man goes on piling up debts to the Earth by living like this, then he will bring his own destruction upon himself. This must be so.

Ever since the white man first appeared, he has wanted to take our land and deprive us of our own traditional and truthful laws so that he can impose his own. His countless promises have come to nothing. Some years ago he promised us that our fathers' land would be respected and that territory which had been stolen would be returned – but this has never happened.

We must recover the land which Kaku Serankua left us, because it is our mother, the source of our life and sustenance. She has been abused by the white man. We must recover the land because we need her to live. She is sacred, and through her the mamos maintain the order of the universe: an order built on the equality and life of all people. We must recover our mother so that we can sustain our culture and our traditions and defend ourselves from the white man who is hemming us in more and more: herding us onto barren ground as if we were just pigs, fenced in to be fattened.

We have no faith in the white man's laws and we hope for nothing from him. All he has ever given us has been broken promises and lies – his laws always exploit the Indians.

**Being Indian is like being at the root of things**

He abuses us and only agrees with us when he wants something from us (such as votes for the local politicians who promise much and do nothing).

The white man has taught us many new and false needs, separating us little by little from our traditions and our ancient ways of producing all that we need. He has brought his own thinking into our community. But his thoughts are bad and even make some of us feel ashamed of being Indian – of the very thing that should be our greatest pride. Being Indian is like being at the root of things.

Many Arhuaco believed the false promises and sold out to the politicians and landowners – some have even betrayed their own brothers.

The whites have not respected our internal government. We, on the other hand, have always respected the national Colombian government, and we demand that they respect ours. We should be asked to approve any laws about us which the Colombian government is thinking of passing. We demand the right to choose our own leaders in the way we have always done. We demand that we be consulted before anyone is authorised to enter our land. We do not want more whites to come and spoil our holy places, to view us as a tourist spectacle, or to work here without our consent.

We have always wanted to live in peace according to our traditions. We have always hoped that the whites, our younger brothers, would understand our point of view and work with us. But now many years have passed and all the white man has done has been to try and cheat us.

We realise now that our struggle and suffering is shared by all Colombian Indians. We are not asking for help. Instead we are standing with other Indians and working together for our land and culture.

We have seen that when the white man speaks of 'progress' and 'integration' he really means misery and deprivation. The white man does not listen to us. He does not want us to chose our own future.

To join the white man's society is to lose everything which is our own.

We can see this very clearly now, and we know that we alone must take charge of our destiny.

*Kogi*

## Coca

Coca is a leafy bush grown as an important ritual plant by many Indian peoples in the Andes and the Amazon. Its leaves contain a number of 'mind-altering' alkaloids, including minute amounts of cocaine.

There are several ways of using the separate alkaline additive which is needed to make the coca leaf release its active ingredients. The Indians of the Sierra have a unique technique: they bake sea-shells, gathered from the beach, and then grind them to a very fine lime powder. Each man stores his powder in a fist-sized gourd, or *poporo*, which is closed with a stick. He carries this at all times, along with his bag of coca leaves. Whenever men meet, they immediately exchange a handful of coca.

A man chews a few leaves into a ball. Then he removes the powder-coated stick from his poporo and carefully rolls it onto the wad inside his mouth. The powder mixes with the leaf and begins the chemical reaction which releases the alkaloids. A man will insert the stick into his poporo several times to get more lime, keeping the same coca mass in his mouth for an hour or more. During this time he will repeatedly rub the stick against the opening of his poporo and over the years hard layers of calcium build up around the hole.

Using coca in this way has a similar, though very much milder, effect to that of taking refined cocaine (which the Indians do not use): they feel more alert, less fatigued and less hungry. There is no evidence that using coca has any harmful side effects.

Coca is extremely important to Arhuaco men: there is an obvious sexual symbolism in the use of the (male) stick and (female) poporo; the ritual exchange of leaves is socially bonding; and, most importantly, coca is seen as facilitating access to a more spiritual level of reality. The plant is viewed as divine. Most men use coca most of the time and they rub the poporo stick against the gourd many hundreds of times a day.

Top *An Arhuaco man uses the same poporo throughout his life. The layers of lime grow with his age and wisdom*

Bottom *The Indians grind sea shells to make the lime needed for chewing coca leaves*

# Perpetual creation

## The Hopi ritual cycle

Your beautiful rays,
may they colour our faces;
being dyed in them,
somewhere at an old age
we shall fall asleep old women.
Hopi woman's prayer to the
sun for a newborn girl

The Hopi are a deeply religious people. Spirituality runs through every aspect of their lives and is fundamental to their identity. Theirs is a system of beliefs which recognises the interconnectedness of the natural world and of life and death, and which takes responsibility for a world that rests precariously on the effects of humankind's actions.

Hopi religion draws from an ancient past that is intimately bound to their homeland and is rich with stories and teachings. It is nevertheless a tradition very much of the here and now, whose function is to secure the immediate needs of the people from one month to the next: rain for making the crops grow; sunshine for making them ripen; fertility for themselves and for all life. It is part of a highly pragmatic approach to a difficult land: they treat the environment with great humility and respect; they ask before taking, and give back in return.

*Rainbow dancer*

The Hopi's world is like a self-contained wheel from which there is no escape from accountability: irresponsibility brings catastrophe. Similarly, there is no escape or loss in death, because when a person dies he or she is simultaneously reborn in the lower world. The rituals for birth and burial are related. The spirit bodies of the lower world are weightless and rise up into the sky as rain clouds to bring rain and fertility, and so new life, to the upper world. People's life cycle is like the daily and yearly passage of the sun as it moves between the upper world and the lower world.

It is the Hopi's annual round of ceremonies that keeps the wheels revolving smoothly. It drives the Earth's journey around the sun and leads the Hopi through the rotation of summer and winter, birth and death. It confirms not only the Indians' place in the world but the very existence of the planet itself and their responsibility to it. As each month comes, bringing its own gifts and hardships, there is change and newness but also ancient constancy. It is the same cycle, turning and turning for generation after generation in a pattern which the Indians have observed with great acuity for hundreds of years. Each rite confronts the seasonal challenges and dangers of growing food in a desert that receives only ten centimetres of rainfall a year. Through these rituals the people breathe fresh life into themselves and into the world as a whole, and at the same time reaffirm their ancient ancestry as well as that of the Earth.

This cyclical pattern is obvious to the Hopi and deeply ingrained in their thinking. Its constantly repeated message is one of the inter-connection between all life, of its precariousness and the wonderful but very serious responsibilities which that brings.

They are dismayed that this, the most important message of all, continues to be ignored by the white society which surrounds them.

*Almost miraculously, the Hopi coax harvests of maize, beans, cotton, and squash from the desert using age-old techniques of dry farming, irrigation, and flood-water farming*

## The ceremonies

When the clans gathered some 700 years ago, the *kikmongwi*, or chief, invited each of the new arrivals to perform a special ritual (see p. 13). If it was successful, they were invited to settle in the village, where they were given land for their homes as well as plots for their crops. In return they undertook to perform their ritual on a regular basis. Each ceremony is therefore an expression of a specific clan's power and spirituality, and each makes a unique contribution to the welfare of the Hopi and of humankind in general.

