

Who on EARTH is Juidako?

Comments on a voyage to the tiny village of Mairidikai near El Estrecho, Putumayo, Peru accompanying our virtual intercultural project.

From where we live in Germany (and any other part of Germany) it is a long journey to Mairidikai. A journey undertaken in times where the world counts carbon footprints in a humble attempt, and wasting precious time, to prevent the disaster which has been caused by the overexploitation of resources and, let's never forget it, by the exploitation of millions of people for the benefit of only a part of this world and the opulence and luxury of only a few.



Zeichnung: Elke Falley-Rothkopf

As we live in that part of the world which has benefitted from the rest of the world, although we went accompanied by uncomfortable ideas as to the emissions of greenhouse gases, we were again allowed to travel because covid restrictions have been eased and we do (still) dispose of the necessary funds to afford the tickets.

We came by explicit invitation of the community to this year's celebrations in the house of the community, the maloka. We are not the only ones who have been invited. Firstly, because the maloka, as a structure, installation and in its very own understanding, is open to everyone. Secondly, because the maloka concept and vision needs everyone to come. What for? The elders' and the head of the Maloka's message has been confirmed to be the following: To re-establish the world's balance. To live in peace.

Invited to the gathering in the maloka were also kin and friends, arriving from La Chorrera and Puerto Arica in Colombia, for instance. In the small Native Community of Mairidikai live members of the Murui, Bora, Ocaina, Kichwa, Maijuna and Secoya peoples. (Please note, these are people of distinct languages families) They were expecting their kin from the native communities in La Chorrera and Puerto Arica, both in Colombia. Many came. Despite the long, difficult and, last but not least, costly voyage to the maloka. These voyages are mainly by boat, using *lanchas* or (for the nearer range) *pequepeques*. The journey could take 4, or even 10 days. Which means, also for the people from La Chorrera and Arica, it had been a long way to and from Mairidikai. It meant spending a considerable amount for fuel, *en combustible*, an amount 4 times the amount spent in food for the people attending the celebrations. Amounts that due to the background of exploitation of the area and in particular its native inhabitants, are not easily made available.

Apart from the easy-to-answer question why one would like one's family from abroad to attend the celebrations in a house of the community, it should not be forgotten that in the course of history these Indigenous communities had been torn apart because of the rubber boom which brought forced relocation, slavery and incredible atrocities against their population. But let us comment here also on another important fact which we ("us from here") had and have to learn.

The maloka, its cycle(s) of celebrations, is neither random, nor merely for the purpose of fun. It is not simply a building, but rather a broad concept and vision to plant, grow and spread. This was underlined when during the preparations for the event, it came to us being called to learn - by Pedro, head of

Mairidicai's maloka, and his father (whose name is also Pedro) having travelled from La Chorrera, to teach the chants and rituals. In order for the concept, the vision to grow and spread, it is essential to hear and learn the chants, to join the dances. To have the young participate and teach them. The people of Mairidicai had eagerly awaited *los jóvenes de allá, de Alemania*, the young from Germany, students and children, coming over to also see, hear and learn. Alas, we came alone. But a group of students and colleagues from the Bonn *Institut für Altamerikanistik*, the Klima-Bündnis in Frankfurt and friends already followed us from the distance, online.

This year's celebrations belonged to a cycle which started with the inauguration of the maloka at Mairidicai last year. The cycle is now concluded. New celebrations (not yet programmed) will start a new cycle with their unique set of dances and chants. Until then, it is up to us to pay attention to the teachings, to listen to the chants – and try to join in. In this universal dance which never stops - and tries to *keep the serpent in the water* so that the *tree of abundance* shares its fruits for all on earth again.

Maybe we came alone, with the young from where we live still missing on site. However, we already have our students, our young, gathering to join in at least in the virtual meetings with the community. Following the instructions of the Head of the Maloka and his father, we have the rituals documented and are ready to share them with all those interested. As Pedro (*senior*) put it: Noone is obliged to. Because the wish to learn has to come from the heart, not from force.

Mairidicai, the name of the native community, we have been told, means also “we will be strong”. The celebrations were dedicated to the *Tree of Resistance*. We were dancing to be able to resist and persist in the multifold crises which the world now experiences and which affect all on earth. The rituals, chants, the dances – to re-establish balance, to have fresh and clean air, to make us see and understand that we have to share among each other. We have to come together to be working together, crossing the barriers that distance, language differences and history impose on us.

We shall be strong. We shall join hands in building the future.

Maybe, as the intercultural community, we are yet a few. Do not forget, everything starts small.

JOIN.

Elke Falley-Rothkopf