

The Meeting of Two Worlds: Searching for and Affirming Our Christian and Indigenous Identity

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Who are we, the Guna people? The question is complex and cannot be answered with a precise definition. We are the sum of many experiences, stories, relationships, cultures, languages, geographies, encounters with other people groups, and encounters with ourselves. The Guna are one of many people groups in *Abya Yala*¹ whose way of life is built upon our spirituality, worldview, and story of origin; who have been transformed step by step in

1. *Abya Yala* is the term utilized by the Guna people and which has been adopted by many indigenous peoples to refer to the American continents. It means “fully mature land” or “the land of life’s blood.”

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coming to know other peoples and ourselves. The bridge between internal and external dialogue allows us to create new ways of seeing life and recognize that the answer to who we are will never be static but rather dynamic.

Among the Canoes: Passing through Strange Lands, the Guna Experience

If the sea could speak, it would tell our story; if canoes could record memories, they would reveal the secret of the people who have lived surrounded by the sea; they would tell a story that has never been heard of a people who found their freedom through struggling and always meeting themselves and others rowing on the high seas.

The Guna way of life went through a process of transformation as time passed and we encountered other people groups. Every day we became a stronger nation, valuing our identity. Communal life intensified; every person sought the well-being of others and harmony with nature, believing that others' lives mattered and that God cared for the well-being of everything that exists.

Ibeorgun, a Guna prophet, taught our grandparents many things, including, for example, how to build a better hut:

We are going to improve our huts. We need a really big one here. A house for everyone. A house for the women, for the men, for the children. In this big hut we will speak of *Baba* (God), of our illnesses, of our work, of our big things and our small things. Like all huts, this one must be built with our own hands.... Choose