There are several annual ceremonies which became established and are still performed in certain villages. They are, of course, far more complex than can be properly described here. Their fundamental message, however, is straightforward and universal.

We have tried to warn you again and again that some white men will cause great suffering for all life if they continue to violate and desecrate the great spirit's laws for this land and life. Already the forces of nature are hitting your cities and towns with greater intensity and violence. Big winds, earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanoes, severity of seasons changing, droughts, floods, fires, freezing cold weather, blazing heat waves. All your scientists have not been able to predict these natural forces, nor can they stop them!

Hopi letter to the US government, 1984

**Soyalangw**

The winter solstice brings one of the most important ceremonies of the year, whose main purpose is to drive the sun back from its descent into winter towards its summer home. There is song and dance to bring warmth to the mesas, and fertility to the people and the crops. This is the time when *pahos*, prayer feathers, are made to ensure abundance during the coming year. Later, when the sun-watcher announces that the sun is rising over a certain point on the horizon, it will be time for planting.

**Wuwtsim – 'manhood society'**

As the days draw in, some weeks before the shortest day, it is time for manhood initiation. Young men in late adolescence are initiated into one of four different secret societies and learn their own purpose in life. They go through a ritual rebirth into manhood and abandon their childhood names. The ceremony begins before dawn, in the cold darkness of first creation. A new fire is kindled with flint and cotton and fed with coal from Maasaw's underworld. Prayers are said first for the sun, then for the Earth as it is warmed by the faint eastern light, and finally for the first plants and animals. The year moves further into its winter sterility and life becomes especially harsh, particularly if the summer crops were poor. The Hopi now wait for the solstice to herald the start of a new year and a new beginning.

**Powamuy – purification moon**

In early February, the people germinate bean sprouts in the warmth of the underground *kivas*, (see p. 11). Their growth anticipates the success of the coming year's crops. In the middle of the month, at the first sight of the new moon – the 'purification moon' which gives the ceremony its name – the beans are cooked in a stew, or *haruqwlvi*, and served to the villagers at a feast. This is the climax of the 16-day bean dance.

**Angqtiwa – 'coming back again'**

Spring unfolds, with the Hopi's fragile maize and bean crops entirely dependent on snow melt and the erratic and uncertain rainfall. The purpose of the dances is now, more than ever, to invoke rain from the gods. As the weather becomes warmer, the *katsinas* (see p. 13) move from the kivas to the plazas and sing all day for rain, dancing through the village while people watch from their rooftops.

**Lalkont, O'waqölt and Maraw ceremonies**

Around the time of the autumn equinox the three women's societies follow, with rituals to celebrate fertility and the gifts of the harvest. Some of their dances are burlesques of the men's ceremonies.

**Niman – 'going home'**

As the year passes the peak of summer and the maize reveals its fertility, the important 'going-home' ceremony ends the katsina season with 16 days of festivities. The katsinas present the people with *piiki* bread and the first green ears of maize. Then they dance for more rain to ensure a bounteous harvest, before finally retiring to their spirit home in the San Francisco Peaks, which the Hopi call *Nuvatukya'ovi*, meaning 'snow piled high on top place'. They will not reappear until the later part of the year.

**Snake dance and Flute ceremony**

The Tsuu'tsut (Snake) and Leelent (Flute) societies continue the cycle into the autumn with a sequence of highly symbolic ceremonies. With magic and song they bring rain to the driest time of year and help the sun on its seasonal course.

# Finding the light

A Hopi creation story

People always ask, 'So where do you get your knowledge?' and I say, 'From the ancestors, from the time of creation'.

Hopi elder, 1993

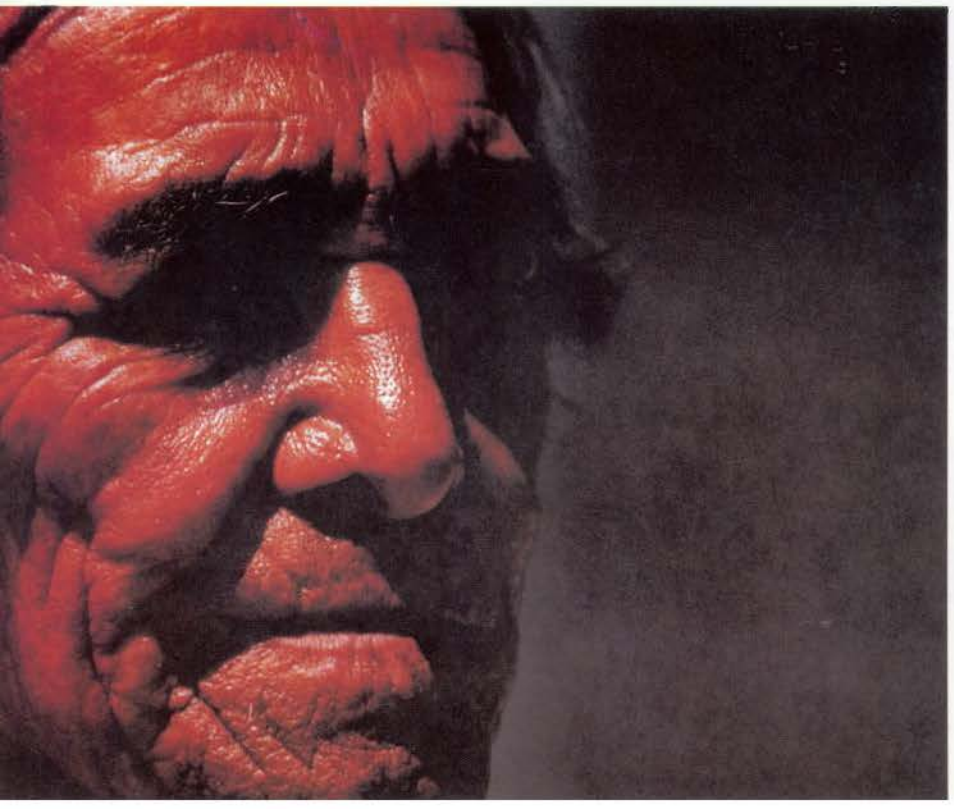
*Hopi mythology has been passed down the generations by word of mouth. There are many versions of the creation story and as most of them relate to the history and migrations of specific clans, there is no single account that is more or less 'correct' than any other. The following can give only the very sketchiest outline of one version of a complex oral tradition.*

## In the beginning

In the beginning the creator gathered up the endless space and made the first world and the living beings. Later they moved from the first into the second and then into the third world, where they became people. The creator gave us laws and warned us not to give in to the many temptations of life. He made us of both good and evil: one of our sides has heart and is wise, though awkward; the other has no heart, it is clever and strong but not wise. The two sides forever struggle within us.

But in the third world immorality gained the upper hand and flourished. The men did not work in the fields; they just sat and gambled. Husbands sought other women, and wives went with other men. The young no longer respected the elders. The springs dried up; the crops withered. Sickness came to many. Instead of trying to understand life, many believed that they were its creators. The leaders smoked tobacco and prayed for guidance, and they realised that they had to find a new place and start a new life, one with good heart.

They remembered that they had often heard the sound of footsteps coming from up above. 'There must be someone up there', they said, 'perhaps they will let us go up and join them.'



So they sang and prayed. They decided to mix earth with saliva, and to create a swallow from the clay. They blew tobacco smoke and sang to give him life. They asked him to go and investigate the noises from the sky.

The creator gave us laws and warned us not to give in to the many temptations of life

He flew up and up until he saw an opening in the sky. But he tired and had to return before he could reach it, so they tried again with a hummingbird. He reached the hole and flew through it into a new world. It was a place of desert and mountains, but there was also green, and it was very beautiful. But he grew weary and had to fly back down. Next they sent a hawk but he too had to turn back before he could find the person who was making the noise. Finally they made a shrike. Up he flew into the new world, the fourth world. At first he did not meet anyone. He flew on and on until he came to the place where our Hopi village, Oraibi, now stands.

## The fourth world

There, sitting on the ground by a fire, with his back towards the bird, was a man preparing his midday meal. The man heard the shrike and turned. He was a terrifying sight. His face was burnt and encrusted with blood. His hair was singed. Two black lines were painted across his nose and cheekbones, and he wore necklaces of turquoise and bones.

He was Maasaw, the great spirit and master of death; creator and destroyer. The bird told him about the people below who wanted to escape corruption and start a new life. Maasaw replied, 'My life is simple. All I have is my planting stick and my maize. If they are willing to live as I do they may come.'

The shrike returned to the lower world with the message, and the people were overjoyed to hear his news. They prayed and smoked and then decided to plant a pine seed which would grow into a tree. They would climb this into the sky and into the new world. They sang for it to grow until it reached the sky, but it was still too short. They tried again and again with other seeds. Finally, they planted a reed. They sang for its growth and it grew and grew until its ▶

*In ancient times, each tribe chose an ear of maize. When the Hopi were left with the short blue corn, they knew that their life would be difficult but long*

## Kivas

When the Hopi's ancestors lived as nomads, they made homes from small pits covered with brush and mud. When they developed settled agriculture, people began building larger houses above ground but continued to use the pits as burial chambers and storage rooms for maize. Later, as the clans united and people formed villages, the underground chambers became ceremonial meeting places called *kivas*. Every Hopi village has several kivas, and each one has its own headman and is sometimes associated with one clan. Most of the rituals take place, at least partly, in the kivas but they are also used as general meeting rooms.

The kiva is sunk into mother Earth like a womb and is seen as the birthplace of humankind. It embodies all four worlds of the Hopi creation story: the fire pit where life began; the hole in the floor called the *sipapu*, or 'path from the navel', leading down to the first world; the altar level of the second world where the novices sit during ceremonies (the priests use the lower level to show their humility); the raised platform of the third world; and the ladder which, like the reed used in mythological times, leads into the fourth world. The movement of the night sky's constellations is seen through this skylight and determines the timing of some rituals.

The kivas are sacred places and are fundamental to Hopi life. When the Hopi use the kivas, they relive their people's ancient passage from the first world to the fourth world, from ignorance to knowledge.

## Maize

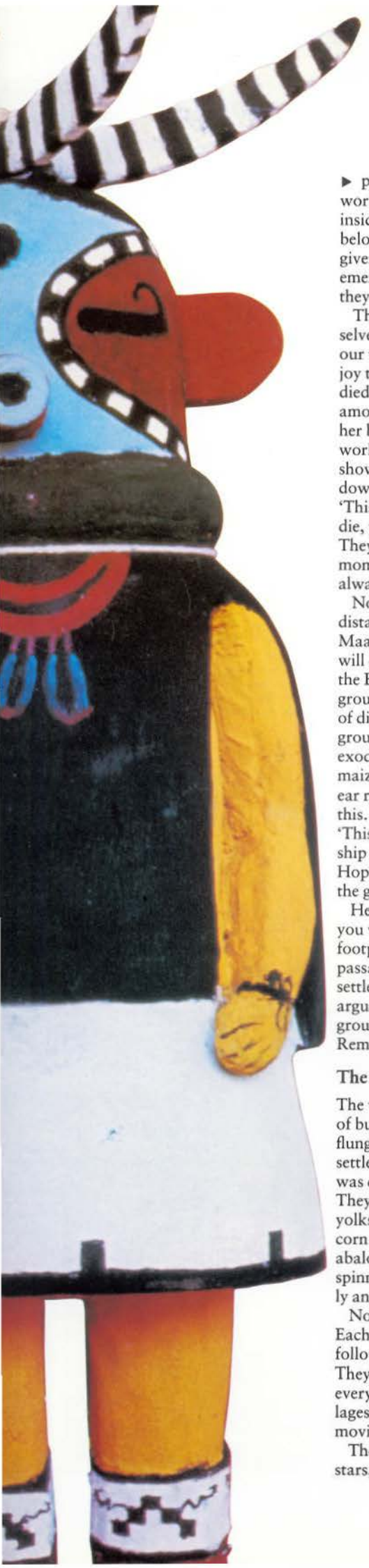
Maize is considered the most vital element in the Hopi diet; it is the nourishment that mother Earth provides for her children. The Hopi think of it as both 'human flesh', because it is food, and 'spirit', because it is divinely created. Cornmeal is a powerful symbol and is fundamental to all Hopi ceremonies: it is used to open and block pathways, to shower the katsina dancers, and to welcome the rising sun.

The plant's growth is a symbol for human life. As the stalk spirals up towards the light, the first tassel appears. This is described as male. The ear of maize, which is female, follows. Then the silk emerges, and pollen is dropped on the 'lifeline' to mature it. When the tassel begins to turn brown and bend downward, the male and female have reached their old age and the end of their reproductive power. The Hopi have the same word for a dead body and a spent cornstalk.

On special occasions, the Hopi eat a bread called *piiki* which the women make from a batter of ground blue maize and water, and bean ashes for leavening. The mixture is spread very thinly over a hot flat stone, and it cooks to a thin blue pancake which is folded into a long sausage shape. Dozens are prepared at a time and stacked in piles.

Maize is a grass which was domesticated and turned into food by the Central American Indians some 7000 years ago. Its use appears to have spread north, reaching the Colorado Plateau around 100 BC. Because it could be dried and stored easily, it became a mainstay throughout Central America, and it probably facilitated the widespread population movements across the continent.

*Some of the finest pottery in the southwest is made by Hopi potters, mostly women. The pots are coiled without using a wheel, burnished with a stone and then baked in a dung fire. They are then decorated with intricate designs using natural pigments*



► pointed end pierced up into the fourth world. Only the good people climbed up inside the reed: they left the corrupt down below. As they climbed, each person was given a tribe and a language. When they emerged, they cut back the reed so that they could not be followed.

The people were ecstatic to find themselves in the new world, the fourth world, our world. They sang and danced; but their joy turned to sorrow when the chief's son died. They discovered a witch girl was amongst them and they wanted to throw her back down the hole, back to the lower world. But she pleaded for mercy and showed them that the chief's dead child was down below, playing with other children. 'This is how it must be,' she said, 'when you die, you will journey to the world below'. They decided to spare her, but from that moment on they knew that there would always be evil in the world.

Now the people noticed a fire in the distance and walked towards it. It was Maasaw's and he spoke to them, 'You will divide into many groups and wander the Earth'. He placed ears of maize on the ground in front of the people. The corn was of different colours and lengths, and each group of people picked one to carry on their exodus. The greedy picked the best-looking maize, until only one short, stubby blue ear remained. The humblest leader picked this. It was a test of wisdom. Maasaw said, 'This corn will bring a long life, full of hardship but full of peace. Your name shall be Hopi. You shall follow the teachings of the great spirit and not corrupt them.'

He went on,'This place is Oraibi, now you will journey all over the Earth, leaving footprints and rock writings to mark your passage. But later you will return here and settle. But the evil in the world will bring arguments. You will split up into more groups and eventually Oraibi will decay. Remember this.'

## The migrations

The world was dark. The people cut a disk of buckskin, tied it to a wooden frame, and flung it into the sky. They sang to it until it settled on the horizon. It shone, but its light was cold. It was the moon. They tried again. They cut another disk, painted it with egg yolks and pollen. They gave it a face, tied corn silk around its edges, and sewed an abalone shell to its forehead. They sent it spinning into the sky, where it shone brightly and cast warmth over the world.

Now the people began their migrations. Each group became a clan. Some of them followed certain signs, some followed stars. They left their writing on the rocks, and every so often they stopped and built villages. But they never stayed long before moving on once more.

Their guides were the sun, the moon, the stars, and their maize. If they reached places

*An elder making a ball for his grandson for the hockey-like game called* nahoydadatsia

where the maize failed to grow, they knew they had come too far and they turned back.

Eventually we, the Hopi, returned to the land that was made for us, but we must never forget where we came from or what our purpose is on this Earth.

**Their guides were the sun, the moon, the stars and their maize. If they reached places where the maize failed to grow, they knew they had come too far**

The Hopi have been placed on the Earth to take care of the land through their ceremonial duties. Hopi is the bloodline of this continent, as others are the bloodline of other continents. Together we hold the world in balance, revolving properly. If the Hopi nation vanishes, the motion of the Earth will become eccentric, the water will swallow the land, and the people will perish.

The Hopi are the first people. They must cure the ills of their own bloodline so that everything will become peaceful, naturally, by the will of the creator. He will cure the world. But right now the land of Hopi is being hurt. To us this is a sign that the world is in trouble. All over the world they have been fighting, and it will get worse. Only the purification of the Hopi will settle the problems on this Earth. We did not suffer all this hardship and punishment for nothing. We live by these prophecies and teachings. We do not want the world to be destroyed.

## Clans

The clan is the heart of Hopi society. Each one is usually made up of several families, but as all the clan members are thought to have descended from one woman, they see themselves as close kinfolk. People belong to their mother's clan and can only marry a partner from a different clan.

The multifarious layers and subdivisions of Hopi society are extremely complex because people are members of many distinct but overlapping groups at the same time: clans, secret societies, kiva groupings, clan groupings, as well as, of course, families. While at one level people's sense of identity often lies most strongly with one of these associations, the inter-connectedness of the different groups serves to weave the people together into one community.

During the 'gathering of the clans' (400–700 years ago) each one brought its own supernatural power and guardian spirit, which it offered for the communal good of the village and all humankind in exchange for entry into Hopi, the centre of the universe. Still today, each clan brings from its separate past its own experience and ritual re-enactment of mythological history: where its ancestors went after they emerged into the fourth world; what they encountered on their journey; how they arrived at Hopi; and how they joined the wider Hopi society. The oldest woman in each clan passes these memories of the ancient past on to the generation which follows.

**The naming of the clans: a dead bear**

Some clans are linked together by events in the ancient past. The following story is an example of this:

'Soon after the migrations began, a group of Hopi came across the carcass of a bear. Before moving on, their leader said that from that time on they would be known as the Bear Clan in order to distinguish themselves from other Hopi. Another group came to the same place and cut strips from the bear's hide to use as carrying straps. They became the Strap Clan. Some saw a bluebird pecking at the meat and called themselves the Bluebird Clan. Others arrived only to find a bit of grease left in the eye sockets, and they became the Greasy Eye Cavity Clan. Another group watched as a spider strung its web across one of the eye sockets, and they took the name of the Spider Clan. Ones who came later saw a spruce tree growing up through the skeleton and called themselves the Spruce Clan.'

## Katsinas

The *katsinas* are the spirits of plants, animals, birds, and insects; and of mythological beings, natural forces, and even moral and social values. They protect and nourish the Hopi but also punish them for any wrongdoing. They fill the Hopi world and appear in over two hundred guises, from grasshoppers to rain clouds, from wolves to crows, and with names such as Mudhead, Heart of the Sky, and Striped Nose.

The katsinas are the messengers between people and the creator and between the living and the ancestors of long ago. They move freely between the upper world and the lower world, and from July to December they are thought to live far away, on top of the San Francisco Peaks. They return to Hopi for the winter solstice and remain throughout the spring and summer. During this time, there are a number of rituals and ceremonies where they bring gifts and dance in the villages for rain, corn, and life, and for harmony throughout the world.

The katsinas are striking figures, adorned with turquoise, pine branches, paint, and feathers. The rhythmic sound of their bells and rattles fills the village as they sing and dance in the plaza while spectators watch and solemnly bless each one with cornmeal. During a two-day katsina dance, ritual clowns sometimes appear to make fun of the crowds and perform slapstick parodies of the proceedings. These tricksters act as a counterpoint to the katsinas, making fun of everything sacred and good. But their frivolous behaviour also carries a serious warning about the dangers of abandoning the 'Hopi way' and one's responsibility to the Earth.

The Hopi make katsina dolls for their children, which help them to learn about their religion from a young age. The Hopi do not allow their ceremonies or the katsinas to be photographed, but some Hopi do make katsina dolls to sell to outsiders.

*This inscription is carved on a boulder known as Prophecy Rock, near a Hopi village. One interpretation of its meaning is that it serves as a warning to the Hopi against following the 'white man's way'. People must choose between the upper path of the* Bahanna *which ends abruptly in chaos, and the lower path of the Hopi which continues peacefully to infinity.*

The family, the dwelling house, and the field are inseparable because the woman is the heart of these, and they rest with her.

Hopi petition to the government, 1894

*Most katsina dolls are carved from cottonwood tree roots and coated with a thin layer of clay before being painted and decorated*

# Snow spires

## The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

*The Sierra Nevada range rises between the arid Guajira peninsula to the east, the lush tropical Magdalena basin to the west and the Caribbean to the north.*

> And if there is an earthly paradise in these lands of the Indians, this must indeed be it ... everywhere around is crowned with high peaks ... and mountains covered by populous towns of Indians, all of which could be seen from all sides with their slopes and pleasing views.... What most delighted one's sight was their many plants ... cleanliness and neatness, as is shown in their courts paved with very large dressed stones and in their paths made of slabs.
>
> Fray Pedro Simón, 17th century

The Arhuaco (who are also known as Ika) live on the south side of the Sierra. Their neighbours, the Arsarios (or Malayo or Wiwa), live on the east and a third Indian people, the Kogi, live on the north. Together they total at least 20000. The 'black line' which defines the Indians' homeland stretches invisibly around the mountains and incorporates some hot, lowland areas and a few stretches of sea shore. The black line also links several sacred sites.

The Sierra mountains are as steep as any in the world, matched only by the southern slopes of the Himalaya. The Indians are adept at using the different altitudes to ensure their crops can be harvested at different times of year. Their basic foodstuffs are maize, manioc, plantains, and a variety of fruits. The Spanish invaders introduced coffee, sugar cane, wheat, and some cattle. The Indians also keep pigs, which grow well on a diet of fat avocados.

The Spanish invasion of the area began in the 16th century, and by 1750 the settlers had reached deep into Indian territory. Colonisation on a massive scale started in the 1950s when poor peasants, fleeing violent civil war, were attracted to the relative tranquillity of the Sierra. By this time, a fourth Indian people, the Kankuamo, had been largely assimilated into mixed-race society (interestingly, a resurgence of Kankuamo identity began in the 1990s).

### Invaded but not conquered

As the lower slopes have been taken over by white ranchers and mestizo settlers and the natural habitat has been destroyed, the Indians have retreated into the higher valleys, where the soil is less fertile and the game more scarce.

In 1916 the government told the regional authorities to create reserves for the three Indian groups, but nothing was done. In 1968 the Arhuaco successfully pressurised the agrarian reform office to draw up one reserve, though it covered only about half of the Indian settlements. Another parcel of land was returned to the Indians four years later when Catholic missionaries lost their ownership claim in the courts. In 1984 two further Indian reserves were created in the Sierra. They start at approximately 800 metres (2600 feet) above sea level and extend up to the snow caps. They do not, however, include the lower, more fertile valleys, or any access to the seashore. The latter is a serious omission because the Indians collect sea shells for use in the preparation of their coca. Furthermore, nearly half the reserve area cannot be farmed at all and most of the remaining area has only very poor soil. Survival International has supported the Sierra Indians' land claims since 1974. Another threat to their land comes from tourism, which the Indians oppose.

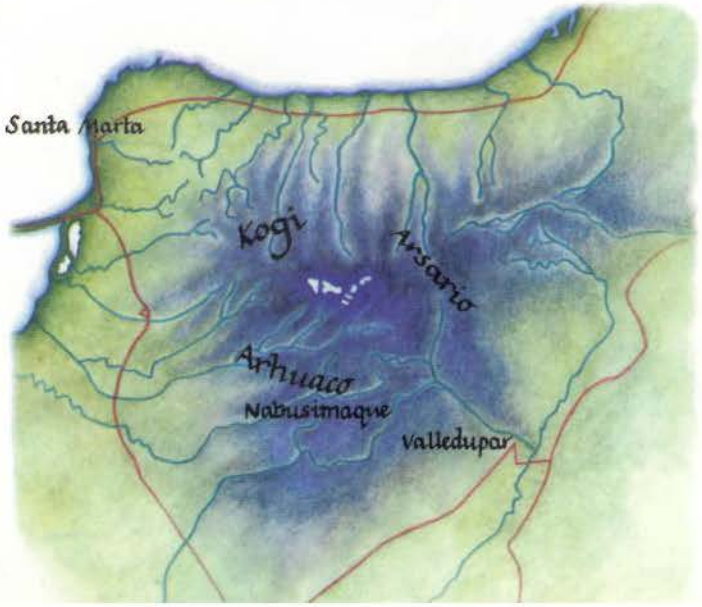
### The drug wars

Compounding these problems is the fact that the Sierra is invaded by soldiers from both the Colombian army and the anti-government guerrillas, both of whom want to control the drug trade and destroy each other. The mountains provide good cover for guerrillas: they are remote from Bogotá; close to the Venezuelan frontier and the Caribbean; and surrounded by poor Colombians who feel that their own government consists of rich men getting richer at their expense. Furthermore, some of the most sought-after marijuana in the world grows there. Over the last 15 years the area has also been used for growing coca to feed the ever-expanding drug market in North America and Europe.

Furthermore, the mountains lie close to the wildest part of the coast, which is the gateway for the two-way traffic in contraband that goes back and forth across the Caribbean daily: marijuana and cocaine going north to the richest nation on Earth; cigarettes, whisky, and electrical goods travelling south – nothing essential for life, but all worth a fortune none the less.

Meanwhile, the mounting pressure on their lands has brought many health problems to the Indians.

The Indians' fervent defence of their homeland is unshakable. But with the lower portion of the Sierra virtually under siege, the Indians have little choice but to move up the valleys in an effort to live beyond the reach of the invaders and their violence.



## Grave gold

The so-called Tairona people, the ancestors of today's Sierra Indians, have become famous for their extraordinary gold work. These Indians moulded finely shaped figurines of spirits, people, and animals using the ancient 'lost wax' technique. Figures were shaped in beeswax and then encased in a clay which was dried and fired so that the wax melted and could be poured out to leave a perfect clay mould behind. The gold was panned from the rivers, melted, and then poured into the mould to reproduce the wax shape. The finished figures were used in rituals, placed in graves, and buried as 'payments' to the Earth.

For the Indians, gold is a holy metal of immense ritual importance. When the invaders learnt that the Indians offered dazzling gold sculptures to their gods, they dug up their tombs and looted their graves. This practice continues to the present-day, and artifacts, made of gold, other metals, or stone, are regularly removed from the Sierra by professional grave robbers (*guaqueros*) who sell them to international dealers, who in turn sell them for vast sums of money in Bogotá and New York. In addition, the famous Bogotá Gold Museum is full of pieces removed from the Sierra.

The Indians deeply resent this theft. As the true caretakers of the Sierra and its contents, they feel that to see the sacred metal in monetary terms is insulting and dangerous and believe that their work in ensuring the balance of nature is thwarted by the excavating and theft of the sacred riches of the Earth.

> The white man steals from our tombs. He takes the sacred, living stones and sells them thinking only of his own enrichment. This is like tearing out our mother's eyes, teeth, and entrails and replacing them with glass and plastic.
>
> Kogi, 1980s

Top *Tairona gold figure*
Middle *Girl with her drawing of her village*
Bottom *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*


# Settling the promised land

Hopi land and history

According to the Hopi creation story, the people emerged into the fourth world, this world, and were sent off in all four directions to find the centre of the universe. The clans would wander the southwest for generations, building villages of stone and leaving marks on the rocks which would endure as a record of where the people had travelled. Eventually they would find the land, Hopi, that was meant for them.

## Ancient Roots

Two thousand years ago the southwest of what is now the United States was home to several roaming, semi-nomadic peoples, one of whom is known as the Anasazi – a Navajo word meaning 'old enemies' – who the Hopi call *Hisatsinom*, 'people of long ago'.

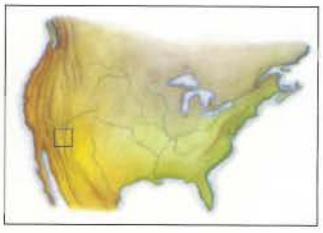
These ancient ancestors of the Hopi were mysteriously restless. They never settled for long in any one place, not even as their settlements became larger and more established. They abandoned their villages time and time again, as though always fleeing one paradise lost to seek a new, ever-elusive land where there would be spiritual harmony and freedom from evil. All over the southwest, stone villages were constructed and then deserted. Within walking distance of every one of the existing Hopi villages are the ruins of these early settlements.

Nature is the most important thing to the Hopi. It is the land and all living things, the water, the trees, the rocks – it is everything. It is the power that comes from these things that keeps the world in one piece. Here is the spiritual centre of this land. This is the most sacred place.

Hopi elder, 1965

## The arrival in Hopi

It was probably a prolonged drought towards the end of the 13th century that forced a fresh wave of migrations. Some of those people on the move were the Hopi, who came from all directions and finally settled on the edge of the Black Mesa – a hard desert of immense and spectacular skies, wind-worn rock, dramatic mesas, and plummeting canyons. This plateau rises up to an altitude of 2 700 metres (8 860 feet) and has three southern 'fingers', which are separated by low scrub land, or 'washes'. Early European travellers usually approached from the east and so the promontories are numbered 'first', 'second', and 'third' mesa beginning from that direction.




The clans gathered in Hopi, the Black Mesa country, as if it was a promised land. They knew that in this lunar, arid place they would be able to survive only through constant prayer. The harsh barrenness of the land would teach them humility and bring them closer to the creator.

Some of them congregated in Oraibi, which is thought to be the oldest continuously inhabited village in North America. The Hopi are remarkable for being so rooted in, and intimately bound to, one specific place. While their legends and ancient past are coloured with epic journeys over vast distances, the Hopi, like the Arhuaco, have been settled village dwellers for hundreds of years.

When the Spider Clan arrived at Moenkopi, they made marks on a certain bluff to the east, saying that this place should always belong to the Hopi, that no one should take it away from them.

Yukioma, chief of Hotevilla, early 1900s

## The Spanish

The first Spaniards arrived in Hopi in 1540, convinced they would come upon legendary cities of gold, only to find simple adobe villages. They came on horseback (this was the first time the Indians had seen horses) and in full armour. They were met by the war chief, who drew four lines of cornmeal in the sand as a warning to the strangers not to advance. To the foreigners this meant nothing and they charged ahead regardless and killed several Indians. By the 1630s Franciscan missionaries had moved into Hopi to save the Indians' 'pagan' souls, changing the name of Oraibi to 'Pueblo of San Francisco'. The Hopi called the missionaries *totaatsim*, or tyrants, for the mission system was oppressive and brutal and any Indian resistance met with torture. This account from 1655 tells of one incident after an Indian was caught 'worshipping an idol':

'In the presence of the entire pueblo, Father Guerra gave him such a severe beating that he was bathed in blood. Then... the Friar administered a second beating, following which he took burning turpentine and larded the Indian's body from head to feet. Soon after... the Indian died.'

All forms of Hopi religion were banned and sacred objects burnt, but the Indians hung on to their ceremonies by holding them secretly outside the villages. Prolonged drought and famine in the mid-1600s only confirmed the Hopi's contempt for a religion which violated the laws of their sacred land and its creator.

Decades of Spanish brutality culminated in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 when, on a single day, all the Pueblo peoples in the southwest rose up against the oppression of the Spanish: the normally peaceable Hopi killed all the priests in their villages. The church in Oraibi, built with forced Indian labour, was torn down. Roman Catholicism never returned to Hopi.

Twenty years later some people in the village of Awat'ovi tried to welcome the missionaries back, but their chief had the village razed to the ground rather than allow the return of 'white ways'. Over the next two hundred years the Hopi became polarised between those who shunned the whites and those who accepted them. By the late 19th century the white invasion into Hopi was multi-pronged: Mormon and Mennonite missionaries, both intent on succeeding where the Catholic Church had failed; and tourists brought in by the Santa Fe railway to witness the 'noble savagery' of Hopi religious ceremonies. Invasion of Indian land by the white man always brings disease and in 1853, the 1860s, and 1898 the Hopi were devastated by small pox epidemics.

### The 'friendlies' versus the 'hostiles'

By the early 1900s, Oraibi was firmly split into two camps: the 'friendlies', who welcomed the whites and their schools, and the 'hostiles', who rejected any integration with outsiders. Both sides looked to Hopi religion to justify their point of view: were the missionaries and politicians the *Bahannas* who, according to prophecy, would come from the east to help the Hopi, or were they simply impostors and invaders? As animosity grew, the ceremonial cycle began to fall apart: clans on one side of the argument would not allow the participation of those on the other; 'hostiles' left villages that were dominated by 'friendlies' and vice versa, so that, in some cases, villages did not have the necessary clan representatives for a particular ceremony. The most notable split in Hopi came in 1906 when the 'friendlies' and 'hostiles' of Oraibi had a 'pushing fight' to decide who would stay and who would go. The 'hostiles' lost and left the village at nightfall, taking only what they could carry. They went on to set up the villages of Hotevilla and Bacovi.

### The 'true white brother'

Some Hopi believe that after people settled in Oraibi the 'true white brother' would come bringing truth and justice. They would know him because he would carry a stone tablet matching the one held by the chief of Oraibi since the time of the village's first inhabitants. So far, white men have only come bearing the gun, the cross, and the camera.

*After death, people's spirits return to the Grand Canyon which lies to the west of Hopi and which the Indians know as Ongtupqa, or Salt Canyon*

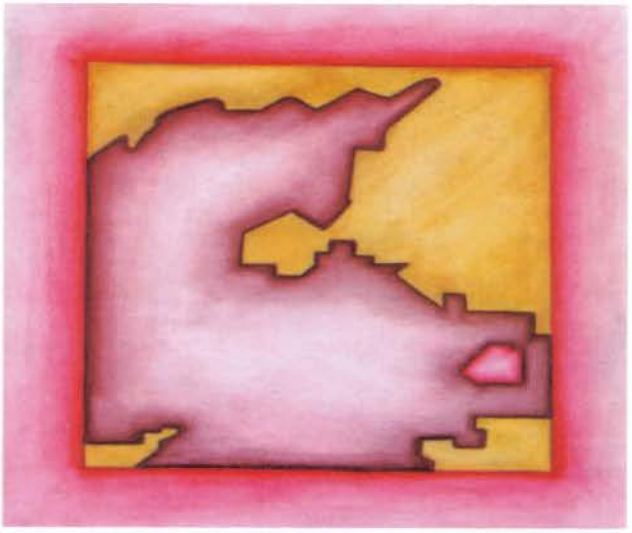
The Hopi have been invaded by the white man for over 450 years – from explorers to missionaries, soldiers to politicians, anthropologists to tourists. Their population has been ravaged by disease and famine, many of their children have been taken away from them and forced into white schools, and pollution from mining has brought sickness. In spite of all this, and generations of internal debate on how best to hold true to the Hopi way in the midst of a powerful consumer society, the Hopi are still here; living by their own moral values on the land that has always been theirs, speaking their language and maintaining their identity and autonomy. Their tenaciousness of spirit has made the Hopi, like the Arhuaco, a guiding influence and inspiration for other Native Americans and the wider movement for their rights.

> The old law never changes but these new laws are changing all the time.
> Hopi elder, 1993

*The Anasazi cliff-dwellers constructed multi-storied villages. Often built deep in the clefts of the rock or high on a ledge, they are almost indistinguishable from the natural landscape. Mesa Verde, Colorado*

# Fighting chaos

Problems facing the Hopi and Arhuaco



Hopi
joint use area
Navajo

### Power of the pen

*The Peabody Coal Company (owned by Hanson plc) is draining the Black Mesa of water which it uses to flush coal slurry along hundreds of kilometres of pipeline to the power station. The Hopi are deeply worried about the effect that this is having on their land and lives. Their springs are already drying up and water is scarce. The Hopi tribal council wants Peabody to draw its water from an alternative source such as Lake Powell. Please support the Hopi by writing a letter to one or both of the following addresses:*

*Chairman, Hanson plc,*
*1 Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7HJ,*
*United Kingdom*

*The Secretary of State for Energy,*
*1000 Independence Ave. SW,*
*Washington, DC 20585, USA*

*Hotevilla was founded in 1906 by 'hostiles' who were expelled from Oraibi for refusing to follow white ways. It remains one of the most orthodox Hopi villages*


## The Hopi's neighbours: the Navajo

No one knows why the Navajo Indian nation migrated from the sub-arctic forests of what is now western Canada to arrive in the arid deserts of the southwest around the 16th century. But the newcomers soon assimilated many of the characteristics of the Hopi and other 'Pueblo' peoples they encountered there. They also welcomed the sheep introduced by the Spanish. As the Navajo grew in numbers, these animals quickly became the mainstay of their livelihood. Although there was always trading between the Hopi and Navajo, their relationship has also been fraught with conflict.

The Navajos resisted the white colonists' invasion, and the US army began a vigorous campaign against them, led by the infamous Colonel 'Kit' Carson in the 1860s. Many Navajo were killed, 8 000 were force-marched to a camp in New Mexico, and many others avoided capture by fleeing westwards, towards Hopi. As the years passed, the Navajo settled the land all around Hopi.

The Hopi reservation is now entirely surrounded by the Navajo reservation and also includes, inside its borders, a small pocket of Navajo land, in its turn entirely surrounded by the Hopi. This rather odd and unsatisfactory situation has inevitably led to tension. In addition, Navajo-Hopi relations suffered a further setback in 1974 when the US government partitioned an area used by both Indian nations and forcibly relocated thousands of Navajo and some Hopi. The resulting disputes still haunt both peoples and are at the origin of a good deal of friction.

## Divided we stand

One of the strongest themes to recur throughout Hopi mythology and history is the people's tendency to split into groups. For the Hopi this is a strength rather than a weakness: where there is strong disagreement, the dissenting group will strike out to brave the unknown, preferring the integrity of independence to the restrictions of forced consensus. The Hopi were bound together by their spirituality and had no history of centralised leadership.

In 1934 the US government's new Indian Reorganisation Act stated that each Indian nation must hold a vote on whether or not to form a 'tribal council', as its only representatives to the federal authorities. At first, many Hopi refused to take part in the elections. Some feared the council would be a tool for the US government to facilitate the theft of Indian land and resources. Others held to the tradition of villages governing themselves and refused to accept any centralised authority. Nevertheless, there was a 'yes' vote and, despite bitter disagreement from many Hopi, the tribal council was formed.

The council remains contentious today with different Hopi supporting or opposing it depending on the issue in question. Although it is a gross oversimplification, those who generally support the council are often called 'progressives', while those who oppose it are known as 'traditionalists'. However, even 'traditionalist' villages (such as Hotevilla) sometimes refer to the tribal council and use its authority to support cultural causes; and even 'progressives', and the council itself, justify their outlook by referring to Hopi tradition.

*Peabody Coal's massive use of water at their Black Mesa mine is drying up the Hopi's vital springs*

The most contentious issue of all is the coal mining on the Black Mesa. Since 1966 the US government has leased more than 26 300 hectares (65 000 acres) of Hopi and Navajo land to the Peabody Coal Company (owned by the British conglomerate, Hanson). Unfortunately, the company uses some of the most destructive mining techniques. Their open-cast strip mines ravage the landscape, turning it into a barren waste. The company uses nearly 18 million litres (4 million gallons) of water a day from underground aquifers which are the Indians' sole source of drinking water. Some goes to wash out the mines, but most is used to flush the coal through 434 kilometres (270 miles) of pipeline to the power stations serving Las Vegas and southern California. The pollution from coal dust and the serious depletion of the water table affect a vast hinterland

and are devastating what has always been a fragile land.

Coal mining on the Black Mesa, and in particular the involvement of the US government in its promotion, has a long and complex history. Both the Hopi and Navajo tribal councils receive royalties from the coal and use them to finance many of their social welfare and educational programmes. Some Hopi and Navajo believe that the mining is inevitable and that the best use should be made of it; others believe that the coal should not be mined under any circumstances and that to do so violates the sacredness of the earth. There is universal concern amongst all Hopi and Navajo, however, that the land cannot sustain Peabody's colossal demands for water: the company is sucking the mesas dry and the Indians' springs are drying up.

## A different worship: missionaries in the Sierra

The first missionaries to contact the Arhuaco were Capuchin friars from Spain who came to the Sierra in 1693. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries they made excursions into the Sierra to burn Arhuaco temples and eradicate their beliefs.

In 1916 the Capuchins decided to step-up their activities in the Sierra and establish a permanent base. They built a mission in a valley surrounded by hills sacred to the Arhuaco and named it San Sebastián de Rábago.

Right *The missionaries tyrannised the Indians and forced them to cut their hair and wear European clothes*

Below left *The Capuchin missionaries punished children for speaking their own language. This girl has been hung up by her hands*

The Capuchins subjected the Arhuaco to an extremely harsh regime designed to suppress and eventually extinguish the Arhuaco religion and way of life. They took Arhuaco children, forced them to attend the mission school, and punished them for speaking their own language. Those who tried to escape were stripped naked and beaten. Many Arhuaco fled higher up into the mountains for safety. They also sent a delegation to Bogotá to ask for protection.

In 1928 men hired by the Capuchins murdered Adolfo Torres, an Arhuaco leader who had resisted the Church. This was one of the most infamous incidents of the Church's unholy reign and is still a painful memory for the Indians.

By the 1970s the Capuchins had moderated the excesses of their early years, but their activities were still resented by the Arhuaco, who by that time were in the forefront of the Colombian indigenous movement. On 7 August 1982 they decided to rid themselves of the mission once and for all. Led by Luís Napoleón Torres (who was later assassinated by the army), hundreds of Arhuaco occupied the mission. The frightened Capuchins barricaded themselves into an upstairs room and radioed for help. The next day the Bishop arrived to mediate, but he too was prevented from leaving by the Indians. The army arrived but were persuaded by the Arhuaco that there was no need to intervene.

In the end, the missionaries accepted defeat. They agreed to leave the Sierra and have never returned. There is now a bilingual education programme in place and some of the teachers are Arhuaco. One of the advisors for the project is a prominent member of Survival.

## The Indian movement in Colombia

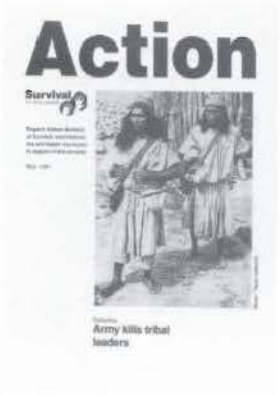
Colombia has the most diverse Indian population in the Americas. It is also one of the most dangerous countries in the world for indigenous peoples; their leaders are killed with sickening regularity, usually by the armed forces. In spite of this repression (or perhaps because of it), the Indians' movement to stand up for their own rights is one of the staunchest in the continent.

### *Power of the pen*

*The Sierra Nevada is under siege by the army, guerrillas and paramilitaries. The Indians live in constant fear of attack, torture and death. Their political leaders and mamos are prime targets and the attackers are very rarely brought to justice. No one has yet been tried for the murder of the three Arhuaco leaders in November 1990, although the army officers who are thought to be responsible have been identified. Similarly, the killing of the Arsario man, Gregorio Nieves, has gone unpunished.*

*International public opinion will eventually force the government to act. Please write to the President of Colombia to convey your support for the Arhuaco and their Indian neighbours, the Kogi and Arsario.*

*Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7–26, Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia*




*Thousands of Survival International supporters wrote to the Colombian government to express their outrage at the murder of three Arhuaco leaders and the constant persecution of their community*

From left to right *Hugues Chaparro, Angel María Torres, and Luís Napoleón Torres before they were murdered by soldiers in 1990*

The movement began in the Andean south-west of the country, where the Indians of the Cauca valley have been fighting for their land rights throughout this century. In 1971 they formed an organisation, the Regional Indian Council of the Cauca (CRIC). They started to produce their own newspaper, argue their case, slowly and laboriously, through the law courts, and coordinate their communities to present a united front to the white landowners who were stealing their land. Survival International was among the first international organisations to support them in this, and the Cauca organisation was soon emulated in other parts of Colombia. The Paez and Guambiano Indians of the Cauca paid dearly for their struggle. Literally hundreds were imprisoned over land battles and, on average, one of their leaders was murdered approximately every month.

Despite their geographical distance from the Cauca, which lies at the other end of the country, the Arhuaco have always been in the vanguard of the movement. In the 1940s they formed the short-lived Indian League of the Sierra Nevada to press for their rights. In 1974 they founded the Council of Arhuaco Indian Organisations (COIA), and in 1983 they formed the Confederation of Tairona Indians (CIT). The Arhuaco were prominent in the formation of the National Organisation of Colombian Indians (ONIC), which united all the organisations under one federation in 1982.

ONIC remains one of the leading Indian organisations in the Americas and it has fought and won many battles for Indian rights. More recently it has been joined by the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO), a political body which emphasises Indian spirituality. The two organisations work closely together.

> When our leaders where killed it was as if the brain of our people had been extinguished. They were a symbol of unity for us.
>
> Arhuaco mamo, 1993

## Killing the leaders

Violence has racked Colombia since 1948, when it descended into twenty years of brutal civil war that left a legacy of rival guerrilla armies and a culture of terror.

The Colombian army views all peasant and Indian communities as potential guerrilla collaborators, and it maintains a high level of violence in Indian settlements – raiding villages, burning down houses, torturing and, occasionally, killing people.

In 1990 the army murdered three Arhuaco leaders. The Indians were travelling by bus to Bogotá. During one of the bus halts, armed men, later identified as soldiers, boarded the vehicle and dragged the Indians off and into waiting pickup trucks. The Indians' bodies were found several days later showing signs of severe torture. The three victims were Luís Napoleón Torres, his brother Angel María Torres, and Hugues Chaparro. All were very important Indian leaders of long-standing. On the same day soldiers from the same battalion tortured two other Arhuaco.

This was a devastating blow to the Arhuaco and, years later, they are still seeking justice. No one has been brought to trial for the killings despite a protest march by 1 000 Indians and letters to the Colombian government from thousands of Survival members. The army officers responsible have been identified but the army, which has considerable power over the Colombian government, refuses to recognise their acts as punishable.

In 1993 two Arhuaco representatives came to Spain and Britain as guests of Survival International to raise awareness about the murders and the – plight of indigenous peoples in the Sierra. Survival's campaign for their rights continues – for details of how you can help please turn to the form at the back of this report.

# Survival
## for tribal peoples

*Survival International is a worldwide movement to support tribal peoples. It stands for their right to decide their own future and helps them protect their lands, environment and way of life.*

Tribal peoples are being persecuted around the world. They do not want charity but they *do* need voices, like yours, to join their own in standing up to the businesses, banks, and governments that threaten to destroy their children's future.

With your help we can push the governments into taking positive action and making more tribal lands safe from further invasion, and we can provide emergency practical help when needed.

Without individuals like you, Survival would simply not exist. There are lots of ways in which you can help: the tear-out form will tell you how to become a member or take part in our £10 campaign. If you have been moved by this report, use the addresses on pages 18–19 to make your feelings known to the politicians and policy makers.

With especial thanks to all the Hopi and Arhuaco who have helped and supported this publication.

With thanks to:

Rachel Fallone, illustrator (a student at the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, The University of Reading);

Dr Donald Tayler and Dr Peter Whiteley, anthropologists;

Patrick Drysdale, editorial consultant;

Photographers:
Yesid Campos: 4–bottom; 5–top; 5–middle; 6–top; 7–middle r; 15–middle
Jonathan Mazower: Inside cover; 3–bottom; 5–bottom; 6–l; 12–top; 16–top; 18–bottom l; 20–bottom; 21–middle; back cover–bottom l
Juan Mayr: Cover; 1–bottom; 2–top; 7–top; 7 bottom l; 15–top; 15–bottom; back cover–top
John Running: 2–bottom; 3–top; 8–all; 10–bottom; 11–all; 12–l; 13–bottom; back cover–bottom r
Richard Solly: 18–middle r
Bruce Trudgill: 10–top; 17–all

Thanks also to Lucas Silva

Arhuaco and Kogi sources for pp. 4–7:
Personal communications (1974–1993) with several Arhuaco and Kogi; Arhuaco testimonies in Survival International Document II, 1976; Vicencio Torres: 'Los indígenas Arhuacos y "la vida de la civilización"'. Bogotá, 1978; and 'Aún es tiempo de vivir', entrevistas con Ramón Gil Barros, by Sylvia Botero.

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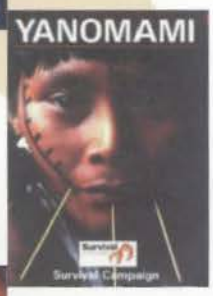


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